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# CSCI 215E.50: Social and Ethical Issues in Computer Science

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Missoula College UM  
Department of Applied Computing and Electronics  
Course Syllabus

**CSCI 215E Social and Ethical Issues in Computer Science  
Section 50/51 AU 2013**

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: WTS101/ENEX101/WRT101 English Composition

Last Updated: AU 2013

**Meetings:**

**Online:** This is an online course which does not have face-to-face meetings. New content for the week will be available to students on each Saturday. Assignments for the week are due each Friday by 12:00 midnight.

**General Education Component:**

CSCI 215E is a designated lower division writing course. It also fulfills the Ethical and Human Values Perspective 5 General Education Graduation Requirement as defined in The University of Montana Catalog.

**Faculty Contact:**

Dr. John Taber  
Office Hours (Spring):

E-mail: [john.taber@umontana.edu](mailto:john.taber@umontana.edu)  
Tu-Th 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Contact me for appointments at other times.

\*\* Email is the best way to reach me - but please allow 24 hrs for a response. If needed, we can conduct a meeting via Google Hangout

Please use your official UM email address for correspondence. University policy prevents staff from responding to personal email accounts (Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.) Also, please only participate in your section number - There are several sections of this course each semester.

**Description, Objectives, and Textbooks**

**Required Text:**

*Ethics for the Information Age, Michael J. Quinn, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Pearson/Addison-Wesley, 2011, ISBN 978-0-13-213387-6*

**Supplemental Text (Available in print or online via Creative Commons):**

*Blown to Bits: Your Life, Liberty, and Happiness after the Digital Explosion, Hal Abelson, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Addison-Wesley, 2009, ISBN 978-0-13-285553-2.*

Digital download: <http://www.bitsbook.com/excerpts/>.

**Online Requirements & Software:**

You will need or have access to DSL comparable speed or 3G service, especially for any video content.

You will also need or have access to a decent writing software app (ie. Microsoft Word, Libre Office, etc) that can save files to .doc, .docx formats. Note: for my section, you can also submit files in .odt format (this is an open document format - Libre Office, available free for all platforms at [www.libreoffice.org](http://www.libreoffice.org) supports all these formats and has a built in pdf converter).

## **Course Overview:**

*Social and Ethical Issues in Computer Science* studies ethical decision making in the complex world of information technology. The course begins with a survey of general ethical principles and decision making processes, examining effective tools and guidelines to resolve complex dilemmas. The remainder of the course explores information technology-specific ethical issues. Included will be discussions on professionalism involving business relationships, codes of ethics, accountability and licensure; intellectual property including patents copyrights, and trade secrets; online behavior including SPAM, hacking, and social engineering; and privacy issues such as data mining, surveillance, and transaction generated information.

In addition to the ethical component of the course, CSCI215E fulfills a lower division writing requirement. Assignments focus on basic grammar, sentence structure, mechanics (capitalization and punctuation), paragraph structure, topic sentences, thesis statements, and introductory and closing paragraphs.

## **Course Description:**

This course explores ethical issues in the field of computing. Students will develop the skills needed to identify and analyze various ethical concerns. We will cover standard ethical concepts and theories, as well as standard methods of ethical analysis. I place a strong emphasis on practical application of the ethical process. This means that once you've learned the basics of ethical analysis, you'll apply that information to different scenarios. It's important to keep in mind that the field of ethics considers many different viewpoints. A good ethicist will fairly evaluate positions that may, on a personal level, be far outside his or her comfort zone. I expect you to become good ethicists!

Your ethical analysis work will usually be in the form of an essay, so you'll practice your writing skills at the same time that you practice your ethics skills. Initial writing assignments will work on grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. In short order, we'll move to topic sentences and paragraph structure, then expand to a full essay with introduction, body text, closing, and thesis statements. Once we reach that point in the assignments, you'll continue using that format for the remainder of the semester.

## **Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course a student will:

1. Identify and describe common ethical concepts and theories.
2. Analyze ethical dilemmas and articulate a clear, descriptive account prior to forming a normative course of action.
3. Demonstrate one or more processes of philosophical analysis.
4. Identify common ethical issues facing professionals in the field of information technology.
5. Apply ethical concepts and an analytical process to common dilemmas found in the information technology field.
6. Demonstrate writing competency in the following areas:
  - a. Development of ideas
  - b. Organization
  - c. Appropriate voice
  - d. Proper mechanics
  - e. Relevance to assignment

## ***Course Structure, Assessment, and Grading***

### **Course Outline:**

1. Catalysts for Change
  - a. Milestones in Computing
  - b. Milestones in Networking
  - c. Milestones in Information Storage and Retrieval
2. Introduction to Ethics
  - a. Ethical Perspectives
    - i. Relativism, Divine Command
    - ii. Egoism, Kant and Deontology
    - iii. Utilitarianism
    - iv. Justice and Social Contract Theory
  - b. Putting it all together – Applying Multiple Perspectives and the Dialectic Process
3. Privacy
  - a. Perspectives on Privacy
  - b. Disclosure, Public Information, Public Records, and U.S. Legislation
  - c. Covert Surveillance and Wiretapping
  - d. Data Mining and Identity Theft
4. Intellectual Property
  - a. Intellectual Property Rights, Trade Secrets, Patents, and Copyright
  - b. Fair Use and Restrictions
  - c. Peer-to-Peer Protections, Open Source
5. Networked Communications

- a. Email and SPAM
- b. Censorship and Freedom of Expression
- c. Children and Inappropriate Content, Trust on the Internet, Internet Addiction

**Course Schedule:**

For online students, course material will be available each Saturday and work for the week will be due each Friday at midnight MST/MDT. **No Excuses!** If you are a distance student in a different time zone, please figure out the offsets so you you're your work in on time. Assignments will vary between a minimum 300-word writing assignment, questions over the reading or supplemental material, online quizzes, and other work as assigned.

There will be two longer research papers of between 1200 and 1500 words due throughout the semester. These papers will be reviewed by other students in the class before final submission.

Students are often surprised by the amount of writing involved in this course. **University guidelines require that students in a lower division writing course submit at least 15 pages of writing throughout the semester.**

Students often comment that they expect more flexibility in due dates when they take online courses. This may be the case for self-study classes, but CSCI215E is an instructor-led course. Assignments/due dates are provided with a lead time of approximately 7 days, which should help schedule your schoolwork with your work/family/other responsibilities.

**Course Workload:**

The good news about CSCI215E is that you can earn credit for 2 general education requirements in a single 3 credit course. This works out well on the financial side since you don't have to pay for two separate classes to earn the credit. However, there is a lot of work required to successfully complete the class. Depending on your level of writing expertise, plan on 8 - 10 hours each week to work through the lessons and assignments.

**Evaluation Procedures:**

<b>Assessment:</b>	<b>Weight:</b>
Discussion Board	20%
Written Assignments	20%
Analysis Paper 1	20%
Analysis Paper 2	20%
Examinations	20%

**Grading Scale:**

97-100%  
 93-96%  
 90-92%

**Letter Grade:**

A+  
 A  
 A-

87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67-69%	D+
63-66%	D
60-62%	D-
< 60%	F

### Forums:

Many of your writing assignments will be posted to the forums area, which is accessible by all students in the course. At times, students will be asked to review the work of others in the class and provide constructive comment, feedback, or evaluation on the writing. While this may be uncomfortable for some students, it is a standard part of any writing course. Please be respectful of others when commenting on their work.

**All discussion board writing assignments must be at least 300 words in length.** Most word processing programs have a word count feature to help you reach your goal. While this might seem easy, it often takes several weeks before all students in the course submit at least 300-word essays. The first time an entire class submits the minimum word count for an assignment, I will award extra credit points to the entire class. This extra credit opportunity is available during the first 4 weeks of the semester.

Before posting, submissions should be created using a word processor and proofed for quality and content. Copy and paste can be used to submit the manuscript to the Moodle discussion board. **All submissions should be at least 300 words unless otherwise noted.** My grading rubric is posted in the Course Information section.

### Written Assignments:

Written assignments are submitted directly to Moodle and are not publicly available. In general, these assignments assess your understanding of the text or other material as well as your writing skills. You are expected to use clear and complete sentences when answering questions. One or two word answers are not acceptable. Likewise, a word-for-word answer directly from the book or the Internet won't get you many points. **Please make sure that you submit in the correct format (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .odt)** and in the correct location - sometimes students submit their final work into the comments section, which is especially difficult to read. I'll give a little latitude for your Unit 1 assignments if you submit something I can't open/read, but you won't be able to resubmit after that grace period.

Each written assignment should contain your name and section in the upper right corner of your paper. Save and name your documents using the following convention:

Lastname Firstname Ax.y (where Ax.y is the assignment, such as A1.1, A2.3, etc.)

## Analysis Papers:

Analysis papers provide students the opportunity to examine an ethical issue in greater depth. Submissions are 1200-1500 words in length, typewritten (word processor), and double-spaced form. Before final submission, all analysis papers are required to complete the following process: draft submission by author to discussion forum, peer review with suggestions and comments to discussion forum, and final submission to Moodle. A minimum of two analysis papers are required each semester.

Submissions will be evaluated in the areas of grammar/mechanics, clarity/organization, and effective analysis of the topic. Please review the grading rubrics for discussion board assignments and analysis papers, which are found in the Course Info area of the Moodle shell. Before submitting your work, please review the assignment to make sure you've covered all of the required elements. It's no fun to take off points because a student has forgotten to cover an element of the assignment.

## Late Work:

Late work is not accepted. Material is available at least a week in advance. You are welcome to submit before the due date.

Sometimes unexpected situations arise, so **you do have the option of not turning in a total of three (3) written or discussion board assignments**. You don't have to make prior arrangements or notify me - just don't turn in the assignment. The grade will show up as a 0 but the first three 0s won't penalize your grade. If you choose to turn in all assignments, you'll receive extra credit accordingly.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due by midnight on Friday of each week. All best attempts will be made to keep grading current (within a week of the due date).

## **Feedback on Assignments and General Questions**

You will receive feedback that's both timely and helpful. For assignments posted to the discussion forum, look for a reply to your initial post with comments. Sometimes feedback contains only narrative, other times, edited feedback on your writing. Students are **STRONGLY** encouraged to read through all submissions and feedback, including the work of other students. With 25 of you in each section, you're bound to read writing and feedback that will help your efforts, even if it's not directly about your own work

General feedback on assignments will be posted to the Instructor Feedback forum. There is a link to this forum from the main page of the Moodle shell, so you can easily see if there is new information there.

The Q&A forum is designed for all students to post questions as well as answers that are of general interest. If you have a question about course material, due

dates, or details about an assignment, please post to this forum. Think of it this way – if you'd raise your hand in a regular classroom to ask your question, then the Q&A forum is the place to do the same thing in this online class. This forum will be monitored and questions will generally be answered within 24 hours M-F. Students are encouraged to offer feedback and answer questions as well. There is a link to this forum from the main page of the Moodle shell, so it should be easy to monitor new posts.

### ***Help with your Writing Assignments and Analysis Papers***

The University of Montana offers **free** writing assistance to all students through the Writing Center (<http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/Tutoring/default.aspx>). This service is available to anyone, regardless of major. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the writing center. Help is available face-to-face as well as online. This service can be especially useful to international students, or to those students who aren't confident in their English skills. Assistance is available at Missoula College and Mountain (Main) campuses.

To make the most of these sessions, please provide your tutor with the written parameters of the assignment, the grading rubric, and your draft. When using the Center for help on your analysis papers, make sure to allow plenty of time before your due date. This is especially important for your final paper because the Center can be overwhelmed with requests at the end of the semester.

### ***University Regulations***

#### **Academic Conduct:**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at:  
<http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

#### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism, especially in an ethics course, will not be tolerated. If I suspect plagiarism, I will notify both the student and the department chair as I investigate the situation. Assignments involving plagiarism will receive a 0. That said, I encourage research from a variety of sources, including discussions with your classmates. Make sure as you complete your assignments that everything is in your own words. Please don't copy material from other students.

Within the Course Information is a section on plagiarism. Occasionally students will unknowingly plagiarize the work of others. Use these guidelines:

- If you got the idea for your material from someone else, make sure you cite it.
- If you paraphrase someone else's work, make sure you cite it.
- If you directly quote someone else's work, make sure you cite it.
- If you have any question at all about whether to cite a source, ASK ME.



## **Disability Accommodations Policy:**

Students with documented disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course when requested in a timely manner. Please be prepared to provide a letter from the DSS Coordinator and a description of the requested accommodation after class or by appointment with the instructor. Please submit your requests early in the semester or even before the start of class. I want each student to succeed, and putting accommodations in place as soon as possible helps make that happen.

## **Special Information for Online Students Only:**

Some sections of the course are offered entirely online through UMOonline. Course content will be literature- and writing-intensive. Podcasts and short video presentations will be used to supplement reading materials. These multimedia materials will use the WMA, WMV, MP3, MP4, and RM (REAL) multimedia format. An Internet connection with reasonable (DSL) bandwidth is recommended. The REAL media player will need to be installed to access online video presentations. The REAL media player can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.real.com>.

Class materials will be available at the start of each week. Expect each lesson to consist of reading material, audio and video webcasts, review questions, and discussion board activities.

Technical support is available through <http://umonline.umt.edu> and by telephone at 406.243.4357 for the IT Central Help Desk and 406.243.6394 for Moodle specific questions.