HONR 494
Information Ethics and Privacy in the Age of Big Data
Spring 2018

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COURSE TITLE

Information Ethics and Privacy in the Age of Big Data

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This discussion-based course explores the ethics and privacy of information in our contemporary society. We will critique information production and consumption behavior across contexts, ranging from information shared on social media to government surveillance on the web. Students will learn ethical theory and practice from an interdisciplinary perspective by examining the ethical guidelines of various fields through case study analysis. Students will also learn new practical skills related to privacy on the web, including the tools and practices of encrypted communication. At the end of the semester, students will have a firm understanding of information ethics and web privacy. Students can apply these new concepts and skills to enhance civic engagement and protect privacy for themselves and others

LEARNING OUTCOMES
- Understand networked technologies, including algorithms, artificial intelligence, the web, and social media.
- Apply and critique strategies for personal privacy protection.
- Critically analyze and evaluate the contribution of networked technologies to societal structures of control, power, and oppression, especially for marginalized communities.
- Develop practical responses to ethical challenges relating to information and data from discrete disciplinary perspectives.

THE WORK OF THE COURSE
Semester Overview

Unit	Duration	What you'll do	Projects
Introduction to Ethics and Privacy	Weeks 1-2	Get-to-know-you exercises and discussions	—
Unit 1: Networked Technologies	Weeks 3-5	Understand networked technologies, including algorithms, artificial intelligence, the web, and social media.	Network technologies diary and report
Unit 2: Personal Privacy Protections	Weeks 6-7	Apply and critique strategies for personal privacy protection.	Privacy Awareness Campaign
Unit 3: Data is Power	Weeks 8-11	Critically analyze and evaluate the contribution of networked technologies to societal structures of control, power, and oppression, especially for marginalized communities.	Persuasive essay
Unit 4: Examining Ethical Challenges	Weeks 12-14	Develop practical responses to ethical challenges relating to information and data from discrete disciplinary perspectives.	Develop an ethical framework
Poster Project	Week 15	Research Poster and Forum	

Semester Details

Date	Readings	Exercises and Assignments	Topics and Goals for the day
Introduction to Ethics, Privacy, and Networked Technology			
Thursday, Jan 11		Vision Cards Brand Deck	Understand the syllabus and the class expectations and goals. Class community building.
Tuesday, Jan 16	Raymond Wacks, Privacy - A Very Short Introduction: Chapter 2 danah boyd, *It's Complicated* — Privacy		Privacy Introduction
Thursday, Jan 18 Meet in Special Collections reading room, Library 2nd floor	Trina J. Magi, Fourteen Reasons Privacy Matters: A Multidisciplinary Review of Scholarly Literature Fábio Esteves, "I have nothing to hide. Why should I care about my privacy?"		Why care about Privacy? Archival Collections and Privacy
Tuesday, Jan 23 Meet in Special Collections reading room, Library 2nd floor	Manoush Zomorodi, The Bookie, the Phone booth, and the FBI Michael Zimmer, Privacy Law and Regulation Michael Siebert, Montana lawmakers weigh privacy in the digital age US Department of Justice, The USA PATRIOT Act: Preserving Life and Liberty ACLU, Surveillance Under the Patriot Act, Infographic and Article Wikipedia Entry for the Connecticut Four	**Reflection Paper 1 assigned**	Privacy and the law

Unit 1: Networked Technologies			
Thursday, Jan 25 Meet in Special Collections reading room, Library 2nd floor	danah boyd, *It's Complicated — Introduction* Raymond Wacks, Privacy - A Very Short Introduction: Chapter 1 [pp. 16-33] Helen Nissenbaum, Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy, and the Integrity of Social Life — Introduction		Privacy in contemporary contexts
Tuesday, Jan 30	Jacob Brogan, What's the Deal With Algorithms? Lee Raine and Janna Anderson, Code-Dependent: Pros and Cons of the Algorithm Age Nick Seaver, Algorithms as culture: Some tactics for the ethnography of algorithmic systems	**Reflection Paper 1 Due** **Project 1 Assigned**	Algorithms Discuss reflection paper in class
Thursday, Feb 1	danah boyd and Kate Crawford, Critical questions for big data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon The Economist, Videographic: What is Big Data? Carine Lallemand, Dear Diary: Using Diaries to Study User Experience		Big Data and the Internet of Things
Tuesday, Feb 6	John Koetsier, 2-minute explainer: AI vs. machine learning vs. deep learning James Vincent, What counts as artificially intelligent? AI and deep learning, explained Margot O'Neill, Explainer: What is artificial intelligence? NPR Ted Radio Hour, Jeremy Howard: Will Artificial Intelligence Be The Last Human Invention?	Diaries due to Sara and Scott	Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

Thursday, Feb 8	—	**Project 1 Due**	Diary Study reporting Small group analysis of Diary Studies
Unit 2: Personal Privacy Protections			
Tuesday, Feb 13	The Next Web, Facebook tracks scary-specific details about your life. Here's how to find what it knows Review your Facebook Ad Preferences and Apply Magic Sauce Martin Shelton, Securing Your Digital Life Like a Normal Person [and reference the "low-effort," "medium-effort," and "high-effort" lists of online privacy practices from Vicki Boykis, How to protect your data and privacy online for the average user] Jon Christian, I tried to switch to secure email and I want to bang my head on a desk		Web Tracking: What it is, why we should care, and how to respond to it.
Thursday, Feb 15	Laura Kalbag, Indie Design [video] Privacy Policies [Skim]: Facebook, D2L, MSU Library, MSU FERPA Notice, Google, Snap Inc. Privacy Infographics: ACLU, National Geographic Satellites, Infographic 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	**Project 2 assigned**	Tracking and targeting Privacy Policy Reviews Review infographics as a class Canva infographic creator
Tuesday, Feb 20	Yasha Levine, The Crypto-Keepers Julia Powles, Obfuscation: how leaving a trail of confusion can beat online surveillance Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai, Visiting Random Sites to Confuse Trackers Won't Protect Your Privacy	Create an Elevator Pitch	Critique prevailing privacy-protection approaches

Unit 3: Data is Power			
Thursday, Feb 22

Meet in Special Collections reading room, Library 2nd floor | Yochai Benkler, Degrees of Freedom, Dimensions of Power, Yochai Benkler

Natasha Duarte, Algorithmic decision-making in NYC

Willamette Week, Portland's top brass said it was OK to swipe your garbage--so we grabbed theirs. [This brief reading highlights privacy in a fun way. Feel free to skim.] | Axes of Oppression (plus alternate view) | Data as Power - Introduction

Axes of Oppression |
| Tuesday, Feb 27 | John Lanchester, You Are the Product | **Project 2 Due** | Ethics of Technology - Social Media and Misinformation |
| Thursday, Mar 1 | Goldie Blumenstyk, As Big Data Comes to College, Officials Wrestle to Set New Ethical Norms

Cecelia Parks, Beyond Compliance: Students and FERPA in the Age of Big Data | | Ethics of Technology - Students |
| Tuesday, Mar 6 | Sam Adler-Bell, Privacy for Whom?

Garret Keizer, Privacy of the Poor

Erin McCormick, Big Brother on wheels? Fired security robot divides local homeless people | | Ethics of Technology - Class |
| Thursday, Mar 8 | Kerry Rodden, Is that a boy or a girl? Exploring a neural network's construction of gender

Garret Keizer, A feminist critique of privacy | **Mid-term Self-Evaluatio n Due**

Project 3 assigned | Ethics of Technology - Gender |
| Tuesday, Mar 13 | Spring Break | | |
| Thursday, Mar 15 | Spring Break | | |

Tuesday, Mar 20	Safiya Noble, [Challenging the algorithms of oppression](#) (plus optionally read the [corresponding article](#)) Aljazeera, [Surveilling Black Lives Matter (video)](#) Chukwuemeka Afigbo, [If you have ever had a problem grasping the importance of diversity in tech and its impact on society, watch this video](#)		Ethics of Technology - Race
Unit 4: Examining Ethical Challenges			
Thursday, Mar 22	Michael Keller and Josh Neufeld, [Terms of Service: Understanding our Role in the World of Big Data](#)		Ethics of Researching with Big Data — Commercial Apps
Tuesday, Mar 27	Take a look at this infographic from Futurism: [Types of AI: from reactive to self-aware](#) Boer Deng, [Machine ethics: the robot's dilemma](#) NPR podcast [Can robots teach us what it means to be human?](#) (33 minutes) Motherboard, [Tractor Hacking: The Farmers Breaking Big Tech's Repair Monopoly](#)	**Project 3 Due**	Robot Ethics and AI Ethics Watch clips in class from Ex Machina
Thursday, Mar 29	Read your partner's Project 3 [to be assigned on March 27] [Facebook emotional contagion](#) and [analysis](#) by Jouhki et al.	**Reflection Paper 2 Assigned**	Ethics of Researching with Big Data — Social Media In-class peer evaluation of Project 3 Ethics Survey

Tuesday, Apr 3	Jacob Metcalf, Ethics Codes: History, Context, and Challenges	**Project 4 and Poster Project assigned**	Ethical Codes and Frameworks, Part 1 Discuss the final 3 weeks of class In-class reading and analysis: ethical codes from different disciplines
Thursday, Apr 5	Steven Ginnis, #WhatAreYouDoingWithMyData: a framework for social media ethics Association of Internet Researchers, Charting Ethical Questions By Data And Type. (Appendix 1 from the report "Ethical decision-making and Internet research 2.0: Recommendations from the AoIR ethics working committee")	**Reflection Paper 2 Due** **(please bring 4 printed copies to class)**	Ethical Codes and Frameworks, Part 2 Discuss reflection paper in class In-class reading and analysis: ethical frameworks from different disciplines
Tuesday, Apr 10	Student-directed readings and discussions		Read and discuss ethics from different disciplines
Thursday, Apr 12	Student-directed readings and discussions		Read and discuss ethics from different disciplines
Tuesday, Apr 17	Student-directed readings and discussions		Read and discuss ethics from different disciplines
Thursday, Apr 19	Student-directed readings and discussions	**Project 4 Due at 11:59pm**	Read and discuss ethics from different disciplines
Posters and sharing			
Tuesday, Apr 24	Poster in-class Preparation		
Thursday, Apr 26	Poster Presentation	**Poster Due at 9am**	
Finals Week		**Final Self-Evaluation Due May 1 at 11:59pm**	

PROJECTS and ASSIGNMENTS

This course will include three categories of assignments: reflection papers, major projects, and self-evaluations.

Reflection Papers

Throughout the semester, you will write a brief (250-500 words) reflection paper that articulates your response to and understanding of our current readings and discussions. These papers function as diagnostic check-ins—a chance for you to work through your ideas and the ideas of your classmates. The word count is meant to be a guideline to help structure your response. We will discuss the reflection papers together as a class.

Major Projects

Each major project will correspond to a thematic learning unit. The projects will allow you to explore course topics more deeply, and are designed to provide you with an opportunity to share your ideas and demonstrate your familiarity with the course concepts.

Project 1. Diary Study and Report

At the conclusion of our first unit—Networked Technologies—you will complete a project that will highlight your position and understanding within today's networked technologies. We will provide you with a structured "diary" in which you will record your daily activities relating to browsing the web, interacting on social media, and using apps on your mobile devices. You will then work in small groups to analyze your collective diaries, with a view towards detecting patterns and connections within the network of the internet.

Project 2. Design a privacy awareness campaign

Based on our second unit—Personal Privacy Protection—this project will entail designing a privacy awareness campaign. The goal of this project is to apply your new knowledge of information privacy through an engaging and accessible campaign, in the form of an infographic. In essence, you will seek to answer the question, "How do you get your friends to care about privacy?"

Project 3. Write a persuasive essay, with peer evaluation

Based on our third unit—Data is Power—this project will entail writing a persuasive essay in the style of a NY Times or other major newspaper piece. Consider this writing assignment as an opportunity to persuade the reader about a certain topic.

Take about 1,000 words to explore a dimension of power drawn from our class readings. To help shape your response, we will provide you will a set of about 10 statements related to the readings for you to choose from. For the peer evaluation component of this assignment, you will be paired with another student and you will be asked to respond to evaluation prompts related to structure, clarity, and persuasiveness.

Project 4. Develop a technology-related ethical framework
"Ethical frameworks are concrete instruments that are aimed at assisting professionals in *deliberating* about ethical aspects of programs and policy in order to support the day to day decision-making about their implementation."[1]

Based on our fourth unit—Examining Ethical Challenges—this project will entail examining existing ethical dilemmas and frameworks, and developing your own framework. Choose an ethical dilemma related to technology in your discipline, drawn from the news or located through disciplinary-related research. Consider the various points of view of different actors within the dilemma and create a narrative scenario that describes their different motivations and perspectives. From within this complexity, develop a framework for ethical inquiry into your dilemma. The framework may be based on or adapted from an existing framework that we discuss in class, or you may reference another existing framework that you find relevant. The framework that you develop for this project will be suited for your specific dilemma, and will include guiding questions that can can function as a framework for ethical action. Ultimately, ethics is less about finding the right answers, and more about asking the right questions. This project will allow you to articulate questions that can shape ethical action for yourself and others in your academic field.

Poster Project
For our final project, you will create a poster that describes and shares the ethical framework that you developed in Project 4. The posters will be presented on the final day of class as a research forum, where we will engage in ethics-focused dialogue about your research and insights.

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[1] ten Have, M., de Beaufort, I. D., Mackenbach, J. P., & van der Heide, A. (2010). An overview of ethical frameworks in public health: can they be supportive in the evaluation of programs to prevent overweight?. BMC public health, 10(1), 638. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-10-638

Self-Evaluations

At the middle of the semester, you will write a midterm self-evaluation that reflects on your work and contributions throughout the course. You will complete a similar self-evaluation at the end of the term. The self-evaluations are intended to serve as helpful reflective exercises in which you document your process and overall progress. The self-evaluations will not only inform our own evaluation of you, but will inform how we adjust the course itself as we progress together.

Midterm Self-evaluation

Instructions: Create a document that responds to the following questions. You are welcome to approach this self-evaluation either as a series of answers to each of these questions or as a less formal letter to us about the course and your work. Be honest and carefully consider your work thus far in the class.

1. Evaluate your participation during in-class discussion. How would you characterize your involvement in our discussions so far? What are your strengths and weaknesses in this regard? Have you read and thought through the readings? What could have used more work? How has your thinking evolved from one week to the next?

2. Tell us about how your thinking and practice has evolved so far in the class, focusing on privacy, data, power, and society. How do our course topics and discussions relate to your personal life and your course of study at MSU?

3. Have you completed all assigned work for the course?

4. What letter grade would you give yourself for the first half of this course and why? Consider preparedness, the strength of your written work, your participation in discussion, and your goals for the semester.

5. How is this course meeting your personal learning goals?

6. What questions do you have for us at this point? About the subjects of the class? About your work/progress this semester? Are there any aspects of your work that you would particularly like feedback on? Do you have feedback for us about the class so far?

Final Self-evaluation

Instructions: Create a document with answers to each of the following questions. The questions here are less prescriptive than on the midterm self-evaluation, in order to give you the opportunity to reflect on the course in a way that feels appropriate to you.

1. Write a short evaluation of your performance in this class (up to 250 words), addressing the following sorts of questions: Were you prepared for each class week? Did you do all of the required readings and projects? How would you characterize your overall effort, interest, and commitment to the class? Did your engagement increase or decrease as the semester went along? How did you meet the goals for the course?

2. Write a brief description of the ethics and privacy skills and concepts that you gained or built upon as a result of this class (up to 250 words). Are there skills or ideas that you still want to gain or discuss beyond what the class provided?

3. We would like to know a bit about your experience building community with your classmates. Please reflect on our shared experience together (up to 250 words): did the structure of this class and our approach to dialogue and discussion help build community connections with your classmates? If yes, please tell us why. If not, let us know that too.

4. What letter grade would you give yourself for the semester and why? Consider preparedness for class, the strength of your papers and projects, and your participation in discussions and class activities.

GRADING

For this class, you will ultimately make a recommendation to us for your final grade based on your completion of "Grade Conditions" that are outlined below. While we will assign final grades (as officially required), you will evaluate your own work throughout the course through self-evaluations that will inform our evaluation of you. We have included grade conditions for A, B, and C (with lower grades at our discretion) that you can use as a reference in evaluating your own work.

Throughout the course we will not be putting letter or number grades on individual assignments. We will add questions and comments that engage with your work. You will also be reflecting carefully on your own work and engaging thoughtfully with the work of your peers. The intention here is to create a more open and

organic learning experience rather than a prescriptive grade-driven experience. If this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, contact us at any point to talk about your performance in the course. If you are worried about your grade, your best approach will be to join the discussions, do the reading, and complete the projects with sincere interest. You should consider this course a "busy-work-free zone." If an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions.

Grade Conditions

Your Activity	What an "A" grade looks like	What a "B" grade looks like	What a "C" grade looks like
Projects and reflection papers	Projects and papers demonstrate a clear understanding of the course topics, as connected to the course readings, exercises, and discussions. Complete projects and papers with sincere effort and attention.	Projects and papers demonstrate an understanding of connected to the course readings, exercises, and discussions. Complete projects and paper with some effort and attention.	Projects and papers demonstrate some understanding as connected to the course readings, exercises, and discussions. Complete projects and papers.
Course Participation	Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions Complete all four projects on time Complete all three reflection papers on time Meet with us	Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions Complete all four projects, and submit at least two on time Complete all three reflection papers, and submit at least two on time	Participate with good faith and generosity in most discussions Complete all four projects, and submit at least two on time Complete all three reflection papers,

	individually to establish a personal learning goal	Meet with us individually to establish a personal learning goal	and submit at least two on time
Self-Evaluations	Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation with sincere self-reflection and thorough familiarity with course readings and discussions	Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation with sincere self-reflection and some familiarity with course readings and discussions	Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation

DISABILITY

We wish to make this class accessible to all. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact us or the Office of Disability Services.

UNIVERSITY CONDUCT POLICIES

This course will adhere to the MSU Conduct Guidelines.