

Author(s): Paul Conway, PhD, 2010

License: Unless otherwise noted, this material is made available under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 3.0 License:**
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

We have reviewed this material in accordance with U.S. Copyright Law **and have tried to maximize your ability to use, share, and adapt it.** The citation key on the following slide provides information about how you may share and adapt this material.

Copyright holders of content included in this material should contact open.michigan@umich.edu with any questions, corrections, or clarification regarding the use of content.

For more information about **how to cite** these materials visit <http://open.umich.edu/privacy-and-terms-use>.

Any **medical information** in this material is intended to inform and educate and is **not a tool for self-diagnosis** or a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional. Please speak to your physician if you have questions about your medical condition.

Viewer discretion is advised: Some medical content is graphic and may not be suitable for all viewers.



SI 410 Ethics and Information Technology

Fall 2010 Grading and Assignments

Grading Overview

See separate documents for details on assignments and expectations for grading.

- Overall participation in class 15%
- Essay on Philosophy and IT (Personal) 20%
- Create MediaWiki Content (Collaboration) 25%
- Reflection on Avatars/Identity (Personal) 25%
- Gaining Advantage Scenario (Peer/Team) 15%

Attendance at all classes is mandatory; the essay is graded individually before and after revisions; MediaWiki contributions are evaluated collaboratively; the personal reflection is individually graded; the game scenario is graded by peers working in teams.

Overall Class Participation

[15% of total grade]

The success of this class overall, as well as your ability to master the material and assignments, depends upon full participation in the class. Students must attend every class session unless excused in advance by the instructor. Students must read the assigned readings prior to attending class and must be prepared to respond to questions from the instructor regarding the relevance of the readings to the topic at hand. Participation also encompasses engagement with the evaluation of the course itself, including mid-course and end of course assessments, as well as pre- and post-test quizzes on attitudes toward ethical issues. Assignment of participation grades is somewhat subjective, but you can help assure you get credit for participating in class by speaking up and by attending at least one office hour session.

Essay on Philosophy and Information Technology

[20% of total grade]

Each student will produce an individual essay that addresses the question “Are Ethical Norms Different in the Online Environment?” Within this broad topic, students will identify a particular issue discussed (even peripherally) within the structure of the course. The essay is an opportunity to make some connections between the sometimes disparate worlds of IT systems and ethical norms that may not be covered as well or as deeply in in-class discussions.

The essay will combine three elements: (1) evaluation and interpretation of some portion of the assigned readings for the course, especially the readings from the first three weeks; (2) an extension of those readings to incorporate information beyond the course; and (3) personal reflection on the

relevance of ethical issues to your personal life and social relationships. The overall essay will range from 2,500 to 3,000 words (ca. 10 pp. double spaced), will be properly documented where appropriate, and will be free of typographical and grammatical errors. Essay documentation may conform to any number of possible styles [Chicago, MLA, ACM, etc.], but must be consistently and fully presented.

The first element can be satisfied through the selection, careful reading, and insightful analysis of at least five of the required course readings. The second element can be accomplished either through the use of additional published formal literature (e.g., scholarly journals), the creative use of information from the popular press (e.g., NYTimes, Wired, New Yorker, People, etc.), and/or the use of Web-based documentation on particular technologies or applications discussed as part of the class. For the third element of the assignment, recounting your personal experience or insight, possibly combined with experience of friends or family, will allow you to take a dry analysis from scholarly or possibly distracted publications and make them relevant or personal.

An in-class writing workshop during week two will present and make use of several alternative methods for organizing, balancing, and structuring the information that you will marshal for your essay. Students will submit a first draft and will receive individualized feedback on the substance and style of the essay. Opportunities to discuss the essay during office hours will be encouraged. Students will revise and extend their essays based on feedback received and will submit a final version of the essay by the end of the study break.

Collaborative Wiki Writing and Editing

[25% of total grade]

In Wikipedia, no explicit entry presently exists for the topic “Ethics and Information Technology.” Indeed the variety of entries associated with the general topic of “Ethics” reflect some of the very biases toward technological issues that this course is designed to explore. This writing exercise will produce a variety of entries for possible inclusion in Wikipedia on ethics issues explored in the course, including the philosophical underpinnings of current thinking about ethics and IT, as well as evolving standards associated with gender, violence, identity, and trust.

This writing assignment is group exercise in which students work together and assume varying roles in the wiki trust environment, including author, critic, editor, and trust monitor. Some of the writing will take place as part of the in-class lab assignments, while some will require asynchronous engagement outside of class. Students will work in an artificial wiki environment, powered by MediaWiki, which the software that supports Wikipedia and other collaborative web content. Students will initially create, edit and reedit the entries to reflect the themes explored in the course. Other students, working anonymously and openly, revise at least two articles to improve the readability, the content value, and the visual appeal of the entries. An in-class writing workshop will showcase variations on writing techniques for the web environment generally and Wikipedia specifically. After receiving specific feedback, students will edit and re-edit the entries throughout the course, adding information and illustrations garnered from readings and other sources. The purpose for mixing up the writing and editorial responsibilities is to explore the impact of anonymous and identified collaborative work.

Individual grades will be assigned based on the quality and quantity of the editorial work within a given entry and across entries.

Reflection on Avatars/Identity

[25% of total grade]

During the module on avatars and identity, students will construct two digital avatars. One of the avatars is intended to be a self-portrait of your virtual self. The other avatar has an alternative (alter?) identity that you specify. Students will utilize specialized software provided by EvolverPro.com to construct the avatars using specific instructions provided separately. The writing assignment, upon which most of the grade for the exercise is based, is a well-documented reflection/essay on the choices that you make when constructing identity in an online environment. The traditional literature is rich with musings on the challenges of self-portraiture, so it will be useful to locate, read and reflect on some of these issues. Insight from writings, movies, music, multimedia, and other sources on the avatar in virtual environments is less extensive, but you are encouraged to get creative in thinking through how you think about identity and counter-identity.

The reflection will take the form of a written essay, submitted in draft form for comment by the instructor, and then revised and resubmitted for grading. The reflection should not exceed 3,000 words in length and conform to any writing style that you choose. Include in your document screen captures that display your avatar's physical features. Include at least one view per avatar, but additional views (profiles, etc.) may be provided to bolster the discussion in your reflection. Any secondary sources that you use (magazine articles, movies, books, etc.) as influences on your reflection should be cited in a list of references included at the end of the reflection. You can use any citation style that you want as long as you are consistent.

Sixty percent of the grade (15 points) is assigned based on the extent to which the reflection describes the characteristics of the two avatars created in the lab assignments, the depth of thought about the issues of identity in virtual environments, and the creative use of documentation to bolster the insights. Forty percent of the grade (10 points) is assigned based on the creativity and effort expended in creating the avatar characters.

Gaining Advantage Scenario

[15% of total grade]

The avatar characters created in the third module will be imported into a virtual environments created for the course using the UDK's Unreal Engine 3, one of the more popular game creation tools. The course will provide an opportunity to manipulate avatars in a game space and to create, rearrange, and otherwise manipulate the space. Students working in teams will collaborate to imagine and document a scenario that, if fully developed, would challenge users to deal with the advantages and pitfalls of gaining or losing advantage in a game. Each team of students will construct a scenario that uses the avatars and the environment to test assumptions about fair and unfairly acquired advantage. Examples of a scenario include, but are certainly not limited to scavenger hunts, capture the flag, hide and seek, search and destroy missions, etc. The purpose of the assignment is to propose/model and exercise in a virtual

environment in which people who interact within the environment may or may not be on equal footing for any number of reasons – appearance, physical capabilities, prior knowledge, strength in numbers, etc. The assignment pushes students to understand the dilemma of unfair advantage in and out of virtual worlds and to think of creative ways to explore the implications of this dilemma.

Because of the experimental nature of this assignment, grading is limited to 15 percent of the total grade for the course. Top grades will be assigned collectively to teams based on extent of creative engagement with the core dilemma of gaining advantage and the level of effort expended in learning and manipulating the virtual environment. Teams of students will undertake peer review of the submitted documents and provide feedback on the quality of the effort. Peer assessment will form the foundation of the grade for the assignment; the instructor will adjust peer assessments to help ensure equity of judgment across the teams.