

Fall 2024 CS/IT 285L – Social Issues and Ethics in Computing

- Section 01: T/Th, University Hall Y03-3370, 12:30pm – 1:45pm
 - Section 02: T/Th, Wheatley 01-0034, 4:00 – 5:15pm
- Section 03: T/Th, University Hall 03-3370, 5:30pm – 6:45pm
 - Section 04: T/Th, Wheatley 01-0005, 11:00am – 12:15pm
 - Section 05: Fridays, McCormack 01-207, 1:00pm-3:45pm*

Instructor: Dr. A. Potasznik
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Office hours:
T/Th 2:00-3:30pm, **by appt.**
M-3-201-32, ext 7-6490

Site: <http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotasznik/>

This course is designed with the department's [DEI statement](#) in mind.

Notable dates:

9/3: First class; 9/10 End of add/drop
9/12: BOS and citations "tests" due
Tues, 10/22: Midterm Exam*

Thu, 11/28: No Class (Thanksgiving)

Write-ups: 9/15, 10/6, 11/3, 11/17 (opt)
Optional workshops: 12/5, 12/10

1. Textbook - recommended. A Gift of Fire by Sara Baase, 4th ed, Prentice Hall, ISBN: 9780132492676. 5th edition ok.

2. Student Goals

- Understand the basic ethical concepts & frameworks as they apply to issues in IT
- Become sensitized to computer ethics terminology
- Examine local and global issues, case law and legislation regarding computing matters
- Acquire tools and methods for analyzing cases
- Acquire practice in applying the tools and methods to actual or realistic cases
- Effectively monitor news media to critically analyze issues
- Thoroughly examine and write about particular social and ethical issues
- Present a complex issue to an audience of peers
- Successfully communicate and collaborate with members in a group
- Successfully argue cases with peers of opposing viewpoints
- Develop ethical autonomy: good judgment and helpful intuitions

3. Basic rubric

Write-ups (~3-4): 25%, Participation: 20%, Midterm: 15%, Presentation: 25%, Final Exam: 15%

THERE IS NO EXTRA CREDIT OFFERED IN THIS CLASS. The generosity of the late policy renders extra credit superfluous. No courses required by the CS major, minor, or certificate may be taken pass/fail. This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. You will be notified about, and held accountable for, any changes in this document.

4. Detailed rubric

Monthly write-ups: 25%

Students are required to monitor news media of their choice. Approximately once per month, students will select a current (no more than 3 months old) article with social or ethical impact and submit (via Google Docs and Canvas) a 1-page (minimum, excluding heading and references) write-up explaining the issue. Headings should be no more than 2 lines long, including name and section number. Students should give background information, a brief analysis of the issue's ethical implications, consideration of multiple perspectives, and a link to their personal experience. All applicable terminology and vocabulary as learned in class should be appropriately referenced. All sources must be correctly cited in APA format. There will be 3 to 4 papers per semester. Students will present their findings to the class randomly throughout the semester. **Monthly write-ups must be created and fully written in a Google Doc, the link for which must be shared with Editor permissions via the Canvas submission portal; substantial deductions will result if this direction is not followed.** Write-ups including plagiarized or AI generated content will receive a non-negotiable grade of 0. Detailed directions, rubrics, advice, and examples can be found at <http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotasznik/how-to-write-a-weekly-write-up/>.

Participation: 20%

Part 1: Homework: 30% All homework must be typed, and fully created from start to finish in a Google Doc. Students come to class with physical evidence (printed Doc) that they have completed homework. Students will be notified in advance of topics for discussion for the next class. Homework evidence will be checked in class every day. Homework may or may not be requested from students beyond the initial check; students will also submit the digital version of this assignment via Canvas (Google Doc, editor link) before the class starts. Homework not presented in class due to absence will not receive full credit.

Part 2: Contribution: 70% Students are present and participate in the entirety of the class (discussion + lecture). Being tardy, leaving early, or not engaging during the discussion (texting, etc.) will result in deductions as the professor deems appropriate. The standard deduction is 1 point per minute of missed class.

Where to submit:

HW: in class and via Canvas (Doc link with edit permissions)
Late hw: Doc link with edit permissions to Canvas, email with section details & reasoning to prof
Write-ups: Canvas submission of Doc link w/edit permissions
Late write-ups: Canvas submission of Doc link w/edit permissions
Projects: in class presentation
Final paper: Canvas submission of Doc link w/edit permissions

Midterm: 15%

There will be an in-class midterm exam consisting of acronym significance, court case outcomes, effects of various acts and statutes, & terminology. Up to 30 pages (front and back, 8.5 x 11" maximum size) of approved handwritten notes may be used on the midterm exam. A study guide may be found on the class site. No digital or printed notes are allowed. Due to the study guide and open note policy, there will be no make-up opportunities for students who miss or fail the midterm.

Presentation: 25%

Students will form groups to research a specific current social or ethical issue, then prepare a 9 to 12-minute presentation. They will highlight all viewpoints on the subject and use applicable class terminology. Projects should include plenty of visual elements and references to source material. Students will sign up for presentation dates at the beginning of the semester and may seek advice/approval on topics from the instructor. If in doubt, discuss content with the professor before the presentation. Detailed instructions and requirements can be found at <http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotasznik/project-details-and-advice/>.

Final Exam: 15%

The final exam will be a take-home paper between 3 and 10 pages long that must be created exclusively in a Google Doc. Students may choose to base their final papers on one of the scenarios that we study in the final weeks of the course or to complete a longer version of a weekly write-up (based on a current event, no more than 3 months old). Those who choose the 2nd option are held to a combination of the monthly write-up rubric and the final paper rubric. No late final papers will be accepted. Detailed instructions and requirements can be found at <http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotasznik/allterms/>. Final papers may not be based on scenarios that were explained or assigned in class (scenarios 1-3). Students with a course average of 80.00 or higher on Day 23 may request via email to be exempt from the final paper on that day. Exemptions are not automatic and must be requested by Day 23 at 8:00pm. Exemption grants or rejections will be sent by the professor within 24 hours.

5. Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and factored into the student's grades as class participation. Students should email the teacher in advance if they plan to miss a day of class. At that point they may submit the homework due on the day of absence (via Canvas with an emailed explanation) and find the new assignments (online). Missing the previous class is not an excuse for being unprepared with homework when the student returns. Any unexcused work received past the due date will receive a deduction on the following scale:

Less than 1 day late: -10 points	Less than 1 week: -30 points	More than 1 week: no credit
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Only homework accompanied by documentation proving a family, medical, or military emergency will receive reduced deduction, or the absence be counted as excused. Students with multiple absences may no longer be eligible to submit emailed work. This determination is at the professor's discretion. This scale does not apply to the midterm, projects, or final papers, which must be completed according to set dates and are not accepted late. Students who schedule office hours visits are expected to communicate absences or tardiness with the professor. After 2 no-show office hour appointments, students will not be granted future appointments. See more [information about attendance here](#).

6. Academic Integrity

All CS/IT 285L students must study and confirm understanding of the [plagiarism statement for the course](#) at the beginning of the semester. Any student submitting somebody else's work as their own or copying their own old work (whole or in part) to a new submission will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment and potentially the entire course. A student's inability to explain and/or define ideas and/or words used in their submissions may trigger a plagiarism investigation. In particularly drastic cases, plagiarism can lead to expulsion from the university. The instructor will not tolerate dishonesty and will make no exceptions to this policy. Assignments with evidence of plagiarism cannot be resubmitted. Students are not permitted to use AI generators for any assignment in any way in this course.

7. Student conduct

Students are required to adhere to the University Policy on Academic Standards and Cheating, to the University Statement on Plagiarism and the Documentation of Written Work, and to the Code of Student Conduct which is available online at: https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/dean_of_students/student_conduct.

8. Disabilities

Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offers guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center for Disability Services, M1401 (617-287-7430). The student must present these recommendations and discuss them with each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of Drop/Add period.

9. WPE

Students wishing to use papers from this course for the university writing proficiency exam should contact the professor by email with their request (including specific plans for their foreseen timeline and assignment choice) by the 4th week of classes. Final papers used for this purpose will be due before the stated due date. The professor reserves the right to refuse WPE requests. See: <http://blogs.umb.edu/amandapotasznik/wpe/>.

10. Communication

All communication in this course, whether in person or via email, is expected to be professional and courteous. Emails from students are required to include their section number, a proper salutation, an articulate statement or request, and relevant documentation in the correct format. See: [email requirements for CS/IT285L](#). The professor aims to respond to all emails that adhere to these requirements within 24 hours, excluding weekends.

* If the Friday class runs, the majority of the due dates will remain the same. The 9/27 class will be in asynchronous online format. The midterm exam will take place during class time on 10/25. Each class period will include the equivalent of 2 T/Th classes, combining the lectures, homework, and discussions for that week into one session.