

Ethical Computing Systems

CS/PHIL 201, Fall 2023

Instructors: Vidya Gaddy & Josh Brekel

Course Description

Survey of contemporary ethical issues in information technology and hardware and software development. Explore moral, social, and legal issues with information technology in the modern world. Construct arguments based on philosophical moral theories, and issues explored through science fiction.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, the successful student will be able to:

- Describe some moral theories, including their strengths and weaknesses.
- Describe how various moral theories apply to ethical challenges in the fields of information technology and software development.
- Apply basic logical concepts such as argument, validity, soundness, strength, and cogency to texts.
- Recognize informal fallacies.
- Describe some of the most pressing issues at the intersection of ethics and information technology.
- Participate in civil and reasonable discussion on controversial topics.
- Understand how to apply these skills in the workplace.

Contact

Josh Brekel (He/Him/His): josh.brekel@colostate.edu
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Vidya Gaddy (She/Her): Vidya.Gaddy@colostate.edu
Office hours: M/W 2pm-3pm in CSB 246 and by appointment

Teaching Assistants

Graduate GTA: Lena Hinzer: Lena.Hinzer@colostate.edu

Response Time: Expect responses to emails within 24 hours M-F and 48 hours on the weekend; expect classwork to be graded within 1-2 weeks after the deadline. Grades will be kept updated in the gradebook, which is visible to you in our course shell.

Requirements

- Assignments (weekly in-class discussions & quizzes) 40%
 - Three lowest discussion scores from this category are dropped
- Final Exam **Thursday, 12/14 @ 4 pm** 25%
- Essay/Paper due date TBA 25%
- Attendance 10%

Readings

Course readings will be provided to you through Canvas. Some readings will be from the *New York Times*, which are news articles available online. CSU Students have access to these articles through the College Readership Program. Instructions to access them will be given in Canvas.

Canvas

We use Canvas for all assignments, posting of class materials, and communication. In particular, you need to submit your weekly group discussion in Canvas, by the end of the day they are made available in class. It is your responsibility to make sure you receive and regularly check messages in Canvas.

Class Content and Schedule

First day of class: 8/22; last day of class: 12/7; 11/20-11/24 (Fall Break)

This schedule is tentative. Topics and readings are likely to change. Be sure to check Canvas announcements and modules for any updates.

Week	Content	Readings
Week 1 8/21-27	T: Introduction: Syllabus, Course Expectations Th: Ethical Theory: Virtue Ethics	Tuesday: A Clockwork Soldier Thursday: Schur "Should I Punch My Friend in the Face for No Reason" (excerpt)
Week 2 8/28-9/3	T: Ethical Theory: Utilitarianism Th: Roles, Identity, and DNA	Tuesday: "Calculating Consequences: The Utilitarian Approach to Ethics" Thursday: TBA
Week 3 9/4-10	T: Ethical Theory: Kantian Ethics Th: Informed Consent and Rights	Tuesday: Philosophy Bro: "Immanuel Kant's "Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals"" Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 4 9/11-17	T: Privacy & Facial Recognition Th: Anonymity	Tuesday: Various Articles TBA Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 5 9/18-24	T: Data & The Web Th: Data, Location & Voice	Tuesday: Various Articles TBA Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 6 9/25-10/1	T: Human Enhancement part 1 Th: Human Enhancement part 2	Tuesday: Savulescu/ Procreative Beneficence Thursday: Sparrow/ Enhanced Rat Race

Week 7 10/2-10/8	Ethical Machines Part 1— subject to change Ethical Machines Part 2— subject to change	Tuesday: Searle & Nagel Thursday: TBA
Week 8 10/9-15	Logic and Just War Theory— subject to change Autonomous Robots in War— subject to change	Tuesday: The Conversation Article & NYT Article Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 9 10/16-22	Snowden & Government Surveillance Working For War	Tuesday: No Readings Thursday: Guardian Article & Snowden/Chomsky/Greenwald Debate
Week 10 10/23-29	Codes of Ethics & Codes of Conduct Workplace Ethics & Boeing 737 Max	Tuesday: Various Codes of Ethics Readings Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 11 10/30-11/5	Self-Driving Cars Automation	Tuesday: Various Articles TBA Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 12 11/6-12	Online Free Speech Health Care Data Collection	Tuesday: Various Articles TBA Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 13 11/13-19	Bias & Algorithms Encryption & Extended Mind	Tuesday: Various Articles TBA Thursday: Chalmers Extended Mind
11/20-26	FALL BREAK	
Week 14 11/27-12/3	Attention Economy Intellectual Property— subject to change	Tuesday: Various Articles TBA Thursday: Various Articles TBA
Week 15 12/4-10	TBA— subject to change Review Session	Tuesday: Various Articles TBA Thursday: No Reading
Week 16 12/11-15	Finals Exam Monday 12/11 @ 4 PM	

Grading

We use a grading scheme by percentage. Assignments and quizzes will be weighted at 40%, and the final exam and final essay will be worth 25% each. Attendance will be worth 10%. The combined overall

percentage in each category will correlate with the following letter grades:

A+ Not awarded	B+ 87-90%	C+ 77-79.9%		
A >92%	B 83-87%	C 70-76.9%	D 60-69.9%	F <59.9%
A- 90-92%	B- 80-82.9%			

Policy concerning missed requirements and deadlines

Only in the case of documented extraordinary circumstances, such as illness, will there be an option to extend deadlines. Students must notify their instructor before they miss class in order to be eligible for an assignment extension. Requests for late submission after class has occurred will not be considered unless extraordinary circumstances have occurred.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation in class discussion is a significant part of this class and will be expected of students, informally and through in-class activities (weekly discussion assignments, quizzes, etc.). Attendance is required to participate in the weekly discussion activities (except where explicitly approved beforehand by an instructor), as well as any other graded, in-class assignments. Students who participate become more engaged with, and develop a stronger understanding of, the topics covered. Thus, attendance and participation are tied to your grade and performance in this class.

→Additionally, participation includes arriving to class on time and fully prepared, having completed the assigned readings and come to class ready to discuss them by supporting, engaging, and listening to peers. iClicker may be used for attendance and participation points.

Student Conduct

In addition to all guidelines in the Colorado State University Student Code of Conduct (found here: <http://www.conflictresolution.colostate.edu/conduct-code>), the following expectations apply:

Academic Integrity

This course will adhere to the CSU Academic Integrity Policy as found on the Student' Responsibilities page of the CSU General Catalog (<http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/policies/students-responsibilities/#academic-integrity>) and in the Student Conduct Code. At a minimum, violations will result in a grading penalty in this course and a report to the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services.

For writing assignments, we use the Turnitin anti-plagiarism tool in Canvas, which automatically checks papers for plagiarism.

AI Policy: In addition, work done, even partially, by using AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is considered cheating (plagiarism) in this class, as the work is not your own. As such, work may be subject to a plagiarism scan (such as TurnItIn or GPT Zero) and addressed accordingly.

If a student has any doubt about what counts as acceptable or unacceptable use of tools under this policy, they should ask the instructor **before using it.**

Principles of Community

Everyone is expected to acknowledge and uphold the CSU Principles of Community in all class activities and interactions.

Devices and Inappropriate Behavior (Etiquette)

Simply put, the use of cell phones, and other inappropriate devices, as well as the inappropriate use of appropriate devices (such as laptops) is disruptive to the class and violates an environment of respect. If you must use your cell phone, please step out of the class for the duration of your conversation (this includes text and any other forms of messages).

If you are found using a device in an inappropriate way during class time, you will first be warned, then asked to stop. If the behavior continues, points for in-class activities/participation may be deducted at the discretion of the instructor.

Universal Design for Learning/Accommodation of Needs

We are committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others carefully are crucial to universal learning.

If you are a student who will need accommodations in this class, please contact us to discuss your individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner. A verifying memo from [The Student Disability Center](#) may be required before any accommodation is provided.

The Student Disability Center (SDC) has the authority to verify and confirm the eligibility of students with disabilities for the majority of accommodations. While some accommodations may be provided by other departments, a student is not automatically eligible for those accommodations unless their disability can be verified and the need for the accommodation confirmed, either through SDC or through acceptable means defined by the particular department. Faculty and staff may consult with the SDC staff whenever there is doubt as to the appropriateness of an accommodative request by a student with a disability.

The goal of SDC is to normalize disability as part of the culture of diversity at Colorado State University. The characteristic of having a disability simply provides the basis of the support that is available to students. The goal is to ensure students with disabilities have the opportunity to be as successful as they have the capability to be.

Support and services are offered to student with functional limitations due to visual, hearing, learning, or mobility disabilities as well as to students who have specific physical or mental health conditions due to epilepsy, diabetes, asthma, AIDS, psychiatric diagnoses, etc. Students who are temporarily disabled are also eligible for support and assistance.

Any student who is enrolled at CSU, and who self-identifies with SDC as having a disability, is eligible for support from SDC. Specific accommodations are determined individually for each student and must be supported by appropriate documentation and/or evaluation of needs consistent with a particular type of disability. SDC reserves the right to ask for any appropriate documentation of disability in order to determine a student's eligibility for accommodations as well as in support for specific accommodative requests. The accommodative process begins once a student meets with an accommodations specialist.