FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

Fordham College at Lincoln Center

Department of Computer & Information Science

SYLLABUS

Semester: Spring, 2025

Course Number: CISC 4650 L01

Course Title: Cyberspace: Issues and Ethics

Instructor: Dr. Robert K. Moniot
Office LL 821-A, Phone (212) 636-6334
Office hours: TF 10:00–11:00 AM
Other office hours by appointment. (I am in my office M–F 9–5; call my secretary at (212) 636-6300 or use Google Calendar to make an appointment.)
E-mail: moniot@fordham.edu
URL: http://www.dsm.fordham.edu/~moniot

Class Hours: TF 8:30 AM – 9:45 AM, Room LL 904

Required Texts: *Cyberethics: Morality and Law in Cyberspace, 7th ed.,* by Richard A. Spinello ISBN 978-1-284-18406-8

Course Overview

This course explores issues of personal and social morality in the context of the technological developments related to the use of information and communication technology (ICT). ICT includes computer systems and digital media, as well as modern means of communication such as the Internet and wireless devices.

We will devote the first part of the course to examining frameworks within which these issues can be analyzed: the basis of ethical theories, and their application to practical decisions in life. Then we will explore some specific issues such as privacy, intellectual property, and freedom of expression in a series of lectures. The last few weeks of the course are organized around a series of student presentations.

Most of the resources for this class are on the Blackboard web site. For convenience, the syllabus, due dates, and schedule of presentations are also available on the publicly accessible web page:

http://www.dsm.fordham.edu/~moniot/Classes/CyberEthics25S/

Readings from the text will be assigned accompanying the lectures. Any outside readings will be provided either by links to available web sources or by posting on Blackboard.

It is not necessary for you to have any specialized training in computer or information science. Most of the issues can be understood without any detailed knowledge of the workings of the underlying technology. In any case, the analysis of these issues from a moral perspective is not dependent on their technological basis.

This course fulfills the core requirement of an EP4 / Values Seminar. It also applies to the following majors and minors: American Studies (Power Politics & Institutions concentration and Art, Music, Theater, or Media requirement), Digital Technologies & Emerging Media (Digital Equity, Ethics, and Power/Values requirement), Humanitarian Studies (Communications, Women's Studies, and Literary Studies requirement), and New Media & Digital Design (Ethics requirement). It is not applicable as a major or minor elective in Computer Science.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze case studies involving ICT to identify stakeholders and the positive and negative impacts on them.

- Correctly apply the principles of an accepted ethical framework to the analysis of case studies involving ICT.

- Identify and discuss the ethical constraints on the actions of professionals in fields involving ICT.

- Research a topic in ICT and write a cogent paper analyzing the topic and the ethical or social issues issues it raises.

- Give an effective presentation on a topic in ICT and the ethical and social issues it raises.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and is graded. This is a seminar, after all, and much of the value comes from class discussions. I encourage your active participation. Attendance grades are posted on the Blackboard grade book and updated within a day or two of each class meeting. The attendance grade for a given day is on a scale of 5 points. You get 3 points for mere presence. Points are added, up to a maximum score of 5 points, depending on the amount of contribution to class discussion: a score of 4 is for participating a little, and 5 for participating a lot. Students who give a presentation automatically receive a score of 5 for that day. Points may be deducted for lateness or for anything else that interferes with the conduct of the class, so grades below 3 are also possible. You may request in advance to be excused from class for a valid reason. The difference between excused absences and unexcused absences is that excused absences appear blank in the Blackboard gradebook and are not counted in the total participation grade, whereas unexcused absences count as a zero for participation. However, there is still a limit on the total number of absences allowed: see the section on Assessment and Grading below.

You are expected to arrive on time for class. If you do arrive late, please enter the classroom quietly so as not to disrupt the class in session. If you are expecting to receive papers back, wait and ask me at the end of class.

You are expected to remain until the end of class, barring a true emergency. If you know in advance that you will need to leave early, inform me before the start of class, and sit near the door so that you can leave without causing a disruption.

Please turn off all cell phones, beepers, etc. during class. Laptops and tape recorders are not permitted unless as an accommodation approved by the Office of Disability Services.

Assessment and Grading

Course grade is based on:

- class attendance and participation (15%),
- an in-class presentation (15%),
- a midterm paper (6–8 pages, 20%),
- four 2–3 page essays (10%)
- a final exam (15%), and
- a final research paper (9–12 pages, 25%).

There is no midterm exam in this class. The essays and midterm paper provide the mid-semester assessment. To pass the course you must complete each of these components adequately. In particular, since the in-class discussions are essential to the aims of this class, any student who misses more than five (5) class meetings (whether the absences are excused or unexcused) will not pass the class.

Grading will be on a percentage scale as follows:

93–100: A

90–92: A-

87–89: B+

83–86: B

80-82: B-

77–79: C+

73–76: C

70–72: C-

60–69: D

below 60: F

Assignments

The essays will be based on material discussed in class and on the assigned readings, and due one week after they are assigned. The grade for the presentation will include components for the preview and study guide (described below). The grades for the term papers will factor in promptness of submission of the proposals, drafts, and the papers themselves.

The midterm and final papers are to be based on library research and written in proper scholarly style, with references for all sources consulted. See the *MLA*

Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, The Chicago Manual of Style, or similar work for guidelines on proper citation style. I accept citations in any commonly accepted scholarly style. I request a **proposal** and **first draft** of each paper, **four weeks** and **two weeks,** respectively, before the due date of the paper itself. The proposal can be in outline form or a brief (approx. one page) summary of what you plan to cover. The proposal should indicate some research you have already done. The first draft is expected to be well along, close to final form. At a minimum it must be at least 2/3 of final length, and include some citations to sources consulted. Based on the proposal and draft I provide feedback to improve the final product. The proposal and draft are not graded, but failure to provide them on time will reduce the grade for the paper. Term papers will be accepted late, but with a penalty that increases with time. Papers may be handed in early, but this does not excuse you from providing the proposal and first draft.

In these papers, you are expected to analyze ethical issues raised by the use of ICT in specific areas. You may select the topics of your papers from areas such as the following: intellectual property, software piracy, music and video piracy, on-line privacy, artificial intelligence, defective software, misuse of software, computer crime, viruses and hacking, cryptography and national security, and computer communication and freedom of expression. This list is not intended to be definitive, and you are encouraged to consider other relevant topics of interest, perhaps drawing on your own experiences. The only restriction is that the topic needs to concern ethical and social issues related to ICT.

Presentations

You will give a presentation on the topic of one of your two papers (midterm or final). Your presentation is to be about 20–25 minutes long, followed by a few minutes of discussion led by the presenter. I request a **preview** consisting of an outline and a copy of the slides (if the presentation will use slides) **one week before the presentation,** so that I can provide feedback and guidance for improving the presentation. After each presentation, the other students will fill out evaluations including written comments to provide feedback about the effectiveness of the presentation. These peer evaluations will be one factor in the presentation grade. After the presentation, I will provide each presenter with a summary of the peer evaluations, along with my own constructive comments and an explanation of the grade assigned for the presentation.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of a set of questions to be answered with short essays. The questions will be based on topics covered in the student presentations, and will probe your understanding of the ethical issues raised by those topics. You will be expected to analyze those issues based on the ethical foundations covered in the first part of the course. To aid students' studying for the exam, I request each presenter to provide a **study guide** for their presentation, to be submitted **by the last class meeting date.** These study guides will be posted on Blackboard. The study guide should be an outline or detailed abstract, at most about 2 pages long, that identifies the main social and ethical issues raised by your topic. I also

request a copy of your slides to post along with your study guide. Late submissions of the study guides will **not be accepted,** since anything posted after the due date will be of little use for the other students to study from.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is very important to the mission of the university. Plagiarism or excessively close collaboration with others on projects will result in an F on the assignment and may result in an F for the course. You are responsible for and expected to follow the Fordham College at Lincoln Center policy regarding matters of academic integrity.

For purposes of this course, generative AI tools will be considered the same as human helpers, i.e., you may use them only in the same way as you would a human helper. Any work you turn in must be your own, or, if collaboration on the assignment is permitted, you must acknowledge any such assistance you received, whether human or AI.

Four-Credit Course Note

The Undergraduate Faculty Handbook states: "For four-credit courses that meet for 150 minutes [per week], the additional credit is earned by requiring three additional hours of class preparation per week in lieu of an additional hour of formal instruction." My expectation is that this additional required time outside class will be used to do thorough and careful research work for the two term papers, using the university library's databases to locate quality scholarly articles, reading them carefully, and following up citations in them to discover other sources.

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, please register with the Office of Disability Services for Students (ODS) in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. Please contact the main ODS number at 718-817-0655 to arrange services. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you need to register with ODS prior to receiving your accommodations. Please see me after class or during office hours if you have questions or would like to submit your academic accommodation letter to me if you have previously registered for accommodations.

Calendar

T Jan. 14: Course overview. Ethical principles.
    Read Spinello, ch. 1.

F Jan. 17: Ethical principles.

T Jan. 21: Ethical principles, cont'd.

F Jan. 24: Ethical principles, cont'd.
    Read McGonigal excerpt (posted on Blackboard).

T Jan. 28: Regulating the Internet.

    Read Spinello, ch. 2.

F Jan. 31: Regulating the Internet, cont'd.

    Essay 1 assigned.

T Feb. 4: Professional ethics.

    Read Johnson, ch. 7 (posted on Blackboard).

    Proposal for Midterm Paper due.

F Feb. 7: Professional ethics, cont'd..

    Essay 1 due.

T Feb. 11: Freedom of expression in cyberspace.

    Read Spinello, ch. 3.

F Feb. 14: Freedom of expression in cyberspace, cont'd.

    Essay 2 assigned.

T Feb. 18: *No class: Monday schedule.*

F Feb. 21: Intellectual property.

    Read Spinello, ch. 4.

    First draft of Midterm Paper due.

T Feb. 25: Intellectual property, cont'd.

    Essay 2 due.

F Feb. 28: Privacy.

T Mar. 4: Privacy, cont'd.

    Essay 3 assigned.

F Mar. 7: Privacy, cont'd.

    Read Spinello, ch. 5.

    Midterm Research Paper due.

T Mar. 11: Cybercrime.

    Essay 3 due.

F Mar. 14: Cybercrime, cont'd.

    Read Spinello, ch. 6.

Mar. 17–21: *No class: spring recess.*

T Mar. 25: Student presentations 1 & 2.

    Essay 4 assigned.

F Mar. 28: Student Presentations 3 & 4.

    Proposal for Final Paper due.

T Apr. 1: Student Presentations 5 & 6.
  Essay 4 due.

F Apr. 4: Student Presentations 7 & 8.

T Apr. 8: Student Presentations 9 & 10.

F Apr. 11: Student Presentations 11 & 12.
  First draft of Final Paper due.

T Apr. 15: Student Presentations 13 & 14.

Apr. 17–21: *No class: Easter recess.*

T Apr. 22: Student Presentations 15 & 16.

F Apr. 25: Student Presentations 17 & 18.

T Apr. 29: Student Presentation 19.
  Course evaluations.
  Final Research Paper due.
  Study Guides due.

F May 9: Final Exam, 1:30 pm. (Tentative date.)