FIMS 9137 –Information Ethics
Synchronous on some Tuesdays, 10:30 – 11:30

Course Outline – Fall 2020
DRAFT: 9.5.20

Instructor Information
Name: Alissa Centivany
Office: FNB 4093
Office Hours: by appointment
Phone: 519.661.2111 ex. 88510
Email: acentiva@uwo.ca

Course Description
This course investigates the ethical aspects of contemporary information technology and information practices. Through lectures, readings, in-class discussion, and group and independent projects, we will analyze and engage challenges ranging from privacy in big data, freedom of expression in social computing environments, platforms and politics, diversity and the digital divide, and the nature of disruption, innovation, property, access and collaboration in an increasingly networked world, as well as the role of various professional codes of ethics. The course draws on diverse cases from the fields of library and information science, media and communication studies, and organizational science as well as your experiences as a user, consumer, practitioner, and participant in the information world. In this course you'll learn key theories, methods, frameworks, laws, and institutions that govern, shape, and inform information technology. You'll develop and refine core analytic, writing and presentation skills, in individual and group contexts, central to success in virtually all organizational settings. You'll also critically and strategically engage with values trade-offs in the worlds of information and technology around you, enabling you to better choose what kind of information consumer, user, citizen, and professional you want to be.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Understand and critically assess key ethics-related principles, concepts, theories, and/or philosophies (historical and/or contemporary, Western and/or non-Western, derived from philosophy, law, etc.) (program-level learning outcome 1, 2, 3, 4, 5);
2. Cultivate leadership potential by recognizing, analyzing, and considering strategies to address the complex nature of ethical issues in the information field (program-level learning outcome 2, 3, 5, 7, 9);
3. Apply ethical frameworks across multiple scales (e.g. self, group) and diverse contexts (e.g. geographic, cultural, institutional, and governmental) (program-level learning outcome 1, 2, 3, 5, 8);
4. Understand how professional codes of ethics relate to ethical principles, concepts, issues, and/or philosophies underpinning the preservation and communication of information via emerging technologies (program-level learning outcome 1, 3, 5, 7);
5. Communicate ethical issues analysis clearly, concisely, and persuasively, using both written (e.g. case studies, briefs) and verbal (e.g. presentations) methods (program-level learning outcome 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9)

Course website: https://owl.uwo.ca. The courses you're registered for should appear as soon as you log in.

Course Materials
All required readings are available online [via OWL, Western Libraries or the World Wide Web] or are on reserve in GRC.

Course Policies

Communication: See the **Communication Plan** on the Overview page of the OWL Course Site.

Respect and collegiality: We are committed to the idea of the classroom (virtual or otherwise) as a place for respectful engagement across difference and a chance to learn from colleagues from a variety of backgrounds and value systems. Students are expected to behave collegially and professionally at all times.

Academic Integrity: A clear sense of academic honesty and responsibility is fundamental to our scholarly community. You are expected to demonstrate honesty and integrity in all of your academic activities. I am committed to the principle of teaching and learning as activities that are collaborative at their core therefore I strongly encourage collaboration while working on some assignments. However, unless specified as a group assignment, all submitted work must be your own, original work. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and instructors are required to remind students that: "Students must write their assignments and essays in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." Students are directed to read the Scholastic Offences policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Assignment submission: All assignments are to be submitted electronically, through OWL or via whatever online platform is used for course activities. While there is no official style manual for this course, please make sure that you choose and consistently use a style that is appropriate to the assignments required in this course. Poor grammar, style or spelling will result in a lower grade. Except in cases of excused absences, late assignments will be reduced at the rate of 5% per day or part thereof. Assignments that are 7 or more days late will not be accepted.

Participation: MLIS guidelines for participation are available at http://intra.fims.uwo.ca/students/handbooks/mlis/mlis-handbook-04.htm#P251_25303

Academic Accommodation

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodation, please register with Western's Accessible Education. Doing so means that you only have to disclose your accommodation needs once, and Accessible Education will make all of your professors aware of your needs. If you wish to discuss your accommodations with me, you are welcome to do so, but if you would prefer not to, registering with AE will mean you don't have to. If serious problems arise during the semester (medical or family issues; serious stress or well-being issues; falling seriously behind; or other circumstances that compromise your ability to succeed in the course and your wider program of study) please let me know as soon as possible – I may be able to help. If you run into difficulties that mean you'll fall behind in multiple courses, please contact Brandi Borman (bborman@uwo.ca) and she can help negotiate with individual instructors.

Western University and FIMS policies on accommodation are as follows:

Medical Accommodation
For Western University policy on accommodation for medical illness, see:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Student Medical Certificate (SMC): http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Religious Accommodation
Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance.
http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo
Further specific information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

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

Other support services on campus:
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies www.grad.uwo.ca
Student Development Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca
Psychological Services: www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych
Services for Students with Disabilities: www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd
Accessibility Information: www.accessibility.uwo.ca/
Writing Support Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing
Learning Skills Services: www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning
Indigenous Services: https://indigenous.uwo.ca/
International and Exchange Student Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/int
Career Centre at Western: www.success.uwo.ca/careers/
Office of the Ombudsperson: http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/

Methods of Evaluation

- Lead Class Discussion   (sign-up)   20%
- Position Paper   20%
- Final Project   40%
- Weekly Participation   20%

Lead Class Discussion – sign up ASAP! worth 20%

Each of you will sign up to help lead, with the instructor (and possibly one other student), one class discussion section. Lead discussants are expected to have done a close read of the assigned readings and have a strong handle on the key findings and arguments of the readings. The main priority of the lead discussant is to prepare discussion questions, activities, and supporting resources based on the week's topic. I will post a sign-up sheet in Week 1's lesson. Topic selection is first-come, first-served. While most of you will work individually, depending on course enrolment some of you may work in pairs on this assignment. Lead Discussants must coordinate with me, the Instructor, in advance of your assigned week and shall provide any supporting materials (videos, discussion questions, PPT slides, etc. no later than 4pm on the Sunday preceding your class. *This assignment will be graded based upon: 1) how effectively, thoroughly, critically, and concisely you engage with the week's topic, 2) how well you are able to synthesize and emphasize core concepts across readings, 3) the engagement, creativity, and effectiveness of the materials you use to supplement the readings and lesson, 4) the discussion questions and/or in-class activity you develop for our one-hour synchronous discussion. The grade for this assignment is a group grade, if students are working in teams, all members receive the same score.*

Position Paper – 20%

Students will complete one position paper (2 single spaced pages) tied to a key substantive ethical interest of the course. A specific prompt for the assignment will be provided as the date approaches. You should come to class discussion prepared to explain and defend your position.

Final Research Project -- 40% [hitting your milestones is worth 15 points, final presentation is worth 10 points, final paper is worth 15 points]

Working individually or in pairs, you will conduct an original research project on an information ethics topic of your choosing. Ideally, you should engage with a topic that is interesting and relevant to your experience and/or your current or future professional work. I encourage you to begin this project ASAP, brainstorm topics, and schedule a meeting(s) with me to discuss your chosen topic and research approach in advance. I encourage you to consider how you might use this work beyond the classroom by presenting it at a conference or other public forum or through publication. The main deliverables for this assignment are as follows:

- *Milestones:*

- o *Topic selection and brief proposal*: In no more than one page, tell me what you're interested in studying, why it's important, what specific research question you hope to answer, and how you will go about gathering and analyzing the data necessary to answer it. This is a starting off point; it doesn't need to be perfect. After submitting your proposal you will have a one-on-one meeting with me, the instructor, to discuss your ideas and modifications.
  - o *First draft*: You will prepare first draft of your paper which will then be shared for peer-review.
  - o *Peer review*: You will receive draft papers from two other students and provide feedback on what they've done well and how they might improve.
- *Presentation:* The last class session of the semester will be devoted to presentations of research projects. Presentations will be graded based on: clarity and quality of communication (oral and visual), creativity, staying within timing parameters (time limits will be determined by the number of final projects), and handling of Q & A. Please practice!!!! You may choose to pre-record your final presentation and simply go live for Q &A.
- *Final Paper:* The final report (~10 single-spaced pages including references) is **due by 11:55pm, Friday Dec. 11.**

Participation – 20%

Your participation grade will be determined by your contribution to the learning of the class. The evaluation will be based not only on how frequently you contribute, but more importantly, by the quality of what you say and how well you listen and respond to others.

High-quality contributions include: starting a class discussion with sound analysis, synthesizing class discussions, summarizing and moving class discussions ahead, giving constructive criticisms or building on others' ideas, substantiating one's views persuasively and logically, responding to others' critiques with reasoned rebuttal, graceful acceptance of new ideas, presenting well thought-out analyses and policy recommendations, volunteering for special role-playing or presentations, recalling and sharing relevant experiences, being respectful and non-judgmental towards your classmates' opinions, asking thoughtful questions during lectures and peer presentations. Respect for the course and each other are essential.

Some contribution/partial credit: attending class and participating but contributions do not meet the threshold of "high-quality" as described above.

Unsatisfactory contributions include: being absent from class without excuse, attending class but not participating in plenary or group discussions, being unprepared for class, seeming to have not read the assigned readings, using technology for activities unrelated to class, offering poorly thought-out analyses or policy recommendations, personally criticizing classmates or demeaning the perspectives of others, being close-minded, disrespectful, or otherwise disruptive. These behaviors will lead to negative contribution grades.

Topics and Weekly Schedule[1]:

1. **Introduction & Overview**
   a. Assigned readings: None

2. **Foundations of Ethics and Critical Thinking**
   a. Assigned readings:
      i. Quinn, Michael J. *Ethics for the Information Age* (4th ed.). Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2014. Chapter 2.
      ii. Nosich, Gerald M. *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson, 2012. Chapter 1.
      iii. SKIM: Huss, Brian. *Everyday Ethics and Critical Thinking,* pp. 193-214.

3. **New Challenges: Ethics and Information Technology**
   a. Assigned readings:

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[1] Note that there may be some modest modifications to the assigned readings and materials and topics in response to the unfolding of current events. If you plan to read several weeks ahead, beware that there may be changes afoot!

      i. Moor, James H. "Why we need better ethics for emerging technologies." Ethics and Information Technology 7.3 (2005): 111-119.

      ii. Brey, Philip. "Values in technology and disclosive computer ethics." In Luciano Floridi (ed.), The Cambridge Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics, 2010. Chapter 3, pp. 41-58.

      iii. Van den Hoven, Jeroen. "The use of normative theories in computer ethics." In Luciano Floridi (ed.), The Cambridge Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics, 2010. Chapter 4, pp. 59-76.

      iv. SKIM: Watson (Tow Center for Digital Journalism), Constructive Technology Criticism: https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/constructive_technology_criticism.php

4. **Choice Architecture: Technology, cognition and UX**
   a. Assigned Readings:
      i. Wu, Tim. The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads. Knopf, 2016. Chapters 25 & 26, pp. 308-327.
      ii. Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. Macmillan. Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 19-38.
      iii. SKIM: Thaler Richard, H., & Sunstein Cass, R. (2008). Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness. Chapter 5, pp. 83-102.
   b. Milestone 1: topic selection and proposal due; schedule a meeting to discuss with Alissa before reading week

5. **Copyright, Libraries and Scholarly Communication**
   a. Assigned Readings:
      i. Perzanowski, Aaron, and Jason Schultz. The end of ownership: Personal property in the digital economy. MIT Press, 2016. Chapter 2: Property and the Exhaustion Principle.
      ii. Perzanowski, Aaron, and Jason Schultz. The end of ownership: Personal property in the digital economy. MIT Press, 2016. Chapter 6: The Promise and Perils of Digital Libraries
      iii. Bodó, Balázs. "Libraries in the post-scarcity era." (2015).

6. **Social Media and Collective Action**
   a. Assigned readings:
      i. Bergstrom, Kelly. ""Don't feed the troll": Shutting down debate about community expectations on Reddit.com." *First Monday* 16.8 (2011).
      ii. Matias, J. N., Johnson, A., Boesel, W. E., Keegan, B., Friedman, J., & DeTar, C. (2015). Reporting, Reviewing, and Responding to Harassment on Twitter. Women, Action, and the Media. May 13, 2015. http://womenactionmedia.org/twitter-report

7. **Hacking and Hacktivism**
   a. Watch "The Internet's Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz."
   b. Assigned readings: None
   c. Assignment: Position Paper due -- upload to OWL before class and be prepared to discuss your positions during discussion.
   d. Assignment: VoiceThread: contribute a brief (2 minutes or so) description of your research project and learn what your colleague plan to do.

<div align="center">**BREAK**</div>

8. **Privacy**
   a. Assigned Readings:
      i. Brunton, Finn, and Helen Nissenbaum. Obfuscation: A User's Guide for Privacy and Protest. Mit Press, 2015. Chapter II, pp. 45-95.
      ii. Mulligan, Deirdre K., Colin Koopman, and Nick Doty. "Privacy is an essentially contested concept: a multi-dimensional analytic for mapping privacy." Phil. Trans. R. Soc. A 374.2083 (2016): 20160118.

9. **Machine Learning Algorithms and Big Data**
   a. Assigned Readings:

      i. Pasquale, Frank. The black box society: The secret algorithms that control money and information. Harvard University Press, 2015. Chapter 2, pp. 19-58.
      ii. Jurgenson, N. "The View from Nowhere." The New Inquiry. (2014). http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/view-from-nowhere/
      iii. SKIM: Gillespie, Tarleton. "The relevance of algorithms." In *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, edited by Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo Boczkowski, and Kirsten Foot. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014.
  b. Assignment: Milestone 2: *First Draft of Research Paper due. Share with Instructor and 2 peer reviewers.*

10. Disruption: Robots, AI, Blockchain and more …
  a. Assigned readings:
      i. Turkle, Sherry. *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic books, 2012. Chapter 2, pp. 35-52.
      ii. Lichocki, P., Kahn Jr., P., and Billard, A. "The Ethical Landscape of Robotics." *IEEE Robotics and Automation Magazine*, 18(1):39-50

11. Global Networked Society
  a. Assigned Readings:
      i. Alsheikh, Tamara, Jennifer A. Rode, and Siân E. Lindley. "(Whose) value-sensitive design: A study of long-distance relationships in an Arabic cultural context." Proceedings of the ACM 2011 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work. New York, NY: ACM, 2011.
      ii. Boyd, Danah. It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens. Yale University Press, 2014. Chapter 6, pp. 153-175.
  b. Assignment: Milestone 3: *Peer reviews are due. Share your feedback with authors and read the feedback on your own work.*

12. Ethics & Information Work
  a. Assigned Readings (pick 2 of 3):
      i. Hill, Heather. "Disability and accessibility in the library and information science literature: A content analysis." Library & Information Science Research 35.2 (2013): 137-142.
      ii. Honma, Todd. "Trippin'over the color line: The invisibility of race in library and information studies." InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies 1.2 (2005).
      iii. Carlos Bueno, "Inside the Mirrortocracy," http://carlos.bueno.org/2014/06/mirrortocracy.html & "Refractoring the Mirrortocracy." http://carlos.bueno.org/2014/06/refactoring.html

13. Final Project Presentations
Our time will be devoted to presentations of final projects. No assigned readings.
Final Research Paper due by 11:55pm on Dec. 11th.