

## **INLS 776: Ethics, Values, and Society Spring 2024**

### **Basic information**

*Date and time:* Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

*Location:* Manning 307

### **Instructor information**

*Instructor:* Melanie Feinberg (she, her, hers)

*E-mail:* mfeinber@unc.edu

*Office:* Manning 024

*Student hours:* Tuesdays 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. (in the office) (or, e-mail to make an appointment for another time)

### **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 social 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 social 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 Information and the 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 social 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 such 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 accountability.
- Discuss complex social dilemmas with your peers in a productive, compassionate manner.
- Design and present a panel for a professional conference.

### **Course structure**

This is an in-person course, meeting twice a week.

Our time together will be oriented around discussion: both discussion of readings and consideration of practical dilemmas and debates—what-if scenarios, analysis of current events, and professional challenges. When possible, lectures will be recorded to watch in advance rather than conducted in class.

Towards the end of the semester, our class structure will shift to examine topics and dilemmas selected by you. As part of our semester project, each project group will be responsible for conducting one class session. This session

will provide a way for you to share what you've learned about your semester project topic with the rest of the class. (More details are in the Requirements section of this syllabus.)

This class will use the Canvas learning management system. Each week's materials, including readings, will be available via its own module in Canvas. Modules for the subsequent week will generally be posted on Thursdays.

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

## Requirements

To pass the course, you must:

- Complete a group project to investigate a topic of your choice related to ethics, society, and values in the information professions.
- Satisfy participation requirements: acquire at least eight collegiality points and document your required points in a brief report.

## Semester project: Investigating a professional matter of concern

The assigned work this semester will primarily comprise *an extended group project*.

In groups of about 5 students each, you will:

- Describe a topic that provokes professional dilemmas involving ethics, values, and society.
- Research academic, professional, and popular literature on that topic, producing an annotated bibliography of sources.
- Conduct one entire session of our class, where you share what you've learned with your classmates and invite discussion based on your ideas.
- Develop a 45-minute panel presentation on the topic to be conducted at a public event, the Symposium on Information for the Social Good (part of the SILS Scholar Showcase).

Note that, although the project involves two public presentations, these are group efforts; there is no individual speaking requirement. Our emphasis is on the *process* of investigating your selected issue: researching your topic, collaborating with your group, and figuring out how best to share your ideas with others. The actual presentations are merely the culmination of this process.

**The Symposium on Information for the Social Good will be held on Friday, April 26, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Students will be expected to attend at least two hours of the symposium, in addition to the time when you are presenting (and attending throughout the day is encouraged, as a way to support your classmates).**

Should unavoidable circumstances prohibit you from attending the symposium, please consult with the instructor.

### *Project details*

You will collaborate with a group of other students to investigate a social dilemma of concern to the information professions. You will examine your topic through the lens of ethics and values.

Project milestones include:

1. Selecting a topic and determining a project management plan.
2. Clarifying your panel's focus and writing an extended abstract to set your intentions. (This milestone will also include a status update to describe how your group has been working together and to assess and adjust your project management plan.)
3. Researching literature on your topic and preparing an annotated bibliography of sources. (This milestone will also include a status update to describe how your group has been working together and to assess and adjust your project management plan.)

4. Creating a detailed outline of both your class session and symposium panel. (This milestone will also include a status update to describe how your group has been working together and to assess and adjust your project management plan.)
5. Conducting one entire session of our class to share what you've learned. Possible activities include:
  - a. Selecting a set of appropriate readings for the class to read in advance.
  - b. Guiding the class in discussion about your topic—perhaps via a scenario that poses a professional dilemma—based on the readings you selected and the ideas that you shared.
  - c. Soliciting feedback to improve your planned symposium panel.
6. Presenting a 45-minute panel at the Symposium for Information and the Social Good.
7. Writing a concluding reflection based on your experience of working on the project and attending the symposium.

Complete details for each milestone, including deliverables and criteria for success, will be available in Canvas. We'll also talk about each milestone in class.

### *Forming project groups*

In class, we will discuss several possibilities for how we might establish semester project groups. The final method will be determined based on the results of an anonymous class poll.

### *Anti-freefloating measures*

To encourage consistent, reliable participation by all project group members, our project process includes the following measures:

- Early development of a project management plan.
- The submission of periodic status updates.
- Five class sessions devoted to semester project work.

*Should any project group find itself, despite these measures, struggling to negotiate challenges of commitment or communication, please consult with me.* If, after intervention, any group member persistently fails to fulfill their responsibilities, that group member may, at the instructor's discretion, be ejected from the group. In such a case, that student will need to prepare an alternate project by themselves in order to pass the course. This alternate project will be at the discretion of the instructor, but will be similar in scope to a 30-page individual paper.

### **Participation**

We're all in this together! It's important that we all find ways to contribute to our mutual learning and well-being. Accordingly, to pass the class, you must *acquire at least eight* collegiality points *throughout the semester*.<sup>1</sup>

Some ways to obtain collegiality points include:

- *Consistently* doing the assigned reading and being prepared for class discussion.
- *Generally* fulfilling the discussion success criteria (these criteria are documented in Canvas).
- Facilitating a small-group discussion: getting the conversation started, keeping the group on task, ensuring that everyone has a chance to speak, synthesizing ideas, and so on.
- Serving as the "devil's advocate" in a small-group discussion by articulating opinions or objections that you do not personally share, but that extend the conversation in interesting ways. (This involves acting as the persistent devil's advocate for an entire class, rather than just making a single remark.)
- Acting as the reporter for a small-group discussion, presenting what the group talked about to the class as a whole.
- Contributing an idea, comment, or question to a discussion that involves the entire class (rather than a small group).
- Writing up thoughts about a course reading, lecture, discussion, or other activity as a Canvas discussion post.

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<sup>1</sup> The idea for collegiality points is liberally adapted from Max Liboiron via Megan Winget.

- Reflecting on a recent news item or everyday experience that expands upon topics germane to the class as a Canvas discussion post.
- Sharing your knowledge with others: for example, helping to explain a reading, discussion topic, or something else from class to a colleague (either as part of a small-group interaction or outside of class; this might include study groups).
- Soliciting knowledge from others: for example, asking a fellow student (or me) for help when you don't understand something (again, either as part of class or outside of class).

Any of these actions will earn a collegiality point. You don't need to do eight different actions; you can act as a discussion reporter eight times, or you can write eight Canvas discussion posts. It's really up to you.

*Have an idea for some other way to obtain collegiality points? Great! Just let me know what you're thinking, and we'll see if it makes sense. We can continue adding to this list throughout the semester.*

#### *Tracking collegiality points*

**I will not keep track of your collegiality points; you will. At the end of the semester, you will submit a report that lists what you've done.** This will not be onerous if you keep track as we go along.

In the report, you will document each collegiality point in 2-3 sentences. (A sample description of a collegiality point might be: "On Monday, January 30, I facilitated my group's process for creating our code of ethics for the information professions. I asked each person to share the directive that they thought was most important from one of the different professional codes of ethics, and we used those to begin our own code.")

Also note that, although I encourage you to perform these activities whenever you can, you only need to tell me about *eight* of them. So your report can just tell me your eight *favorite* collegiality items (or the *first* eight), and not all 45 things that you did. In other words, if you want, you can get this report completed early in the semester and be done with it (as long as you don't have more than two unexcused absences, as explained below).

### **Attendance**

In a class that emphasizes student interaction, being absent affects the learning experience of others. Therefore, attendance is a required component of participation.

**Everyone has two unexcused absences for the semester.** An unexcused absence is when you are away from class for any reason.

**If you have more than two unexcused absences in the semester, you must obtain one extra collegiality point for each unexcused absence.** (For instance, if you have four unexcused absences for the semester, you will need ten collegiality points, rather than eight.)

**If you have a good reason to miss class, you can request an excused absence.** You don't need to obtain an extra collegiality point for an excused absence.

Acceptable reasons for excused absences include:

- Ill health (physical or mental).
- Family emergencies (your child is sick, your partner is in the hospital).
- Accidents and unanticipated disasters (your apartment floods, your car is stolen, etc).
- Religious holidays.

To obtain an excused absence, send me an e-mail with your reason for being absent. Do not go into detail about your personal circumstances, just tell me the basic reason (e.g., "I'm not feeling well today" etc.).

As a rule of thumb, if it would seem wrong for me to cancel class for that reason, it's probably not an acceptable excuse. For instance, studying for an exam in another class or attending a work meeting are not likely to be acceptable reasons to miss class.

As with collegiality points, I won't keep track of your absences; you will. But misrepresenting unexcused absences would be a violation of the honor code, and honor code violations are serious (see the course policies below).

### **Grading and assessment**

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

You will receive written or oral feedback on all assigned work. The feedback will be based on the success criteria and deliverables for each required assignment (available in the Assignments area of Canvas). For group assignments, feedback will be prepared for the group.

Should a submission be incomplete or not meet minimum standards of performance, you will be invited to resubmit it. (If a live event, such as your group's facilitation of one class session, does not meet minimum standards, you will be invited to resubmit an alternate assignment.)

#### *Late work*

There are no penalties for late work.

If you cannot make a deadline for a written assignment, send an e-mail to inform me when you plan to submit your completed assignment. In your e-mail, you just need to tell me when you intend to submit your work. You don't need to explain your circumstances; you don't need to apologize; and you don't need to ask me if a certain date is okay with me. Just tell me when you intend to submit your work.

For written work, the later that projects are submitted, the less time I will have to provide feedback on them, so keep this in mind. You'll get fewer comments—or potentially no comments—when you turn things in late.

Of course, your two public presentations (the class session and symposium panel) are live events that will occur at specified times, which makes late submission impossible. Should an entire group be unable to deliver a public presentation, alternate arrangements will need to be negotiated with the instructor.

However, if an individual group member experiences circumstances such as those defined for an excused absence (illness, family emergency, etc), that is not a problem as long as that person has fully contributed to the process of preparing the presentation. (Should this occur, the project group should consult with the instructor to determine how best to proceed with the presentation in the absence of the missing group member.)

### **Due dates**

#### *Participation requirements*

Collegiality points report

#### *Due date*

**Tuesday, April 30**

#### *Group project milestones*

Group formation, topic selection, and project management plan

Extended abstract and program abstract

Content outline and annotated bibliography

Facilitation of one class session

#### *Due date*

**Thursday, February 8**

**Thursday, March 7**

**Tuesday, March 26**

**Week 13, 14, and 15 (exact dates to be determined in class)**

Attend and present at the symposium

Reflection on the project and symposium (individual work)

**Friday, April 26**

**Tuesday, April 30**

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

## Semester Calendar

This calendar is subject to modification as the semester proceeds.

All readings are available via each week's Canvas module and should be completed before class begins.

### Part 1: Conceptual foundations (ethics and values)

Date	Themes	Readings
Thursday, January 11	Introduction to the course	Syllabus
Tuesday, January 16	Getting to know each other so that we can learn together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hooks, 1994</li></ul>
Thursday, January 18	Ethics 1: foundations of moral reasoning, overviews of normative ethical theories (consequentialism, deontology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regan, 2005</li><li>• Fink, 2016</li></ul>
Tuesday, January 23	Ethics 2: more overviews of normative ethical theories (consequentialism, deontology, social contract)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quinn, 2020</li><li>• Lindemann, 2019 (Chapter 2, pp. 75-87 only)</li></ul>
Thursday, January 25	Ethics 3: yet more overviews of normative ethical theories (virtue ethics and care ethics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• White, 2017</li></ul>
Tuesday, January 31	Ethics 4: feminist ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lindemann, 2019 (chapter 6; chapter 2, pp. 88-99 only)</li><li>• Fricker, 2007</li></ul>
Thursday, February 1	Semester project kickoff: overview, group formation, and project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semester project instructions in Canvas</li></ul>
Tuesday, February 6	Values 1: values in technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Winner, 1990</li><li>• Introna and Nissenbaum, 2000</li></ul>
Thursday, February 8	Values 2: design and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Friedman, Kahn, and Borning 2006</li><li>• Costanza-Chock, 2020</li><li>• Ghoshal and Dasgupta, 2023</li></ul>
Tuesday, February 13	<i>University well-being day; no classes scheduled</i>	
Thursday, February 15	Semester project: conducting research and generating ideas for workshop and panel structure	

Date	Themes	Readings
Tuesday, February 20	Values 3: professional values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Code of Ethics</li> <li>• American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics</li> <li>• Society for American Archivists (SAA) Values Statement and Code of Ethics</li> <li>• IEEE Code of Ethics</li> </ul>

*Part 2. Values conflicts and social dilemmas in the information professions*

Date	Themes	Readings
Thursday, February 22	Dilemmas related to information access: systemic bias in information systems	Noble, 2013 Drabinski, 2013
Tuesday, February 27	Dilemmas related to information access: Intellectual freedom and social justice	Knox, 2022 (chapter 1) Knox, 2020 Cooke and Harris, 2023
Thursday, February 29	Semester project work day	
Tuesday, March 5	Dilemmas related to information access: privacy and mass digitization	Moore, 2016 Thystrup, 2017
Thursday, March 7	Dilemmas related to data collection: personal data, private enterprise, and public interest 1	Nopper, 2019 Ahmed, 2019 Liu, 2019 Andreatta, 2021
Tuesday, March 12	<i>Spring break. no classes scheduled</i>	
Thursday, March 14	<i>Spring break. no classes scheduled</i>	
Tuesday, March 19	Dilemmas related to data collection: personal data, private enterprise, and public interest 2	Liang, Hutson, and Keyes, 2020 Yu, 2022
Thursday, March 21	Semester project work day	
Tuesday, March 26	Dilemmas related to data collection: personal data, private enterprise, and public interest 3	Ebeling, 2016 Søe, 2021
Thursday, March 28	<i>University well-being day; no classes scheduled</i>	
Tuesday, April 2	Dilemmas related to professional ideology and identity	Amrute, 2020 Sutherland, 2017

*Part 3. Values conflicts and social dilemmas in the information professions: selected by you*

Date	Themes	Readings
Thursday, April 4	<b>Class facilitated by project group #1</b>	to be determined by the project group
Tuesday, April 9	<b>Class facilitated by project group #2</b>	to be determined by the project group

Date	Themes	Readings
Thursday, April 11	<b>Class facilitated by project group #3</b>	to be determined by the project group
Tuesday, April 16	<b>Class facilitated by project group #4</b>	to be determined by the project group
Thursday, April 18	<b>Class facilitated by project group #5</b>	to be determined by the project group
Tuesday, April 23	<b>Class facilitated by project group #6</b>	to be determined by the project group
Thursday, April 25	Final symposium preparation	
<b>Friday, April 26</b>	<b>SILS Scholar Showcase and Symposium for Information and the Social Good</b>	
Tuesday, April 30	Course wrap up (additional dilemmas ripped from the headlines?)	

### Course policies

#### *COVID-19 and mask use*

As specified by current UNC community standards, everyone at UNC is encouraged to be fully vaccinated and to receive any eligible boosters.

Mask use is optional in university buildings.

*Please do not come to class if you are sick.* Any illness is always an excused absence. Although this class does not offer a remote option, class materials will be posted to Canvas so that you will have access to them, even if you are ill.

#### *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.

It is normal to feel confused or lost sometimes! **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 outside waiting.)

#### *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](http://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](http://caps.unc.edu) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building.

If you are concerned about a fellow student's wellbeing, one option is to consult the Dean of Students: <https://dos.unc.edu/urgent-concerns/>

#### *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-funds/>

If you are struggling with food insecurity, SILS has a food pantry in the student lounge on the second floor of Manning Hall; feel free to take what you need (or donate items for others). Carolina Cupboard is another 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.

Honor code violations can result in serious penalties, such as failing the course.

#### *Use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT*

You *may* use generative AI tools as a study aid, but you should be very careful regarding the responses that you might receive. ChatGPT, for instance, is quite apt to provide inaccurate or misleading information if you were to ask it, say, to summarize the findings and significance of the Cranfield tests. These responses typically sound quite reasonable, even when they are absolutely wrong. So beware!

In terms of assigned written work, you must submit a disclosure statement that documents *all* the different ways that you used generative AI tools. As part of your documentation, you should include links to *all* the conversations that you may have had with chat-based tools.

Additionally, if you

- Incorporate direct quotations from an AI tool
- Make use of ideas that an AI tool conveyed to you

you need to cite that material in the text of your essay, just as you would cite any other outside source.

Failure to abide by these rules will be considered a violation of the UNC Honor Code.

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