INLS 776: Ethics, Values, and Society
Spring 2022

Basic information

Date and time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 to 1:45 p.m.
Location: Manning 307

Instructor information

Instructor: Melanie Feinberg (she, her, hers)
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Office: Manning 024
Student hours: Thursdays 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. (in the office) or by appointment via Zoom

Introduction

In this course, we will consider how personal and social values manifest in information systems, services, and technologies. We will explore an array of ethical dilemmas and their intersection with our responsibilities as information professionals. Some of the core questions that we will interrogate include:
- How might we productively approach ethical dilemmas germane to the information professions?
- How are—and should—values and beliefs be expressed in information systems and services?
- How does our work affect society?
- How is power expressed in information systems, and to what effects?
- What are our professional responsibilities in relation to ethics and values?

All sections of INLS 776 have adopted similar learning objectives, themes, and requirements, including participation in the semester-ending Symposium for Social Good. That being said, each section will also differ in its precise subject matter, structure, and setup. Don't expect exact alignment across sections!

Learning objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to:
- Identify and analyze ethical dilemmas that arise through the development and use of information systems, services, and technologies, and describe the personal and social values that manifest in the context of these dilemmas.
- Propose actions to resolve ethical dilemmas based on the application of established frameworks for moral reasoning.
- Describe and compare codes of ethics endorsed by relevant professional associations.
- Articulate and justify your own position on the responsibilities of information professionals in relation to ethics, values, power, and acccountability.
- Discuss complex social dilemmas with your peers in a productive, compassionate manner.
- Design and present a panel for a professional conference.

Course structure

This has been designed as an in-person course, meeting twice a week.

Important: **As of January 5, SILS has decided that all courses will be delivered remotely for the first three weeks of the semester. Zoom information will be provided in Canvas.**

Our time together will be oriented around discussion. Generally, Tuesday classes will focus on the week's assigned readings, while Thursday classes will be oriented around practical dilemmas and debates—what-

if scenarios, analysis of current events, and ongoing professional challenges related to the week's theme. Lectures will be minimal.

In weeks 13, 14, and 15, our class structure will shift in preparation for the culminating component of the group project, the Symposium for Social Good. During these weeks, each project group will have one class session to "workshop" your panel presentation. (More details are in the Requirements section of this syllabus.)

This class will use the Canvas learning management system, rather than Sakai. Each week's readings and other materials will be available via its own module in Canvas.

The Semester Calendar (below) provides an overview of each week.

Flexibility in Uncertain Times

Due to the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, SILS has decided that in-person classes will be delivered remotely for the first three weeks of the semester.

We are planning to resume in-person instruction on January 31. But uncertainty has been the rule of late, and we may need to adjust rapidly as the semester proceeds. Simply put, we will all need to do our best to adapt as circumstances require. I know that this is challenging for everyone, and I appreciate your forbearance.

Requirements

To pass the course, you must:
- Satisfy participation requirements.
- Complete a group project to investigate a topic of your choice related to ethics, society, and values in the information professions, culminating in a panel presentation at the semester-end Symposium for Social Good.

Participation
Attendance, preparation, and active engagement are necessary for a successful course.

Participation success criteria
- Attend class regularly.
- Complete all readings before class and be ready to discuss them.
- Contribute actively to discussions:
  - Initiate conversations by asking questions of others.
  - Volunteer your thoughts, feelings, impressions, and examples.
  - Where appropriate, support your opinions and claims with evidence.
  - Speak up when you are confused or uncertain. (For instance, it's absolutely fantastic to begin a conversation by saying "I'm not sure about the difference between ethics and values, can someone help me out?")
  - Retain focus on matters germane to the course.
  - Maintain confidence that your contributions are valuable, no matter your background or level of previous knowledge or expertise.
- Listen carefully and respond thoughtfully.
  - Maintain respect and compassion for your classmates.
  - Demonstrate that you value others' contributions. (For instance, use verbal and nonverbal cues to show that you're paying attention to your classmates. When someone makes a good point, say so.)

- If someone else's perspective is different from yours, attempt to understand it rather than dismiss it. (For instance, ask questions or request explanations.)
- Disagree constructively. (For instance, volunteer a counter-example to consider or refer everyone to the text of a reading.)
- Be attentive to the flow of a conversation. (For instance, if someone is excited about a topic, don't change the subject, but if energy is flagging, move on to something else.)
- Monitor group dynamics, and adopt the Step Up/Step Back principle:
  - *Step back* if you've been talking more than your share.
  - *Step up* if you haven't been contributing as much.

Attendance requirements
As a baseline rule, **everyone is entitled to two unexcused absences per semester, without needing to provide a reason for missing class.** This rule applies whether we are meeting in person or whether we are meeting remotely.

If you need to be absent from class and you haven't already used your two unexcused absences, you don't need to inform me or do anything at all.

If you need to be absent from class and you have already used your two unexcused absences, you will need to inform me of the reason for your absence via e-mail (before the absence if possible). Acceptable reasons include:
- You are experienceing ill health (physical or mental) or you are worried about risks to your health as a result of attending class (e.g., we have returned to in-person classes, but you are worried about Covid infection rates).
- Caring for family members or other family emergencies.
- Accidents and unanticipated disasters (your apartment floods, your car is stolen, etc).

Semester project: Symposium for the Social Good
All students in INLS 776 will participate in the Symposium for Social Good. The symposium will consist of 45-minute panel presentations, organized by groups of six students each.

Each symposium panel will:
- Describe a matter of concern: a topic area, professional dilemma, or current event.
- Outline pertinent problems or questions related to ethics and values.
- Identify associated stakeholders.
- Suggest a course of action, framework for understanding, mode of practice, or other mechanism to respond to the identified problems or questions.

Panels often take the form of brief individual presentations from each participant, followed by time for questions and guided discussion with the audience.

The symposium will be held on Friday, April 22, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with both in-person and digital sessions. Students will be expected to attend at least two hours of the symposium, in addition to the time when you are presenting.

To prepare for a successful panel at the symposium, your group will engage in a sustained investigation of your topic area over the course of the semester.

Project milestones will include:
1. Forming the group and selecting a topic.

2. Writing a 300-500 word abstract for your panel.
3. Preparing a content outline and annotated bibliography of sources.
4. "Workshopping" your panel by facilitating discussion for one session of our class:
    a. Selecting a set of appropriate readings.
    b. Leading us through your panel.
    c. Guiding the class in discussion based on the readings you selected and the ideas that you shared.
5. Presenting the panel at the symposium.
6. Writing a concluding reflection based on your experiences working on the panel and attending the symposium.

Complete details for each component will be available in Canvas. We will also go over each component in class, and have some class time for project groups to meet.

Assessment

Participation
At two points during the semester—midway through and at the conclusion of the course—you will review your own participation by providing a brief (1-2 page) self-assessment of your performance, based on the participation success criteria described in this syllabus. For the interim self-assessment, you will additionally list a set of personal participation goals for the rest of the semester, and for the final self-assessment, you will evaluate your progress towards those goals.

Project
You will receive written or oral feedback on all project components. The feedback will be based on the success criteria and deliverables for each component (available via Canvas).

Should a submission be incomplete or unacceptable for some reason, you will be invited to resubmit it.

Grading

All graduate students who satisfy the course requirements will receive a P.

Due dates

Participation assessments	*Due date*
Interim participation assessment	**Thursday, March 3**
Final participation assessment	**Thursday, April 27**

Group project milestones	*Due date*
Group formation and topic selection	**Thursday, February 17**
Written abstract	**Thursday, March 10**
Content outline and annotated bibliography	**Thursday, March 24**
Workshop panel in class	**Week 13, 14, and 15 (signups in class)**
Attend and present at Symposium for Social Good	**Friday, April 22**
Symposium and project reflection	**Thursday, April 27**

All assignments should be submitted as a PDF document via Canvas.

Late work

There are no penalties for late work. However, participation in the Symposium for Social Good and your associated class workshop session are live events that will occur at specified times, which makes late

submission impossible. If an emergency requires that you miss one of these events, alternate submissions will need to be negotiated individually with the instructor.

Semester Calendar

This calendar is subject to modification as the semester proceeds.

All readings are available in Canvas and should be completed before class begins.

Part 1. Foundational concepts

Week 1	
Introduction	
Tuesday, January 11 *Readings* Course syllabus	Thursday, January 13 *Readings* hooks, 1994
Week 2	
Frameworks for moral reasoning	
Tuesday, January 18 *Readings* - Regan, 2005 - Brown University Science and Technology Studies, n.d. - Quinn, 2020	Thursday, January 20 *No readings.*
Week 3	
Values , technology, and professional responsibility	
Tuesday, January 25 *Readings* - Winner, 1980 - Introna and Nissenbaum, 2000 - JafariNaimi, Nathan, and Hargreaves, 2015	Thursday, January 27 *Readings* - Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Code of Ethics - American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics - Society for American Archivists (SAA) Values Statement and Code of Ethics - IEEE Code of Ethics

Part 2. Values conflicts and ethical dilemmas in the information professions
Note: Thursday readings are brief case studies and current events from recent newspaper articles; these are subject to change as the semester proceeds.

Week 4	
Dilemmas related to systemic bias in information systems	
Tuesday, February 1 *Readings* - Noble, 2013 - Tripodi, 2021 - Melo, 2020 - Drabinski, 2013	Thursday, February 3 *Readings* Imbler, 2021
Week 5	
Dilemmas related to neutrality as a value	
Tuesday, February 8 *Readings* - Nopper, 2019 - Caswell and Cifor, 2016 - Suchman, 2002	Thursday, February 10 *Readings* Romeo, 2021

Week 6	
Dilemmas related to institutional racism in the information professions	

Tuesday, February 15
Readings
    • Amrute, 2020
    • Honma, 2005
    • Sotherland, 2017
    • Gibson, et al, 2017
    • Tran O'Leary et al, 2019
	Thursday, February 17
	Readings
	    • Eavis, 2022

Week 7	
Dilemmas related to information access	

Tuesday, February 22
Readings
    • Moore, 2016
    • Thystrup, 2019
    • Srinivasan, Finn, and Ames, 2017
	Thursday, February 24
	Readings
	    • Powell, 2021

Week 8	
Dilemmas related to data collection	

Tuesday, March 1
Readings
    • Benjamin, 2016
    • Keyes, 2019
    • Cifor and Garcia et al, 2019
	Thursday, March 3
	Readings
	    • Andreatta, 2021

Week 9	
More dilemmas related to data collection	

Tuesday, March 8
Readings
    • Liang, Hutson, and Keyes, 2020
    • Farkas, 2017
    • Singh and Jackson, 2017
	Thursday, March 10
	Readings
	    • Kolata, 2021

Week 10	
Spring break	
Week 11	
Dilemmas related to algorithmic prediction	

Tuesday, March 22
Readings
    • Angwin, et al 2016
    • Søe, 2021
    • Scannell, 2019
	Thursday, March 24
	Readings
	    • Alba, 2021

Week 12	
Dilemmas related to accountability for harm	

Tuesday, March 29
    • Fricker, 2007
    • Ebeling, 2016
    • Menking and Rosenberg, 2021
	Thursday, March 31
	Project group workshops begin
	Readings TBD (selected by each project group)

Part 3.The topics important to you (selected by project groups)

Week 13 Project group workshops	
Tuesday, April 5 *Readings TBD (selected by each project group)*	Thursday, April 7 *Readings TBD (selected by each project group)*
Week 14 Project group workshops	
Tuesday, April 12 *Readings TBD (selected by each project group)*	Thursday, April 14 **University wellness day; no classes scheduled**
Week 15 Project group workshops	
Tuesday, April 19 *Readings TBD (selected by each project group)*	Thursday, April 21 *Readings TBD (selected by each project group)*
Symposium for the Social Good Friday, April 22, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.	
No class on Tuesday, April 26.	

Course policies

COVID-19 community standards and mask use
As specified by current UNC community standards, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community —your classmates and me —as we learn together.

If you choose not to wear a mask, or if you wear your mask improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. (Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception.) For additional information, see https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/community-standards/#chapter-2

Respectful class environment
Learning requires an atmosphere of respect, care, and empathy for each other. This does not mean that we can't disagree; understanding the nature of our disagreements can help us all grow. But disrespect for any person or their identity will not be tolerated.

Asking for help
Should you encounter barriers to your learning—whether it's something that I'm doing or not doing, or challenges in your personal circumstances—I am here to help. Please set up an appointment so that we can work together towards your success.

The work that we will be engaging with this semester is difficult, and most of you will be unfamiliar with some or all of it. It is normal to feel confused or lost sometimes.

Additionally, we are living in challenging times, and we are all grappling with chronic stress and anxiety. It is common and natural to feel overwhelmed. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness or failure.

No busy work
No one wants to do boring things for no reason, including me! From my perspective, everything that we do in this class has a purpose that requires thinking. If anything seems like busy work, I probably haven't articulated the purpose well. Be sure to ask for help, so that I can better explain what the task is supposed to achieve.

Instructor communication
For specific, concrete questions, e-mail is the most reliable means of contact for me. If you do not receive a response after a few days, please follow up. It is always helpful if your e-mail includes a targeted subject line that begins with "INLS 776."

For more complicated questions or help, come to student hours (no appointment necessary) or make an appointment to talk with me at a different time.

You are welcome to call me by my first name ("Melanie"). However, you may also use "Dr. Feinberg" or "Professor Feinberg" if that is more comfortable for you.

Student hours
During student hours, I am available to talk with students about anything, without an appointment.

You can use student hours to ask questions, seek help, consult about project work, obtain more information about course topics, or just say hello. You're not bothering me if you attend student hours! I've dedicated this time to talk with students.

During student hours, my office door will be open; simply come in! If I'm talking with someone else, make sure that I know you're there.

Inclusive learning and accessibility

I want everyone to do well in this class. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know. We'll work together on strategies to meet your needs and satisfy the requirements of the course.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Web site (ars.unc.edu) for details.

Mental health resources

All students have access to counseling and other resources through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to caps.unc.edu or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building.

Basic needs

If you are navigating financial, health, or housing challenges that may have an impact on your ability to thrive at UNC, one resource is the Dean of Students, which also oversees the Dean's Emergency Fund: https://dos.unc.edu/student-support/student-emergency-and-hardship-funds/

If you are struggling with food insecurity and you are in the Chapel Hill area, you can get assisstance through Carolina Cupboard, an on-campus food pantry: http://carolinacupboard.web.unc.edu/

Academic integrity

The UNC Honor Code states that:

It shall be the responsibility of every student enrolled at the University of North Carolina to support the principles of academic integrity and to refrain from all forms of academic dishonesty...

This includes prohibitions against the following:
- Plagiarism.
- Falsification, fabrication, or misrepresentation of data or citations.
- Unauthorized assistance or collaboration.
- Cheating.

All scholarship builds on previous work, and all scholarship is a form of collaboration, even when working independently. Incorporating the work of others, and collaborating with colleagues, is welcomed in academic work. However, the honor code clarifies that you must always acknowledge when you make use of the ideas, words, or assistance of others in your work. This is typically accomplished through practices of reference, quotation, and citation.

If you are not certain what constitutes proper procedures for acknowledging the work of others, please ask the instructor for assistance. It is your responsibility to ensure that the honor code is appropriately followed. (The UNC Office of Student Conduct provides a variety of honor code resources.)

The UNC Libraries has online tutorials on citation practices and plagiarism that you might find helpful.

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