

CMSC 304

Ethics and Social Issues in Information Technology

Topic Selection Activity

Today we'll be selecting topics for the reading-based discussions that will take up most of our class time during the semester. On each of these topic-based days, there will be:

1. A reading assignment
2. One or more students assigned to give a brief overview presentation
3. In-class discussion, debate, guest lecture, or other activity

At the end of this assignment is a list of possible topics. Today you will work with your teams to **make** and **prioritize** a list of topics for the class. Think about:

- What topics are of most interest to us as students? As users? As CS professionals?
- What topics will generate interesting and lively discussion that we'd like to participate in?
- What topics are about the right scope for one day's worth of assigned reading and one class period's worth of discussion and debate? (Some narrow topics could be grouped together; broad topics could be subdivided into different perspectives or issues.)
- What *set* of topics would create diversity and let us explore a wide range of issues and topics? (E.g., not just privacy topics.)
- What set of topics represents a mix of things you are already familiar with and new topics?
- What set of topics represents a mix of technical and non-technical, deep and not-as-deep topics?

It's fine to use your laptops to explore the Internet for possible reading assignments and to learn more about the topics, to see whether they'll be interesting in practice.

- Bookkeeping stuff; a little about ethical analysis.
- Team discussion and prioritization. You should end up with a ranked list of topics (you don't have to include every topic on the list, but should have at least 15-20.)
- Topic lists. Each team proposes the first topic on their ranked list (moving to the 2nd or later topics if another team has already proposed that topic). There will then be a moment for each team to reorder their list if they want to, in response to the set of topics that's been chosen. This will continue round-robin.
- Discussion/debate/commentary per topic, as much as possible.

After class, I will establish the final topic schedule, and will post it to the class schedule.

While you are in teams, decide whether you will do the homework individually or as a team.

Possible Topics/Topic Categories

- Government transparency/accountability
 - Control of information flow; free speech and censorship
 - Internal surveillance; predictive policing
 - Personal privacy
 - Patriot Act and warrantless wiretapping/government access to cell phone content
- File sharing
- Commercial privacy: phone tracking; clickstream data; advertising; information ownership
 - Google Earth, Google street view
- Population/crowdsourced privacy: social media; cookies; use of cell phone cameras
- Gender, race, and other group representation in technology fields
- Security of personal computers; of accounts
- Cyberterrorism and large-scale security
- Software licensing: EULAs; renewals; changing terms; enforceability
- Bioinformatics
 - Robot surgeons; cyborgs;
 - Telemedicine and telesurgery
 - Prosthetics; bionics; HIPAA; insurance predictions; patient data mining
- Automated cars; automation and safety
- Costs (financial and human) of technology development and production; working conditions; worker displacement
- Disruptive apps: Uber, ratemyprofessors, bookswap
- App developer responsibilities: safety; security
- Digital content: DRMs; software reuse; “kill switches”
- Information providers: responsibility for accuracy; for privacy
- Copyrights, trademarks, and patents
- NDAs: enforceability, legality, appropriateness
- 3D printing
- App developer responsibilities: safety; security; functionality
- Income inequality; technology “haves/have-nots”; access rights
- Artificial intelligence: applications; consequences
- Plagiarism; idea theft;
- Voting: voting technology; vote rigging; Diebold
- Robot ethics
- The “internet of things” (the computerization of objects in the everyday world)
- Accessibility - American Disabilities Act
- Digital retouching of images and videos
- Smart wallets (security, spending habits); e-tailing
- Video games in general; game violence; sexism and racism in games
- Internet vigilantism
- Cyberstalking
- Phone usage and texting while driving (distracted driving)
- Self-driving cars
- Blogging and libel/privacy issues
- Online education and MOOCs
- “Jailbreaking” and rights of purchasers to own/modify technology
- WikiLeaks
- Aaron Swartz’s suicide and digital copyright/piracy/SOPA