

Computers and Society

CPSC 430

Lecture 1 – Introduction
Kevin Leyton-Brown

<http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430>

Course Description

- We'll explore the interplay between **information technology and society**, emphasizing ethical issues.
- You'll come away with an increased:
 - understanding of the **social and ethical implications** of computer use and abuse;
 - ability to **think critically and defend decisions** logically;
 - appreciation for **alternate points of view**.
- Our focus will be on **reading, writing and discussion**.
 - Each week students will complete an **assigned reading**, write a **mini-essay** in response, and **evaluate the work of others**.
 - Classes will emphasize discussion and debate.
 - The ability to speak, read and write fluently in English is **essential for success** in the class.

Grading Scheme

Class Participation	10 %
Class Attendance	10 %
Weekly Essay Questions	35 %
Weekly Peer Review	10 %
Midterm Exam (take-home)	10 %
Final Exam	25 %

- Attendance: must complete start/end of class polls at least once/week. This is not the course for you if attending at least half of the classes synchronously will impose a hardship.
- To pass the course, you must pass the final exam.
- I may change the exact percentage breakdowns shown here.
- This is **not an easy course—something to hand in every class**
 - On the other hand, you'll learn a lot, and students who work hard throughout the term can expect to do well.

Participation

- **Class participation: 10%**
 - participation in class discussions (1/class max)
 - substantive contribution to Piazza or Zoom chat (1/week max)

Participate at least this many times...	Get this many points
17	10
14	9.5
12	9
10	8.5
8	8
6	7.5
5	7
4	6
3	5
2	3.5
1	2
0	0

Weekly Essays

- **Between Thursday, 6:30 PM and Tuesday, 4:45 PM (sharp!)**
 - Do **assigned readings** of up to one chapter from the textbook. Readings posted at <http://cs.ubc.ca/~kevinlb/teaching/cs430>.
 - Take a **multiple-choice quiz** online to test your comprehension.
 - Answer one **essay question** (your choice from a list of choices) and enter your answers online. You'll be allowed up to 2500 characters; that's less than one single-spaced page.
 - At first: do some **calibrated peer review**
 - This is practice for the following; details in a minute
- **Between Tuesday, 6:30 PM and Thursday, 4:45 PM (sharp!)**
 - Perform your own **peer review** of four randomly assigned students' written questions.

Grading Your Essays

- You'll **receive 3 or 4 peer reviews** of your work, each week
 - These reviews will be **double-blind** (you won't know who reviewed you)
 - You'll be graded on a five-point scale on four dimensions:
 - Was the essay **well structured**, stating a thesis, supporting it with argument(s) that are clearly related to this point and (if relevant) distinct from one another, and linking these arguments in a logical way?
 - Did the essay **do a good job of making its case**, choosing relevant arguments, backing them up with evidence and examples at an appropriate level of detail, and responding to contrary views as appropriate?
 - Did the essay demonstrate a **good understanding of the course's subject matter**, including both the topic and the wider context?
 - Was the essay presented **clearly and in correct English**?
 - You'll also get comments on each item, and an outline of your essay
- When you also **receive a review by a TA**:
 - only the TA evaluation matters for your grade
- When you are evaluated **only by peers**:
 - Each of your peer grades will be weighted in proportion to our estimates of your peers' **dependability** as graders
 - If you disagree with your grade **you can appeal**, and a TA will re-grade your essay
- Essays are worth **increasing amounts** as the term goes on
 - 2, 3, 4 % of final grade each week

Peer Review

1. Calibrated peer review

Grading essays from previous years that we've graded already

- Confirms that we all **understand the grading scheme** in the same way, and shows you examples of weak and strong essays

2. Supervised peer review

Grading essays from this year when you haven't yet demonstrated proficiency at peer review

- A **TA will grade the same essays**, and only the TA grade will count
- The TA will also assess whether you made **thoughtful comments**

3. Unsupervised peer review

Grading essays from this year once you've demonstrated proficiency

- Your review may be **spot checked or appealed**: checked by TA
 - Spot checks: very positive ratings; severe disagreements; random
- We'll update your dependability score based on your degree of agreement with peers (taking their own dependability into account) and, when available, degree of agreement with TAs

Estimating Dependability

- We continuously maintain estimates of each peer grader's “**dependability**” via Bayesian inference
 - The key idea is that calibrations and assignments graded by TAs give us information about which **graders are more reliable**
 - we then bootstrap this knowledge to decide how much to trust each grader on assignments that were **not graded by a TA**
- Your dependability score is our estimate of **effort * (1/variance)**
 - **effort** is (1 - the probability that you always assign the class average without considering the essay)
 - **variance** is your tendency to differ from TA scores
- The system starts out with the assumption that all students have **low dependability scores** (specifically, low effort and high variance)
- As you grade assignments/calibrations, we **update these beliefs**
 - doing **more calibrations** both helps you get better at grading and gives us evidence to counteract the system's pessimistic initial belief
 - if you always assign each submission **the class average**, our model will assign you a low effort probability; you need to properly identify both strong and weak assignments in order to achieve a high dependability score.

Peer Review: Reviewer Perspective

- Do **at least 3 calibrated reviews** (more the first week; can always do more) before 4:45 PM every Tuesday that you're required to do so
 - Week 1: this means everyone!
 - Week 2+: only if required
- Do **4 reviews of others' essays** before 4:45 PM Thursday
- How we'll calculate **your peer review grade** (10% of the course):
 - **Scaled dependability scores**, snapshotted each week
 - reviews worth **increasing amounts**: scaled to 0.6, 0.9, 1.1 % of final grade per week
 - If you don't do everything assigned (reviews; calibrations when required) your grade will be **scaled down**; see web page

This all starts right away!

- Before **next Tuesday**:
 - ☑ **read all of Chapter 1** of the textbook
 - ☑ **log in** to “Mechanical TA” and:
 - ☑ perform **calibrated peer reviews**; try to get into the independent pool
 - ☑ complete a **quiz** (or you can’t do peer reviews later)
 - ☑ write a **short essay** on your assigned topic
- Don’t leave this to the last minute!
 - It might take you a bit of time to get your accounts set up, etc.
 - Heddy will have office hours to help out with such issues

“What if something goes wrong, and I can’t submit an essay/review?”

- We’ll **drop your worst two essay and peer review grades**, allowing for situations in which:
 - you miss the (firm) deadline
 - you’re sick, out of town, have a conflict with another course, ...
 - you face hardships due to the pandemic
 - you register for the course late
 - you get a poor grade on one essay

(We’ll renormalize your grades accordingly)

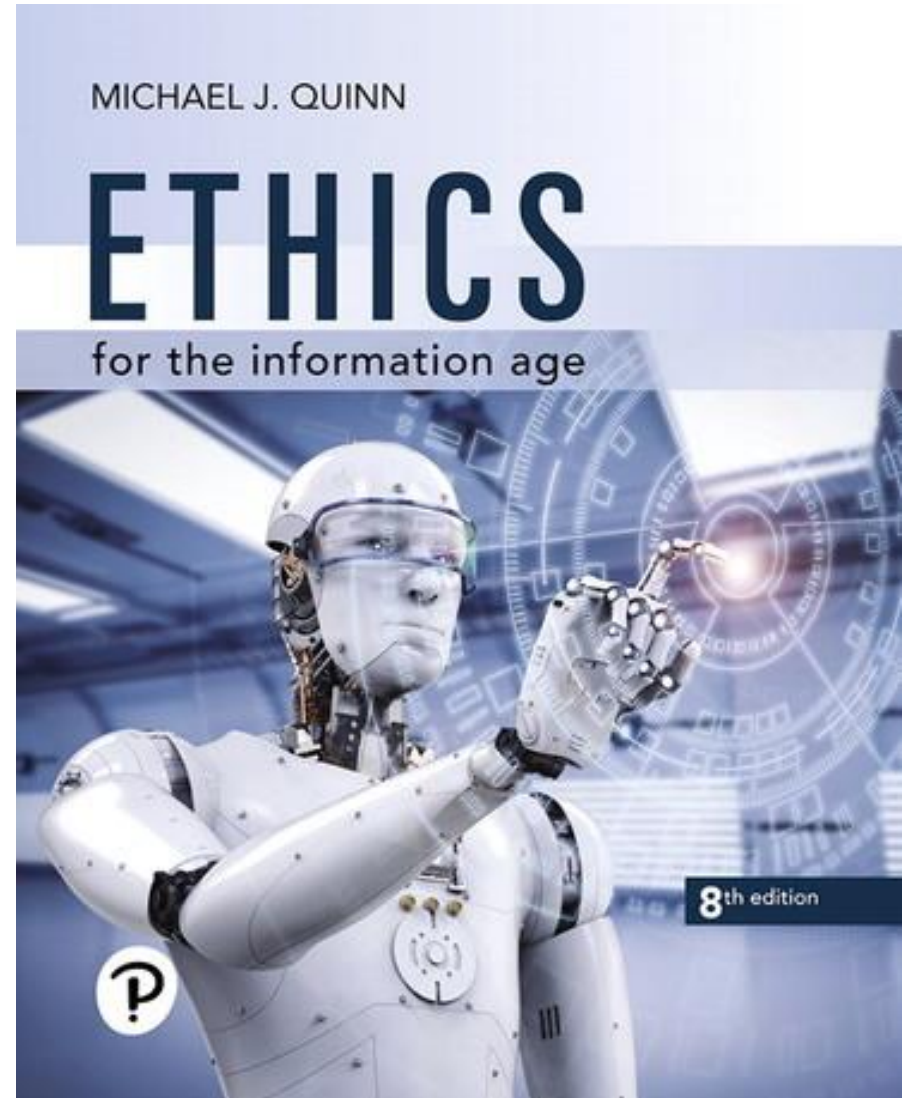
- Other extensions or waivers will be granted only in **truly exceptional circumstances**.
 - Unless you have an exceptional excuse, you’ll simply get a grade of zero.
 - (Brief) illness isn’t an exceptional excuse, see above.
 - Registering in the course late isn’t an exceptional excuse.
 - If you’re on the waitlist, start actively participating now!

What if I'm on the wait list?

- Historically, most people on the wait list **get into the class**
 - but it's not up to me, up to undergrad advisors in the main office
- Main office will prioritize the wait list by **attendance** (in addition to the various other priorities)
 - make sure you complete the attendance quizzes!
- You need to **actively participate from the beginning** (unless you want to use up your late day right away)
 - wait list registrants should be able to access MTA, Piazza
 - if you have troubles, let us know!

Textbook

- We will be using the textbook *Ethics for the Information Age, 8th Ed*, by Michael J. Quinn.
- It's important that you have a copy, because we'll be reading the whole thing—starting this week!
- Old editions exist, but you're responsible for all material in the 8th edition.



Topics (pretty cool stuff, actually 😊)

- History of computing, storage, networking (next 3 classes)
- Ethics & Argumentation (5 classes)
- Social issues (1 week each):
 - Networked communications
 - Intellectual Property
 - Information Privacy
 - Privacy and the Government
 - Computer & Network Security
 - Computer Reliability
 - Professional Ethics
 - Work & Wealth
- Rest of today:
 - break into 16 groups
 - get assigned a statement and a position for or against
 - develop arguments for your assigned position
 - present your list to the class; we'll discuss briefly
 - everyone votes on the issue (you vote freely)
 - we'll revisit these questions throughout the course. You'll get to see if your opinions change.