Computers and Society
CPSC 430

Lecture 1 – Introduction

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http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430

Course Description

- We'll explore the interplay between **information technology and society**, emphasizing ethical issues.
- You'll come away with an increased:
  - understanding of the **social and ethical implications** of computer use and abuse;
  - ability to **think critically and defend decisions** logically;
  - appreciation for **alternate points of view**.
- Our focus will be on **reading, writing and discussion**.
  - Each week students will complete an **assigned reading**, write a **mini-essay** in response, and **evaluate the work of others**.
  - Classes will emphasize discussion and debate.
  - The ability to speak, read and write fluently in English is **essential for success** in the class.

Grading Scheme

In-Class Discussion	10 %
Weekly Essay Questions	20 %
Weekly Peer Review	10 %
Final Essay	15 %
Midterm Exam	15 %
Final Exam	30 %

Caveats:
- To pass the course, you must pass the final exam.
- I may change the exact percentage breakdowns shown here.
- This is **not an easy course—something to hand in almost every class**
  - However, students who work hard throughout the term can expect to do well.

Weekly Essays

- **Between Thursday, 12:30 PM and Tuesday, 10:30 AM**
  - Do **assigned readings** of up to one chapter from the textbook. They're posted at http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430.
  - Take a **multiple-choice quiz** online to test your comprehension.
  - Answer one **essay question** (your choice from a list of choices) and enter your answers online. You'll be allowed up to 300 words; that's less than one single-spaced page.

- **Between Tuesday, 12:30 PM and Thursday, 10:30 AM**
  - Perform your own **peer review** of two randomly assigned students' written questions.
    - For the first few weeks, you'll receive examples of TAs' essays, and other TAs' peer reviews of these questions.
    - We'll also accumulate an (anonymous) "hall of fame" of excellent essays and peer reviews that you can use as further examples.

This all starts right away!

- For **next class** (Tuesday, January 10, **10:30 AM**), you must:
  - **read all of Chapter 1** of the textbook
  - **perform a quiz online** using WebCT
  - **write a short essay** on one of three topics
- Don't leave this to the last minute!
  - It might take you a bit of time to get your accounts set up, etc.

- To help motivate you, **2 milestones for January 9, 6 PM:**
  - **Register your clicker** in WebCT (5% participation)
    - Clickers will be used for 60% of your participation grade
  - **Register your TurnItIn alias** in WebCT (5% participation)
    - TurnItIn will be used for submission of essays and peer review

"What if something goes wrong, and I don't submit one week?"

- We'll **drop your worst essay and peer review grades**, allowing for a situation in which:
  - you miss the (firm) deadline
  - you're sick, out of town, have a conflict with another course, …
  - you register for the course late
  - you get a poor grade on one essay

- One exception: we won't drop your peer review grades from the last 3 weeks of the course

- Other extensions or waivers will be granted only in **truly exceptional circumstances**.
  - Unless you have an exceptional excuse, you'll simply get a grade of zero.

You'll get peer reviewed

- You'll **receive 2 peer reviews** of your work, each week
  - These reviews will be double-blind (you won't know who reviewed you)
  - You'll be graded "good" (2 pts), "satisfactory" (1 pt), or "unsatisfactory" on:
    - understanding the social issue under consideration
    - applying theoretical framework(s) presented in class
    - drawing conclusions that are well supported by an argument
    - using clear and correct English
  - You'll also get comments on each item.
- Initially, you will also **receive a review by a TA**, and only the TA evaluation will matter for your grade.
  - Later, we'll shift to peer review without TAs.
- If you are evaluated only by peers and disagree with your grade, **you can appeal**, and a TA will re-grade your essay.
  - If the TA's grade differs by more than 2 points, you will receive the TA's grade rather than your peer reviewer's
  - The first time the TA disagrees with your appeal, nothing happens;
  - On subsequent failed appeals, you lose 2 points from your essay's grade.
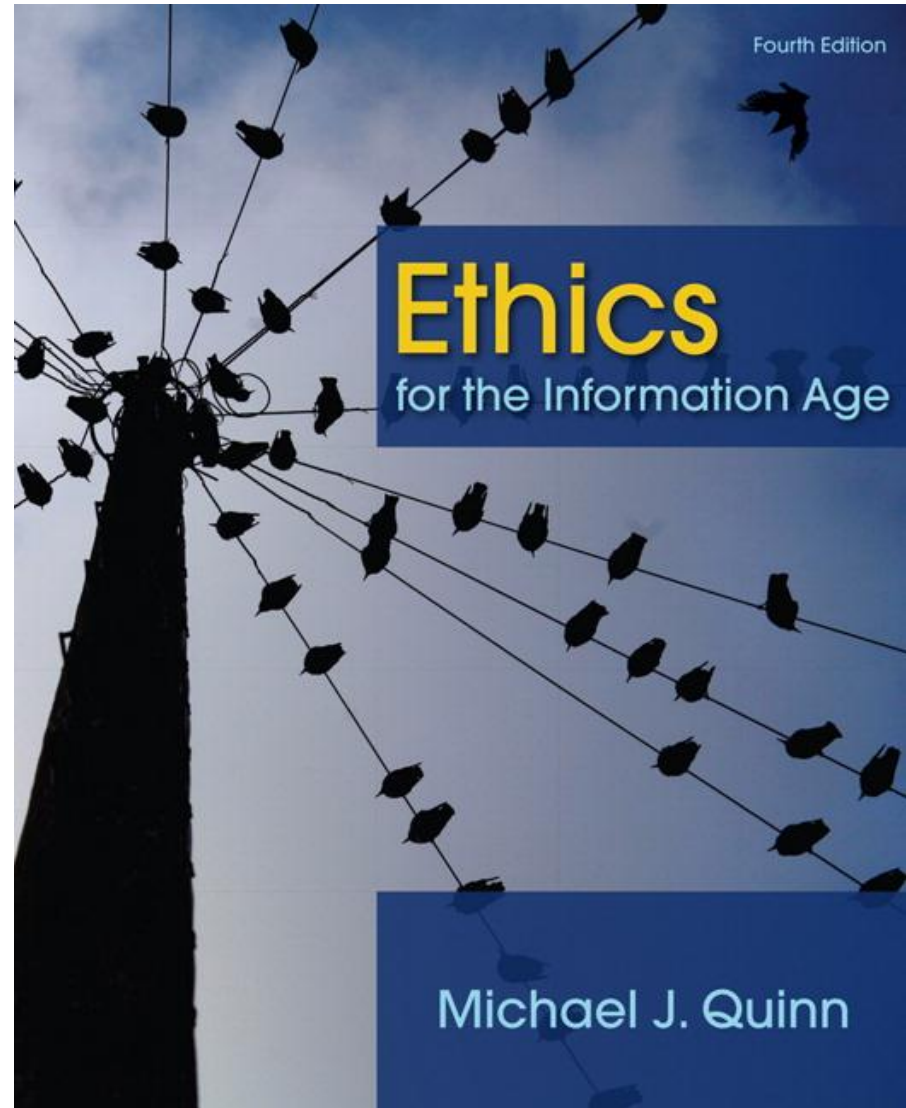
You'll perform peer review

- You're only eligible to peer review if you get a **perfect grade on the quiz**.
  - You get three tries to complete the quiz.
  - There aren't any grades for the quiz, but there are grades for peer review.
- You **perform 2 reviews each week**, including the first week.
  - These reviews will be double-blind (you won't know who you're reviewing)
- At first, **TAs evaluate each review**: "good", "satisfactory", "unsatisfactory".
  - Once you get two "good"s, you start to evaluate other students without a TA.
- If **a peer appeals** your independent review and the TA agrees, you
  - get an "unsatisfactory" rating for that review
  - stop independently reviewing until you obtain 2 more "good" ratings from a TA.
- TAs will **spot check reviews**, esp. to make sure they're not overly positive.
  - If your review is spot-checked and found unsatisfactory, we proceed as above.
- How we'll calculate **your peer review grade** (10% of the course):
  - 1 point for every peer review you hand in (note: requires perfect quiz).
  - 2 points for every "good" from a TA, 1 point for "satisfactory", 0 for "unsatisfactory". 2 points for every review that is not spot checked and not appealed.
  - Note: each week's peer review is worth about 1% of your final grade.

Final Project

- At the end of the course, you'll pick one of your essay questions from throughout the term, and develop it into **a longer (up to 1200 word) essay**, taking into account the feedback you received.

- This project will be **graded only by the TAs**.

Textbook

- We will be using the textbook ***Ethics for the Information Age, 4th Edition***, by Michael J. Quinn.

- It's important that you have a copy, because we'll be reading the whole thing—starting this week!

- **Two copies on reserve** in the CS reading room

Topics (pretty cool stuff, actually ☺)

- History of computing, storage, networking (next week)

- Ethics (3 weeks)

- Social issues (1 week each):
  - Networked communications
  - Privacy
  - Computer reliability
  - Work and wealth
  - Intellectual property
  - Security
  - Professional ethics

- Rest of today:
  - break into 14 groups (count off from 1 – 14)
  - get assigned a statement and a position for or against
  - develop arguments for your assigned position
  - present your list to the class; we'll discuss briefly
  - everyone votes on the issue (you vote freely)
  - we'll revisit these questions throughout the course. You'll get to see if your opinions change.

Networked Communications

"For the protection of children, computers in libraries should be configured to block objectionable content."

Intellectual Property

"The producers of software should have the right to prevent others from copying the software they produce."

Privacy

"The Vancouver Police should use Facebook posts to prosecute alleged participants in the 2011 Stanley Cup riot."

Computer and Network Security

"Canadians should have the right
to vote online in federal, provincial
and municipal elections."

Computer Reliability

"The manufacturer of a self-driving car should not be held responsible for crashes in bad weather, such as snow storms."

Professional Ethics

"A UBC CS sysadmin accidentally discovers pornography in a student's private department file space, depicting a woman the sysadmin believes may be under 18. The sysadmin should inform the department head."

Work and Wealth

"It is immoral for a corporation to pay its CEO 400 times as much as a production worker."