IRLS520-001 Ethics for Library and Information Professionals

Updated Mon, 08/24/2009 - 19:00

COURSE NAME, NUMBER AND PREREQUISITES:

Under construction 7/31/08

Ethics for Library and Information Professionals

IRLS520-001

[Prerequisite: IRLS 504 or consent of the instructor.]

Instructor: Martin Frické

This course meets Tucson: UA Campus: Psych 204, Thursday 6:30 - 9:00pm

Course Outline

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"Face to face instructional course on Information Ethics." (3 credit hours)

General overview

Ethics for information professionals is a recent and rapidly expanding field of study. Fortunately it does not require completely new techniques for the solution of problems in its domain. Ethics, in general, has been studied for thousands of years, and it has developed techniques appropriate for the study of ethical problems.

Ethics is concerned with notions like right and wrong, good and bad, duties, virtues, and rights and responsibilities. One central area of ethics, normative ethics, studies which particular actions, for example, hanging murderers or censoring dangerous or pornographic books, are right or wrong. Normative ethics is a practical study: it concerns the morally good life, how to live well.

Information ethics is a sub-category of normative ethics which addresses practical ethical problems connected with information. Several are prominent, including: free speech, censorship, access to information, intellectual property, fair use, privacy, and workplace issues.

Many organizations for Information Professionals publish codes of ethics. As examples, there is the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, American Society for Information Science Professional Guidelines, and there is the IEEE-CS/ACM Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. However, while such codes give us a set of principles to work with, they do not tell us how we are to go about implementing these ideals in our everyday practice. Such codes often do not clearly define the notoriously complex ethical concepts which they use. The ALA code, for
example, uses such terms as: equity, fairness, freedom, rights, public interest, and yet it leaves us with a number of questions: What constitutes an 'equitable' distribution? Under what conditions is something someone's 'property'? How do we show respect for a 'right'? Also such codes do not tell us what to do when (inevitably) various rights and interests conflict. So, for example, the ALA code does not tell us how to answer such questions as: How do we balance equity of access with protecting intellectual property rights? What if the intellectual freedom of one person creates a hostile atmosphere for others? What if our personal convictions conflict with the 'interests of the institution' which we serve? Should we have no politics no morals? In brief, a course that simply helped you learn how to implement a particular code of ethics, perhaps provided by a professional body you belonged to, would have limitations. We want to go further.

Our course will consider what ethical ideals should regulate the behavior of information professionals. Through our discussion of this question we will become better able to understand the rationale for the codes of ethics, and know how to revise them over time to keep pace with this rapidly changing field, and/or to develop specific ethical codes for our particular work environments.

**How this course will be taught**

This is a face to face class meeting once a week **Tucson: UA Campus: Psych 204, Thursday 6:30 - 9:00pm.**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Successful completion of this course will help students achieve the B5, B6, and C10 competencies (outlined at http://sirls.arizona.edu/about/studentCompetencies). More specifically, by the completion of this course, you will:

- know the basics of ethical theory and its application to problems in information access and dissemination
- know many of the information laws and practices both in the United States and Internationally
- be able to apply ethical codes in concrete cases
- be able to develop your own personal, professional, or institutional code of information ethics.
- have experienced live debate and discussion on controversial and unresolved issues in information ethics

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:**

Students need online access, either by way of their own computers and Internet connection or by public access means (such as those provided in Public Libraries or in on campus labs).

A d2l course will be set up to provide infrastructure for the face to face delivery (it will, for example, manage the submission of papers and the grades). You will be given an account in the d2l course.

There is no set text for the course.

There are online materials available either directly on the Web or through password protected electronic reserves at the library (http://eres.library.arizona.edu with password xxx (enrolled students will be given the password from within d2l).

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

The course requirements are

- quizzes
- single author coursework papers
- final examination

There will be five brief quizzes.

The single author coursework requirement will be three papers (two very short of about 500 words each, the third of about 4 pages).

The final examination will be a take-home exam of two hours duration. It will be distributed electronically about December 5th and due about December 12th.

The quizzes will count for 20% of the final grade, the single author coursework papers 60% of the final grade, and the
final take home exam for 20% of the grade.

COURSE, SCHOOL, AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

Academic Code of Integrity

Students are expected to abide by The University of Arizona Code of Academic Integrity. 'The guiding principle of academic integrity is that a student's submitted work must be the student's own.' If you have any questions regarding what is acceptable practice under this Code, please ask an Instructor.

Accommodating Disabilities

The University has a Disability Resource Center. If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the Disability Resource Center and request that the DRC send me, the Instructor, official notification of your accommodation needs as soon as possible. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Assignment Policies

- Submission: The papers are to be submitted usually by the d2l assignment drop box. (a less preferable alternative is by d2l internal email to the Instructor, put, for example, 'Assignment One' as the subject and send the assignment either as the message or as an attachment to the message. Pure electronic documents need to be either plain text or formatted using HTML (just 'Save As' HTML using your favourite word processor).

- Format, style and content: Content is all important in this course. Style should be plain and transparent (be guided by the classic Strunk and White Elements of Style). If English is not your native language, and you would like some assistance, please contact the Instructor. The format is unimportant, except that it should be html.

- Late papers: There will be due dates and students are expected to meet them.

Incompletes

The current Catalog reads

The grade of I may be awarded only at the end of a term, when all but a minor portion of the course work has been satisfactorily completed. The grade of I is not to be awarded in place of a failing grade or when the student is expected to repeat the course; in such a case, a grade other than I must be assigned. Students should make arrangements with the instructor to receive an incomplete grade before the end of the term ...

If the incomplete is not removed by the instructor within one year the I grade will revert to a failing grade.

GRADING:

The following scales will be used

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<th>Internal</th>
<th>For Graduate School</th>
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General grading criteria: For ordinary papers, and unless specified otherwise, you should write about the equivalent of four pages of ordinary text. Grammar, style, or spelling are not central--provided the paper is understandable and the faults are not so severe as to be a distraction. Then, important grading criteria include:

- clear articulation of your views and arguments
- soundness of what is said
- appropriate appeal to evidence
- clear and concise exposition of the points you are making
- consideration of intellectual context and relevant literature

How to find out your grades: d2l has two main ways to help a student find grades. There is a link on the toolbar named 'Grades' which, if clicked on, will display all the grades. Second, if a student clicks on a submitted and graded assignment in the Dropbox, the grade, and feedback comments from the Instructor, will be displayed.

INSTRUCTOR NAME AND CONTACT ADDRESSES:

Please raise queries by email. When the course is up and running, and you are a registered student, use the course's internal email (this is best for me as it keeps material related to this course in one place). Failing that, use ordinary email to mfricke(at)u.arizona.edu.

There will be an online office hour, during which I will be available in a Chat room. This will be at a time to suit you students, but it may well be an evening at 7pm MST.
Fall 10
  Summer 10
  Winter 10-11
  Spring 10
  Winter 09 10
  Fall 09
  Summer 09
  Spring 09
  Winter 08 09

Fall 08
  IRLS506-001 Research Methods
  IRLS506-011 Research Methods
  IRLS515-001/010 Organization of Information
  IRLS515-011 Information Organization
  IRLS520-001 Ethics for Library and Information Professionals
  IRLS520-010 Ethics for Library and Information Professionals
  IRLS521 Children’s and Young Adult Literature in a Multicultural Society
  IRLS524
  IRLS532-001 Online Searching
  IRLS532-010 Online Searching
  IRLS550 Information Environments from Hispanic and Native American Perspectives
  IRLS560
  IRLS561 Academic Libraries Practice and Administration
  IRLS563 Readers' Advisory Services in Public Libraries
  IRLS571 - 001/010
  IRLS572-010 Government Information
  IRLS573-010 Information Technology in Libraries
  IRLS575-791 User Interface and Web Site Design
  IRLS588 Issues in Indigenous Information Services
  IRLS598 Planning and Evaluation of Libraries and Information Centers
  IRLS622-010 Information Quality
  IRLS675 Advanced Digital Collections
  IRLS688: Books and Society: From the Late Middle Ages to Early Cyberspace

Archive of Old Syllabi

Guided exploration