

# 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 Participation	20 %
Weekly Essay Questions	25 %
Weekly Peer Review	10 %
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 every class**
  - On the other hand, you'll learn a lot, and students who work hard throughout the term can expect to do well.

# Participation

- **Clicker use: 10%**
  - depends on activity, not on answers
  - starts **Tuesday**
  - if you don't register in **Connect**, you'll start missing marks
  - posted weekly
- **Other class participation: 10%**
  - structured activities (debates, presentations)
  - participation in class discussions
  - course blog (Google+) discussion and contribution
  - making good use of time in class (Facebook, games, ...)
  - tracked by TAs, finalized only at end of class



# Weekly Essays

- **Between Thursday, 3:30 PM and Tuesday, 1:30 PM (sharp!)**
  - Do **assigned readings** of up to one chapter from the textbook. Readings 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.
  - First weeks: do some **calibrated peer review**
    - This is practice for the following; details follow
- **Between Tuesday, 3:30 PM and Thursday, 1:30 PM (sharp!)**
  - Perform your own **peer review** of three randomly assigned students' written questions.
    - We'll accumulate an (anonymous) "hall of fame" of excellent essays and peer reviews that you can use as further examples.

# Review of your Essays

- You'll **receive 3 peer reviews** of your work, each week
  - These reviews will be **double-blind** (you won't know who reviewed you)
  - You'll be graded on a five-point scale on four dimensions:
    - Was the essay **well structured**, stating a thesis, supporting it with argument(s) that are clearly related to this point and (if relevant) distinct from one another, and linking these arguments in a logical way?
    - Did the essay **do a good job of making its case**, choosing relevant arguments, backing them up with evidence and examples at an appropriate level of detail, and responding to contrary views as appropriate?
    - Did the essay demonstrate a **good understanding of the course's subject matter**, including both the topic and the wider context?
    - Was the essay presented **clearly and in correct English**?
  - You'll also get comments on each item, and an outline of your essay
- When you also **receive a review by a TA**:
  - only the TA evaluation matters for your grade
- When you are evaluated **only by peers**:
  - your grade is the **median** of your peer grades
  - If you disagree **you can appeal**, and a TA will regrade your essay
- Essays are worth **increasing amounts** as the term goes on
  - 1.5, 2.5, 3.5 points (% of final grade) each week

# Peer Review

## 1. Calibrated peer review

*Grading essays from previous years that we've graded already*

- Confirms that we all **understand the grading scheme** in the same way, and shows you examples of weak and strong essays

## 2. Supervised peer review

*Grading essays from this year when you haven't yet demonstrated proficiency at peer review*

- A **TA will grade the same essays**, and only the TA grade will count
- The **TA will also grade your peer review** (recall: 10% of final grade)

## 3. Unsupervised peer review

*Grading essays from this year once you've demonstrated proficiency*

- By default, **you get a perfect grade** for every submitted review
- Your review may be **spot checked or appealed**: checked by TA
  - Spot checks: very positive ratings; severe disagreements; random
- This can put you back into the supervised pool

# Peer Review: Reviewer Perspective

- Do **at least 3 calibrated reviews** (and as many as you want) before 1:30 Tuesday when you're in the supervised pool
  - Week 1: this means everyone!
  - Week 2: only if you're still in the unsupervised pool
  - Getting into the **unsupervised pool** (you can do this in week 1!):
    - Get a **review score** of at least 3.5. For every review, you match our assigned grade:
      - Exactly or differing in at most one point across all dimensions: +1
      - Differing in at most two points:, no more than one point in any dimension +0.5
      - Differing in at most four points, no more than two points in any dimension: -0.25
      - Otherwise: -1
      - Score can't fall below 0
    - Maintain an **average grade of 70% or more** on your graded reviews
- Do **3 reviews of others' essays** before 1:30 PM Thursday
- How we'll calculate **your peer review grade** (10% of the course):
  - graded reviews: you get **what the TA gives you**
  - ungraded reviews: you get a **perfect grade**
  - reviews worth increasing amounts: scaled to 0.6, 1, 1.4 points (%) per week
  - calibrated reviews, when supervised: **lose 50% of the week's grade** if you don't do  $\geq 3$



# This all starts right away!

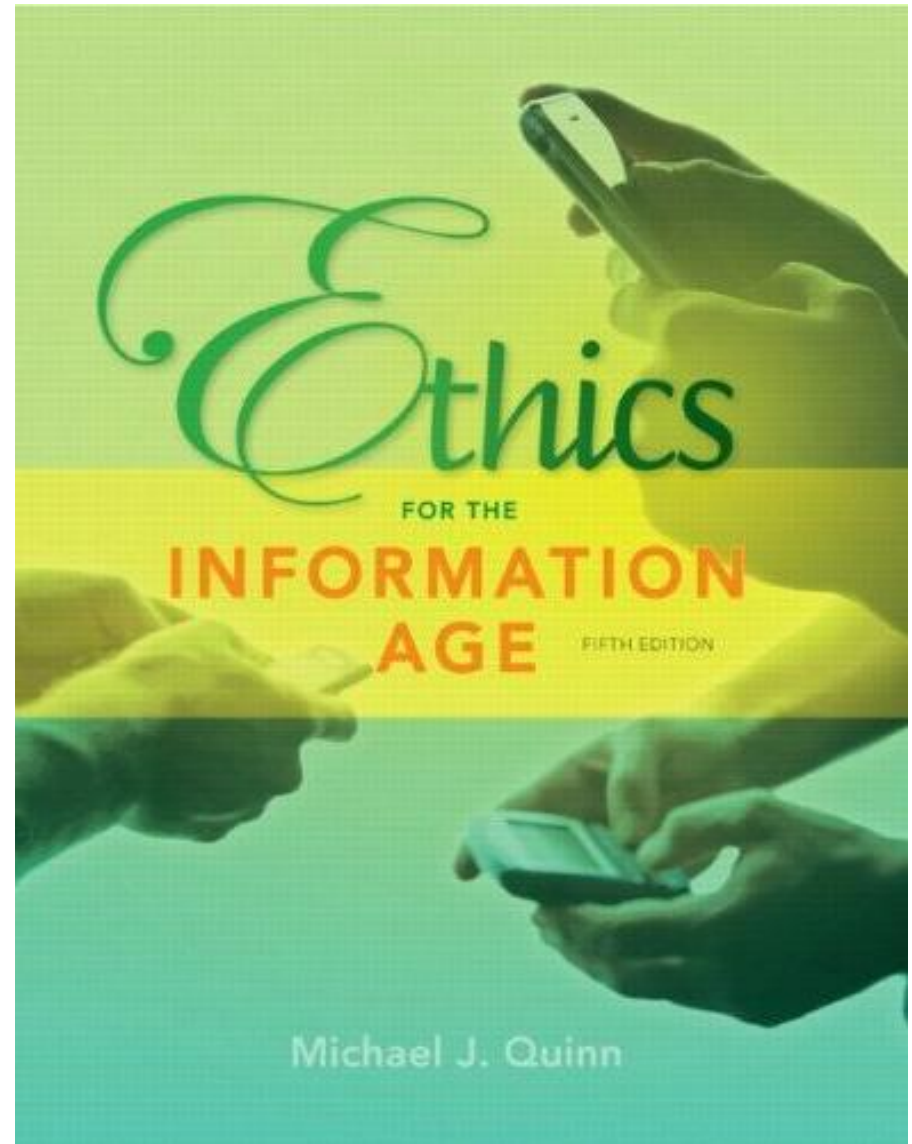
- For **next class** (Tuesday, September 10, **1:30 PM**) :
  - ☑ **read all of Chapter 1** of the textbook
  - ☑ **perform a quiz online** using Connect (or you can't do the essay)
  - ☑ **log in** to “Mechanical TA” and:
    - ☑ perform at least 3 calibrated peer reviews, preferably more
    - ☑ get an essay topic
  - ☑ **write a short essay** on your assigned topic
  - ☑ **register your clicker** in Connect, or you'll miss out on grades
  - ☑ **bring a laptop** if you have one
- Don't leave this to the last minute!
  - It might take you a bit of time to get your accounts set up, etc.

# “What if something goes wrong, and I can’t submit an essay/review?”

- 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(We’ll renormalize your grades accordingly)
- 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.

# Textbook

- We will be using the textbook *Ethics for the Information Age, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed*, by Michael J. Quinn.
- It's important that you have a copy, because we'll be reading the whole thing—starting this week!
- **Copies on reserve** in the CS reading room
  - One 5<sup>th</sup>, one 4<sup>th</sup> edition



# Topics (pretty cool stuff, actually 😊)

- History of computing, storage, networking (next 3 classes)
- Ethic & Argumentation (5 classes)
- Social issues (1 week each):
  - Networked communications
  - Intellectual Property
  - Information Privacy
  - Privacy and the Government
  - Computer & Network Security
  - Computer Reliability
  - Professional Ethics
  - Work & Wealth
- Rest of today:
  - break into 16 groups (count off from 1 – 16)
  - 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,  
all publicly accessible computers and wifi networks  
paid for with taxpayer money 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.”

# Information Privacy

“It should be illegal for a search engine to publicly disclose users’ search histories, even in anonymized form.”

AOL.com did this in August, 2006

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AOL\\_search\\_data\\_leak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AOL_search_data_leak)

# Privacy and the Government

“The government should work to intercept all encrypted communications.”



# Computer and Network Security

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

# Computer Reliability

“Self-driving cars should be allowed to operate on public roads once they have been shown to be at least slightly safer than the average human driver.”

# 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.”