

DTEM4430

Digital Media Ethics



Dr Mathias Klang
mklang@fordham.edu
www.klangable.com
(215) 882 0989
Office: FMH 436
Classroom: FMH232

What is digital media ethics?

This course comprehensively overviews our data-driven society's current ethical and social implications. We start by learning some fundamental principles of ethics and technology and then explore the ethical responsibilities of being a data/information professional. We then look at ethical and social issues that emerge throughout the data lifecycle, including how data is collected, stored, shared, and analyzed. Finally, we will engage more deeply with various data-rich contexts' ethical and social dimensions, including law enforcement, education, health care, and the workplace.

This course explores classical and contemporary approaches to ethical decision-making and applies them to modern media practices. We will examine critical ethical issues confronting new media today. In addition to a basic introduction to ethics, the course will examine thorny issues resulting from new media formats like the Internet.

Key concepts include digital inclusion & representation, digital lifestyles, automation & simulation, free speech & content moderation, law enforcement & digital conflict, information privacy & security, and artificial intelligence & algorithmic biases. The main objective is to inform and encourage the critical examination – and responsible development & use – of computing technologies.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the roles of social, political, legal, and ethical factors in contemporary computing and technology innovation practice.
- Understand the moral dimensions of issues in digital media – including the understanding that not every controversy is a moral one
- Understand a broad set of ethical and social implications of our data-driven society, including potential unexpected outcomes of data models, algorithms, and related systems;
- Identify and critically engage with ethical and social implications of data experienced in their daily lives and workplaces.
- Critically reflect on these factors in their thinking, orientations, and practice within their education, daily lives, workplaces, and future aspirations for developing new technologies.
- Extend this knowledge and practice to future coursework and beyond.

Schedule

Module	Dates	Monday	Thursday
	Th 1/19		Introduction Moral: Truth, Facts, Thinking
1	Mon 1/23 Th 1/26	Moral: Truth, Facts, Thinking II	Seven Threats to thinking Blackburn Part 1
2	Mon 1/30 Th 2/2	Moral Knowledge & Free Will	Foundations Blackburn Part 2
3	Mon 2/6 Th 2/9	Virtue Ethics	Some Ethical Ideas Blackburn Part 3
4	Mon 2/13 Th 2/16	Non-cognitivism/Deontology	Utilitarianism
5	Tue 2/21 Th 2/23	Ethical theories & Case Studies	Case study 1: Memes
6	Mon 2/27 Th 3/2	Ess Digital Ethics	Case study 2: Ethics of Unpublishing
7	Mon 3/6 Th 3/9	Case Study 3: Ethics of Family Youtubers	Ethical stance Midterm
	Mon 3/13 Th 3/16	SPRING RECESS	SPRING RECESS
8	Mon 3/20 Th 3/23	Artificial Intelligence	Case Study 4: Ethics of Hacktivism Lin chap 1 & 2
9	Mon 3/27 Th 3/30	ChatGPT & DALL-E	Lin chap 3 & 4
10	Mon 4/3 Th 4/6	Case study 5: Ethics of TikTok Trends Lin chap 5 & 6	EASTER
11	Mon 4/10 Th 4/13	EASTER	Case study 6: Doxxing Nazis Lin chap 7 & 8
12	Mon 4/17 Th 4/20	Enhancement Savelescu & De Melo-Martin	Case study 7: Ethics of Trolling Lin chap 9 - 11
13	Mon 4/24 Th 4/27	Lin chap 12 & 13 Topic TBD	Lin chap 14 & 15
	Mon 5/1	Closing	

Possibly the best syllabus ever written is [Sonya Huber's Shadow Syllabus](#); it's nothing like a typical syllabus. Read it. You won't regret it.

Assignments

NAME	CREDITS	DUE
Ethics Reflection	30	22 January
Blackburn reflection part 1	30	25 January
Blackburn reflection part 2	30	1 February
Blackburn reflection part 3	30	8 February
Ethical stance Midterm	100	9 March
Lin chapter reflections 15 chapters	150	Schedule on Blackboard
Case Studies	70	Schedule on Blackboard
Revisit personal ethics reflection	30	1 May
Ethical stance Final	100	10 May
Total	570	

What's my grade?

The final letter grade for the course is a percentage of your total points

A 94 or above A- 90–93, B+ 87–89, B 83–86, B- 80–82, C+ 77–79, C 73–76

Slack

I really like using Slack as a communications platform in my courses. It is faster, more informal, and fun (?), and it enables you all to get to know each other and help each other answer questions that you may have. So, in Digital Media Ethics, we will use Slack to post questions, share information, and goof off. Slack is a form of digital culture and we should probably evaluate its ethical implications, but the advantages are that if you have any questions, they will be answered quicker on Slack than via email. Make sure you are on the course slack channel. Have you read the syllabus? Post an image of a ball on #random (no text, just picture)

Reading & Talking

This course has a lot of reading. Not too much, but still a lot. It is designed to also include a LOT of participation and discussion. I am very good at talking. I am a professional, I get paid to talk. But this course will only work if you share your ideas and join the discussion. I will talk less, I will set up the discussions, and you will fill it with meaning. I know that you may not enjoy talking in class but this is a “fake it till you make it kind of situation” and I believe in your abilities to do so.

Ethics Reflection

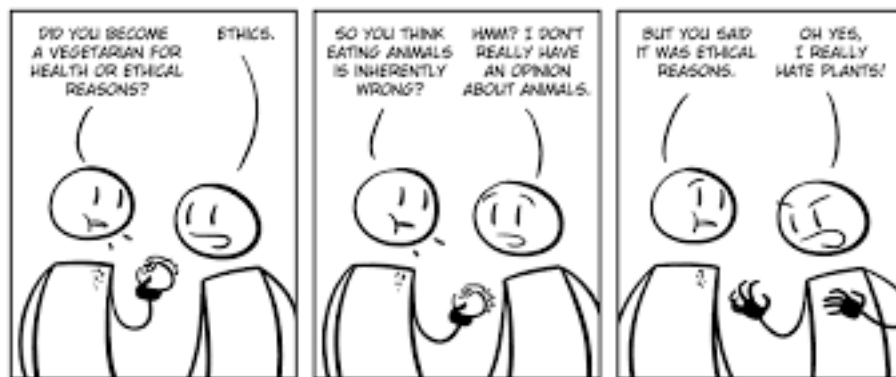
Personal ethics are the principles a person uses when making decisions and behaving in personal and professional settings. Some of our ethics are taught to us through our family, faith, and friends. Some ethical principles are formal, and some are our own internal compass. Reflect on what your ethics are and try your best to think about where you learned them or how you developed these principles.

Your reflections should be about 300-700 words. Really try to think deeply and say something meaningful. You will use this reflection as the basis for your final reflection at the end of the course.

All papers must include your name, date, and course info

Grading will work like this:

- 30 points: you were thorough and your writing was clear and without grammar errors (awesome job)
- 25 points: you submitted good work but your writing had a few grammatical errors or unclear ideas (good job)
- 20 points: you submitted okay work but you didn't really say much or what you had wasn't clearly written (keep trying)
- 15 points: you submitted pretty mediocre work with incomplete ideas or incomprehensible writing (I'm still glad you submitted something! We can work with anything! We just can't work with nothing.)
- 0 point: you didn't submit anything (this is the only truly disappointing grade)



Ethical Stance

Both the midterm and the final will consist of writing an ethical stance. In order to develop a "Stance" you must first understand the issue from more than one "side" or position. Take your time to reflect on the readings before writing your paper.

The goal is to develop a position on the issue. This means that you will take a side, either for or against, and clearly apply an ethical framework to your stance (utilitarianism, deontological, virtue, feminist)

You are welcome to browse online to learn more about "Ethical Stance" papers. Please note: this paper isn't as strict as some examples you will find online. Still, they may be helpful to you.

Guidelines

ALWAYS write a paper as if it were for someone you like a lot and want to impress but who knows nothing about the topic. Do NOT write your paper for me (you will assume I know what you're talking about and take too many shortcuts.)

IMPORTANT: You must cite the articles where this information comes from. If you need a refresher, please contact any Librarian (they want to help you!) and also check out [this quick resource](#).

In the first 1-2 paragraphs, explain the issue and provide a brief synopsis of both sides (not your own position yet, but just enough to inform the reader about the issue.) Try to write clearly. As a communication professor, I am interested in how clearly you can communicate an idea, not how poetically (those are beautiful talents and wonderful styles of writing... just not for this course.)

In the main body of the paper, clearly state which position you are taking (for or against) and explain your decision using an ethical framework:

- You should make an argument for why one choice is more ethical than the other, applying the concepts from one of the many ethical approaches we've learned. Be careful to review your textbook and represent the ethical position correctly.
 - For example: It is not enough to say "Virtue Ethics" (or any name of a framework) -- you are expected to briefly explain what this means and how it supports your position.
 - Also: really think about which ethical frameworks best fit this context (as well as perhaps your personal morals.) Not every framework is useful in every situation... some are more suited to certain types of dilemmas or contexts. Be thoughtful.
- You are not required to believe your position -- this does not have to represent your personal beliefs (though it certainly can if you want it to!) However, the position should be believable... meaning it should hold up as a believable and logical position to take.

Instructions

Papers should be around 700-900 words, or approximately 3-4 pages, not including the references and citations.

Papers must cite/reference all 4 readings using either APA or MLA.

Papers must have a "References" section at the end of the paper (again, either APA or MLA)

Papers do NOT need a title page or abstract -- do not include these

You should avoid using phrases like "I believe" or "I think" and focus on stating your ideas using an ethical framework

Refresher: You are Not Entitled to Your Opinion <— worth reading.

Grading will work like this:

- 90-100 points: excellent grammar, well developed stance, clear ethical position
- 80-89 points: good grammar, fine developed stance, identifiable ethical position
- 70-79 points: acceptable grammar, underdeveloped but identifiable stance and/or unclear ethical position
- 60-69 points: poor grammar and/or poorly developed stance and/or absent or unclear ethical position
- 1-59 points: all elements of the paper were below college writing
- 0 points: you didn't submit anything



Blackburn

The Blackburn book is divided into three chapters and forms the backbone of the theory section of this class. It will be supplemented by other readings and lectures. The idea with this book is to gain a quick overview and basic understanding of the ethical theories we will be applying in this course.

The book is structured into three sections. The first deals with refuting objections to the very idea of ethics, this is followed by a sampling of topics where ethical thinking may be productive, and the book ends with Blackburn distilling the arguments of Hume, Kant and Aristotle down to their essences, to underscore the timeless relevance.

The graded element of this work consists of writing a review on each section. A review isn't just a summary, but gives commentary that will be uniquely yours as the writer of the review. For a nonfiction review the goal is to evaluate the piece not so much on its entertainment value as on whether it fulfills its promise to solve a particular problem or deliver certain information.

The length is 250 - 600 words. Grading will work like this:

- 30 points: Excellent. Clear overview and evaluation of the work.
- 20 points: Good. Too descriptive and not analytical/evaluative enough.
- 10 points: This is basically a summary of the text.

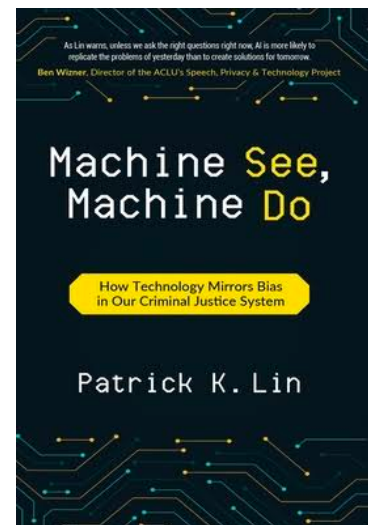
Lin

In the courses I teach I want to present the student with multiple perspectives on the topic. As such, much of the reading comes from an array of authors. In order to present a longer, cohesive voice I pick a relevant popular nonfiction book that will allow us to delve more deeply into the topic. For this course we will be reading Patrick Lin's *Machine See, Machine Do: How Technology Mirrors Bias in Our Criminal Justice System*.

The graded element of the Lin book will consist of personal reflections on each of the 15 chapters.

The length is 150 - 250 words. Grading will work something like this:

- 10 points: Excellent. Connected to the overall course & raises interesting points.
- 8 points: Good.
- 6 points: Fair.





Case Studies

Digital ethics is about thinking in action, about applying ideas in real world situations and reaching conclusions. In order to understand how this process works we will be working on a series of case studies in class. In order to be prepared for these you will need to read the case and think about it, be prepared to discuss the positions and argue for your conclusion.

The graded element of the case studies will be the work you do to prepare for these classroom exercises.

Grading will work something like this:

- 10 points: Excellent. Good reading, analytics and application of theory
- 8 points: Good.
- 6 points: Fair.

Advice

I keep a bunch of resources aimed at helping students in navigating the more obscure details of academia. Check out Annoy the faculty which has surprisingly good advice on how to email your professor. Matt Might has a great page on college, and the Reddit thread on College Classroom Norms has some gems. I have an unfinished page of Classroom reflections and writing resources which are probably less useful but may help combat insomnia some nights.

Effort

While it may seem odd to include it in a syllabus, your effort is a required component of this course.

The federal definition of course credit hours assumes a minimum of “two hours of out-of-class student work per Module for a semester hour.” According to this metric, a student should assume at least six hours of out-of-class work per Module for each 3-credit course.

Attendance

Attendance-wise, you are allowed to miss TWO classes without a penalty to your grade, exclusive of serious emergencies. (If you are very ill, or have extenuating circumstances, you need to be proactive about contacting me. If you do that, make up assignments are possible—but they MUST be cleared with me first). 3 absences automatically take your final grade down one tier of a grade lower (i.e. from an A- to a B+). 4 absences result in a full letter grade lowering (A- to B-). Fordham’s university-wide policy is that 4 unexcused absences result in a failing grade. It is your responsibility to get readings/ assignments for missed days from other students, and you are encouraged to come to my office to discuss topics you’re unclear on.

Please be on time for class and remain for the whole class period. If you are more than 10 minutes late, or if you leave more than 5 minutes early, you will be counted as absent for that class. Scheduling

Changes to the syllabus may be made at the instructor’s discretion and if circumstances require. Participants will be notified of changes via Blackboard/ university email. Participants are responsible for keeping up to date with these changes.

Inclusivity

Every student in this classroom, regardless of personal history or identity categories, is a valued member of this group. Your experiences are valuable and important, and you should feel free to share them as they become relevant to our class. No student in this class is ever expected or believed to speak for all members of a group.

In this classroom, you have the right to determine your own identity. You have the right to be called by whatever name you wish, and that name to be pronounced correctly. You have the right to be referred to by whatever pronouns you wish. You have the right to adjust those things at any point in your education. If you find that there are aspects of course instruction, subject matter, or classroom environment that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact me privately without fear of reprisal. For more see <http://klangable.com/blog/teaching/inclusivity-policy/>

Writing

Writing is a painful, but rewarding, process. For help and tips see <http://klangable.com/blog/teaching/writing-resources/> If you struggle with the writing required in this course, please make use of the Writing Center. For more information about their services see www.fordham.edu/academics/programs_at_fordham/english/writing_center

**I would like to make a pun
about philosophy,**

but I Kant.



Academic Integrity

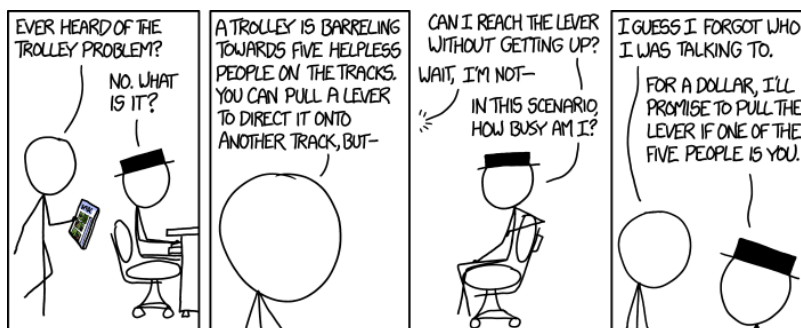
A University, by its nature, strives to foster and recognize the originality of thought. Originality can only be recognized, however, when people acknowledge the sources of ideas or works that are not their own. Therefore, students must maintain the highest standards with regard to honesty, effort, and performance. As a Jesuit, Catholic University, Fordham is committed to ensuring that all members of the academic community strive not only for excellence in scholarship but also for the integrity of character. In the pursuit of knowledge and personal development, it is imperative that students present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. As part of this process, each student must acknowledge the intellectual contribution of others. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to plagiarism, cheating on exams, falsification, unapproved collaboration, and destruction of library materials. For further details, consult the Standards of Academic Integrity on the University website.

Coaching

Any student who struggles with time management and/or organization is invited to one-on-one academic coaching sessions (typically once a week for 45 minutes). Please contact disabilityservices@fordham.edu for more information.

Accommodations

The Office of Disability Services at Fordham University helps to ensure equal educational access and opportunity for all members of our community. In the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, members of the ODS staff work individually with each student to understand his or her strengths and limitations in order to develop the most effective and comprehensive accommodation plan.



Fordham will offer reasonable and appropriate auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services, and facilities once students meet with ODS for an initial intake meeting to develop an accommodation plan directly with the student in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students seeking accommodation(s) should the Rose Hill Office of Disability Services, (718) 817-0655 or email disabilityservices@fordham.edu.

If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, please visit the Office of Disability Services, email, or call them.

Counseling

University life is full of challenges. Fordham offers support for anyone who feels like they need help dealing with the pressures of life as a student. CPS offers free individual and group counseling and psychotherapy in a safe and confidential setting. For more information about their services see www.fordham.edu/campus_resources/student_services/counseling_and_psych/

Student well-being

Any student who faces difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat everyday, or who lacks a stable place to live is urged to contact your class dean for support. I also urge you to contact me, or our department chair, about these or other hardships you may be going through. Your well-being is of primary importance to us. if you are facing challenges related to your physical or mental health, or obstacles like food or housing insecurity, please do not hesitate to reach out. **We can help.**