

MCS 575-301 (31311)

Digital Media Ethics

Spring Quarter 2019, 4 credit hours

Tu 5:45PM - 9:00PM

14 E. Jackson Room 1137

Instructor: Nathanael Bassett

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Office: 14 E Jackson, 1835

Office Hours: 3-5 Tuesdays & via appointment (Skype, Google).

Course Description:

What is it to be "ethical"? Does the digital somehow change that? This course is intended to provide students with a framework for identifying and understanding ethical dilemmas in the realm of digital media and society. We will explore various case studies as they pertain to our lives on and around the internet, draw from personal experience and consider the experiences of others, and try to envision imaginaries of the future in how the world is affected by digital media and the ethical issues it raises.

Objectives:

By the end of the quarter students should be capable and prepared to

- Distinguish between various moral philosophies and how they may or may not apply to digital technologies and society.
- Identify ethical issues and conflicts in the design and use of digital technologies.
- Be able to make principled choices when dealing with technologies and digital media.
- Help to articulate reasonings for the most ethical practices when engaging with digital media, from a professional and a personal standpoint.

Required Texts:

- Ess, C. (2013). *Digital Media Ethics*. Polity.
- Other readings available via D2L

Recommended (not required):

- Bowles, C. (2018) *Future Ethics*. NowNext Press

Assignments & Grading:

A: 90 - 100%, work meets all assignment criteria and displays originality and creative thought, no basic errors

B: 80 - 89%, work meets all assignment criteria but repeats material from lecture or readings without building on it, may have some minor errors that do not impede communication

C: 70 - 79%, work falls short on some assignment criteria and may have some conceptual errors in repeating material from lecture or readings, has errors that impede communication

D: 60 - 69%, work falls short on multiple assignment criteria and displays major errors in understanding or technique, has errors that impede communication

F: 59% and below, work does not attempt to fulfill assignment criteria and displays major errors in understanding or technique, has errors that significantly impede communication

Grading Scale (please refer to the [Academic Handbook](#) on the significance of letter grades):

Assignment Descriptions

In-class participation and discussion: 10%

You are expected to participate and be involved in classroom discussion. This class values input from students based on their insights derived from the readings and personal experience. Sharing those views contributes to the overall learning of the class. Additionally, breakout sessions will help students to draw from one another and better understand the topic at hand. During class time your involvement is important to your success and others. Participation will earn you this portion of your grade. Deliberately distracting and disrupting the environment by detracting from discussion will cost you those points.

Reading Responses: 10%

Each week you will post reading responses on D2L by using the "Discussion" tool. You should click on the "Discussion" tab, then find the topic for the appropriate week, and start a new thread containing your thoughts or reactions to the readings. You are encouraged to read and comment on each others posts, and to post at least 2 questions you have for the class. These are due before class time every week.

Discussion Leadership: 20%

Each student will take a turn facilitating class discussion for a day. Some periods may feature two discussion leaders, depending on the number of students in the class. You will be able to work together or split the readings in those cases. A signup sheet will be provided the first day of class. Discussion leaders should post no fewer than 3 discussion prompts in lieu of questions in their reading responses.

You should provide an overview of the readings, then you may present your discussion questions to the class. Your role will be to act as facilitator and help to identify important connections between the readings and current events or relevant examples. To this point, you should research and present a case study relevant to the theme of the week. This case study should be an ethical controversy, ideally drawn from current events or areas of student interest

and knowledge. Be mindful of the ethical theories we will be covering, and be prepared to discuss research and current events from different ethical viewpoints.

Final Paper: 50%

The course readings and topics we discuss in class will lay the foundation for your own project in which you examine some ethical considerations of digital media, in depth. Your final paper should be a minimum of 15 pages. Some examples of acceptable papers include literature reviews (stemming from research on a specific topic), historical research, theoretical papers, or applied ethical position papers and manifestos.

This grade is broken down as such:

Proposal - (a one to two page is due Week 5) - 5%

Abstract and Annotated Bibliography (due Week 6) - 20%

Meeting with Professor (scheduled by student during Weeks 7-8) - 5%

Presentation - 20%

Paper - 50% (due by the start of the presentations during Exam Week)

Personal Ethical Statement - 10%

In this statement, students set out a personal code of ethics, guided by their sense of purpose, that can guide them in their future. Students should define their vocation and explain how they came to that understanding, incorporating experiences and thoughts from before and during the course. Based on their knowledge of controversies and challenges in digital ethics, students will forecast future and present challenges to living according to their purpose. Students will suggest ways to overcome these challenges, including one example of them doing so during the quarter. Finally, students will discuss how their purpose relates more broadly to society.

These statements should be 750-1000 words and can take a more informal tone than other writing for this course. Students can draw from original research or from Future Ethics and one or more of the suggested texts for further study at the end of this syllabus. The statement is due by the end of Week 10 (i.e. 11:59 pm on the last day of the last week of classes).

Instructions for assignments:

Turn in all written assignments electronically via D2L. Please use doc, docx, or pdf format and save your work as "[assignment name]_[last name]".

All written assignments should be double space, 12pt Times New Roman font, with standard 1" margins, with the authors name and date present. Deviations from these requirements may result in grade penalties. Use a consistent citation/reference style (APA, Chicago, etc).

Course Policies:

Absences and Late Work

Absences (including tardiness and leaving early) are heavily discouraged. That said, life happens. Students are allowed one absence throughout the quarter with no explanation. Late assignments will be penalized 1/10th of the possible points for that assignment per day that the work is overdue. The "new day" begins at 12:01AM. Late work will not be accepted more than one class period after it is due.

Course Evaluations

Students will have the opportunity to provide formal feedback on the course during the later portion of the quarter. You will receive an email notification that will allow you to complete an online teaching evaluation. This is important to me because I take your input into how I teach will teach this class and others in the future. Additionally, the university uses these evaluations to determine which classes will be made available, assess the quality of courses, and maintain student enrollment. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that promotes the intellectual development of each individual within the community. The University seeks to maintain and enhance the educational environment of the community in a variety of ways including through the development of and promotion of standards for academic honesty. The University believes that all members of the community are responsible for adherence to these standards for academic honesty, and that all violations of academic integrity are detrimental to the intellectual development of individuals within the community and to the community at large. Violations include but are not limited to: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University for further details.

Accessibility

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations:
Loop Campus - Lewis Center #1420 - (312) 362-8002
Lincoln Park Campus - Student Center #370 - (773) 325-1677

Writing Center

The Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from

invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Utilizing the writing center as a resource can have a direct impact on the quality of your work and your total grade. Visit www.depaul.edu/writing for more information.

Sexual and Relationship Violence

As a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. It is important for students to know that faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students should also know that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response. Students seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu). Students seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or hpw@depaul.edu). More information is available at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/hpw/shvp.html>. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

On Course Content

If you are concerned that certain material or subjects will likely be emotionally challenging for you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have before the subject comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to course material with the class or with me individually afterwards, I welcome such discussions as an appropriate part of our classwork.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion as a result of those concerns, you may always do so without academic penalty. However you will be responsible material and you may not be able to earn a participation grade. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

Course Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction (April 2)

- **Recommended:** Bowles - Future Ethics
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Week 2 - (A very brief) Foundations of Ethics (April 9)

- Ess Chapter 1 & 6
- de la Bellacasa, M. P. (2011). Matters of care in technoscience: Assembling neglected things. *Social studies of science*, 41(1), 85-106.

FURTHER READINGS

- Gunkel, D. and Hawhee, D. (2003). Virtual alterity and the reformatting of ethics. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 18: 173-194.
 - Timmons, M. (2016) "A Moral Theory Primer" In *Disputed Moral Issues*, Oxford University Press.
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Week 3 - Design Ethics (April 16)

- Winner, L. "Technologies as Forms of Life." Edited by David Kaplan. *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.
- Winner, L. (1980). Do Artifacts Have Politics? *Daedalus*, 109(1), 121-136.
- Rosenberger, R. (2014) How Cities Use Design to Drive Homeless People Away. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/how-cities-use-design-to-drive-homeless-people-away/373067/>

FURTHER READINGS

- Gunkel, D. J. (2018). The other question: can and should robots have rights?. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 20(2), 87-99.
 - Asaro, P. (2016). Hands up, don't shoot!: HRI and the automation of police use of force. *Journal of Human-Robot Interaction*, 5(3), 55-69.
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Week 4 - Security, Surveillance & Privacy (April 23)

- Ess Chapter 2
- Lyon, D. (2017). Digital Citizenship and Surveillance| Surveillance Culture: Engagement, Exposure, and Ethics in Digital Modernity. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 19.
- van den Hoven, J. (2008) Information Technology, Privacy, and the Protection of Personal Data. In van den Hoven J. & Wecker J. (Eds.) *Information Technology and Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

FURTHER READINGS

- Dzodan, F. (2017) Big Data and the ethics of community surveillance. *Medium*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/this-political-woman/big-data-and-the-ethics-of-community-surveillance-eb8d6e136a88>
- Zuboff, S. (2015), Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization. *Journal of Information Technology* (30), 75-89. doi:10.1057/jit.2015.5. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2594754>

Week 5 - Copyright, Piracy & Hacktivism (April 30)

- Ess Chapter 3
- Light, B. A. (2016). The rise of speculative devices: Hooking up with the bots of Ashley Madison. *First Monday*, 21(6).
- Schwarz, J.A. (2015) Honorability and the Pirate Ethic. In Baumgartel, T. (Ed.) *A Reader on International Media Piracy: Pirate Essays*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Himma, K. E. (2008). Ethical Issues Involving Computer Security: Hacking, Hacktivism, and Counterhacking. Himma, K. E., & Tavani, H. T. (Eds.) *The Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics*. John Wiley & Sons.

FURTHER READINGS

- Donovan, J (2017) Refuse and Resist! *Limn* (8). Retrieved from <https://limn.it/articles/refuse-and-resist/>
- H. R. (2015) "Doxxing Is Always Bad, Except When It's Not": Your Morality Is A Bludgeon. Model View Culture." Retrieved from <https://modelviewculture.com/news/doxxing-is-always-bad-except-when-its-not-your-morality-is-a-bludgeon>

Week 6 - Democracy (Or Not) (May 7)

- Ess Chapter 4
- Gillespie, R. (2016) Freedom, Democracy, Power, Irony: The Ethics of Information and the Networked Fourth Estate. In Booth, P. & Davisson, A. (Eds). *Controversies in Digital Ethics*. Bloomsbury.
- Sunstein, C. (2008). Democracy and the Internet. In van den Hoven J. & Wecker J. (Eds.) *Information Technology and Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kelty, C. M. (2014) The Fog of Freedom. In Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foot (Eds.) *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

FURTHER READINGS

- Ess, C. (2011). Self, community, and ethics in digital mediatized worlds. In Jones, S. (Ed.) *Trust and virtual worlds: Contemporary perspectives*, p. 3-30.

Week 7 - Sex & Violence (May 14)

- Ess Chapter 5
- Davisson, A. (2016) "Passing Around Women's Bodies Online: Identity, Privacy, and Free Speech on Reddit" In Booth, P. & Davisson, A. (Eds). *Controversies in Digital Ethics*. Bloomsbury.
- Massanari, A. (2017). # Gamergate and The Fappening: How Reddit's algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures. *New Media & Society*, 19(3), 329-346.
- Stroud, S. R. (2016) "Be a Bully to Beat a Bully": Twitter Ethics, Online Identity, and the Culture of Quick Revenge. In Booth, P. & Davisson, A. (Eds). *Controversies in Digital Ethics*. Bloomsbury.

FURTHER READINGS

- Scott S. R. (2014) The Dark Side of the Online Self: A Pragmatist Critique of the Growing Plague of Revenge Porn, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 29 (3), 168-183, DOI: 10.1080/08900523.2014.917976

Week 8 - Rights: To Forget & To Refuse (May 21)

- SEP: Rights. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights/>
- Hesselberth, P. (2018). Discourses on disconnectivity and the right to disconnect. *New Media & Society*, 20(5), 1994-2010. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817711449>
- Ambrose (Jones), M. L. (2012). It's about time: privacy, information life cycles, and the right to be forgotten. *Stan. Tech. L. Rev.*, 16, 369.

FURTHER READINGS

- Portwood-Stacer, L. Care Work and the Stakes of Social Media Refusal. *New Criticals*. Retrieved from <http://www.newcriticals.com/care-work-and-the-stakes-of-social-media-refusal/print>
- Rosen, J. (2012). The Right to be forgotten. Available at: http://www.stanfordlawreview.org/online/privacy-paradox/right-to-be-forgotten?em_x=22

Week 9 - Analytics: Big Data & Algorithms (May 28)

- Noble, S. U. (2018). "Introduction" and "Conclusion". In *Algorithms of Oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. NYU Press.
- Hauer, T. (2018). Society and the Second Age of Machines: Algorithms Versus Ethics. *Society*, 55(2), 100-106.
- Mittelstadt, B. D., Allo, P., Taddeo, M., Wachter, S., & Floridi, L. (2016). The ethics of algorithms: Mapping the debate. *Big Data & Society*, 3(2), 2053951716679679.

FURTHER READINGS

- Dzodan, F. (2017) When white fears become Big Data: racist emotions and the populists who love them. *Medium*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/this-political-woman/when->

[white-fears-become-big-data-racist-emotions-and-the-populists-who-love-them-9ccf8e1ef1b2](#)

- Sylvia IV, J.J. (2016) "Little Brother: How Big Data Necessitates an Ethical Shift from Privacy to Power" In Booth, P. & Davisson, A. (Eds). *Controversies in Digital Ethics*. Bloomsbury.

Week 10 - Presentations (June 4)

Finals Week

Final paper due

Suggested Texts for further study:

- Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. NYU Press.
- Eubanks, V. (2018). *Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor*. St. Martin's Press.
- Broussard, M. (2018). *Artificial Unintelligence: How Computers Misunderstand the World*. MIT Press.

This schedule, the above syllabus, and the general content of the syllabus is potentially subject to change.