CSCI 494 SYLLABUS

COURSE NAME, NUMBER	Social and Ethical Issues in Computing, CSCI 494
SEMESTER, YEAR	Spring 2009
INSTRUCTOR	T. VanDrunen
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OFFICE HOURS	MWF 2-4 pm; Th 10:30-11:30 am
COURSE WEBSITE	`http://cslab.wheaton.edu/~tvandrun/cs494`

RESOURCES

D. Micah Hester and Paul J. Ford, *Computers and Ethics in the Cyberage.* Prentice Hall, 2001.

Other readings will be given as handouts or can be found on the course webpage.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Study of the ways in which the computer and communications revolution is changing society. Develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the ethical issues that arise in computer science and related professions.

INFORMAL DESCRIPTION

This course—at least, this offering of it—does not have a carefully laid-out, iron-clad curriculum. Instead, it consists in a series of readings on a series of topics. The intent of the course is not to lead you down a single route through a well-defined field of topics, but to let you grow and explore. This will require your participation in the learning process in a way that differs from that in previous computer science courses.

Our goal is that at the end of the semester you will be aware of the issues and concerns that have arisen from the growth of technology in general and computing technology (and computer *science*) specifically. You will also be aware of some views on these issues. You will have made progress in forming your own views and have had practice in articulating them.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Students will develop a greater awareness of how computing (as well as technology in general) interacts with non-technical concerns.

2. Students will identify specific issues and the kinds of issues that are raised or shaped by computing technologies and information technologies.

3. Students will analyze specific issues at the intersection of computing and social concerns.

4. Students will articulate their responsibilities from both a Christian and a professional perspective.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

1. Readings and short responses will inform the students of current issues and the opinions that have been expressed about them; they will also verify the students' completion of the assignment and mark their progress in digesting the material.

2. The short essays that students write will demonstrate their reflection on specific ethical concerns.

3. A book review will be an opportunity for students to investigate more deeply one perspective on one topic.

4. The final paper each student will write will demonstrate the maturity of his or her understanding of a specific issue.

Grading:

	weight
Readings, responses, and participation	25
Short essays (3 or 4)	25
Book review	25
Final paper	25

SPECIAL EXPECTATIONS

Academic Integrity

Since this course primarily consists in the written articulation of ideas, the originality of your written work and the proper citation of ideas is crucial. Sloppy citation will be penalized. A serious omission of giving credit for text of ideas or the commission of other forms of plagiarism may result in lowering your final grade for the course by a letter grade. A second offense—or a single offense of manifest intentional dishonesty—may result in a failing grade in the class and referral to the dean of students for discipline.

Late assignments

Apart from extraordinary circumstances (which may require verification from the student life office), late assignments will not be accepted.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class periods. Because the class format is discussion-based, your absence harms not only your own experience in the class, but that of your classmates. When missing a class is unavoidable, it is a courtesy to inform the instructor, ahead of time if possible.

Special needs

Whenever possible, classroom activities and testing procedures will be adjusted to respond to requests for accommodation by students with disabilities who have documented their situation with the registrar and who have arranged to have the documentation forwarded to the course instructor. Computer Science students who need special adjustments made to computer hardware or software in order to facilitate their participation must also document their needs with the registrar in advance before any accommodation will be attempted.

Course content. This is my first time teaching this course. In fact, most of the readings are new to me (I have largely adopted the set of readings that Dr Gray uses for this course), and for some of the issues, this course will be my first time to give careful attention to them. We will be learning together.

The heart of this course is reading. You must set aside time in your schedule to do the reading for this course, for it is substantial. Be prepared to read an average of 55 pages per week to prepare for class time. In addition, you will have some reading to do—spread out over a quad and at your own pace—for your book review and and final paper.

Class periods will be conducted as discussions. I will lead discussion mostly by asking questions and letting you analyze and critique the readings—and to analyze and critique each other's ideas. I consider discussion classes to be the most difficult to teach or lead; I request your patience and effort.

Christian perspective. Very little in this course is explicitly set up to articulate a distinctively Christian understanding of the field of computer science or its applications. Largely this is because of the difficulty of doing so. This course presupposes that the lordship of Jesus Christ extends to computer science just as it does to all other studies of nature and of human endeavor; identifying how that lordship plays out is another matter. We will examine the issues and ideas we meet in the readings with the lens of scripture as the opportunities arise.

Readings and responses. The readings for a class period are posted on the course website. Note that the readings for the day are listed on the day we will discuss those readings (eg, the reading listed on Feb 19 are to be read *for* the Feb 19 class; the are not assigned *on* Feb 19 for next week). Most reading assignments (all but three) involve reading a chapter from our textbook—typically four articles in each chapter. In addition, there will generally be one or two other papers/articles to read. The average number of pages per week is 55.

Many of the non-textbook articles are available online. You should *print out* the article if for no other reason so that you can bring it with you to class (additionally it is likely better that you read the dead-tree version than the screen version). For the other non-textbook articles, I will give you a photocopied handout. I will do my best to give them two weeks in advance so that you will have the opportunity to read ahead if that fits your schedule better.

For each article, you are to write a one-paragraph response. These responses shout be succint and brief, but must contain these five elements: introduce the reading (what is it about?), summarize it (what are the main points and concerns, in what sequence?), identify the main point (what position does the author take?), respond to it (what do you think?), and raise a question for discussion (what needs to be talked about?). The questions you come up with will be the starting point for our in-class discussions.

Your responses to the articles should be sent to me by email *no later than noon on Wednesday*, ie, the day before we discuss the articles in class. Please send your responses in the body of an email, not as an attachment. Even though your responses are in an email, you should still write formally—complete sentences, correct spelling and punctuation. You responses will be graded on completeness, evidence of thought, and the technicals.

The purpose of the responses (and the rule that they be turned in the day before class) is (a) to ensure and prove that you have read the readings, (b) to help you prepare for discussing the readings in class, and (c) to prevent you from saving the reading for the last minute, so you have time to internalize and reflect on the ideas.

Short essays. There will be three or four short essays assigned during the semester. I will give a topic, and you will make and defend a position on that topic. Essays will be 1 to 2 pages long. Details will follow.

Book review. During A quad, you will be required to read one book relevant to our course. A list of suggested books can be found on the course website, though you are not limited to that list. The book you choose must be approved by the instructor. You must propose a book no later than Jan 28 (earlier is better). Details on the report will follow; expect it to be 4 to 8 pages long and due Mar 6 (the last day of A quad). You will also give a short summary of the book and your thoughts on it to the class sometime late in A quad or early in B quad.

Final paper. During B quad, you will be required to write a final paper. I will provide a list of topics, and you will make a proposal from that list of a similar topic of your own choosing; the topic must be approved by the instructor. Details on the paper will follow; expect it to be 5 to 10 pages long, with a proposal due Mar 25, outline Apr 8, rough draft Apr 15, and final draft May (the last day of B quad). The paper will involve some research and the forming and defending of an opinion. During our exam block, you will give a summary of your paper to the class.

Refreshments. Each student is requested to bring refreshments twice during the semester. This will not affect your grade.