PHIL 123: INTERNET, SOCIETY AND PHILOSOPHY

SPRING
2016

Brock Baines
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Classroom: 176 LEB
MW 4:00-5:50 p.m.
CRN 36470

Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00-4:00 p.m., and by appointment (161 Susan Campbell Hall)

Course Description:

This course will serve as an introduction to the emerging field of internet and information ethics. We will be considering a number of the key ethical problems and challenges that have arisen alongside the introduction of new digital information technologies into contemporary society. Students will be exposed to a variety of arguments made by experts in the field for how best to approach thinking about and addressing these important ethical issues. Some of the questions we will be asking are: What does it mean to say that we are living in a post-industrial, information age? Given what we have seen thus far, what can we expect to happen to human social relations as more and more communication takes place over the internet? What new ethical challenges does the internet pose for intellectual property? How has the internet changed our relation to privacy? What new avenues for criminal activity and behavior have been opened by network computing and what should be done about? What has been the impact of new digital information technologies on the world of work and the creation and distribution of wealth?

There will be four lectures with time devoted to discussion each class. Reading assignments will be announced in advance, and they are listed in the tentative schedule given below. Every student is expected to attend all lectures each week and to read the assigned texts by the assigned dates (i.e., to have read the text before it is discussed in the lecture). Grades will be based on two quizzes, a mid-term exam, a final essay (4-6 pages double spaced with 12 point font) and on attendance and performance in discussion. The percentage of the grade for each of these is as follows:

- Two quizzes (15 possible points each)
- Mid-term Exam (20 possible points)
- Final Exam (30 possible points)
- Participation and attendance (20 possible points)

Two-fifths of your discussion grade will be based on attendance (i.e., one point for each section) and the other three-fifths on the quantity and quality of your contribution to the discussion. Late papers will not be accepted. If the essay is not turned in on time, you will receive no points for that part of your grade. Only in cases of documented medical excuse or special documented circumstances (e.g., family emergency) will you be allowed to turn in a late essay. You must submit your essay online through Canvas by the date and time specified for each assignment. Your essay will be evaluated by Vericite, which is a plagiarism detection tool.
Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) is strictly prohibited and may result in severe penalties. Definitions, procedures, and penalties for such cases are spelled out on the UO website for Academic Dishonesty.

**Topics/Readings:** Below is a list of topics for discussion along with a tentative schedule of required readings. There is only one required text:

- Charles Ess *Digital Media Ethics* (Polity: 2014)

All other listed readings will be available on Canvas.

**Week I: Introduction to the Ethics of Digital Media**
(Mar. 28) Introduction to the ethics of digital media.
(Mar. 30) Central Issues in the Ethics of Digital Media (Ess Ch. 1)

**Week II: Finding a Theoretical Framework for Ethics**
(April 4) Quin, M.J. "Introduction to Ethics" (Canvas)
(April 6) Framing Digital Media Ethics (Ess Ch. 6)

**Week III: Privacy and Digital Media**
(April 11) Privacy in the Electronic Global Metropolis? (Ess Ch. 2)
(April 13) Singer, P. "Visible Man: Ethics in a World without Secretes (Canvas)
Lovink, G. "Twelve Theses on WikiLeaks" (Canvas)
[QUIZ #1]

**Week IV: Copying and Distributing via Digital Media**
(April 18) Copying and Distributing via Digital Media (Ess Ch. 3)
(April 20) Hughes, J. "The Philosophy of Intellectual Property" (Canvas)
Gordon, W.J. "Moral Philosophy, Information Technology, and Copyright" (Canvas)

**Week V: Friendship and Digital Media**
(April 25) Friendship Online (Ess Ch. 4, pg. 120-142)
(April 27) MID-TERM EXAM

**Week VI: Democracy and Digital Media**
(May 2) Digital media, democratization and citizen journalism (Ess Ch. 4, pg. 142-156)
Sunstein, C.R. "Democracy and the Internet" (Canvas)
(May 4) Pappacharissi, Z. "The Virtual Public Sphere" (Canvas)
Dean, J "Why the Net is not a Public Sphere" (Canvas)

**Week VII: Digital Sex and Games**
(May 9) Digital Sex and Games (Ess Ch. 5)
(May 11) Taylor, T.L. "Internet and Games" (Canvas)
Stuart, S. "From Agency to Apperception" (Canvas)
**Week VIII: Identity and Digital Media**
(May 16) Turkle, S. "Life on the Screen" (Canvas)
   Franzen, J. "Liking is For Cowards" (Canvas)
(May 18) Cocking, D. "Plural Selves and Relational Identity" (Canvas)
   Mathews, S. "Identity and Information Technology" (Canvas)
   [QUIZ #2]

**Week IX: Knowledge and Digital Media**
(May 23) Chun, W.C. "Internet Epistemology" (Canvas)
   Thagard, P. "Internet Epistemology" (Canvas)
(May 25) Goldman, A. "The Social Epistemology of Blogging" (Canvas)
   Pettit, P "Trust, Reliance and the Internet" (Canvas)

**Week X: Ethics, Society and the Future of Digital Media**
(May 30) Ess, C. "Culture and Global Networks" (Canvas)
   Miller, S. "Collective Responsibility and Information and Communication Technology" (Canvas)
(June 1) Flanagan, M. et al. "Embodying Values" (Canvas)

**Week XI: Exam Week (No Class)**
(June 7) **FINAL ESSAY** (to be submitted on Canvas no later than 5 p.m.)