Philosophy 2078G
Digital Humanities 2126G

Ethics for a Digital World

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
DIGITAL HUMANITIES
Western University

Undergraduate Course Outline Winter 2017
Tuesdays 3:30 – 4:30, Thursdays 2:30 – 4:30
Middlesex College, room 105B

Professor: Dr. Ryan Robb rrobb@uwo.ca
Office: Stevenson Hall, 4126
Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30 – 5:30, Thursdays 4:30 – 5:30

DESCRIPTION:

We spend a considerable portion of our lives in the digital world. What moral considerations ought to guide our conduct as digital citizens? This class will engage materials that explore the following sorts of questions: What are our rights and responsibilities in the digital world? How is social media changing our relationships? How do we balance copyright claims against demands for open access? How do we trade off anonymity and accountability? What's the relationship between our virtual identities and our physical identities? What constraints, if any, shape our digital identities? Is piracy always wrong? Does a hacker's code of ethics make any sense? Is cyber bullying worse than other forms of bullying? How should we respond to sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of hate and exclusion in online communities? Where do and don't smart phones belong? Are there constraints on how we edit and present images online?

MATERIALS:

All readings for this course will be made available through OWLSakai

REQUIREMENTS:

In-Class Test: 15%
Two 1250 – 1500 word essays: 60%
Final Exam: 25%

OBJECTIVES:

The primary objective of this course is to help students improve their critical thinking skills in the form of written essays and tests. Specifically, students should expect to improve their abilities to read and track the complex arguments presented in the course materials, arguments they will be required to describe on the tests, and assess in their written essay submissions.

The secondary goals of the course are to help students recognize, and (hopefully) better respond to, the ethical challenges that arise in the context of computer use and online interaction, using a variety of ethical theories introduced throughout the course.

TOPICS:

Week 1: Introduction – What is Philosophy/Critical Thinking (How to write an essay)
January 5th
Week 2: Intro to Digital Ethics
January 10th and 12th
Weeks 3: Living Ethically in Virtual Worlds
January 17th and 19th
Week 4: Privacy and anonymity
January 24th and 26th
Week 5: The ethics of open access
January 31st and February 2nd
Week 6: Piracy
Feb 7th and 9th
Week 7: Piracy (cont…) and Hacking
Feb 14th and 16th

Feb 21st and 23rd – Reading Week – No Class

Week 8: Bullying, exclusion, and ethics
Feb 28th and March 2nd
Week 9: Ethics and mobile technology
March 7th and 9th
Week 10: Big Data
March 14th and 16th
Week 11: Gender and the internet
March 21st and 23rd
Week 12: Disability and Access
March 28th and 30th
Week 13: Virtual agents
April 4th and 6th

The in-class test will take place on Thursday, February 9th.
The first essay is due on Thursday, February 16th.
The second essay is due on Thursday, March 30%.

POLICIES/REGULATIONS:

General – The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Due Dates – Late papers will be assessed a 5% penalty on the first day, and will incur an additional 1% penalty for each subsequent day (weekends included), to a maximum of 45 days, or 50%. After that time, a grade of 0 will automatically be recorded. No papers will be accepted after the last day of classes, i.e., Friday, April 7th 2017.

Plagiarism Checking – All required papers are subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com)

Extensions/Missed Tests: Students are NOT to contact Professor Robb or any of the course T.A.'s to request either an extension for an essay or a make-up exam. Any request for an extension/make-up must be taken the student's academic councillor, along with documentation that establishes the legitimacy of the request.

AUDIT:

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

HEALTH:

Students who are in emotional/mental health distress should refer to Mental Health@Western: http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.