INLS 774: Applied Data Ethics
School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Instructor: Dr. Dianne Martin
Email: diannem@email.unc.edu
Course Credits: 1.5
Class meetings: Online, Asynchronous
Office hours: Online by appointment only

Course Description and Objectives
How should our values and beliefs be expressed in our information and data systems and services? What impact does our work have on people (at different scales)? What is our responsibility to understand and respond to those impacts? How is power expressed in various sociotechnical information systems and how do the values that we (intentionally or unintentionally) build into these systems help or harm? What is our obligation to “goodness,” “fairness,” “justice,” or “ethics?” What are the limitations of these frameworks?

Students who take this course in applied ethics will practice engaging in thought and discussion on issues related to information and data in various individual, community, and societal contexts. Students will learn a series of formal frameworks for ethical reasoning and will examine issues relevant to information and data systems and services through collective consideration of recent cases.

Course Materials
You are not required to purchase a textbook for this course. Course materials (including readings, videos, podcasts, and other media) are outlined in the weekly modules in Sakai and in the Weekly Schedule and Readings section of this document. If the reading is not posted, you are responsible for finding it using UNC Libraries or other means. Course readings may change based on changing current events.

Assignments
In lieu of attendance, students in this class will complete weekly discussions, activities, and/or case study responses. The success of this course relies on active participation from all class members. You should plan to set aside regular times throughout the week to participate in this class. Missing assignments (including participation assignments) will result in a failing grade. If you fall behind (because of illness or other issues) please contact me so that we can arrange alternatives or makeup assignments.

In-depth Book or Film Analysis (35%) – Due date is March 8 by 5 pm.
At the end of the course each student will submit a 1500-word in-depth analysis of a book or film (TED Talk, for example, but it could also be a work of fiction) related to the topics presented in the course. This analysis will include the ethical or moral implications related to Big Data that are raised in the book or film. It should include examples from the work and at least five outside references.

Weekly Discussions (35%) – midpoint points put in Sakai on Feb. 6 / final points put in on March 1
Students will be asked to participate meaningfully in discussions each week. Although the nature of the discussions will change each week, students are expected to complete initial posts by Wednesday at
midnight, and at least 2 responses by Saturday at midnight. I will post an initial discussion question each week, but students may choose to initiate discussion questions in the weekly discussion if you have one. Discussions should be related to the topic of the week.

Successful participation in discussions includes the following criteria:

1. Discourse in our class should be respectful, empathetic, and demonstrate compassion for your classmates.
2. Respect for all persons. While I expect robust discussion, disrespect for colleagues and/or the instructor will not be tolerated.
3. Complete all readings. Readings are meant to inform discussions/activities. When possible, ground your questions and comments in the readings and related materials.
4. Make discussion posts and responses substantive. “I agree” is insufficient. Add to the comment by offering additional points for consideration, or relevant questions. Respond to previous questions. Suggest additional resources or alternative perspectives. Make posts meaningful.
5. Don’t be afraid to admit when you don’t understand. Add (specific) questions to the discussion if you have them (working through questions and ideas is an excellent way to start important discussions!).
6. Focus on the issue at hand - While discussions sometimes take necessary detours, keep the broader topic/question in mind as you decide on how to contribute. Focus on the substance of issues (and not your classmates) when you agree or disagree.
7. Disagree constructively. If someone else’s perspective is different from yours, try to understand it rather than dismiss it out of hand. Ask for examples, explanations, or clarifications. Offer counter-examples, or refer to readings, rather than dismiss/insult a colleague.
8. Remember that we all come to these issues with different levels of experience and are all working through different questions in different ways.

Shared Notes (30%) – midpoint points put in Sakai on Feb. 6 / final points put in on March 1

The class will collect a repository of shared notes in the related a repository area. Students will be assigned to a discussion group. Within your group, you can decide which one of you will prepare notes for which reading. Each student must contribute to shared notes on their designated reading each week. When commenting in shared notes word documents, be sure to track changes and end your submissions with a parenthetical note: (Martin).

Grading

Graduate students in this course will receive a grade of P if you complete all assignments and have a minimum grade of 65 points. To pass the course, you must complete all assignments. If a particular assignment needs revision to be marked as complete, I will notify you of the revision due date. Because this semester is relatively compressed, I will not be able to offer much leeway with due dates, but please contact me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) if you have an extenuating circumstance.
WEEKLY SCHEDULE: SPRING 2024

Week 1 (Jan. 10-16): What are we doing here?
* WATCH
  1. PowerPoint Lecture #1 in Sakai: Overview of Ethical Frameworks
  2. Timnit Gebru: How Can We Stop Artificial Intelligence From Marginalizing Communities? | TED Talk

* READ and take notes on 2 of the following 3 articles:

* DISCUSSION: Case Study: Personal Expression

Week 2 (Jan. 17-23): How do we operationalize value & values?
* WATCH
  1. PowerPoint Lecture #2 in Sakai: Defining Professional Ethics

* READ and take notes: What elements are shared among these codes? What is missing from each (or all?)? What would you add/take away?
  1. ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (http://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/)
  4. Feminist Data Manifesto: https://www.manifestno.com/

* DISCUSSION: Value and Values in Codes of Ethics

Week 3 (Jan. 24-30): Is info/data neutral?
* READ and take notes:
* **DISCUSSION:** Case Study: Building a Dataset

**Week 4 (Jan. 31 – Feb. 6): How do we embed our biases into systems?**

* **READ and take notes:**

* **WATCH:**

* **DISCUSSION:** Case Study: Systemic Bias

**Week 5 (Feb. 7-20): Power. (Feb. 12-13 are UNC Wellness Days)**

* **READ and take notes:**

* **DISCUSSION:** Case Study: Selection and Censorship: Controlling Community Resources

**Week 6 (Feb. 21-27): How do we balance between rights and accountability?**

* **READ and take notes:**

* **DISCUSSION:** Case Study: “Freedom” vs. Safety in Private Space

**Week 7 (Feb. 28-Mar. 5): How do we understand what is “(un)true?”**

* **READ and take notes:**

* **DISCUSSION:** Big Ideas about Big Data to Take Away from the Class – Discussion of indepth book or film analyses – the moral of the story.

**Due March 8 by 5 pm: In-depth Book or Film Analysis**
Course Policies

Honor Code
The Honor Code, which prohibits giving or receiving unauthorized aid in the completion of assignments and exams is in effect in this class. Whenever you use the words or ideas of others, they should be properly marked as a quotation (and referenced) or the source of the ideas should be cited. APA citation format is required for assignments in this class. Please contact the instructor if you have any questions about the application of the Honor Code to your work in this class. You can learn more about the UNC Honor Code at https://studentconduct.unc.edu/ and about the Instrument of Student Governance at https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf. I also expect that students will give proper credit to other researchers through proper use of citation. APA citation style will be used for this course.

Counseling and Psychological Services
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.

If you are interested in seeking resources from UNC CAPS you can visit their website: https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more. (source: Student Safety and Wellness Proposal for EPC, Sep 2018). Additionally, SILS alumni Jess Epsten, and Emily Simmons created a Toolkit for LGBTQQIA+ Young Adults Seeking Mental Health Services in North Carolina accessible through the CEDI Lab website here.

Accessibility Resources and Service Office
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.

Additionally, 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 difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. See the ARS Website for contact information: https://ars.unc.edu or email ars@unc.edu. If you need an accommodation but have not yet gone through the steps it takes to establish a formal relationship with University ARS, please let me know, and I will do my best to accommodate your needs. Relevant policy documents as they relation to registration and accommodations determinations and the student registration form are available on the ARS website under the About ARS tab.

Acceptable Use Policy
By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University’s technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University’s mission. In the context of a class, it’s quite likely you will
participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others’ intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the University website “Safe Computing at UNC” for information about the data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Title IX Resources
Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/. Please contact the University’s Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim–titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy on Non-Discrimination
The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals’ abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University’s Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/.

Diversity Statement
I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this course an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate suggestions.

Grading:
This course is part of a graduate certificate program so is graded according to the graduate standards of P or F.