

IDT 555: Ethical and Legal Issues in the Information Age

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(**draft** syllabus for Fall 2024)

Catalog Course Description

Analyzes ethical and legal issues related to information technologies. Examines the ways that technology challenges traditional ethical and legal concepts and raises old issues in new ways. Topics reflect recent patterns and developments, with particular emphasis on how technological developments shape, and are shaped by, the economic and political structure and organization of communication systems. Examines the role ethical and legal factors play in the day-to-day work of designers, producers and consumers using a series of contemporary issues as case studies.

Modestly Revised Course Description for Fall 2024 (to be submitted)

This course explores the ethical and legal challenges facing information design and data analytics professionals in the information age. It analyzes the ways in which technology challenges traditional ethical and legal concepts, and raises old issues in new ways. Through a series of contemporary case studies, students will explore the role that ethical and legal factors play in the day-to-day work of data analytics and information design professionals. This course incorporates design projects that challenge students to produce information products in different modalities. These projects are not necessarily analytics-focused, but will incorporate ethical and legal considerations.

Course Overview

Asynchronous

This course is offered fully asynchronously; students are not expected or required to be at any particular place at any particular time. Students are required to keep up with course materials on a week-to-week basis, and to submit projects on a timely basis as indicated below. Students will be required to demonstrate engagement with the course each week.

Project-Focused

This course requires students to complete three projects. The projects are designed to maximize student choice with respect to the modality and topic. Each project will take the form of one of the ten modalities illustrated below (essay, presentation, etc) or another modality proposed by students. Project 1 should address one of the first four topics, as illustrated below. Project 2 should address another one of the first four topics. Project 3 should address one of the last three topics. Students are expected to complete projects in at least two different modalities across the three projects.

Conversations on Legal and Ethical Issues

An important component of the class will be a series of Conversations with professionals in the field. These conversations will be live-streamed on Monday evenings, and recorded for students to review on their own schedules. Students attending the live stream will have the opportunity to engage with the guest speaker. The conversations might address the following topics:

1. Introduction & Orientation
2. Intellectual property, copyright, and data ownership
3. Ethical considerations in data collection, analysis, and visualization
4. Data bias and discrimination
5. Algorithmic decision-making and the ethics of big data
6. (TBD: Virtual and augmented reality technologies, Ethics of using data to create personalized experiences, or ethical implications of using artificial intelligence)
7. Social responsibility and the ethical use of information

Learning Objectives

- 1. Students will be able to identify and analyze ethical and legal issues related to data privacy, security, bias, and discrimination in information design and analytics.**

2. Students will be able to evaluate the ethical and legal implications of using big data, algorithms, and other emerging technologies in information design and analytics.
3. Students will be able to apply ethical frameworks and principles to real-world case studies and scenarios, and develop strategies for addressing ethical and legal challenges.
4. Students will be able to articulate and apply a personal code of ethics for information design and analytics that reflects a commitment to social responsibility and ethical decision-making.

Outcomes

1. Increased awareness and understanding of the ethical and legal issues surrounding data privacy, security, bias, and discrimination in information design and analytics.
2. The ability to evaluate the ethical and legal implications of using big data, algorithms, and other emerging technologies in information design and analytics.
3. The development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in addressing ethical and legal challenges related to information design and analytics.
4. The ability to articulate and apply a personal code of ethics for information design and analytics that reflects a commitment to social responsibility and ethical decision-making.

Course Topics

1. Intellectual property, copyright, and data ownership

Intellectual property laws and their impact on information design and analytics

Copyright and fair use in the use of data and information

Ownership and use of third-party data in design and analytics

2. Ethical considerations in data collection, analysis, and visualization

Informed consent and data collection

Ethical considerations in the use of data visualization techniques

De-identification and anonymization techniques in data analysis and visualization

3. Data bias and discrimination

Identifying and mitigating bias in data analysis

Ethical considerations in the use of data to make decisions

Addressing algorithmic discrimination in information design and analytics

4. Algorithmic decision-making and the ethics of big data

Ethical considerations in the use of machine learning algorithms

Identifying and mitigating bias in algorithmic decision-making

Understanding the social implications of algorithmic decision-making

5. Emerging ethical and legal issues

Ethical considerations in the use of virtual and augmented reality technologies

The ethics of using data to create personalized experiences

The ethical implications of using artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies

6. Social responsibility and the ethical use of information

Social responsibility in the use of data to drive decision-making

Ethical considerations in the use of data to influence public opinion

The role of information design and analytics in promoting social good

7. Legal and ethical responsibilities of professionals:

Ethical considerations in the use of data in marketing and advertising

Legal and ethical considerations in data journalism

Professional ethics and codes of conduct for information design and analytics professionals

Course Materials

Conversations

Live-streamed and recorded Conversations with professionals in the field addressing contemporary topics relevant to the course.

Short Lectures

5-7 minute video lectures introducing each of the course topics

Resource Sharing & Overviews

Dyanamic Zotero class bibliography identifying resources of interest, organized by course topic

5-7 minute video overviews of key course resources, reflecting contemporary events and student interests

Course Projects

Project proposals and completed projects contributed by students

Critiques and commentary on proposals and completed projects by members of the learning community

Project Modalities

Essay:

Choose one of the seven course topics and write a 2,000-word essay analyzing the issue and proposing strategies for addressing it.

Self-navigated slide presentation:

Create a slide presentation exploring one of the seven course topics. The presentation should be self-navigated and include at least 15 slides, and be expected to take about 30 minutes to review.

Slides & oral presentation:

Create a 30-minute presentation exploring one of the seven course topics. The presentation should include at least 15 slides and be delivered orally to the class.

Annotated bibliography:

Choose one of the seven course topics and create an annotated bibliography of 10-15 sources that explore the issue. Each annotation should be no longer than 200 words and the entire bibliography should be designed to be read in approximately 30 minutes. The annotations should provide a brief summary of each source, an evaluation of its credibility and relevance, and a reflection on its contribution to the understanding of the issue.

Podcast episode with guest:

Create a 30-minute podcast episode exploring one of the seven course topics. The episode should include a guest who is an expert in the field and feature a discussion on the issue and its implications.

Infographic:

Create an infographic that visually explores one of the seven course topics. The infographic should be designed to be easily understood by a general audience and should incorporate data, statistics, and other relevant information.

Case study analysis:

Choose a real-world case study that examines one of the seven course topics, and write an analysis of the case. The analysis should provide a summary of the case, identify the ethical and legal issues involved, and propose strategies for addressing the issues.

Social media campaign:

Create a social media campaign that raises awareness of issues surrounding one of the seven course topics. The campaign should be designed to be shared on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook, and should incorporate visuals, text, and hashtags to engage and inform the audience.

Role-playing simulation:

Create a role-playing simulation that simulates a scenario related to one of the seven course topics. The simulation should involve multiple participants and require them to make ethical and legal decisions in response to the scenarios.

Interactive website:

Create a website that educates the public on one of the seven course topics. The website should be interactive and engaging, and might incorporate multimedia elements such as videos, animations, and interactive quizzes.

Course Requirements

Complete three Projects

Project 1: Week 5

Project 2: Week 9

Project 3: Week 15

Projects must address one of the course topics

Project 1: Topic 1,2 or 3

Project 2: Topic 2,3 or 4

Project 3: Topic 5, 6, or 7

For each project, select a project option. Students must select at least two different project options among their three projects.

Course Calendar

Week 1: Introductions & Orientation

Topic 1: Ethical considerations in data collection and analysis (Weeks 2-3)

Topic 2: Bias and discrimination in data analytics and information design (Weeks 4-5)

Topic 3: Algorithmic decision-making and big data (Weeks 6-7)

Topic 4: Legal and ethical responsibilities of information design and analytics professionals (Week 8-9)

Topic 5: Artificial Intelligence and emerging ethical and legal issues in information design and analytics (Week 10-11)

Topic 6: Ethical frameworks and principles for information design and analytics

Topic 7: