



Course Syllabus: PHI 6679 - Digital Ethics

Wednesdays 6:00-8:50pm live on Zoom
Fall 2021

Course Description and Objectives

As digital technologies and information continues to pervade our experience of and in the world, digital ethics works to develop strategies, theories, and concepts to help us navigate the complex value landscape. Connecting cases and examples to digital ethics theory, this seminar examines ethical implications of contemporary digital technologies and the cultures, communities, and environments they support. Students of digital ethics will critically examine the nature and scope of the digital to analyze and unpack its ethical implications for not only social structures and institutions but also for human and nonhuman nature.



Participants in PHI 6679 will:

1. build familiarity with a range of theoretical and analytical perspectives in ethics,
2. develop ethics literacy through identifying, reasoning through, and taking actionable steps to engage contemporary ethical issues,
3. present key ideas clearly and coherently to your peers, and
4. effectively situate your own ideas in the professional intellectual context of existing discourse.

Mode Description:

I recognize there are a lot of changes to course modalities, thanks to shifting pandemic conditions. So this section of my syllabus is intended to describe, as clearly as possible, how this course will meet. This course is offered live (synchronously) and on Zoom. Students can attend from any location, but must participate during regularly scheduled class sessions. Think of this mode as the same as an in-person class on campus, except that we'll only meet digitally. Note that, just like in my in-person classes on campus, attending live is the best way but not only way to learn and engage.

Office Hours:

I will be available during official office hours from 4:00-6:00pm on Thursdays, by [Zoom \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and/or webcourses chat. I will not be available for physically-present in-person office hours, in order to keep you, me, our families, friends, and young children safe during the delta-variant phase of the pandemic.

Course Grading:





Letter Grade	GPA	Percent Score
A	4.00	93-100
A-	3.75	90-92
B+	3.25	87-89
B	3.00	83-86
B-	2.75	80-82
C+	2.25	77-79
C	2.00	73-76
C-	1.75	70-72
D+	1.25	67-69
D	1.00	65-66
D-	0.75	60-64
F	0	≤59

Academic Integrity:

This is an ethics class, so it seems unnecessary to say that plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course and/or the placement of a "Z" designator with your grade. See the UCF policy at <http://z.ucf.edu>. Academic dishonesty will subject you to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the **UCF Golden Rule** (<http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>) handbook for further information.

Course Accessibility Statement:

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning in this class. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning in this course, please meet with me to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about course design concerns, but it is always best if we can talk at least one week prior to the need for any modifications.

Since we are still negotiating pandemic-related family and work concerns, course accessibility also has to do with excused absences and late work. My policy here is that I will be as reasonably sympathetic as I can. I will excuse absences if you notify me in advance, and will record lectures for you to view later (or again). I will accept late work up to one week after a deadline, if you notify me in advance.

Teach Act Statement:

The materials for this course are only for the fair use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated. The instructor will receive no royalty payments for any materials used in this course.





Syllabus Subject to Change:

I anticipate that we will make adjustments to the readings and schedule based on what decisions we make together in class. All changes will be clearly announced in person and online. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes and take responsibility for being aware of them.

Course Evaluation:

1. Participation (10%)

Participation is required. I will work with you to address conflicts and emergencies on a case-by-case basis, but expect you to participate in course discussions in a timely manner and to deliver assignments on time. Participation hinges on engaging thoughtfully with the readings and your colleagues' analysis and discussions of them.

2. Critical Annotations (15%)

Critical annotations will push you to develop understanding of theories, concepts, and figures related to digital ethics. These weekly short (300-500 word) analytic exercises will scaffold toward your final project. These assignments will ask you to (a) annotate the week's readings and to (b) draw connections to other works or figures that have come up in course-related readings, (c) reminding yourself of comments, questions, or concerns you'd like to bring up in class. Write with the intention of developing a conference-length paper from one or more of them later on. Critical Annotations are due no later than 12:00pm the day of the relevant class session.

3. Seminar Leadership (25%)

Choose a week in which the topic relates to your own interests. You will lead discussion of the readings that week, and will be expected to prepare notes and/or a presentation to stimulate that discussion. Presentations can be in any format, but must centrally address the readings in a clear and thorough way. Your goal is to help us unpack what you see as important themes, concepts, and arguments in those readings. Your presentation should seek to give the rest of the class (and us) access to the way your disciplinary background views and engages with those ideas, and with ethics generally. Your seminar leadership will be scored with a presentation rubric that values presentation skills, clear communication, organization, and creativity.

4. Annotated Bibliography and Argument Outline (10%)

This list of at least 10 references and summaries will be related to the proposed topic of your final digital ethics project (below). The majority of references should be to academic sources. Citation format should be discipline-specific.

Annotations should do at least two things. They should foremost tell us why you included it as an entry - why is it important for your topic? Second, they should tell us something about the content





- main thesis, approach, important premises, etc. I don't expect that should take you more than 2 short paragraphs for each annotation. See the **Purdue OWL** (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>) for more information and for help with formatting.

5. Digital Ethics Project (30%)

This assignment has two parts: a written part, and a multimedia part.

For the written part, you'll develop a 5000-8000 word argumentative paper on a theme or topic discussed through the readings and/or in class. This paper should present a critical argument in or around digital ethics directly engaging readings or author's perspectives we have discussed in class. I recommend that you discuss topics with me in advance.

For the multimedia part, I want you to prepare a lightning-talk style presentation of that argument, as you would for a professional conference, to share and discuss in class. You may use any multimedia format you'd like to produce an engaging, clear, and concise lightning talk. In that talk, you should clearly state your problem, your central claim (thesis), how you support that claim, and at least one potential counter-argument and rebuttal.

Your digital ethics project will be graded using a critical thinking rubric I will provide in advance. You will receive substantial feedback on this work.

6. Evaluations of Peer Projects (10%)

Offer evaluations of two (2) of your peers' digital ethics projects. These should: a) evaluate content delivery, b) assess engagement with ethical issues, c) and pose comments and/or questions for the presenter. You will use the same assessment rubric that I do and include a numeric score along with brief written remarks. Your scores and comments will be shared with the author and visible to the class.

Required Texts & Materials:

1. Floridi, Luciano. 2013. *The Ethics of Information*. Oxford University Press. (required)
2. Beever, Jonathan; McDaniel, Rudy; Stanlick, Nancy. 2020. *Understanding Digital Ethics*. (recommended)
3. Ess, Charles. 2022. *Digital Media Ethics, Third Edition*. Polity Press. (secondary recommendation)
4. Other readings as shared on our webcourses site.

Course Topics:





Each week, we will cover a specific topic in digital ethics. Topics may be adjusted based on student interest and per the “subject to change” policy above. Likely topics will include:

- Ethics Literacy and Decision-Making
- Agency, Autonomy, and Identity
- Responsibility
- Meaning and Making
- Ownership, Copyright, and Copyleft
- Privacy and Surveillance
- Determinism and Data
- Transparency
- Security, Violence, Terrorism
- Sustainability (environments)

As you can see from this list of topics, digital ethics covers the convergence of ethical agents (those capable of making ethical decisions, both human and artificial), ethical patients (those impacted by ethical decisions), and the epistemic landscape (knowledge and data) that couples to ethics. We will unpack each topic through case study examples, theoretical frameworks, and robust interdisciplinary discussion.

A full course calendar is available to students enrolled in the course.













Course Calendar:		
Week/Date	Topic/Content	Readings
1 - Aug 20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductions and Syllabus Discussion 2. Traditional approaches 3. The nature of ethics and its relationship to knowledge and being 4. Rules, Theories, and Principles: approaches to ethical analysis 5. Agents and Patients 	n/a
2 - Aug 27	What is Digital Ethics?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Floridi: "Ethics After the Information Revolution." <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch. 1 2. Floridi: "What is Information Ethics?" <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch. 2. 3. "Defining Digital Ethics ." <i>Understanding Digital Ethics</i>. 2019. Beever, McDaniel, Stanlick. 4. "Central Issues in the Ethics of Digital Media." <i>Digital Media Ethics</i>, 2020. Ess, Charles.
3 - Sept 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pluralistic Analysis for Ethical Decision-Making 2. Scale -- Responsible Conduct of Research/Broader Impacts/Embedded Ethics 3. Scope -- Personal/Societal/Professional 4. Skill -- Moral Literacy and Reflexive Principlism (pluralist approaches) 5. A Proliferation of Strategies 6. Professional Standards 7. digital standards (laws, guidelines?) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Floridi: "The Method of Abstraction." <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch. 3. 2. Responsible Conduct 📄 (Steneck) 3. "Identifying Digital Ethics 📄." <i>Understanding Digital Ethics</i> . 2019. Beever, McDaniel, Stanlick.





<p>4 - Sept 11</p>	<p>Determinism and technology Guest Lecture: Kayte Spector-Bagdady</p>	<p>1. Floridi. 2014. "Identity Onlife .</p> <p>The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Shaping Reality: Ch. 3.</p> <p>2. Spector-Bagdady, K., Lombardo, P.A. 2018. "From in vivo (https://www.milbank.org/wp-content/uploads/mq/volume-96/june-2018/Spector-Bagdady.pdf) to in vitro (https://www.milbank.org/wp-content/uploads/mq/volume-96/june-2018/Spector-Bagdady.pdf) : How the Guatemala STD Experiments Transformed Bodies into Biospecimens (https://www.milbank.org/wp-content/uploads/mq/volume-96/june-2018/Spector-Bagdady.pdf) ." The Milbank Quarterly 00(0):1-28.</p> <p>3. Chandler, Daniel. "Technological and Media Determinism .</p> <p>Wayne. 2015. "Electronic gadgets versus printed books and records: what we risk losing .</p>
<p>5 - Sept 18</p>	<p>Ownership</p>	<p>1. Kantrowitz, Emma. 2013. "Do Cloud Ethics Exist? Who is on your Cloud, an What are They Looking At? .</p> <p>(A Practical Guide to Digital Journalism Ethics: Ed. Don Heider, John Thomas.)</p> <p>2. James et al. 2009. "Ownership and Authorship. Young People, Ethics, and the New Digital Media : 45-57.</p> <p>3. Bruin and Floridi. 2017. "The Ethics of Cloud Computing .</p> <p><i>Science and Engineering Ethics.</i></p> <p>4. Beever, McDaniel, Stanlick. 2019. "Reproducibility and Transferability .</p> <p><i>Understanding Digital Ethics.</i> 2019.</p>
<p>6 - Sept 25</p>	<p>Meaningfulness: Representation and Meaning <i>Presenter: Corinne</i> <i>Peer Evaluators: Daniel, Tami</i></p>	<p>1. Nagel, Thomas. 1974. "What Is It Like to be a Bat? .</p> <p><i>Mind.</i></p> <p>2. Brier, Soren. Cybersemiotics.</p> <p>(http://www.iupui.edu/~arisbe/menu/library/aboutcsp/brier/brier-cybersemiotics-2013.pdf)</p>





		<p>(http://www.iupui.edu/~arisbe/menu/library/aboutcsp/brier/brier-cybersemiotics-2013.pdf))</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Favareau, Don. 2009. "Definitions of Meaning" Uexkull, Jacob Von. 1934. "The Theory of Meaning" Floridi. "The Intrinsic Value of the Infosphere." <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch. 6.
<p>7 - Oct 2</p>	<p>Freedom, Autonomy, and Digital Identity</p> <p><i>Presenter: John</i> <i>Peer Evaluator: Christine, Tiffany</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker: Andrew Iliadis, (http://www.andrewiliadis.com/) Assistant Professor, Temple University - On Data Ontology and Embodiment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Beever and Morar. 2016. "Ecological Autonomy." <i>American Journal of Bioethics</i>. Young People, Ethics, and the New Digital Media (https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/young-people-ethics-and-new-digital-media) (Privacy 21-33 and Good Play 11-17) -- the whole report is interesting. [Select "Download PDF" under the "Open Access Title"] Floridi. "The Informational Nature of Selves." <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch. 11. Beever, McDaniel, Stanlick. 2019. "Empathy and Desensitization ." <i>Understanding Digital Ethics</i>. Routledge. Harari, Y.N. 2018. "Why Technology Favors Tyranny" (https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/10/yuval-noah-harari-technology-tyranny/568330/) ." <i>The Atlantic</i> (suggested by Daniel)
<p>8 - Oct 9</p>	<p>Privacy vs. Surveillance</p> <p><i>Presenter: Christine</i> <i>Peer Evaluators: Kirk, Emily</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker: Ret. Col. Bruce D. Caulkins, Ph.D. (http://cyber.cecs.ucf.edu/people/bruce-caulkins) , Research Associate, Graduate Faculty, Modeling and Simulation Graduate Program IST</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bohrer, Isabel Eva. 2012. Homeland Security, the FBI and Social Media: There is no Such Thing as Privacy. (A Practical Guide to Digital Journalism Ethics : Ed. Don Heider, John Thomas.) Richmond, Holly. 2013. The Ethics of Facial Recognition Software: Using Facial Identification Technology on Issues Unrelated to Security Can be a Threat. (A Practical Guide to Digital Journalism Ethics : Ed. Don Heider, John Thomas.)





		<p>3. Floridi, L. 2018. "Privacy and Power in the digital Age." <i>Aeon Video</i>. Luciano Floridi: Privacy and Power in the Digital Age (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zdRskstz00)</p> <p>4. Lyon, D. 2017. Surveillance Culture: Engagement, Exposure, and Ethics in Digital Modernity . <i>International Journal of Communication</i>.</p> <p>5. Floridi. "The Ontological Interpretation of Informational Privacy." <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch. 12.</p>
<p>9 - Oct 16</p>	<p>Security, Terrorism, and Violence</p> <p><i>Presenter: Tiffany</i> <i>Peer Evaluator: John, Corinne</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker: Ted Reynolds, Ph.D. (http://cyber.cecs.ucf.edu/people/ted-reynolds) , Senior Research Fellow in Terrorism Studies</p>	<p>1. Stockdale David. 2013. Ethical Binds in a Digital World: We have to Decide Where to Draw the Line When it Comes to Privacy and Security. (A Practical Guide to Digital Journalism Ethics : Ed. Don Heider, John Thomas.)</p> <p>2. Taylor, Robert W, Eric J. Fritsch, and John Ca Liederbach 2011. "Digital Terrorism and Information Warfare .<!--" <i-->Digital Crime and Digital Terrorism, 3rd Edition: Ch 2. . Prentice Hall.</p> <p>3. Floridi. "Artificial Evil." <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch.</p>
<p>10 - Oct 23</p>	<p>Guest Speaker: Greg Welch (https://nursing.ucf.edu/research/bios/welch) (on applied simulation)</p>	<p>1. McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. Understanding Media: Pt 1: 1-24 .</p> <p>2. Williams, Nikki. 2013. Neuromarketing: Is Big Brother in Your Head?</p> <p>The Potential Exists for Access to, and Control of, Subconscious Decision-Making. (A Practical Guide to Digital Journalism Ethics : Ed. Don Heider, John Thomas.)</p> <p>3. Kirn. 2015. "If You're Not Paranoid, You're Crazy .<!--" <i-->The Atlantic.</p>





		<p>4. Webb. 2016. "We Post Nothing About Our Daughter Online </p> <p>5. Floridi. "The Morality of Artificial Agents." <i>The Ethics of Information:</i></p> <p>Ch 7.</p> <p>6. Beever, Stanlick, McDaniel. 2019. "The Resituation of Agency </p> <p><i>Understanding Digital Ethics</i>. Routledge.</p>
11 - Oct 30	<p>Agency</p> <p><i>Presenter 1: Emily</i> <i>Peer Evaluators: John, Tiffany</i></p> <p>Simulation and Reality</p> <p><i>Presenter 2: Kirk</i> <i>Peer Evaluators: Emily, Tami</i></p>	<p>1. Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. <i>Simulacra and Simulation</i>. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. [selections 1 and selections].</p> <p>2. Deleuze, Gilles. "Plato and the Simulacrum ." <i>The Logic of Sense</i>: LS 253-6.</p> <p>3. Virillo, Paul. 2000. <i>The Information Bomb</i>. [selections].</p>
12 - Nov 6	<p>Transparency</p>	<p>Advocating Ethical Design: The Proliferation of Visual Lies. Fletcher, Jan. 2011. (A Practical Guide to Digital Journalism Ethics : Ed. Don Heider, John Thomas.)</p> <p>2. Turillo and Floridi. 2009. "The Ethics of Information Transparency." 3. Psycho-Graphics Targeting: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/what-are-psychographics_us_594be378e4b07cdb1933c05b (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/what-are-psychographics_us_594be378e4b07cdb1933c05b)</p>
14 - Nov 13	<p>Responsibility</p>	<p>1. Thomas, John D. 2011. How Much Can you Trust What You Find on the Web?: Democratizing Access to Information Can Help Get to the Truth." (A Practical Guide to Digital Journalism Ethics : Ed. Don Heider, John Thomas.)</p>





		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Rini, R. 2017. "Fake News and Partisan Epistemology". <i>Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal</i>. 3. Himma. 2007. "The Information Gap, The Digital Divide, and the Obligations of Affluent Nations". 4. Otto. 2016. "Telecoms push back..." 5. Floridi. "Distributed Morality." <i>The Ethics of Information</i>: Ch. 13.
15 - Nov 20	develop final project papers/projects in workshop session]	. Floridi. "Global Information Ethics." <i>The Ethics of Information</i> : Ch. 15.
Nov 27	No new readings Paper drafts due	Peer Review in class
17 - Dec 4	<i>Final Exam Period</i> <i>Discussion of Sustainability and Digital Environments</i>	Tuesday, Dec 4th 7:00-9:50pm (meet at Bar Louie at 6)

