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.

Course Website: http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430
Grading Scheme

Class Participation  10 %
Class Attendance    10 %
Weekly Essay Questions 35 %
Weekly Peer Review  10 %
Midterm Exam (take-home) 10 %
Final Exam          25 %

• Attendance: must complete start/end of class polls at least once/week. This is not the course for you if attending at least half of the classes synchronously will impose a hardship.
• 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.

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Participation

- **Class participation**: 10%
  - participation in class discussions (1/class max)
  - substantive contribution to Piazza or Zoom chat (1/week max)

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Weekly Essays

• Between Thursday, 6:30 PM and Tuesday, 4:45 PM (sharp!)
  – Do **assigned readings** of up to one chapter from the textbook. Readings posted at [http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430](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 2500 characters; that's less than one single-spaced page.
  – At first: do some **calibrated peer review**
    • This is practice for the following; details in a minute

• Between Tuesday, 6:30 PM and Thursday, 4:45 PM (sharp!)
  – Perform your own **peer review** of four randomly assigned students' written questions.

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Grading Your Essays

- You'll **receive 3 or 4 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**:
  - Each of your peer grades will be weighted in proportion to our estimates of your peers’ **dependability** as graders
  - If you disagree with your grade **you can appeal**, and a TA will re-grade your essay

- Essays are worth **increasing amounts** as the term goes on
  - 2, 3, 4 % of final grade each week

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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 assess whether you made **thoughtful comments**

3. **Unsupervised peer review**
   
   *Grading essays from this year once you’ve demonstrated proficiency*
   
   – Your review may be **spot checked or appealed**: checked by TA
     
     • Spot checks: very positive ratings; severe disagreements; random
   – We’ll update your dependability score based on your degree of agreement with peers (taking their own dependability into account) and, when available, degree of agreement with TAs

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Estimating Dependability

- We continuously maintain estimates of each peer grader’s “dependability” via Bayesian inference
  - The key idea is that calibrations and assignments graded by TAs give us information about which graders are more reliable
  - we then bootstrap this knowledge to decide how much to trust each grader on assignments that were not graded by a TA
- Your dependability score is our estimate of $effort \ast (1/variance)$
  - $effort$ is (1 - the probability that you always assign the class average without considering the essay)
  - $variance$ is your tendency to differ from TA scores
- The system starts out with the assumption that all students have low dependability scores (specifically, low effort and high variance)
- As you grade assignments/calibrations, we update these beliefs
  - doing more calibrations both helps you get better at grading and gives us evidence to counteract the system's pessimistic initial belief
  - if you always assign each submission the class average, our model will assign you a low effort probability; you need to properly identify both strong and weak assignments in order to achieve a high dependability score.

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Peer Review: Reviewer Perspective

• Do **at least 3 calibrated reviews** (more the first week; can always do more) before 4:45 PM every Tuesday that you’re required to do so
  – Week 1: this means everyone!
  – Week 2+: only if required

• Do **4 reviews of others’ essays** before 4:45 PM Thursday

• How we’ll calculate **your peer review grade** (10% of the course):
  – **Scaled dependability scores**, snapshotted each week
  – reviews worth **increasing amounts**: scaled to 0.6, 0.9, 1.1 % of final grade per week
  – If you don’t do everything assigned (reviews; calibrations when required) your grade will be **scaled down**; see web page
This all starts right away!

• **Before next Tuesday:**
  - **✓ read all of Chapter 1 of the textbook**
  - **✓ log in** to “Mechanical TA” and:
    - **✓ perform calibrated peer reviews**; try to get into the independent pool
    - **✓ complete a quiz** (or you can’t do peer reviews later)
    - **✓ write a short essay** on your assigned topic

• **Don’t leave this to the last minute!**
  - It might take you a bit of time to get your accounts set up, etc.
  - Heddy will have office hours to help out with such issues

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

- We’ll drop your worst two essay and peer review grades, allowing for situations in which:
  - you miss the (firm) deadline
  - you’re sick, out of town, have a conflict with another course, ...
  - you face hardships due to the pandemic
  - 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.
  - (Brief) illness isn’t an exceptional excuse, see above.
  - Registering in the course late isn’t an exceptional excuse.
    - If you’re on the waitlist, start actively participating now!

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What if I’m on the wait list?

• Historically, most people on the wait list get into the class but it’s not up to me, up to undergrad advisors in the main office
  – make sure you complete the attendance quizzes!

• Main office will prioritize the wait list by attendance (in addition to the various other priorities)
  – make sure you complete the attendance quizzes!

• You need to actively participate from the beginning (unless you want to use up your late day right away)
  – wait list registrants should be able to access MTA, Piazza
  – if you have troubles, let us know!

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Textbook

• We will be using the textbook *Ethics for the Information Age, 8th Ed*, by Michael J. Quinn.

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

• Old editions exist, but you're responsible for all material in the 8th edition.

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Topics (pretty cool stuff, actually 😊)

- History of computing, storage, networking (next 3 classes)
- Ethics & 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
  - 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.

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