

LBST/ITIS 2211: Ethical Issues (Technology) – Summer I, 2013
TWR 11:00-1:30, Winningham 101
Dr. Gordon Hull

Brief Description: This course looks at ethical issues that emerge in the context of new technologies. We will combine a study of traditional moral theories with a look at how those theories might help us understand some of the many challenges presented by contemporary technologies. The first half of the course will focus on skills development – distinguishing between normative and descriptive statements, for example – and the “thick concepts” (like privacy, property and security) by way of which we do most of our daily moral thinking. The second half of the course will look at some higher level normative theories used to justify those concepts, as well as some exemplary issues. We will also look (almost every day) at specific case studies designed to draw out the issues in the readings. Throughout, the emphasis will be on developing not just students’ familiarity with the readings and topics discussed, but with developing moral sensitivity (recognizing issues as ethical) and moral judgment (making good, well-reasoned decisions about those issues).

Goals: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Improve critical thinking skills
2. Know basic approaches to ethics, and basic concepts central to ethical thought
3. Recognize when situations call for ethical reflection
4. Successfully apply ethical approaches and concepts to generate solutions to ethical problems and resolve ethical dilemmas
5. Engage in the reasoning required to support and articulate their own ethical commitments
6. Develop respect for, and the ability to constructively engage, differing ethical perspectives
7. Develop a habit of integrating critical thinking about ethics into their own lives.

Assignments:

Grade Distribution:

Short assignments (total): 30%
Presentation: 20%
Mid-term: 25%
Final: 25%

Reading: You need to do the reading for a day *before* the class. That way, you can have something to discuss and you’ll be able to follow lecture/discussion. If you don’t do the reading, you’ll have trouble passing the course, as you will be tested on the reading.

Tests: These are designed to measure your progress over the term. They are taken in class on the days marked on the schedule below. Makeup exams will be administered only in the event of an acceptable excuse, and university policy applies to the final (which will be like the first test –

about the same length, and non-cumulative). It is vital that you study for these tests, and not just cram early in the morning of the exam. They are not designed to surprise you - lecture and review materials will generally be available. But they will require that you understand course material.

Issue Presentation: Issues in ethics and technology are all over the news. For this assignment, you will select a current technology ethics issue from recent news and present it to the class. Your presentation, which should take about 15 minutes, will have five components:

1. A Description of the facts of the issue. You'll need to make this focused and clear enough that non-specialists can understand it
2. An outline of the ethical issues raised
3. What thick concepts (property, privacy, etc.) are implicated in the ethical issues, and how those need to be understood. If higher level theories are relevant, try to include them.
4. A resolution to the most important ethical issues involved. You don't necessarily have to come down on one side of them (although you may) – you can say that “this is the ethical choice” and try to lay out as clearly as possible what that is.
5. You should be ready to lead a class discussion of the issue, fielding questions and facilitating the discussion.

You will be graded on several, roughly equal factors:

1. Selection of the issue. Did you pick something worth talking about? Don't pick something where there really isn't an issue (a murder or something). Is technology driving the issue, or making it newly relevant (so don't talk about abortion, for example)?
2. Presentation of the issue: Did you present the issue clearly, and include all of the relevant parts of it?
3. Ethical concepts: Did you present relevant ethical concepts that help to make sense of those issues? Did you apply the concepts coherently, and present them accurately?
4. Ethical resolution: Does your resolution (or presentation of the core dilemma and proposals for how it might be resolved) make sense?
5. Presentation skills: Eye contact, etc. You're welcome to use slides/power point, though not required to do so. If you do, effective use of power point goes here. Your ability to lead a discussion/field questions afterwards is also part of your presentation grade.

Short Assignments: Most of these are take-home quizzes consisting of short answer questions designed to help ensure that you are understanding the readings. There will be several over the term. The take home quizzes have to be typed, and you have to turn them in at the start of class – no sitting in the back of the room and filling them in by hand during class! Particularly during the beginning of the class, there will also be exercises designed to give you practice on normative vs. descriptive terms, etc. Please note that these assignments collectively add up to almost a third of your grade, so you need to be doing them.

Most days, you will turn in your homework at the beginning of the class. You will then work with a group of classmates on a “team” set of answers (to the same questions), which you will

turn in collectively as a team. Both grades will count. I will divide you into stable teams very early in the class; teams will also work together on case studies.

Case Studies: Ethics is hard! We will look at a number of case studies designed to pair with the readings and otherwise provide you practice in applying and developing the concepts that we study in class. The studies generally present a scenario, a short piece of writing or video, and a series of discussion questions. You do not have to do reading in advance for these (if there is any reading, it will be listed on the readings). However, since you'll need to refer to them in class, you are required to show up with the studies themselves – either on your computer, or with a printout. They are available in two ways: either as links to the case studies part of the course's Moodle page, or from my personal page

(<http://www.philosophy.uncc.edu/ghull/Case%20Studies/Ethics%20Case%20Studies.htm>)

Attendance/Participation: You can't learn very much in philosophy by just sitting there. You learn even less if you're not there at all. However, I am not going to be monitoring your attendance. Historically, in my classes there has been a strong correlation between attendance and class grade. This probably means that if you're the sort of student who cares enough to come to class, you're also likely to be the sort of student who will work enough to do well in the course. So I view the question of attendance as self-correcting. If you don't show up to class, you can't ask questions about material that you don't yet understand. I am under no obligation to repeat course materials that you missed.

Contact Information/Getting Assistance: It is important that you not fall behind. I want to help you avoid doing so. To get help from me:

1. Speak to me before or after class; we can set an appointment to meet at a later time if need be.
2. Email me at ghull@uncc.edu. This is probably the best way to get in touch outside of class.
3. Call my office: 7-2182 and leave a voicemail. This is less effective than email because I'm bad about checking my messages.
4. My summer **office hours** are by appointment.

Disabilities: I share UNCC's commitment to provide reasonable accommodations to enable students with disabilities to access course material. Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. You'll also need to contact disability services, 704-687-4355 (230 Fretwell).

Academic Integrity: This is ethics class! University academic integrity guidelines can be found at: <http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html#VI>. You are required to follow them, and I will follow university procedure in dealing with academic integrity violations.

Detailed Course Outline (not a contract)

Date	Exercise	Reading	Case Study
5/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • First day exercise • Get demographic information for teams 		
5/22	Argument Structure Critical Thinking Review (common fallacies)	Mayer, "Predator War"	---
5/23	Normative/Descriptive	Marche, "Facebook" Kleinenberg, "Facebook"	---
5/28	Basic Ethics (several topics; see handout)	Sunstein, "Democracy and the Internet" Fallows, "The Connection has been Reset"	Great Firewall of China
5/29	Basic Ethics (finish)	Solove, "Nothing to Hide"	Texas Virtual Border Watch
5/30	Begin Issue Presentations	Dourish and Anderson, "Collective Information Practice"	Undercover Cops on Facebook
6/4		Lessig, "Intellectual Property"	Compulsory Licenses for AIDS Medicines
6/5		Grimmelman, "Ethical Visions"	Moore's Spleen
6/6	Midterm		
6/11		Mill, from <i>Utilitarianism</i> Basen, "The Algorithm Method"	The Algorithm Method
6/12		Borlaug, "Ending World Hunger" Rosset, "Taking Seriously"	Ugandan Banana Wilt
6/13		Stone, "Both Sides Now"	Napster Pirates of Transgenic Biotech
6/18	[online class]	O'Neill, "Kantian Ethics"	[online class]
6/19		Kerstein, "Kantian Condemnation" Specter, "Test Tube Burgers"	Artificial Meat
6/20		Radin, "Prostitution and Baby-Selling"	Accelerated Surrogacy, Inc.

6/25, 8am	Final – we'll start at 9, not 8		
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