

CMSC 304: Ethical & Social Issues in Information Technology
<http://www.csee.umbc.edu/~rforo/CMSC304/SP14/>

Instructor Information

Dr. Richard Forno
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Office Hours: ITE325A (2:30-3:30 T/TH) and/or in other nodes/modes by appointment.

TA: John Mynaugh (mynaugh1@OURSCHOOL)
Office Hours: ITE201E (2:30-3:30 T/TH)

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Office Hours: ITE201E (4:00-5:00 Thursday, by appointment)

Course Information

Course meets Tuesdays & Thursdays from 1:00-2:15PM in ITE 233.
Pre-Requisite: CMSC 202. Preference will be given to CS majors and minors.

Catalogue Course Description

This is a survey course that reviews social issues and the ethical impact of information technology throughout the world. The course examines the policy issues that relate to the use of information technology, such as persona, privacy, rights of access, security, transborder information flow and confidentiality.

Course Objectives

Through a contextual ethical analyses of contemporary situations & lively class discussions, by the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the moral obligations and responsibilities that come with professional IT careers and behave appropriately.
2. Appreciate that many IT issues have social, legal, and ethical consequences that are not immediately obvious and add to the complexity of the issue.
3. Be able to identify and differentiate between ethical, social, and legal issues and recognize their importance for CS professionals.
4. Understand each step involved in the process of complete and thorough ethical analysis.
5. Take an issue or problem of ethical, social, and/or legal relevance to the computing profession, analyze the relevant information, formulate a conclusion, defend this conclusion clearly in a written document or oral presentation, and understand and explain opposing perspectives.

6. Understand the ACM Code of Ethics and the Software Engineering Code of Ethics and how these documents relate to theoretical ethical principles and professional and social responsibilities.
7. Understand key legal concepts related to computing and its use, including (but not limited to) patent protection, digital copyright, cybersecurity, and software licensing.

Special Note: This section of CMSC 304 will focus primarily on social, legal, and ethical issues surrounding computing, its applications, and its effect on society. Topics can span the history of computing, intellectual property and ownership, security and privacy, free speech and censorship, social control, accessibility, software design, CS workforce issues including automation and working conditions, entrepreneurship, and artificial intelligence and autonomous systems.

Course Readings Refer to [Reading Schedule](#)

Course Grading (total points: 100)

There will be assigned reading for each class -- generally web articles and other excerpts that will inform your class participation during lectures and discussions. Your active participation in discussions and lectures is expected and will be a significant part of the grade -- your grade in this area will be based on attendance, attentiveness, preparedness, contributions to the in-class discussions, and assigned exercises and activities (some of which may have a written component to be completed after the class). Many of the in-class activities will be conducted in small groups or teams. Team grades will be factored into each student's overall grade, with an adjustment for students who show exceptional leadership/contribution -- or who fail to make a sustained contribution to the group activities.

There will be three written papers (both individual and group-based), a midterm, a final research paper, and an oral presentation.

Everybody starts the semester with the same grade: zero. What you get at the end is what you *earn*, as evaluated through the following assignments:

Class Participation & Attendance	30%
Ethical Analysis Papers (2 ea.)	20% (10 pts ea.)
Midterm Exam	15%
Class Presentation	10%
Final Research Paper	25%

Grading Scale: $0 \leq \mathbf{F} < 60 \leq \mathbf{D} < 70 \leq \mathbf{C} < 80 \leq \mathbf{B} < 90 \leq \mathbf{A} \leq 100$ (out of 100 points)

Note: I will not use "plus/minus" grading.

Late Assignments

Work is due at the beginning of each class or at the deadline announced via Blackboard e-mail. Late/incomplete assignments will be subject to the following penalties:

- 0-24 hours late: 25% penalty
- 24-48 hours late: 50% penalty
- 48-72 hours late: 75% penalty
- >72 hours late: No credit!

Emergency situations will be handled on a case by case basis with appropriate justification and/or documentation. Last-minute requests for extensions generally will be denied, since the purpose of the extensions is to plan ahead for any foreseeable "crunch times." Reviewing the syllabus will help you prepare your schedule accordingly.

Most assignments must be submitted in hardcopy, and late work is considered submitted when I receive it, which means that if you cannot hand it to me personally, you should email me the assignment as a placeholder, and then give me a hardcopy at the next opportunity. Please try to print your assignments early, since students sometimes have trouble with the library printers, and "The printer wasn't working" is *not* an acceptable excuse! At a minimum, for such an assignment to receive full credit, you must email it to me before the deadline and then provide a hardcopy as soon as possible. I reserve the right to assign a late penalty in these cases, particularly if this issue comes up repeatedly for a particular student.

In an effort to encourage good time management, generally I will grant one one-week extension per student, over the course of the semester, if requested in advance and with a clear explanation (other projects due, work-related travel, outside commitments). Last-minute requests for extensions will generally be denied, since the purpose of the extensions is to plan ahead for "crunch times."

Other Course Policies

- Any changes to the schedule or syllabus will be announced via BlackBoard e-mail.
- If necessary, unannounced quizzes will be administered. Quiz scores will count toward your participation grade.
- Cell phones should be turned off. If your phone rings during class, we will take a short break in-place while the phone's owner sings the whole chorus of 'Call Me Maybe.'

A Note About Written Assignments

Success in any discipline requires the ability to effectively communicate one's thoughts. If you have difficulty writing, whether because English is not your first language, or because you haven't taken many writing classes in your undergraduate program, please refer to the Writing Guide and/or visit the UMBC Writing Center in the Library for assistance:

The Writing Center - http://www.umbc.edu/lrc/writing_center.html

Hours: Monday-Wed, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Thurs, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

More specific information about each written assignment will be distributed during the course. However, distribution of grades for those assignments approximately will be:

1. 60% for content (well thought out and well reasoned discussion and analysis)
2. 40% for readability (correct grammar and spelling, readable formatting or handwriting, well structured sentences and paragraphs and readable wording, etc.)

Academic Integrity

This course adheres to the Provost's statement on academic integrity:

"By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, or the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC Directory."

Any violation of the academic honesty policy will result in a minimum penalty of a zero grade for that assignment. In addition, in order to pass the course, the student will be required to recomplete the assignment honestly. Consequences for more serious infractions of this policy, or for second offenses, may include, but are not limited to, receiving a failing grade in the course or being suspended or expelled from the university.

Bottom line: cheating in any form will not be tolerated.