Computers and Society

CPSC 430

Lecture 1 – Introduction

Kevin Leyton-Brown

http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430

Course Description

- We'll explore the interplay between **information technology and society**, emphasizing ethical issues.
- You'll come away with an increased:
  - understanding of the **social and ethical implications** of computer use and abuse;
  - ability to **think critically and defend decisions** logically;
  - appreciation for **alternate points of view**.
- Our focus will be on **reading, writing and discussion**.
  - Each week students will complete an **assigned reading**, write a **mini-essay** in response, and **evaluate the work of others**.
  - Classes will emphasize discussion and debate.
  - The ability to speak, read and write fluently in English is **essential for success** in the class.

Course Website: http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430

Grading Scheme

In-Class Participation	20 %
Weekly Essay Questions	25 %
Weekly Peer Review	10 %
Midterm Exam	15 %
Final Exam	30 %

Caveats:

- To pass the course, you must pass the final exam.
- I may change the exact percentage breakdowns shown here.
- This is **not an easy course—something to hand in almost every class**
  - However, students who work hard throughout the term can expect to do well.

Course Website: http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430

Participation

- **Clicker use**: 10%
  - depends on activity, not on answers
  - starts **Tuesday**
  - if you don't register in **Connect**, you'll start missing marks
  - posted weekly

- **Other class participation**: 10%
  - structured activities (debates, presentations)
  - participation in class discussions
  - course blog (Google+) discussion and contribution
  - making good use of time in class (Facebook, games, …)
  - tracked by TAs, finalized only at end of class

Weekly Essays

- **Between Thursday, 3:30 PM and Tuesday, 1:30 PM (sharp!)**
  - Do **assigned readings** of up to one chapter from the textbook. Readings posted at http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430.
  - Take a **multiple-choice quiz** online to test your comprehension.
  - Answer one **essay question** (your choice from a list of choices) and enter your answers online. You'll be allowed up to 300 words; that's less than one single-spaced page.
- **Between Tuesday, 3:30 PM and Thursday, 1:30 PM (sharp!)**
  - Perform your own **peer review** of two randomly assigned students' written questions.
    - For the first few weeks, you'll receive examples of TAs' essays, and other TAs' peer reviews of these questions.
    - We'll also accumulate an (anonymous) "hall of fame" of excellent essays and peer reviews that you can use as further examples.

This all starts right away!

- For **next class** (Tuesday, September 11, **1:30 PM**) :
  - ☑ **read all of Chapter 1** of the textbook
  - ☑ **perform a quiz online** using Connect (or you can't do the essay)
  - ☑ **log in** to "Mechanical TA" and get an essay topic
  - ☑ **write a short essay** on your assigned topic
  - ☑ **register your clicker** in Connect, or you'll miss out on grades
  - ☑ **bring a laptop** if you have one

- Don't leave this to the last minute!
  - It might take you a bit of time to get your accounts set up, etc.

You'll get peer reviewed

- You'll **receive 3 peer reviews** of your work, each week
  - These reviews will be double-blind (you won't know who reviewed you)
  - You'll be graded "good" (2 pts), "satisfactory" (1 pt), or "unsatisfactory" on:
    - understanding the social issue under consideration
    - convincingly using evidence, theoretical framework(s) from class
    - drawing conclusions that are well supported by an argument
    - using clear and correct English
  - You'll also get comments on each item
- Initially, you will also **receive a review by a TA**, and only the TA evaluation will matter for your grade.
  - Later, we'll shift to peer review without TAs.
- If you are evaluated only by peers and disagree with your grade, **you can appeal**, and a TA will regrade your essay.
- Essays are worth increasing amounts as the term goes on
  - 1.5, 2.5, 3.5 points (% of final grade) each week

You'll perform peer review

- You'll **perform 3 reviews each week**, starting Tuesday.
  - These reviews will be double-blind (you won't know who you're reviewing)
- At first, **TAs evaluate each review**: 0 – 10 scale
  - Once you show you can review reliably, you evaluate other students without a TA.
- If **a peer appeals** your independent review and the TA agrees
  - your review gets graded
  - a low grade might mean you stop grading independently
- TAs will **spot check reviews**
  - when they're extremely positive or reviewers disagree substantially
  - randomly
- How we'll calculate **your peer review grade** (10% of the course):
  - graded reviews: you get what the TA gives you
  - ungraded reviews: you get the average across graded reviews plus 10%
  - reviews worth increasing amounts: scaled to 0.6, 1, 1.4 points (%) per week

"What if something goes wrong, and I can't submit an essay/review?"

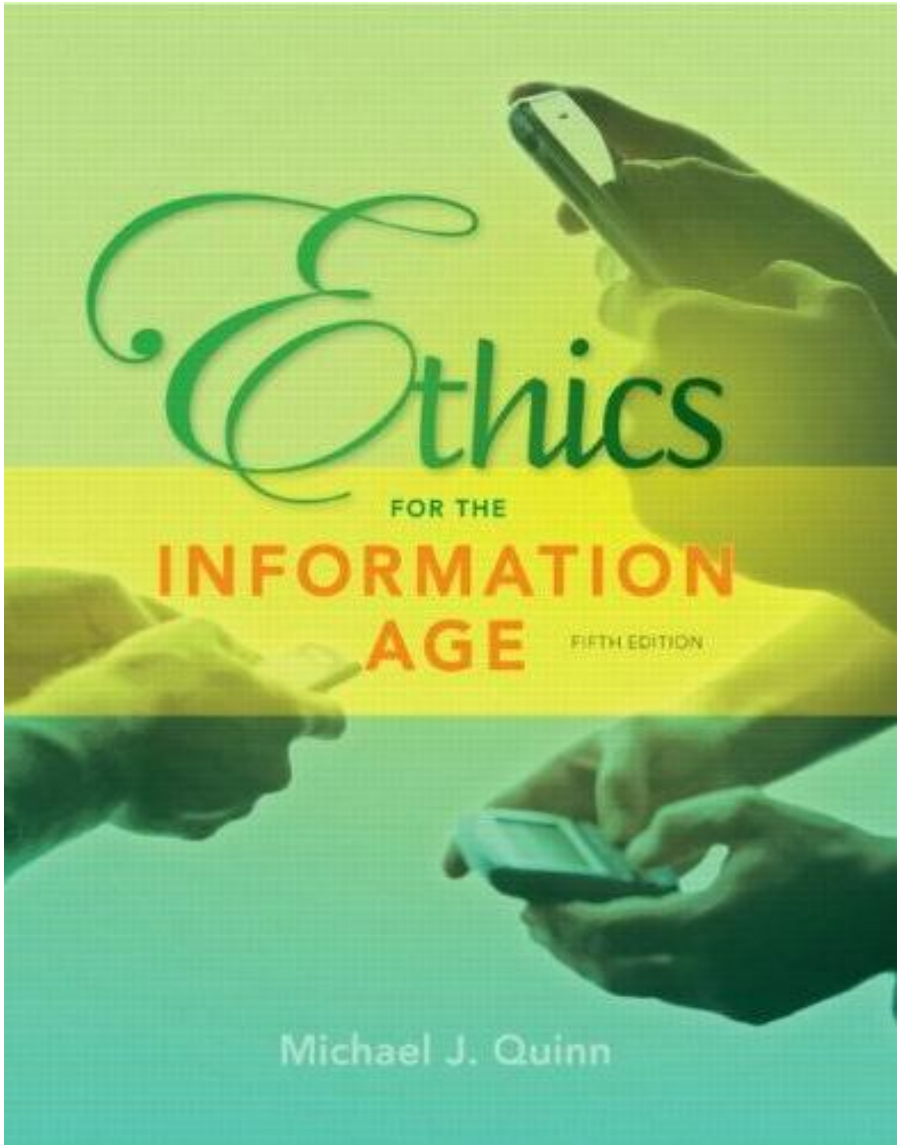
- We'll **drop your worst essay and peer review grades**, allowing for a situation in which:
  - you miss the (firm) deadline
  - you're sick, out of town, have a conflict with another course, …
  - you register for the course late
  - you get a poor grade on one essay

  (We'll renormalize your grades accordingly)

- Other extensions or waivers will be granted only in **truly exceptional circumstances**.
  - Unless you have an exceptional excuse, you'll simply get a grade of zero.

Textbook

- We will be using the textbook ***Ethics for the Information Age, 5th Ed***, by Michael J. Quinn.
- It's important that you have a copy, because we'll be reading the whole thing—starting this week!
- **Two copies on reserve** in the CS reading room
  - One 5th, one 4th edition



Topics (pretty cool stuff, actually ☺)

- History of computing, storage, networking (next 3 classes)
- Ethic & Argumentation (5 classes)
- Social issues (1 week each):
  - Networked communications
  - Intellectual Property
  - Information Privacy
  - Privacy and the Government
  - Computer & Network Security
  - Computer Reliability
  - Professional Ethics
  - Work & Wealth
- Rest of today:
  - break into 16 groups (count off from 1 – 16) using Droid
  - get assigned a statement and a position for or against
  - develop arguments for your assigned position
  - present your list to the class; we'll discuss briefly
  - everyone votes on the issue (you vote freely)
  - we'll revisit these questions throughout the course. You'll get to see if your opinions change.

Networked Communications

"For the protection of children, computers in libraries should be configured to block objectionable content."

Intellectual Property

"The producers of software should have the right to prevent others from copying the software they produce."

Information Privacy

"It should be illegal for a search engine to publicly disclose users' search histories, even in anonymized form."

AOL.com did this in August, 2006

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AOL_search_data_leak

Privacy and the Government

"The government should create a database identifying the DNA of every resident and make it available to medical researchers and police."

Computer and Network Security

"Canadians should have the right to vote online in federal, provincial and municipal elections."

Computer Reliability

"Self-driving cars should be allowed to operate on public roads once they have been shown to be at least slightly safer than the average human driver."

Professional Ethics

"A UBC CS sysadmin accidentally discovers pornography in a student's private department file space, depicting a woman the sysadmin believes may be under 18. The sysadmin should inform the department head."

Work and Wealth

"It is immoral for a corporation to pay its CEO 400 times as much as a production worker."