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SI 410 Ethics and Information Technology

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 purpose of the essay is to read and assess some of the readings from the first three weeks of class and to make some connections between new technologies and ethical norms that may not be covered as well or as deeply in in-class discussions. As long as you can tie your essay topic directly to some element of the course syllabus, you may get as creative as you wish regarding topics, ranging into film and music, video games and simulations, television and other media.

The essay will combine three elements:

- (1) evaluation and interpretation of some portion of the required readings for the course, especially the readings from the first three weeks;
- (2) incorporation of information beyond the course readings; and
- (3) personal reflection on the relevance of ethical issues to your personal life and social relationships.

1. The first element can be satisfied through the selection, careful reading, and insightful analysis of at least five of the required course readings. Three of these readings **must** come from the selection of resources posted at the CTools site under “Resources/Readings/Foundation.” Several of these readings are required for the class and you may use either the required or the optional readings posted to CTools. Two other readings may be chosen from any of the other required readings for the course.

2. 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.), a range of communication/entertainment media (TV, music, film, etc.), and/or the use of Web-based documentation on particular technologies or applications discussed as part of the class. You are welcome to use *Wikipedia* articles to satisfy the second element, but you should exercise caution to find articles that you trust (clearly, part of the focus of this course).

3. For the third element of the assignment, recounting your personal experience or insight, possibly combined with the experience of friends or family, will allow you to take a dry analysis from scholarly or possibly disconnected publications and make them relevant or personal.

The overall essay will range from 2,500 to 3,000 words (ca. 10 – 15 pp. double spaced), will be properly documented with citations to any sources used, page numbers for quotations, and currently active URLs. The essay 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 essay should be submitted in either .doc, .docx, or .pdf formats.

An in-class writing workshop during the week-two lab/discussion (Wednesday morning), offered by staff from the Sweetland Writing Center, 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 from the Graduate Student Instructor on the substance and style of the essay. In your first draft, you should focus on getting the main idea expressed and make sure that the mechanics of your paper (citations, grammar, spelling, formatting) are in place.

Opportunities to discuss the essay during office hours will be provided. 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.

As with all essay assessment, the assignment of a grade is somewhat subjective. In keeping with the deep traditions of “Iron Chef America,” however, the total of twenty (20) points for the essay will be distributed as follows.

10 points for the clarity of the argument presented, including the organization of the essay, the flow of the essay, and the presentation of quotes and other direct evidence to make the points of your essay.

5 points for full and accurate citations, consistently applying a citation style of your choice.

5 points for grammar and spelling, including the avoidance of passive voice.

Deadlines to keep in mind.

Week 2

Choose a preliminary topic for the essay and submit by email to the GSI by Thursday, 16 September 16, 4:00 pm.

Week 4

Submit first draft of essay to the CTools course site by uploading into Assignments. Do not use the drop box.

Week 7

Submit revised essay to the CTools course site by 5:00 pm, Wednesday, October 20. Revised essays submitted after this date and time will be penalized 10% of the grade for the assignment.