IMT 550 A: Policy and Ethics in Information Management
Winter 2017
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Course Description:
This course examines policy and ethical issues affecting information use and production, with an emphasis on the social and cultural dimensions. We will discuss policy issues including privacy and intellectual property, ethical issues including freedom of expression and social justice, and explore ways in which they are relevant to information management professionals.

By the end of this course, students will be able to understand social and cultural dimensions of ethical choices in information management. We will do this through examining information issues as sociotechnical controversies, focusing on information access and control, intellectual property, governance, the material dimensions of information, speech, surveillance, and privacy. On successful completion of the course, students will be able to analyze information issues, perform stakeholder analysis, and propose policy alternatives.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Ethics, Technology and Society

Required Readings:


ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

ACM/IEEE-CS Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice

IEEE Code of Ethics

ALA Code of Ethics

Data Science Association Code of Professional Conduct


Lecture Referenced Articles:


**Optional Readings:**

Katie Shilton (2015) “Anticipatory ethics for a future Internet: Analyzing values during the design of an Internet infrastructure” *Science and Engineering Ethics*


**Week 2: Information issues and the US legal context**

**Required Readings:**

U.S. Declaration of Independence.


**Optional Readings:**


Report on RTBF requests: Google.


Google Spain v AEPD and Mario Costeja González court case:
• Official court documents
• Advocate General’s Opinion (Links to an external site.). (2013, June 25). [press release].


Week 3: Privacy and Surveillance

Required Readings:

U.S. Constitution, amend. IV.


Listen/watch one Intelligence Squared debate:

• Mass Collection of US Phone Records Violates the Fourth Amendment. (2014, October 7). Intelligence Squared U.S.
• Snowden was Justified. (2014, February 13). Intelligence Squared U.S.
• Spy On Me, I’d Rather Be Safe. (2013, November 20). Intelligence Squared U.S.
• The U.S. Should Adopt the “Right to Be Forgotten” Online. (2015, March 11). Intelligence Squared U.S.

Optional Readings:


Crump, C. (2013). *You are being tracked: How license plate readers are being used to record Americans’ movements.* New York: American Civil Liberties Union.


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**Week 4: Freedom of speech**

**Required Readings:**


**Optional Readings**

Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. (n.d.). What does free speech mean?


Week 5: Intellectual Property

Required Readings:


Optional Readings

GNU. (2007). General Public License 3.0.


### Week 6: Intellectual Property

**Required Readings:**


Watch: Horowitz, D. (2011). We need a “moral operating system.” *TEDxSiliconValley*.

**Optional Readings:**


Week 7: The Future of Work

Required Readings:


Optional Readings:


Week 8: Robots and Drones

Required Readings:


Optional Readings:


Week 9: Social and Economic Divides in the Information Economy

Required Readings:

Massive Open Online courses and Development: An examination of MOOC usage for professional workforce development outcomes in Colombia, the Philippines, & South Africa:


The Impact and Reach of MOOCs: A Developing Countries’ Perspective:

https://www.openeducationeuropa.eu/sites/default/files/legacy_files/asset/In-depth_33_1.pdf

Poorest countries hit hardest as world lags behind on global education goals:


Optional Readings:


**Week 10: Environmental Impact of IT**

**Optional Readings:**


**Course Expectations:**

There are a total of twenty classes:

- Once a week all of the sections will meet together in a large lecture. Some of the lecture classes will include a guest speaker. Students will be attentive and prepared to ask guest speakers thoughtful questions.
- Once a week each section will meet for discussion. Students are expected to be fully engaged in our discussions, giving fellow students your full attention.

This course requires that you do readings each week. Doing the reading is essential, or you will not be able to participate easily in class discussions. In the workplace, ethical conduct, policy deliberations and the impact of new laws are usually only discussed obliquely, even though they may be at the heart of daily professional choices you make -- or that your bosses make. If you take the time to understand and articulate the issues and options here, your value in the workplace rises exponentially.

Instructors and students are expected to come to class having read all of the readings and ready to engage in lively conversation. In order to encourage learning, the use of any electronic devices during class (including laptops, tablets and phones) is not permitted. Studies have shown that taking notes on your laptop is not nearly as effective as taking notes by hand.
Please be sure to read through the entire course website to ensure that you understand the course assignments and readings.

**Online Discussions**

Please post all questions that are not of a personal nature to the Canvas discussion page. You know the old adage: if you have a question, many other people probably have the same one!

**Assignments and Grading**

**Assignments will not be accepted late.** Assignments turned in after the deadline get a 0.

If any portion of any assignment is plagiarized, the assignment will receive a 0. If it is a group assignment, all of the members of the group will receive a 0. Issues of academic dishonesty will also be reported to the Dean, and may result in suspension or expulsion from University of Washington. Grading will be based on the following point distribution:

1. Classroom activities: 20 points
2. Weekly writing: 20 points
3. Final Paper: 30 points
4. Group presentation: 10 points
5. Debate: 5 points
6. Peer Review: 5 points
7. Classroom engagement: 10 points

**Final Paper**

Your group will have to identify an information issue and analyze it over the course of the quarter. There are several components of this assignment with various deadlines. Your final paper will be about 4000 words and will explain your information issue, some recommendations about how to deal with it, and it will justify your conclusions.

There are a range of milestones due throughout the quarter -- we will not give feedback to papers that are submitted after the given deadline. These are ungraded opportunities to get feedback from the teaching team. **Note that a complete first draft will be due in week 8!**

You will be assigned groups of 3-4 people. Students will be randomly assigned to groups. These will be your groups for the entire semester.

Once you and your group have decided upon a topic, find reputable readings related to the case. You should read as much as it is necessary for you to gain an understanding of the topic. I recommend that your group create a Zotero group to collaboratively maintain your research database.

As we will discuss in the first weeks of class, an *information issue* is "a disagreement about how information should be produced, shared, distributed, consumed (accessed), etc." In other words, it is a disagreement among groups of stakeholders about who can produce (or share, or distribute, or consume) certain information, *for what purposes, under what circumstances*, etc.

One of the central aims of this course is to teach you how to investigate and resolve information issues as they arise in the kinds of institutions within which you will eventually work. This
assignment is meant to give you practice studying an information issue concretely as it manifests in a real institution. More specifically, you will be asked to study and evaluate an information policy within an organization (a policy being an institution’s resolution of a particular issue).

Final Paper Milestones:

**Milestone 1: Select Final Paper Topic (Due Week 2)**

Your first task will be to identify the information issue/policy you want to study and the context within which you intend to study it. Consider whether the issue is appropriately documented – will you have enough material to understand the issue? Or, is the issue too broad? Is there too much written about the information issue you are interested in? It is very important for you to find an issue that has a scope that is appropriate for the class. Because legal frameworks might come into play, consider what region of the world you will be dealing with.

Write a paragraph describing the information issue/policy your group will be researching and the institution within which you will be researching it. Be very clear and specific about the nature of the issue and policy, and the scope of your project. Characterize your issue in a single sentence, such as “Who is permitted to take photographs of . . .?” or “Under what conditions may students . . .?” Do the same for your policy: “The policy establishes under what conditions . . . .”

**Milestone 2: Bibliography of research and overview of the information issue and institution (Due Week 4)**

Assemble some evidence about your problem and present a 1000 word summary of the information issue including its history. You will also include a bibliography of 15-20 sources. Consider what the sources say and why they are believable or not. You will need enough source material to claim some sort of mastery over your topic. Your research should explore:

1. The nature (including the history) of the issue and policy in its context.
2. What is the specific context in which you are studying this information issue, including the place and specific parties involved?
3. Why has the issue arisen at just this time and in just this way?
4. In what ways have changing circumstances either created or transformed the issue?

Strategies for doing this research include: finding documents related to the organization’s policy, obtaining news accounts or other external reports, examine the relevant laws, and academic articles about your topic. Please consult university librarians for help!

You might also explore collecting some data about your information issue: What other kind of data can you bring to bear on this information issue? Things to consider might be to interview people at this organization, publicly available sources of data, or to conduct non-intrusive mini online experiments (see technologyscience.org for inspiration).

**Milestone 3: Identify stakeholders and describe interests (Due Week 6)**

Using all of the data that you have gathered, identify all of the possible stakeholders in this information issue. Please turn in a write-up that:

1) identifies the different stakeholders and explore their differential roles and statuses, as determined by affiliation with specific institutions, location within those institutions, cultural
identity, history, etc. Explore at least three of the stakeholders' positions (about 300 words each) on the issue and the factors that have contributed to it. How (and why) are they aligned with or against other actors? What is the nature of their rhetorical arguments (and how might these differ from their “true” positions)? To what extent do their different positions reflect different ethical frameworks (and to what extent do they argue from different understandings, values, positions)? If the issue has a strong technological element, to what extent do the various stakeholders view the function and significance of the technology in different ways?

2) Lays out a range of possible policy solutions for the issue, for each solution specifying: its strengths and weaknesses, who (which of the stakeholders) stands to gain and who to lose, and what stands to be gained or lost. Your write up of the possible policy solutions should be about 1000 words.

Milestone 4: Ethical analysis and recommendations (Due Week 8)

Taking the analysis that you performed in Milestone 3, select criteria with which to evaluate the possible policy alternatives. At least one of the criteria should have their basis in at least one of the ethical frameworks that we have been discussing in class, or from the readings. Using the criteria that you have developed, assess how your policy proposals will affect the information issue, for better and for worse! Using your criteria, project the outcomes of the different policy alternatives. Make your own recommendations based on the above analysis and explain in 1000 words.

Milestone 5: First Draft for Peer Review (Due Week 8)

Your draft of your report should cover the following topics. We suggest word counts and section titles, but you do not need to adhere to these exactly. Please put the total document word count after the title.

- Executive summary/abstract. (about 100 words)
- The information issue and policy: Frame the information issue in relation to important conceptual/historical developments. Clearly and carefully describe the information issue, the context of the case that you are studying, and the policy that is meant to resolve the issue. (about 1000 words)
- Description of the stakeholders and their positions. Describe at least 3 stakeholders. (each stakeholder description should be about 300 words)
- Possible solutions (different policy options), including an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. (1000 words)
- Your proposed solution and its justification. (Please make sure that you incorporate a discussion of one the ethical frameworks we discussed in class.) (1000 words)

The report should be about 4,000 words long

Peer Review (Due Week 10)

Giving helpful feedback will make you an indispensable colleague. Peer review is a skill that can be practiced and honed. Our assignment asks you to give feedback to your colleagues for each peer review, but you may want to write more. Please see the grading rubric for the final assignment and use this to guide your comments. You (individually) will be assigned the paper of another group in the class.

This is what your peer review should include:
• Restate the main points of the paper so the writer understands what you (the reader) got out of the substance of the paper.
• Tell the writer what the highlight of the paper was for you as a reader.
• Are you convinced by the recommendations offered and the analysis that leads to this conclusion? Help the writer understand what could be improved for the final paper, not what you don't like. Think about concepts, theories, or examples that could extend or challenge the conclusions that the writer has come to.
• Consider the structure and presentation of the paper. What was clear to you as a reader, and where might the writer need to do a bit more explaining? Is the flow of reasoning logical? Note if there are sentences or paragraphs that seem out of order. Tell the authors which sentences you found awkward or if you notice grammatical errors.
• Give the writer concrete suggestions and be realistic about what can be achieved.
• Be organized in how your present your comments.

Debate

Each group will be assigned a debate time in weeks 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7. Debates will be about the topic of the week. The instructors will propose debate topics one week in advance of the debate. The teams will know which statement they will debate in advance, but not whether they will be debating the negative or affirmative case until the day of debate itself. Thus, students will need to brief both sides of the case in preparation for the debates. We expect everyone to have prepared with his or her teams and to be willing to participate. Students must be present to get credit for debates.

Classroom Engagement

This is a lecture and discussion-based course. Clearly, you need to attend class to participate in the discussions. In order to benefit from the class meetings, you must both be prepared, present and paying attention, which includes refraining from being distracted by your laptop and electronic mobile devices (no laptops, tablets or mobile phone can be used in class). Students are welcome to take notes with old-fashioned information technology (pen and paper) and collaboratively share notes with friends. I will give students the opportunity to sign in at the beginning of class to indicate that they are willing to participate that day. I keep a daily engagement journal and here is what I look for when assessing this portion of your grade:

• Attendance – while I cannot require you to attend class, not attending will limit your ability to engage in our graded class activities. Thus, missing class could result in a significant reduction in your engagement grade.
• General Attitude/Professionalism – arriving on time for class, keeping a positive attitude, making constructive comments, being attentive, exercising mobile IT etiquette and doing your best to learn something every class session, are the keys to his aspect of engagement.
• Coming to class prepared with questions and comments about our topics of the day.
• Participation in your team’s discussions during our breakout/team activities, I will be floating around the class and monitoring engagement.
• Contribution to class discussions – make it a goal to offer input to our discussions every class session.