DTEM4430
Digital Media Ethics
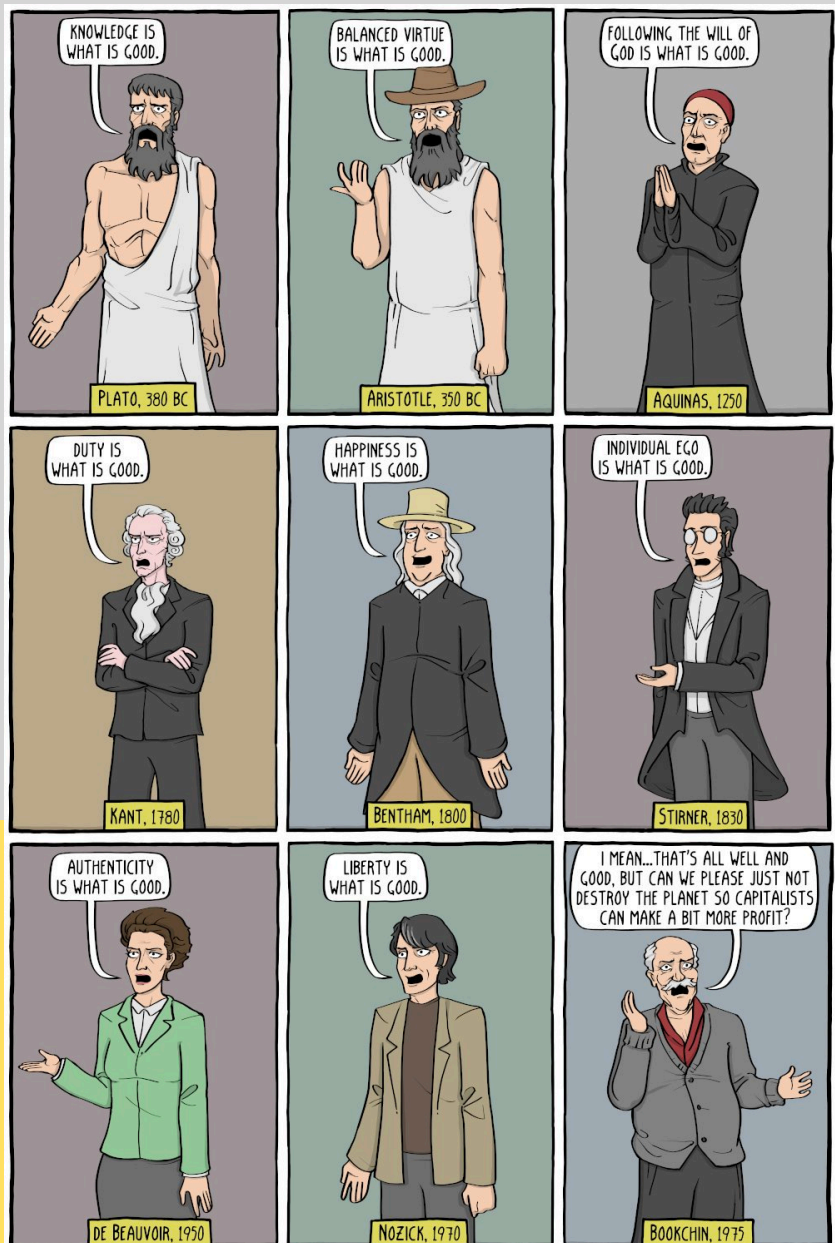
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What is digital media ethics?

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.
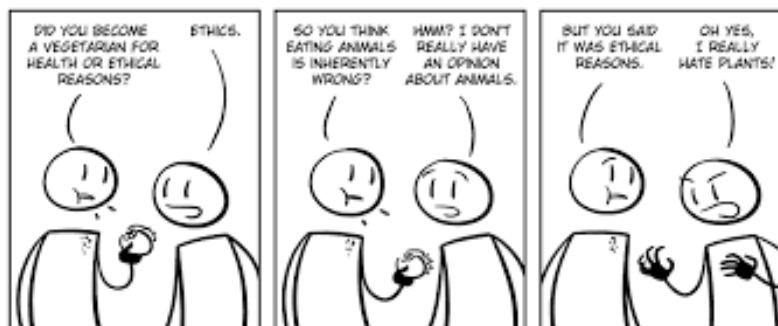
Schedule

Module	Dates	Monday	Thursday
1	1/18		Introduction TT Chap 1
2	1/22 & 1/25	TT Chapter 2 Utilitarianism	TT Chapter 3 Contractualism
3	1/29 & 2/1	TT Chapter 4 Deontologism	TT Chapter 5 Moral Rights
4	2/5 & 2/8	TT Chapter 6 Virtue Ethics	TT Chapter 7 Feminist Ethics
5	2/12 & 2/15	TT Chapter 8 Environmental Ethics	TT Chapter 9 What we Believe https://www.moralmachine.net/
6	2/20 & 2/22		Presentation 1 & 2
7	2/26 & 2/29	Presentation 3 & 4	Presentation 4 & 5
8	3/4 & 3/7	Presentation 6 & 7	Presentation 8 & 9
9	3/11 & 3/14	Presentation 10 & 11	Presentation 12 & 13
10	3/18 & 3/21	Presentation 14 & 15	SPRING RECESS
	3/25 & 3/28	SPRING RECESS	EASTER RECESS
11	4/1 & 4/4	EASTER RECESS	EXAM
12	4/8 & 4/11	Presentation 16 Shew ch 1	Presentation 17 Shew ch 2
13	4/15 & 4/18	Presentation 18 Shew ch 3	Presentation 19 Shew ch 4
14	4/22 & 4/25	Presentation 20 Shew ch 5	Presentation 21 Shew ch 6
15	4/29	Wrapping up!	

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 on BB
Tannsjö Chapters	90	Day of class discussion
Presentations	60	Before Class discussion
Exam	100	4 April
Shew Chapters	60	Day before class discussion
Topic ethics question	95	Before class discussion
Final Ethics Paper	100	6 May
Total	**505**	

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

Oh not another communications platform! Yupp. Slack allows for informal communication, collaborative support, and basically is more fun than email (low bar, I know). So, in Digital Media Ethics, we will use Slack to post questions, share information, and hopefully some fun memes. Since Slack is another managerial tool, we should probably evaluate its serious 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 a picture of your favorite note taking equipment on #random (no text, just picture).

Overall plan

This course is divided into three main sections. We begin with the theory section. This will an overview of ethics theories connected to digital technologies. The second section will be applied ethical analysis. Here each module begins with a lecture on Monday and student presentations on Thursdays. The third section will be a more fluid mix between applied ethics topics, the Shew book, and discussions on both.

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.

Tannsjö

To bring us all up to speed and get an overview of ethics we will be using Torbjörn Tannsjö's (ask me about pronunciation) book *Understanding Ethics* (3rd edition). The book consists of 9 chapters and we will have a class meeting for each chapter. For each class you should have read the chapter and written a personal review.

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:

- 10 points: Excellent. Clear overview and evaluation of the work.
- 6-9 points: Good. Too descriptive and not analytical/evaluative enough.
- 5 points: This is basically a summary of the text.
- 0 - 4 points: Barely a summary.
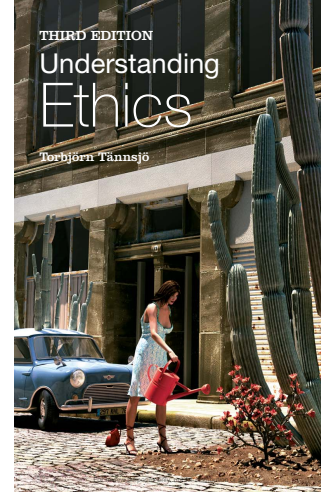
Shew

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 Ashley Shew's *Against Technoableism: Rethinking who needs improving*.

The graded element of the Shew's book will consist of personal essays on each of the 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.

Presentations

Once we have covered the theory section of the course (modules 1-5) we shall move on to the applied ethics section of the course. Applied ethics can be seen as a practical form of ethics, where we apply ethical theories to real-world problems. Practical ethics attempts to answer the question of how people should act in specific situations.

Problem Definition

Information

Guiding Principles

Answers

Reflections

This will be a group assignment. For each topic the group should (1) define the problem, this entails narrowing the issue down to its core question. The more specific you can be the better. If it helps you may even narrow the work to a specific case. (2) Gather information to understand your specific problem. What is the situation? What are the relevant facts? Who are the stakeholders? How is the rest of the world impacted? (3) What are the guiding principles? Which ethical theory will you apply? How? (4) What are the results of your analysis? (5) What impacts will arise from your conclusions? Does your answer create new ethical dilemmas?

Each of the five presentations are worth 10 points and I will be grading on the clarity of your arguments and the application of ethical theories to the facts of the case.

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

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

On temptation

Since its public release at the end of 2022, ChatGPT – the artificial intelligence chatbot developed by OpenAI – has experienced rapid growth and widespread adoption. In academia it is both a tool that can enhance learning and a threat to integrity which opens the door to cheating and plagiarism. Like so many of our digital tools, Generative AI presents us with exciting possibilities and, at the same time, challenges to our established ways of working.

If you are so inclined, feel free to use generative AI, to help spark ideas or categories for brainstorming. Use the tool by taking key words from your topic and asking questions about these ideas or concepts. Generate texts and then use these as a base for further thinking.

1. DO NOT submit a more or less unedited text generated by AI as your own work.
2. If you do use the tools DO include a note explaining
   - The benefits you felt the technology gave you.
   - What you did to change the work

Laptops or not

A short word on technology in the classroom. If you use them to take notes then you are welcome to use them. HOWEVER, I will be calling on you to comment, answer questions, and more than those using analogue technology. If your technology use seems distracting to you or to those around you, I will ask you to put it away.

Advice

I keep a bunch of resources aimed at helping students navigate 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 teaching & writing resources, which may help combat insomnia...

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.
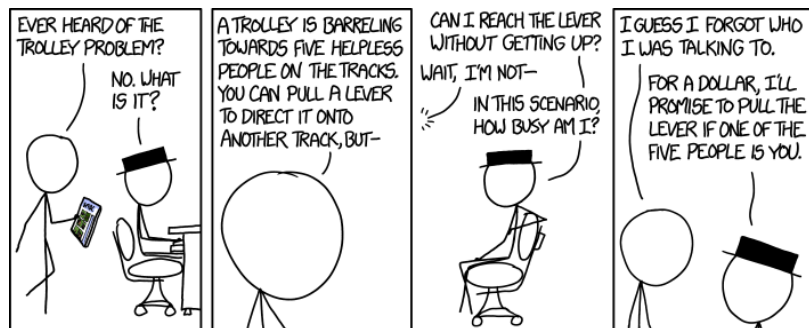
Accommodations

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.**