INFOST 120
Information Technology Ethics
Fall 2017

Section 001
M/W 11:00a – 12:15p
Bolton B46

Instructor:
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Office hours: Monday 1:30-3pm, or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:
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Office hours: Wednesday 9:00-10:30am

General Description:
This course provides a comprehensive overview of the current ethical issues in information technology (IT) use. It examines an array of long-standing and emerging issues facing IT users, ranging from free speech, privacy, intellectual property, net neutrality, security and crime, to ethics in social networking, online communities, and online gaming. The course will discuss the ethical responsibilities of IT professionals, and promote the critical examination and responsible use of IT.

Objectives:
1. To review major ethical theories as they pertain to information and communication technologies
2. To explore current issues in ICT policy and the ethical dilemmas that arise in light of them
3. To investigate students’ ethical responsibilities as members of our information society

Competencies:
Upon successful completion of the course, students will:
1. Understand various ethical theories and ethical decision making models
2. Respond to and apply appropriate decisions around ethical issues in an array of information and technology practices
3. Participate appropriately and ethically in the information society

Method of Instruction & Learning:
- Classroom lecture and discussion, complemented by film & media screenings.
- Small group work (both in and out of class time).

Prerequisites:
- No specific course prerequisites.
**Workload:**
This is a 3-credit, 100-level GER course that meets twice weekly for 2.5 hours of in-class interaction. The UWM guideline is 2.5 hours of work outside of class per credit so you can expect to spend 7-8 hours each week preparing for class or working on assignments, in addition to the course meeting time itself.

**Course Materials:**
- **D2L:** Additional (minor) course readings will be distributed via D2L or in-class. **You are expected to check the D2L website regularly** for new postings, including assigned readings (PDFs and webpages), videos & links from lectures, discussion questions, assignments, and so on.
- **Wikipedia:** Students might find it helpful to review relevant articles on Wikipedia, and are encouraged to constructively edit and improve those encyclopedia entries.

**Course Schedule:** *(subject to minor modifications)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 4</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
<td>1.1 * NO CLASS *</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1.2 - Review syllabus and course objectives</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 11</td>
<td>Why Worry about Ethics &amp; Information Technology?</td>
<td>2.1 - Tavani: Ch. 1</td>
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<td>2.2 - Screening: <em>Growing Up Online</em></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sept 18</td>
<td>Ethical Theories and Principles</td>
<td>3.1 - Tavani, Ch. 2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.2 - Continue discussion; check D2L for additional short readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sept 25</td>
<td>Ethics for IT Professionals Ethical Design</td>
<td>4.1 - Tavani, CH. 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4.2 - Friedman // Friedman &amp; Nissenbaum // Manders-Huits &amp; Zimmer</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 2</td>
<td>Privacy &amp; Information Technology</td>
<td>5.1 - Tavani, Ch. 5</td>
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<td>5.2 - Continue discussion; check D2L for additional short readings</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 9</td>
<td>Information Security, Hacking, and Cybercrime</td>
<td>6.1 - Tavani, Ch. 6</td>
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<td>6.2 - Tavani, Ch. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 16</td>
<td>Movie / Television review due Friday Oct 20 at 6pm</td>
<td>7.1 <strong>NO LECTURES THIS WEEK</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.2 <strong>NO LECTURES THIS WEEK</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 23</td>
<td>Ethics of Intellectual Property</td>
<td>8.1 - Tavani, Ch. 8</td>
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<td>8.2 - Continue discussion; check D2L for additional short readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td>Free Speech and Expression Online</td>
<td>9.1 - Tavani, Ch. 9</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>9.2 - Continue discussion; check D2L for additional short readings</td>
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Course Elements: (read these carefully and completely)

1. Attendance & Engagement:
   a. Lectures will focus on the assigned reading, highlighting particular items and connecting content in the readings to other “real-world” examples. Students are expected to attend each lecture, arriving prepared to participate in informal discussions of the class material, respond to direct questions, and ask questions of their own. Frequently, videos will be shown to complement the course material, and informal worksheets might be provided to help guide your learning.
   b. Success in this class requires regular attendance. A sign-in sheet will be distributed during each class. Signing in, and then leaving class, will be noted and will impact your “Attendance & Participation” grade. Repeated absences – including tardiness – will negatively impact your “Attendance & Participation” grade.
   c. Absences require the instructor’s approval in advance, and may require written documentation of medical or family emergencies. Multiple unexcused absences will impact your “Attendance & Participation” grade. Simply emailing me to indicate you will be absent does not necessarily make it “excused”.
   d. While this is a large class, I encourage students to actively engage and constructively participate in class, as best is possible given its size. I, or the teaching assistant, will note student contributions which can enhance one’s “Attendance & Participation” grade element.
   e. Some course sessions might include breakout and small group discussion and work. Your participation will be assessed based on the constructive and collaborative use of this in-class time to interact with your group, share perspectives, and learn from each other interactively.
2. **Weekly Assignment:**
   
a. Students must submit answers to eight weekly assignments over the course of the semester, indicated with an “X” on the course schedule.

b. The assignment questions will be posted to D2L at 1:00pm Wednesday of each week, and will your written answers are due via D2L each **Friday at 6:00pm**. Be sure to follow the instructions for each assignment carefully.

c. Each weekly assignment is worth 2 points, and will be evaluated on the following scale (partial points are possible):

   2 points: Submission is on time, at required length, generally free from errors, and shows you have sufficiently engaged with the reading and lecture material in crafting your answer.

   1 point: Submissions that are less than 6 hours late, not at required length, error ridden, or responses that show only a minimal effort to engage with the course material and/or are only marginally responsive to the question.

   0 points: Failure to submit, more than 6 hours late, responses that show a clear lack of engagement with the material, or fail to properly addressing the question at hand.

d. If a response is particularly stellar (for example, it brings in outside sources with new insights, connects material covered in different lectures in creative ways), you will earn a **bonus “+” mark.** For each “+” earned, your final grade will be increased by 0.5 percentage points (i.e., 3 “+” scores would add 1.5 percentage points to your final grade calculation; 6 “+” scores would add 3 percentage points). Thus, exceptional performance on responses could potentially bump you up a grade level for the entire course.

3. **Movie / Television Review Assignment:**
   
a. During the week of October 16-20, students are required to write a reflective essay on a movie or television series that addresses issues of information technology ethics. Suitable films include *The Circle, Her, iRobot, AI: Artificial Intelligence, Eagle Eye*, or episodes of *Black Mirror, Westworld, or Mr. Robot*. Other suitable examples abound, and most are available online or via the library.

b. The reflective essay must be at least 500 words and address:

   - A brief description of the film (but not a full plot summary), and a general listing of some of the featured information technologies and activities with ethical implications.

   - A more detailed description of at least one scene/event in the film, including an explanation of an ethical issue discussed in class, and the relevant information technology, noting any “uniqueness” issue that might be present with that technology.

   - A discussion of how the act/technology in the film could be ethically justified, as well as how it could be found ethically problematic. Think about it in terms of examples used in class: one could justify torture because it will save many lives (utilitarian argument), or one could argue torture is never justified due to a duty to uphold certain principles (deontological argument).

   - Identification of at least one conceptual muddle or policy vacuum related to the example, and discussion of how these could be addressed “in the real world” if this fictional depiction became reality.

c. The reflective essay is due **6pm on Friday, October 20 via D2L**, and will be graded similarly to the Weekly Assignments.
4. **Group Poster Project:**
   
   d. Small groups will be formed to work on a group poster project. The projects are meant to explore the ethical dimensions of an information technology of the group’s choosing (with instructor’s approval). The projects are meant to be collaborative, and while some time has been allotted on the syllabus to work in class, groups might need to work together outside of class to complete the project.

   e. Groups will present their poster in class, as well as at a public “poster session” on campus. (Further details and instructions will be provided).

5. **Final Exam:**

   f. The course includes a take-home Final Exam, with answers to be submitted via a D2L dropbox. The exam due date is fixed, and no exceptions or extensions will be granted, except as allowed in the campus “special consideration” policy (see below).

**Course Policies:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit Breakdown</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Engagement</td>
<td>A  94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments</td>
<td>A-  91-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie / TV Review</td>
<td>B+  88-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Poster Project</td>
<td>B  84-87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>B-  81-83</td>
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<td>C+  78-80</td>
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**Atmosphere for Learning:**

- Students are encouraged to participate in open and frank discussions of the course material, but are also expected to respect the opinions of other students and to engage in discussion and debates in a sensitive and respectful manner.

- Before class begins, please turn off all cell phones, instant messengers, and any other items that might ring, buzz, play “Call Me Maybe,” or otherwise call attention to themselves and disrupt class.

- Laptop computers may be used to assist in note taking. But please check email, chat, text, and update your Facebook status on your own time; it is distracting and disrespectful to the instructor and your classmates.

- Fair warning of things I will take note of: Coming to class late, leaving class early, sleeping in class, disruptive eating in class, playing on your laptop or texting during class, doing work for other courses in class, etc. These, or similar, activities will negatively affect your attendance/participation grade.

**Special Considerations:**

- Students needing special accommodations for testing/assignments must visit the Student Accessibility Center for evaluation and provide the instructor the necessary paperwork within the first two weeks of class.

- I do not provide individual extensions, make-up assignments, or extra credit (other than what might be offered to the entire class). The course requirements and deadlines are clearly outlined in this syllabus and you are expected to meet all course obligations. Here is UWM’s policy on “special consideration,” which I strive to follow closely:

  **Special Consideration.** The principle of equal treatment of all students shall be a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. No student should be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class. This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability, or the completion of work missed.
as the result of religious observance, verified illness, or justified absence due to circumstances beyond the student’s control. (http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/faculty/1927.pdf)

Contacting Me:

- **I** will be available for short discussions immediately before and after class. Typically, any substantive issues will need to be addressed later via email or office hours.

- **By email:** I will respond to class-related emails during normal work hours, and will generally reply the same day as received (an e-mail sent after working hours, however, may not be replied to until the next morning). Please be sure to use your UWM e-mail account, identify yourself and the course, and always use proper and professional e-mail etiquette and modes of address. For example, don’t start your e-mail with “Hey Mike” or end with “Kthxbye!”.

- **In person:** I am available to meet in person during posted office hours or by appointment. Please email me to set up a time to meet in my office or at a Grind for coffee.

**UWM and SOIS Academic Policies:**

The following links contain university policies affecting all SOIS students. Many of the links below may be accessed through a PDF-document maintained by the Secretary of the University: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf).

Undergraduates may also find the **Panther Planner and Undergraduate Student Handbook** useful ([http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/Handbook2005-06.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/Handbook2005-06.pdf)). For graduate students, there are additional guidelines from the Graduate School ([http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/StudentInfo/](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/StudentInfo/)), including those found in the **Graduate Student and Faculty Handbook**: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/Publications/Handbook/](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/Publications/Handbook/).

- **Students with disabilities.** If you will need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of a course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are responsible to communicate directly with the instructor to ensure special accommodation in a timely manner. There is comprehensive coverage of issues related to disabilities at the Student Accessibility Center ([http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/MainOffice.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/MainOffice.html)), important components of which are expressed here: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf).

- **Religious observances.** Students’ sincerely held religious beliefs must be reasonably accommodated with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements, according to the following policy: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm). Please notify your instructor within the first three weeks of the Fall or Spring Term (first week of shorter-term or Summer courses) of any specific days or dates on which you request relief from an examination or academic requirement for religious observances.

- **Students called to active military duty.** UWM has several policies that accommodate students who must temporarily lay aside their educational pursuits when called to active duty in the military (see [http://www3.uwm.edu/des/web/registration/militarycallup.cfm](http://www3.uwm.edu/des/web/registration/militarycallup.cfm)), including provisions for refunds, readmission, grading, and other situations.

- **Incompletes.** A notation of “incomplete” may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantial cause beyond the student’s control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or some limited amount of other term work. An incomplete is not given unless the student proves to the instructor
that s/he was prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above

- **Discriminatory conduct** (such as sexual harassment). UWM and SOIS are committed to building and maintaining a campus environment that recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of every person, fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect, and encourages the members of its community to strive to reach their full potential. The UWM policy statement (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf) summarizes and defines situations that constitute discriminatory conduct. If you have questions, please contact an appropriate SOIS administrator.

- **Academic misconduct.** Cheating on exams and plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, ranging from a failing grade for a course or assignment to expulsion from the University. See the following document (http://www4.uwm.edu/dos/conduct/academic-misconduct.cfm) or contact the SOIS Investigating Officer (currently the Associate Dean) for more information.

- **Complaints.** Students may direct complaints to the SOIS Dean or Associate Dean. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.

- **Grade appeal procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow SOIS appeals procedures or, in the case of a graduate student, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm).

- **Examinations, Finals.** The Secretary of the University is authorized to prepare the final examination schedule. The time of the final examination for an individual or a class may be changed only with the prior approval of the dean or director of the respective college/school. The change will involve a postponement to a later date. For individuals with exam conflicts, a separate week at the very end of the exam week will be reserved to take one of the conflicting exams (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad+admin_policies/S22.htm).

- **D2L and Student Privacy:** Certain SOIS courses utilize the instructional technology Desire to Learn (D2L) to facilitate online learning. D2L provides instructors the ability to view both individual data points and aggregate course statistics, including the dates and times individual students access the system, what pages a student has viewed, the duration of visits, and the IP address of the computer used to access the course website. This information is kept confidential in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), but may be used by the instructor for student evaluation within the constraints of this particular course.