Fall 2020 CS/IT 285L – Social Issues and Ethics in Computing

☐ COVID-19 Semester: All Sections are Remote
☐ Live lectures will take place T/Th at 10:00am on Zoom. ID: 926 0532 1412

Instructor: A. Potasznik
potaszni@cs.umb.edu
Site: http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotaszni/

Office hours:
Wednesdays 1-4pm, by appt. (via Zoom. ID: 915 9531 3284)

Notable dates:

9/8: First class; 9/15 End of add/drop
9/13: Beginning of Semester “test” due
9/20, 10/4, 10/18, 11/1, 11/15
Midterm: 10/22
Optional Workshops: 12/3,8,10
Final paper due: Thurs 12/17


2. Student Goals
● Understand the basic ethical concepts & frameworks as they apply to issues in IT
● Become sensitized to computer ethics terminology
● Examine U.S. case law and legislation regarding computer ethics
● Acquire tools and methods for analyzing cases
● Acquire practice in applying the tools and methods to actual or realistic cases
● Effectively monitor news media to critically analyze issues
● Thoroughly examine and write about particular social or ethical issues
● Present a complex issue to an audience of peers
➢ Successfully communicate and collaborate with members in a group
➢ Successfully argue cases with peers of opposing viewpoints
➢ Develop ethical autonomy: good judgment and helpful intuitions

3. Basic rubric
Write-ups (~5-6): 25%, Participation: 20%, Midterm: 15%, Presentation: 25%, Final Exam: 15%
THERE IS NO EXTRA CREDIT OFFERED IN THIS CLASS. The generosity of the late policy renders extra credit superfluous. No courses required by the CS major, minor, or certificate may be taken pass/fail.

4. Detailed rubric
Weekly write-ups: 25%
Students are required to monitor news media of their choice. About every week, students will select a current (no more than 3 months old) article with social or ethical impact and submit (via blackboard) a 1-page (minimum, excluding heading and works cited) write-up explaining the issue. Headings should be no more than 2 lines long, including name and section number. All applicable terminology and vocabulary as learned in class should be appropriately referenced. All sources must be correctly cited. There will be 5 papers per semester. Students will present their findings to the class randomly throughout the semester. Weekly write-ups will be submitted in .docx or .pdf format via blackboard. Write-ups including plagiarized content will receive a non-negotiable grade of 0 and will result in failure of the course. Detailed directions and requirements can be found at http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotaszni/how-to-write-a-weekly-write-up/.

Participation: 20%
Students will submit their answers to assigned homework questions in the appropriate Blackboard submission folder on Saturdays by 11:59. They will then comment on the homework posted by other members in their groups on Sundays by 11:59pm. Homework not submitted on the discussion board by the deadline for any reason will not receive full credit. Students will be notified in advance of homework topics for discussion for the next class. See website for exact requirements.
Midterm: 15%

There will be a multiple-choice midterm exam consisting of acronym significance, court case outcomes, effects of various acts and statutes, & terminology. Up to 30 pages of approved handwritten notes may be used on the midterm exam. A study guide may be found on the class site. No digital or printed notes allowed. Due to the study guide and open note policy, there will be no make-up opportunities for students who miss or fail the midterm.

Presentation: 25%

Students will form groups to research a specific social or ethical issue of their choice, then prepare a 9 - 12 minute presentation. They will highlight all viewpoints on the subject and use applicable class terminology. Students will use an approved application to post visual and audio content. Students will be assigned presentation dates at the beginning of the semester and may seek advice/approval on topics from the instructor. If in doubt, discuss content with the professor before the presentation. Projects must be posted in the correct Blackboard location by 8am on the presentation day. All other students must comment on the project by Sundays at 11:59pm. Detailed instructions and requirements can be found at http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotaszni/project-details-and-advice/.

Final Exam: 15%

The final exam will be a paper between 3 and 10 pages long. Students may choose to base their final papers on one of the scenarios available in the class slides or to complete a longer version of a weekly write-up (based on a current event, no more than 3 months old). No late or emailed final papers will be accepted. Detailed instructions and requirements can be found at http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotaszni/allterms/. Final papers may not be based on scenarios that were explained in class.

5. Attendance [This section has changed for COVID classes, see #4, Participation. The deduction scale is still accurate for submitted assignments]

Attendance is mandatory and factored into the student’s grades as class participation. Students should email the teacher in advance if they plan to miss a day of class. At that point they may submit evidence of homework due on the day of absence (via email) and find the new assignments (online). Missing the previous class is not an excuse for being unprepared with hw when the student returns. Any unexcused work received past the due date will receive a deduction on the following scale:

| Less than 1 day late: | -10 points | Less than 1 week: | -30 points | More than 1 week: no credit |

Only homework accompanied by documentation proving a medical or family emergency will receive reduced deduction or the absence be counted as “excused.” Students with multiple missed assignments may no longer be eligible to submit late work. This determination is at the professor’s discretion. This scale does not apply to the midterm, projects, or final papers, which must be completed according to set dates.

6. Academic Integrity

All coursework submitted should be current, original and unique for this particular course. Any student submitting somebody else’s work as their own or copying their own old work (whole or in part) to a new submission will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment and potentially the entire course. In particularly drastic cases, plagiarism can lead to expulsion from the University. The instructor will not tolerate dishonesty and will make no exceptions to this policy. More academic integrity information can be found here: http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotaszni/plagiarism/. If you do use quotes, you will be graded on your own synthesis, not on the quality of the work you are citing or quoting. Assignments with evidence of plagiarism cannot be resubmitted.

7. Student conduct

Students are required to adhere to the University Policy on Academic Standards and Cheating, to the University Statement on Plagiarism and the Documentation of Written Work, and to the Code of Student Conduct which is available online at: https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/dean_of_students/student_conduct.

8. Disabilities

Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offers guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center for Disability Services, M1401 (617-287-7430). The student must present these recommendations and discuss them with each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of Drop/Add period.

9. WPE

Students wishing to use papers from this course for the university writing proficiency exam should contact the professor by email with their request (including specific plans for their foreseen timeline and assignment choice) by the 4th week of classes. Final papers used for this purpose will be due before the stated due date. The professor reserves the right to refuse WPE requests. See: http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotaszni/wpe/.