

CS 33006: Social and Ethical Issues in Computing (Writing Intensive) Spring 2010

Instructor

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Course Overview

This course has several goals, including a study of the social and ethical issues of computing, professional writing in computer science, and some common practices of the discipline.

First, this course is **a study of social and ethical issues of computing**, covering the content recommended for the *CS 280T Social and Professional Issues* course in the ACM/IEEE Computing Curriculum 2001 guidelines. Rather than focusing on technical content, this course focuses on the study of various moral systems and their application to a variety of topics (e.g., SPAM, file sharing, privacy of public records).

Critical thinking is an important part of this study. It will not be sufficient to simply state that something is right or wrong, but you must explain *why* it is right or wrong according to a particularly moral system. A well-reasoned, rational argument will be crucial to this explanation — think in terms of duty, obligation, rights, benefit, or harm. To develop and practice this critical thinking, class participation will be important, and part of your grade will be based on that participation.

Second, this course is **designated as “writing intensive”**. Every major must have a writing-intensive course, which must be an upper-division course, must cover writing in the discipline, and must involve a substantial amount of writing. Further, a writing-intensive course must base 50% or more of the class grade on writing assignments.

By “writing in the discipline”, we mean professional writing common to a computer scientist, which differs in many aspects from the writing of professionals in other fields (e.g., fiction writers). While basic elements such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, and composition are common to all fields, and knowledge of these basic elements will be assumed, this course will concentrate on technical writing and related artifacts (e.g., presentations) common in the field of computer science.

In this course, you will have roughly one assignment per week, most of which will have a writing component to the grade. In some cases, the assignment will be a short essay on some topic in ethics (requiring the critical thinking and well-reasoned arguments mentioned above), while in other cases the assignment will be oriented more toward scientific writing or professional practice (e.g., writing a resume or a short technical abstract).

If you would like to know more about writing-intensive courses, see:
<http://www.kent.edu/catalog/2009/CourseInformation/WIC/index.cfm>
http://www.kent.edu/Administration/provost/curriculum_svcs/forms/upload/WIC_policy.doc

Finally, this course will explore some **common professional practices of computer science**. In addition to writing assignments such as writing a resume or technical abstract, you will have some “professional” assignments such as a brief “elevator pitch” and a short technical presentation using PowerPoint slides.

Course Prerequisites

The *Undergraduate Catalog* lists the prerequisites for this course as a grade of “C” or better in CS 33001 CSII: Data Structures. An equivalent course taken elsewhere is also acceptable. Students who do not have this prerequisite should talk to the course instructor, else they risk being deregistered from the class.

Textbook

The required textbook for this course is:

Ethics for the Information Age, 3rd Edition,
Michael J. Quinn, Pearson / Addison Wesley, 2009,
ISBN-10 0-321-53685-1, ISBN-13 978-0-321-53685-3

You will need to purchase a copy of this textbook, skim each chapter in advance of the lecture, and then read the chapter in detail afterward. I will use the author’s PowerPoint slides in class, but they are usually missing important detail and are not sufficient on their own.

Class Web Page

The web page for this class is <http://www.cs.kent.edu/~walker/classes/eth.s10> (a link to this page is available on my home page).

The class web page will contain links to the current class syllabus and schedule, lecture notes, homework assignments, exams and solutions, etc. You might want to check the web page on a regular basis, in particular when a homework assignment is outstanding or an exam is eminent.

Lectures

You are expected to attend each lecture, and to actively participate in class discussions. A portion of your grade will come from class participation, and you are expected to actively participate in class discussions during every class.

In my lectures, I will use both the “official” slides provided by the textbook authors, as well as some slides of my own. My slides are drawn from a variety of sources. The required text provides much of the material, although some material may be drawn from other books on social and ethical issues or online resources.

Homework Assignments

There will be approximately one homework assignment per week, usually assigned on Wednesday and due on Monday. In some cases, particularly for assignments near the end of the course, you will have more than 5 days to work on a particular assignment, and in that case, the assignment will generally count more than a normal assignment.

For each assignment, you will be told how much of the grade will be based on social and ethical issues, writing, or professional practice.

No late homework submissions will be accepted unless you make *prior* arrangements with me, or have a *documented* illness (e.g., a signed note from a doctor). In the latter case, I expect you to contact me as soon as possible afterward, ideally not waiting for the next class.

Exams

There will be one midterm exam (held during class) and a final exam (held during finals week). Exam dates will be announced as the semester progresses.

All exams are closed book and closed notes, and must be individual work. It is expected that you take each exam at the scheduled time, unless you make *prior* arrangements with me or have a *documented* illness (e.g., a signed note from a doctor). In the latter case, I expect you to contact me as soon as possible afterward, ideally not waiting for the next class.

Grades

Your course grade will be based approximately 35% on social and ethical issues, 50% on writing, 10% on professional practice, and 5% on class participation. Homework assignments will comprise the bulk of your grade, though the midterm exam and final exam will each count 10%.

This course will be graded under the Plus / Minus Grading System, described online at <http://www.kent.edu/CurrentStudents/Plus-Minus.cfm>. Note that this system does not support grades of A+ or D-.

A grade $\geq 93 = A$, $\geq 90 = A-$, $\geq 87 = B+$, $\geq 83 = B$, $\geq 80 = B-$, $\geq 77 = C+$, $\geq 73 = C$, $\geq 70 = C-$,
 $\geq 67 = D+$, $\geq 60 = D$, $< 60 = F$.

Note that the guidelines for writing-intensive courses state that each student must compete at least one writing intensive course with a minimum grade of C (2.00) before graduation.

Instructor Absences

Over the course of the semester, I will have to miss a few classes to attend a conference or other professional meeting. This is a normal occurrence at research-oriented university with a flourishing graduate program, where professors are expected to regularly attend conferences and professional meetings to remain current in their fields. Presumably, they bring their insights from those events into the classroom, which benefits you as a student. Further, by attending those meetings, they make other professionals aware of Kent State, which increases your visibility and the value of your degree.

I will make every effort to minimize these absences, or to arrange for my class to be covered during my absence in such a way as to avoid disrupting the flow of the class. When this is not possible, it may occasionally be necessary for me to cancel a class, or to schedule a makeup class at some other time, but such occurrences are usually rare.

Respectful Student Conduct

Kent State University's Code of Student Conduct, described in the Digest of Rules and Regulations at http://www.kent.edu/emsa/upload/CAMPUS-LIFE-RULES-AND-REGS-2009_10.pdf, requires students to behave in a respectful manner to their instructors as well as their classmates. In a course on social and ethical issues, where some topics may evoke deep emotions related to religious or cultural beliefs, it is especially important to be sensitive to the beliefs of others.

Some examples of disruptive behavior are rudeness toward the instructor or classmates, tardiness, inattention in class, and use of cell phones in class. Students will be expected to behave in a mature and professional manner at all times in the classroom.

Academic Integrity

Student-instructor relationships are built on trust. Students must trust that instructors have made appropriate decisions about the structure and content of the courses they teach, and instructors must trust that the materials that students turn in are their own. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational process. In this course, the penalty for *any* act of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is a final course grade of F.

Registration Requirement

The official registration deadline for this course is 31 January 2010. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashFast) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

The last day to withdraw is 4 April 2010.

Student Accessibility Policy

University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. **Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services** (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sas for more information on registration procedures).

STUDENT CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM: Condensed Version

[For the complete policy and procedure, go to www.kent.edu/policyregister and search for policy 3342-3-01.8, or see <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/chap3/3-01-8.cfm> or <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/chap3/upload/3342.3.01.8.pdf>]

Cheating and plagiarism constitute fraudulent misrepresentation for which no credit can be given and for which appropriate sanctions are warranted and will be applied.

The university affirms that acts of cheating and plagiarism by students constitute a subversion of the goals of the institution, have no place in the university and are serious offenses to academic goals and objectives, as well as to the rights of fellow students.

"Cheat" means to intentionally misrepresent the source, nature, or other conditions of academic work so as to accrue undeserved credit, or to cooperate with someone else in such misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

1. Obtaining or retaining partial or whole copies of examinations, tests or quizzes before these are distributed for student use;
2. Using notes, textbooks or other information in examinations, tests and quizzes, except as expressly permitted;
3. Obtaining confidential information about examinations, tests or quizzes other than that released by the instructor;
4. Securing, giving or exchanging information during examinations;
5. Presenting data or other material gathered by another person or group as one's own;
6. Falsifying experimental data or information;
7. Having another person take one's place for any academic performance without the specific knowledge and permission of the instructor;
8. Cooperating with another to do one or more of the above;
9. Using a substantial portion of a piece of work previously submitted for another course or program to meet the requirements of the present course or program without notifying the instructor to whom the work is presented; and
10. Presenting falsified information in order to postpone or avoid examinations, tests, quizzes, or other academic work.

“Plagiarize” means to take and present as one’s own a material portion of the ideas or words of another or to present as one’s own an idea or work derived from an existing source without full and proper credit to the source of the ideas, words, or works. As defined, plagiarize includes, but is not limited to:

- a. The copying of words, sentences and paragraphs directly from the work of another without proper credit;
- b. The copying of illustrations, figures, photographs, drawings, models, or other visual and nonverbal materials, including recordings of another without proper credit; and
- c. The presentation of work prepared by another in final or draft form as one's own without citing the source, such as the use of purchased research papers.

Academic Sanctions, from Section D

The following academic sanctions are provided by this rule for offenses of cheating or plagiarism. Kent campus instructors shall notify the department chairperson and the student conduct office each time a sanction is imposed. Regional campus instructors shall notify the regional campus dean and the student conduct officer each time a sanction is imposed. Regional campus student conduct officer shall notify the Kent student conduct office each time a sanction is imposed by a regional campus Instructor. The following academic sanctions are provided by this rule for offenses of cheating or plagiarism. In those cases the instructor may:

1. Refuse to accept the work for credit; or
2. Assign a grade of "F" or zero for the project, test, paper, examination or other work in which the cheating or plagiarism took place; or
3. Assign a grade of "F" for the course in which the cheating or plagiarism took place; and/or;
4. Recommend to the department chair or regional campus dean that further action specified in the rule be taken. The department chairperson or regional campus dean shall determine whether or not to forward to the academic dean or to the vice president for the extended university a recommendation for further sanction under this rule.

Procedures for Invoking Sanctions, from Section E

Academic administrative procedures pertaining to paragraph (D)(1)(a) of this rule. In the event that an instructor determines that it is more probable than not that a student in a course or program under the instructor's supervision has presented work for university credit which involves an act of cheating, plagiarism or cooperation in either, then the instructor shall:

1. Inform the student as soon as is practical, in person or by mail, of the belief that an act of cheating or plagiarism has occurred. If the student cannot be reached in a reasonable period of time, the instructor may proceed with sanctions, notifying the student in writing as promptly as possible of the belief and the procedural steps the instructor has taken.
- b. Provide the student an opportunity to explain orally, in writing, or both, why the student believes the evaluation of the facts is erroneous.
- c. If the explanation is deemed by the instructor to be inadequate or if no explanation is offered, the instructor may impose one of the academic sanctions listed in paragraph (D)(1)(a) of this rule. Where appropriate, the instructor may recommend the imposition of academic sanctions listed in paragraph (D)(1)(b) of this rule. In addition, the instructor may refer the matter to the dean of the college, campus, or school in which the student is enrolled for imposition of academic sanctions listed in paragraph (D)(1)(b) of this rule.
- d. The instructor shall notify the office of judicial affairs of the circumstances and action taken. Such notification will be used as background information in the event that formal conduct charges are initiated against the student.
- e. The instructor shall inform the student in writing of the right to appeal, and the procedure to follow.
- f. The instructor shall keep the evidence of cheating or plagiarism in a secure place and provide it upon request to any appeals officer or the conduct officer. The instructor shall provide copies on request to the student at the student's expense.
- g. The instructor shall cooperate with academic and student conduct personnel in any appeal of the decision, and/or in adjudication of any disciplinary proceedings.