

# PHIL 282 Ethics in a Digital Age

**Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00-9:15 AM in YMCA 121**

Dr. Glen Miller  
Department of Philosophy  
YMCA 418 | 979-847-6131  
glenmiller@tamu.edu  
Office Hours: Mon 3-5 pm, and by appt

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Exploration of the intersection between ethical and social theories, principles, and values and the interconnected digital world; examination of the interplay between these domains for topics such as cybercrime, privacy, surveillance, security, intellectual property rights, artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, internet governance, computing professionalism, and cyber policy and law.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES AND MAJOR OBJECTIVES**

The course provides ample opportunity to improve students' understanding and skills in the following general areas:

- **Critical Thinking:** to include creative thinking; innovation; inquiry; and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
- **Communication:** to include effective development and interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
- **Social Responsibility:** to include intercultural competence; knowledge of civil responsibility; and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- **Personal Responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

These general outcomes are achieved through the specific learning outcomes for this course. By the end of this course, the successful student should be able to:

- Analyze the interplay between (i) practices and moral norms and (ii) the development and use of computing and information technology, in order to study how changes in one domain can affect the other (*critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, personal responsibility*).
- Explain ethical theories, moral principles, and technical details clearly and concisely (*communication*).
- Appraise the applicability of traditional social and political ideas, such as power, authority, and bias, to cybertechnologies, and how dialogue can be used to overcome conflict (*critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, personal responsibility*).
- Explain how ethical theories, principles, and values inform computing practices, laws, and policy, and, for those on the professional track, professional codes of ethics (ACM or IEEE), with an emphasis on how they are influenced by culture (*critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, personal responsibility*).
- Critically analyze contemporary computer-related ethical and social issues from the perspective of computing professionals, policymakers, and users from different backgrounds (*critical thinking, social responsibility, personal responsibility*).

To achieve these outcomes and objectives, students are given the opportunity and encouragement to participate actively in classroom discussions. Students will select either the policy or professional track. The latter is intended for computing professionals. Students on the different tracks will sometimes complete different readings before class, and then come to class ready to discuss the material with the whole group.

**PREREQUISITES:** None

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Joe Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002. (or any Hackett version)

Singer, P. W. and Allan Friedman. *Cybersecurity and Cyberwar: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Additional materials are available on the course website, which can be accessed through eCampus at <http://eCampus.tamu.edu>. Select the PHIL 382 Ethics and Cybertechnology course.

## TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Laptops, cell phones, and other media devices should not be used in the class meetings without prior approval from the instructors, which will not be given absent a compelling reason. The use of prohibited devices may result in the student being considered absent for the day.

## ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend all classes and to participate in all classroom activities. Classes are limited to 30 students to ensure that everyone is able to meaningfully participate in each class. The best way to master material for this class is to prepare properly, listen attentively, participate in activities, and ask questions when a topic is unclear. *Proper preparation includes bringing a copy of assigned texts to the meeting*. Students are encouraged to be familiar with university rules regarding excused absences, which can be found in Student Rule 7 at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>. Participation is worth 5% of the course grade.

## A NOTE ON E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

As preparation for writing effectively in their careers, students are expected to communicate professionally with instructors using email. Professional style includes an appropriate salutation and closing and reasonable care in the construction of the message. *Emails to instructors should always include the course prefix and number (PHIL 382)*.

## GRADED COMPONENTS

### Exams

There will be two exams. They may include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. Exams are cumulative.

### Readiness Quizzes

Unannounced quizzes will be given at the beginning or end of many class sessions. The quizzes will primarily test material assigned for that day, and, for quizzes at the end of the class session, what was covered in the class section. The quizzes will be a combination of true-and-false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. Students will have up to five minutes to complete each quiz. Students who arrive while the quiz is being taken will be able to take the quiz, but they will be given no extra time to complete the quiz. Those who arrive after the quiz has been collected will receive a zero for the quiz. The lowest two quiz grades will be excluded from the calculation of this component of the course grade.

### In-class Presentation

Students will work in groups of three or four on an in-class presentation on an **Aggie Experience Activity** that they have attended that relates to ethical, political, cybersecurity, or cybertechnology concerns. Students will choose an Aggie Experience Activity from a pre-approved list of events taking place on campus or in the community during the semester. Groups will be assigned. Presentations must include visual aids. Students are expected to prepare their presentations outside class. Each student in the group must give part of the presentation in class. More detailed instructions will be provided during the semester.

## Writing Assignments

Writing assignments are an opportunity for students to gain fluency with the theories, ideas, issues, and cases presented in the class and to develop their own thoughts on these topics. Students will write two Analysis Papers that should be about 1000 words in length each. Students are expected to identify an ethical or political issue that arises with cybertechnology and explain its importance; to clearly and concisely explain relevant technical details (at a policy level); to use appropriate ethical or political concepts or ideas to analyze the issue; and to justify the use of these concepts and ideas, keeping in mind that the new technological context may cause these concepts or values to be altered or refined or new concepts to be developed.

Students can revise the first Analysis Paper. To earn a better grade, the resubmission should be substantially better than the initial submission and should respond to relevant instructor comments. It will be due a week after the paper has been returned to the student. The maximum score that a revision can earn is 20 points above the grade given the initial submission.

The Cultural Discourse Journal consists of a series of short (but no shorter than a paragraph) reflections that are aligned with specific weeks in the course on the following topics:

- The habits and skills one needs to flourish professionally in a world that is increasingly globally connected (Week 6);
- Identifying one's personal biases and prejudices and how they affect how one relates with others, especially in cyberinteractions (Week 7);
- When tolerance is appropriate and when it is not (also Week 7);
- Recognizing power and authority, especially in an organizational context, with an awareness of privilege, oppression, and discrimination (Week 8);
- Identifying a situation in which dialogue was used to find common ground among individuals who had previously disagreed (Week 10); and
- Analyzing an issue where there is ethical disagreement from multiple viewpoints (Week 11).

Detailed requirements for the papers will be distributed via eCampus. All papers must be submitted to the appropriate turnitin.com link on eCampus. Failure to submit your essay to turnitin.com will result in a zero (0) for the assignment. Instructors may also request a hard copy (paper copy) of your essay. A standard penalty of five (5) percentage points per day is assessed to papers submitted after the deadline, either electronically to turnitin.com or the hard copy, though the penalty may be modified based on the instructor's discretion. Students are encouraged to use the supplemental resources posted on eCampus to improve their writing mechanics and the coherence, conciseness, and clarity of their papers.

### *A Helpful Writing Resource*

The **University Writing Center** (UWC), located in 214 Evans Library and 205 West Campus Library, offers one-on-one consultations to writers. UWC consultations are highly recommended but are not required. Help is available with brainstorming, researching, drafting, documenting, revising, and more; no concern is too large or too small. UWC consultants will also help you improve your proofreading and editing skills. If you visit the UWC, take a copy of your writing assignment, a hard copy of your draft or any notes you may have, as well as any material you need help with. To find out more about UWC services or to schedule an appointment, call 458-1455, visit the web page at [writingcenter.tamu.edu](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu), or stop by in person.

## COMPONENT WEIGHTING FOR COURSE GRADE CALCULATION

Readiness Quizzes	15%	First Exam	20%
Analysis Papers	20%	Final Exam	20%
Cultural Discourse Journal	10%	Participation	5%
Presentation	10%		

## GRADING

A	90% - 100%
B	80% - <90%
C	70% - <80%
D	60% - <70%
F	<60%

## AGGIE HONOR CODE & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”

The Honor Code and the Honor Council Rules and Procedures can be found at <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/>.

University rules concerning scholastic dishonesty will be rigorously enforced in this class. Plagiarism is defined in the TAMU Student Rules as the “appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.” You should credit your use of anyone else’s words, graphic images, or ideas using standard citation styles. Moreover, you may not submit your own work from another course. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the TAMU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System. A single incident of cheating may lead to an F\* in the class.

**Submitting an assignment late is far better than plagiarizing. The standard penalty for late submission is a 5% deduction (for the paper, not the course) for each day the paper is late.**

## GRADE COMPLAINTS

We are happy to discuss and possibly change grades provided two conditions are met. First, the student must have waited at least 24 hours after he or she received the graded assignment. Take this time to carefully review all the comments give by instructors. Second, the student must bring a written statement that explains the discrepancy he or she sees between the quality of the work and the grade it received. The appeal must be made within 7 days from the time the student received the graded assignment.

## AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) POLICY STATEMENT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

## TITLE IX AND STATEMENT ON LIMITS TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Texas A&M University and the College of Liberal Arts are committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws provide guidance for achieving such an environment. Although class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to student record policies and laws, University employees — including instructors — cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues that jeopardize the health and safety of our community. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices if you share it with me, even if you do not want the disclosed information to be shared:

- Allegations of sexual assault, sexual discrimination, or sexual harassment when they involve TAMU students, faculty, or staff.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In many cases, it will be your decision whether or not you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Student Counseling Service (<https://scs.tamu.edu>). Students and faculty can report concerning, non-emergency behavior at <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>

**SPRING 2018 AT A GLANCE**

Week 1	Intro to Cyberspace	<i>Cybersecurity and Cyberwar</i> , Introduction and Part 1	
Week 2	Intro to Cyberethics	<i>Cybersecurity and Cyberwar</i> , Part II	
Week 3	Intro to Cyberethics	<i>Cybersecurity and Cyberwar</i> , Part II	
Week 4	Intro to Cyberpolitics	<i>Cybersecurity and Cyberwar</i> , Part III	
Week 5	Ethics: Moral Virtues	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , books i-ii; Bruce Schneier, <i>Liars and Outsiders</i>	
Week 6	Ethics: Intellectual Virtues and Artificial Intelligence	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book vi; John Searle’s <i>Talks at Google</i>	
Week 7	Ethics: Friendship and Social Media	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book viii; Shannon Vallor’s “New Social Media and the Virtues”	First exam
Week 8	Organizational Dynamics and Inclusivity	Tracy Lien’s <i>Why Women Are Leaving the Tech Industry in Doves</i> ; van Bavel and West’s “Seven Steps to Reduce Bias in Hiring”	1 <sup>st</sup> Analysis Paper due
<b>Spring Break: relax and be safe!</b>			
Week 9	Policy and Cyberspace	Bruce Schneier, <i>Regulating the Internet of Things</i> ; Selections from <i>Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations</i>	
Week 10	Privacy and Autonomy	Selection from Aristotle’s <i>Politics</i> ; Shannon Vallor’s “Surveillance and the Examined Life”	
Week 11	Intellectual Property	Hettinger’s “Justifying Intellectual Property”; Chris Sprigman on Intellectual Property; Richard Stallman’s <i>The GNU Manifesto</i>	
Week 12	<b>Professional Track:</b> Professional Ethics in Computing <b>Policy Track:</b> Ethics of Cybertechnology	<b>Professional Track:</b> Don Gotterbarn’s “Computing Professionalism: Do Good and Avoid Evil”; ACM and IEEE Codes of Ethics <b>Policy Track:</b> Miller, <i>Ellul’s Critique of Technological Society</i> ; Robert J. Whelchel, “Is Technology Neutral”	
Week 13	<b>Professional Track:</b> Professional Ethics in Computing <b>Policy Track:</b> Ethics of Cybertechnology	<b>Professional Track:</b> Harris, <i>Impediments to Moral Responsibility</i> ; Holzer and Lerum’s “The Ethics of Hacking Back” <b>Policy Track:</b> Holzer and Lerum’s “The Ethics of Hacking Back”; Bill Joy, “Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us”	
Week 14	Research Presentations	Student Choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Analysis Paper due
Final Exam: Monday, May 8, 1:00-3:00 pm			

\* The instructors reserve the right to change this schedule. Any changes will be communicated via eCampus as soon as possible.