

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**Undergraduate Course Outline 2022-23**  
**Digital Humanities 2126F/Phil 2078F (650):**  
**Ethics for a Digital World**

**Fall 2022**

**Office Hours: Thurs 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

**Office: Zoom**

**Instructor: Dr. Ryan Robb**

**e-mail: [rrobb@uwo.ca](mailto:rrobb@uwo.ca)**

**Course Delivery: All elements of this course will  
be delivered asynchronously through OWL**

**Antirequisites:** Phil 2998 (F/W 2019-20), Phil 2268

### **DESCRIPTION**

We spend a considerable portion of our lives in the digital world. What moral considerations ought to guide our conduct as cyber-citizens, given the possibility that online behaviour is morally distinct from real world behaviour? This class will engage materials that address the philosophical issues raised by these two questions: Specifically: What's the relationship between our virtual identities and our physical identities? How is online activity changing our interpersonal relationships? What are our rights and responsibilities toward others in the cyber-world? How do we trade between the potentially conflicting values of anonymity and accountability? How do we balance copyright claims against demands for open access? Is piracy always wrong? Does a hacker's code of ethics make any sense? How should we respond to forms of hate and exclusion in online communities?

### **TEXTS**

All the readings for this course will be made available through OWL

### **OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of this course is to help students improve their critical thinking skills. Specifically, students should expect to improve their abilities to understand the arguments made in the readings and respond with arguments of their own in their online discussion posts, their online participation, and their term papers.

The secondary goal of the course is to familiarize students with recent attempts by scholars to identify and address some of the ethical issues that emerge in our increasingly digital lives. This goal will be satisfied by testing student comprehension of the materials with online quizzes, and on the final exam.

## **METHOD OF EVALUATION**

Quizzes: 15% (11 multiple choice quizzes, worth 1.36% each)

Discussion Posts: 30% (two 400 – 600 word posts, worth 15% each)

Discussion Participation: 10% (8 responses, worth 1.25% each)

One 1100 – 1300 word term-paper: 25%

Final Exam: 20% (scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the December 2022 Final Exam period)

## **AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### 1. Extensions

If you fail to meet the submission dates for the two discussion posts or the term paper, extensions may be granted only as a result of a petition to the Academic Counselor of the student's faculty. **Instructors have no authority to waive this requirement, and any unofficial arrangements they make with students will not be respected by the administration.**

### 2. Late Assignments and penalties

Quizzes: Quizzes not completed prior to the end of the relevant Unit **cannot** be made up.

Unit Discussion Posts: Late discussion posts will lose 1 (out of 15) mark per day for each day they are late; after 9 days (weekends included), a grade of 0 will automatically be recorded.

Discussion Responses/Participation: A failure to respond with the required number of replies (four in Unit 2 and four in Unit 4) to your classmates' discussion posts before the deadline specified on the schedule below **cannot** be made up.

Term Papers: The term papers are due on the last day of classes for the term. In accord with UWO Senate guidelines, **no term papers will be accepted after the last day of classes, i.e., Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022. ANY PAPER NOT SUBMITTED BY THIS TIME WILL (regrettably) RECEIVE A GRADE OF 0.**

## **READING AND ASSIGNMENTS SCHEDULE**

NOTE: All of the readings listed in this section are, and will remain, available for the duration of the course under the 'Resources' tab on OWL. Links to each will also be included in the relevant Unit tabs, released when each Unit begins.

Also NOTE: This section includes submission/completion deadlines for each element of the course, with the exception of the final exam. Those deadlines are listed in each of the Unit sections below and repeated separately in the following section.

### **Unit 1 (Weeks 1 and 2, September 8<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>): What is Philosophy, What is Ethics, What is Digital Ethics?**

#### **Week 1: Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics**

Readings: Lecture Notes and Video – What is Philosophy?  
Lecture Notes and Video – What is Ethics?  
Assignment: Quiz #1

#### **Week 2: Ethics in the Digital World... same old story, or something new?**

Readings: Steve Matthews – Internet Ethics  
Antonio Marturano – The Role of Metaethics and the Future of Computer Ethics  
Zonghao Bao and Kun Xiang – Digitalization and Global Ethics  
David M. Douglas – Toward a Just and Fair Internet: Applying Rawls's Principles of Justice to Internet Regulation  
Assignment: Quiz #2 (The 2 quizzes for Unit 1 must be completed by Thursday September 22<sup>nd</sup> at 11:55 p.m. EDT)

### **Unit 2 (Weeks 3 and 4, September 22<sup>nd</sup> – October 5<sup>th</sup>): Personal Identity and the Possibility of Friendship in the Digital World**

#### **Week 3: Me, My Online Identity, and the Possibility of Moral Wrong**

Reading: Marya Schechtman – The Story of my (Second) Life: Virtual Worlds and Narrative Identity  
Jessica Wolfendale – My Avatar, My Self: Virtual Harm and Attachment  
A.J. Craft – Sin in Cyber-Eden: Understanding the Metaphysics and Morals of Virtual Worlds  
Assignment: Quiz #3

#### **Week 4: Can we Make Friends Online?**

- Readings: Robert Sharp – The Obstacles Against Reaching the Highest Level of Aristotelean Friendship Online  
Sofia Kaliarnta – Using Aristotle’s Theory of Friendship to Classify Online Friendships: A Critical Counterview
- Assignments: a. Quiz #4 (The two quizzes for Unit 2 must be completed by Thursday October 6<sup>th</sup>, no later than 11:55 p.m. EDT)  
b. **First** 400 – 600 word Unit Discussion Post due no later than **11:55 p.m. EDT Thursday October 6<sup>th</sup>**.

#### **Unit 3 (Weeks 5 and 6, October 6<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>): The Effect of Digital Life on Truth and Privacy**

##### **Week 5: The Internet, Truth, and Anonymity**

- Readings: Karen Frost-Arnold – Trustworthiness and Truth: The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability  
R. George Wright – Self-Censorship and the Constriction of Thought and Discussion under Modern Communications Technologies  
Nicholas Munn – The New Political Blogosphere
- Assignment: Quiz #5

##### **Week 6: Privacy**

- Readings: Norman Bowie – Privacy and the Internet  
Dorota Mokrosinska – Privacy and the Integrity of Liberal Politics: The Case of Governmental Internet Searches
- Assignments: a. Quiz #6 (The two quizzes for Unit 3 must be completed by Thursday October 20<sup>th</sup> no later than 11:55 p.m. EDT).  
b. Four Responses to **FOUR SEPARATE CLASSMATES’** Unit 2 discussion posts must be completed no later than 11:55 p.m. EDT on Thursday October 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Unit 4 (Weeks 7, 8, and 9 October 20<sup>th</sup> – November 16<sup>th</sup>): The Ethics of Open Access, Piracy, and Hacking**

##### **Week 7: Open Access**

- Readings: Michael Parker – The Ethics of Open Access Publishing  
John Willinsky and J.P. Alperin – The Academic Ethics of Open Access to Research and Scholarship  
Natasha Susan Mauthner and Odette Parry – Open Access Digital Data Sharing: Principles, Policies and Practices
- Assignment: Quiz #7

## **Week 8: Piracy and Hacking**

Readings: Paul Graham – Defining Property  
Roberts – The Ethics of Piracy  
Luc Small – Theft in a Wireless World

Assignments: a. Quiz #8

## **Week 9: Hacking**

Readings: Loyd Blankenship – The Hacker’s Manifesto  
Ronald Pike – The ‘Ethics’ of Teaching Ethical Hacking  
Philip Serracino-Inglott – Is it ok to be an Anonymous?

Assignments: a. Quiz #9 (The three quizzes for Unit 4 must be completed by Thursday November 17<sup>th</sup>, no later than 11:55 p.m. EST)  
b. **Second** 400 – 600 word Unit Discussion Post is due by **11:55 p.m. EST Thursday November 17<sup>th</sup>**

## **Unit 5 (Weeks 10, 11 and 12 November 17<sup>th</sup> – December 8<sup>th</sup>): Big Data, Gender, and Cyberbullying**

### **Week 10: Big Data; the Potential and the Problems**

Reading: Michael Kelley – Scientists Used Facebook for the Largest Ever Study of Language and Personality  
Hannes Grassegger and Mikael Krogerus – The Data that Turned the World Upside Down  
Dinah Payne and C.C. Trumbach – Data Mining: Proprietary Rights, People and Proposals

Assignment: Quiz #10

### **Week 11: Gender and the Internet**

Reading: Helen Lewis – Dear The Internet, This is Why You Can’t Have Anything Nice  
Alison Adam and Jacqueline Ofori-Amanfo – Does Gender Matter in Computer Ethics?  
Alison Adam – Cyberstalking and Internet Pornography: Gender and the Gaze

Assignment: Quiz #11 (The three quizzes for Unit 5 must be completed by Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup> no later than 11:55 p.m. EST)

## **Week 12: The Problem of Cyberbullying**

Readings: Tom Harrison – Moral Theory and Research into Cyberbullying  
David M. Douglas – Doxing: A Conceptual Analysis

Assignment: a. Four Responses to FOUR SEPARATE GROUP-MATES' Unit 4 discussion posts to be completed no later than 11:55 p.m. EST on **Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>**  
b. **TERM PAPER** (worth **25%** of your final grade) DUE no later than **11:55 p.m. EST** on **Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022.**

## **This Reading and Assignment Schedule is Subject to Change Given Sufficient Prior Notice**

### **DUE DATES**

The **11 weekly quizzes** (worth a combined total of 15% of your final grade) must each be completed by the end of the Unit in which they appear... so:

Unit 1 quizzes must be completed by Thursday September 22<sup>nd</sup> by 11:55 p.m.  
Unit 2 quizzes must be completed by Thursday October 6<sup>th</sup> by 11:55 p.m.  
Unit 3 quizzes must be completed by Thursday October 20<sup>th</sup> by 11:55 p.m.  
Unit 4 quizzes must be completed by Thursday November 17<sup>th</sup> by 11:55 p.m.  
Unit 5 quizzes must be completed by Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup> by 11:55 p.m.

The **two 400 – 600 word Unit Discussion Posts** (worth a combined total of 30% of your final grade) are due at the end of Units 2 and 4. More specifically:

Unit 2 Discussion Post is due on Thursday October 6<sup>th</sup> by 11:55 p.m.  
Unit 4 Discussion Post is due on Thursday November 17<sup>th</sup> by 11:55 p.m.

For your **On-Line Participation Grade** (worth 10% of your final grade) you need to submit responses to four separate classmates' Unit Discussion Posts in each of Units 2 and 4. The responses for these two Units will need to be completed by:

Unit 2 Responses submitted by Thursday October 20<sup>th</sup> at 11:55 p.m.  
Unit 4 Responses submitted by Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup> at 11:55 p.m.

Your **Term Paper** (worth 25% of your final grade) is due on Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup> by 11:55 p.m.

Your **Final Exam** (worth 20% of your final grade) will be scheduled at some point during the December Exam Period by the office of the registrar.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

## **EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

## **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.