HCI 220 Ethics and Activism in Technology and Design

Winter 2023: TTH 3:20-4:55pm

Veronica A. Rivera (she/her/hers)

Class Location: SVC in-person, room 3218
Office hours:

- Veronica Rivera (Instructor)
    - Mondays 10am-11am on Zoom (link on Canvas)
    - Tuesdays 5-6pm in SVC room 3312
    - Also available by appointment if these times don't work for you
- Alison Crosby (TA)
    - Wednesdays 1-2pm in SVC room 3312

Email: veariver@ucsc.edu
Course website: https://sites.google.com/ucsc.edu/hci220w23/home

- All course information will be available on this site. We will only use Canvas for assignment submissions.

COURSE INFORMATION

Digital technology is not neutral. Structural biases and social power dynamics underlie the design choices and algorithms powering the applications we use everyday. Similarly, these biases permeate the tech companies where such applications are designed and built. Tech workers, including engineers, designers, and product managers, often grapple with these issues, their own prejudices, and the goals of their organizations when they design and build technologies. This course will examine tech ethics, worker movements, and the role of UX practitioners in enacting change. The course will explore relevant topics in tech ethics that affect companies and product development, such as diversity and inclusion, bias in technical systems, and tech regulation. Students will engage in discussion around recent worker movements in the tech industry, and how those relate to ethical and structural issues within tech culture and society at large. Through design-oriented activities and projects, students will reflect on the role of UX practitioners in industry, and the values they want to apply in their future work. This course will prepare students to think critically about the role of UX/HCI professionals, the technology they are contributing to, be cognizant of the challenges tech workers face, and equip them with the tools to lead difficult conversations within their organizations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze existing technologies and computational systems to identify social and ethical dilemmas in their design, construction, and adoption
2. Consider the role UX practitioners play both inside and outside their organizations
3. Interpret tech worker movements through the lens of tech ethics, diversity, and social power dynamics (e.g. race, gender)
4. Learn the methods and pragmatics (e.g. decisions/tradeoffs between personal and professional goals) of organizing, protesting, and participating in labor movements within and across organizations

5. Apply human-centered design methods, when appropriate, to support and explain tech activism efforts

MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I am passionate about HCI, ethics in tech, and teaching. So I am really excited about this class, and to be working with you this quarter. I genuinely believe that each and every one of you is capable of doing well in this class and learning a lot if you put in the effort. As a teacher, I am committed to making it as easy as possible for you to put in that effort. I have created all assignments and selected readings intentionally to support your learning. I will do my best to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment where you feel heard and valued. And I am willing to listen to you and make adjustments to the course where I can to better support the class as a whole. I truly want to help you be successful. I will periodically ask for feedback, but if you are struggling with any aspect of the class, or feel that I could better uphold my commitments as a teacher, please talk to me at any point. Do not wait until feedback is requested from you. Let's work together and learn from each other this quarter.

PREREQUISITES/COREQUISITES

HCI 200: Introduction to HCI
HCI 201: Introduction to Design Methods in HCI
Above may be waived with instructor permission

REQUIRED MATERIALS

All required reading material will be provided by the instructor. Please bring a laptop to class.

COMMUNICATION

Please contact me via email for anything related to the course with the subject prefix: “HCI 220”. I do not check Canvas messages regularly, so I may miss those messages. I will do my best to respond to your email question within 24 hours during my normal working hours (Monday-Friday 8am-5pm). If you don’t hear back from me within 24 hours, feel free to kindly follow up in case I missed your email. Do not expect an immediate response to your email after business hours, during the weekend, or during university holidays.

You will be added to the course slack channel upon enrolment. If you are not added to the channel by the second class, please let Veronica or Alison know. Use the slack channel to ask questions that other students in the class may benefit from. If you need to have a private conversation, email the instructor or TA or see them during office hours. Do not use slack to ask questions about your grades. We are not allowed to discuss grades via slack for privacy reasons.

ASSIGNMENTS & COURSE STRUCTURE

Here is a description of the different assignments and activities in the class and how you will obtain feedback. All assignment instructions are linked:

Quarter-long project: An opportunity for you to use your UX/design/HCI skills (or develop new skills) while completing a project of your choice around tech ethics and activism. You will work in small groups, and should be working on this project throughout the entire quarter. Start brainstorming on day 1! You will be writing a project proposal, due on **1/19/23 at 11:59pm** and a mid-point report due on **2/9/23 at 11:59pm.** Your final deliverable for the project is due at the start

of our final exam period on **3/21/23 at 8am**. You will present your project at the end of the quarter to your peers (potentially including other students and faculty at the Silicon Valley Campus).

Reading reflections: These will help you digest the reading material and be prepared for class discussions and activities. We will be having various speakers joining us throughout the quarter. They are excited to speak with you and want to have engaging discussions so reading reflections are important for you to get the most out of conversing with them. Reading reflections will be due once a week, the day before our discussion **at 11:59pm.**

Assignment 1–Identifying Ethical Dilemmas: Taking a stance and arguing your point professionally is important as you go off into the workforce and have to consider potential ethical issues. In this assignment you will practice identifying and making an argument about an ethical dilemma. You will then write a short letter to a relevant individual or group trying to convince them of your point. This is due **2/2/23 at 11:59pm**.

Assignment 2–Research Paper Presentation: Verbally communicating ideas is also an important skill, whether you are going into academia or industry. To practice communicating new ideas with an audience you will read a research paper of your choice related to design, activism, and/or tech ethics, and present the paper to your classmates. This assignment is due **2/28/23 at 3:20pm** and will be presented in class on 2/28/23 and 3/2/23.

During class you will discuss the readings and engage in hands-on activities that draw on the reading material. Please bring a laptop to class. You are only allowed to use your laptop for the discussions and class activities. Please do not check email, social media, etc. during class time.

All assignments will be submitted on Canvas. The course staff will do their best to provide you with timely written feedback on all assignments and reading reflections so you can learn and improve throughout the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule with readings for each class and all assignment due dates can be found here. Please refer to this schedule often. If there are any major changes I will make an announcement in class.

You will notice that not all readings have been posted on the course schedule. I will post readings no later than 1 week in advance. Once readings for a particular day have been finalized, I will create an assignment for that day's reading reflection on Canvas.

GRADING

You will be graded as follows:

- Quarter-long project: 40%
    - Project proposal: 10%
    - Mid-point report: 10%
    - Final deliverable: 15%
    - Peer contribution: 5%
- Reading Reflections: 15%
- Assignment 1–Identifying Ethical Dilemmas: 15%
- Assignment 2 –Research Paper Presentation: 15%
- Participation in class discussions: 10%

- Feedback forms: 5%

A note on participation: Participation in class discussions and activities is crucial for allowing you and your peers to gain the most from this course. Therefore, part of your final grade will be allocated to participation. If you are consistently attending class, asking discussion questions, actively engaging with invited speakers, and participating in class activities you will easily receive an A in this category.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

I am providing you all the deadlines, due dates, and assignment details from the beginning. Therefore, I expect you to be organized and do your best to complete your work on time. Completing all reading reflections and assignments on time will allow you to gain the most from this course.

Late reading reflections will not be accepted. Reading reflections are meant to prepare you for in-class discussions. So if you do not turn them in on time, you will not be adequately prepared to contribute to that day's activity and discussion. Getting behind on reflections will also cause a backlog of work for you later on. However, I will drop your lowest reading reflection score before calculating your final grade. For all other assignments you can submit up to 3 days late. I will deduct 10% from your grade for that assignment for each day it is late. Your assignment will not be accepted after the 3rd late day.

I recognize that many of you are taking other demanding classes and have responsibilities outside the school that might cause you to fall behind. If you find yourself in this position, or struggling to keep up, please come talk to me. We can work together to find a suitable arrangement for you to learn and be successful in this class.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Topics of ethics and activism naturally touch on challenging, often polarizing, material. Discussing these issues professionally is important as you embark on your career in industry or academia. Inevitably, we will all have different opinions on these issues given our varied backgrounds, identities, and experiences. I encourage you to think critically about the different viewpoints presented in this class. It is ok to express disagreement. All I ask is that you be respectful of your peers, the invited speakers, and myself during our discussions. Be mindful of how your words and actions might make others feel. We will all learn significantly from each other and our speakers if we can have meaningful and kind conversations. During the first class meeting we will create a document of shared values detailing how we will support each other and carry out respect during discussions. It will be linked here.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All members of the UCSC community benefit from an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. I expect you to present your own work and acknowledge the work of others. I have zero tolerance for cheating, plagiarizing, falsification of data, and other forms of academic misconduct. The consequences for these behaviors range may include failing the assignment, failing the course, or dismissal from UCSC. I will report any instances of academic misconduct to the college administration.

If you are not sure what counts as academic misconduct, please come talk to me. This can be confusing for many students, and I would be more than happy to help you learn in this regard.

Likewise, if you are struggling to complete an assignment or to gather data for your projects, let me know and we can work together to figure out a way for you to succeed. I want to help reduce any pressure you might feel to behave dishonestly.

ACCESSIBILITY

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by email, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, I would like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact the DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

UC Santa Cruz welcomes diversity of religious beliefs and practices, recognizing the contributions differing experiences and viewpoints can bring to the community. There may be times when an academic requirement conflicts with religious observances and practices. If that happens, students may request reasonable accommodation for religious practices. The instructor will review the situation in an effort to provide a reasonable accommodation without penalty. You should first discuss the conflict and your requested accommodation with your instructor early in the term. You or your instructor may also seek assistance from the Dean of Students office.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The materials in this course are the intellectual property of their creators. As a student, you have access to many of the materials in the course for the purpose of learning, engaging with your peers in the course, completing assignments, and so on. You are not permitted to share, upload, stream, sell, republish, share the login information for, or otherwise disseminate any of the course materials, such as: video and audio files, assignment prompts, slides, notes, syllabus, simulations, datasets, discussion threads. Conversely, any materials created solely by you (for example, your videos, essays, images, audio files, annotations, notes) are your intellectual property and you may use them as you wish.

TITLE IX/CARE ADVISORY

UC Santa Cruz is committed to providing a safe learning environment that is free of all forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, which are explicitly prohibited under Title IX. If you have experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, know that you are not alone. The Title IX Office, the Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education (CARE) office, and Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) are all resources that you can rely on for support.

Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. Confidential resources are available through CARE. Confidentiality means CARE advocates will not share any information with Title IX, the police, parents, or anyone else without explicit permission. CARE advocates are trained to support you in understanding your rights and options, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. You can contact CARE at (831) 502-2273 or care@ucsc.edu. You can also report gender discrimination and

sexual harassment and violence directly to the University's Title IX Office, by calling (831) 459-2462 or by using their online reporting tool.

REPORT AN INCIDENT OF HATE OR BIAS

The University of California, Santa Cruz is committed to maintaining an objective, civil, diverse and supportive community, free of coercion, bias, hate, intimidation, dehumanization or exploitation. The Hate/Bias Response Team is a group of administrators who support and guide students seeking assistance in determining how to handle a bias incident involving another student, a staff member, or a faculty member. To report an incident of hate or bias, please use the following form: Hate/Bias Report Form.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

What we can expect from each other:
Each individual at UC Santa Cruz should act in the best interests of everyone else in our community. Please take care to comply with all university guidelines about masking in indoor settings, performing daily symptom and badge checks, testing as required by the campus vaccine policy, self-isolating in the event of exposure, and respecting others' comfort with distancing. **If you are ill or suspect you may have been exposed to someone who is ill, or if you have symptoms that are in any way similar to those of COVID-19, please err on the side of caution and stay home until you are well or have tested negative after an exposure.** Let me know that you're not feeling well and I'll respond about how best you can keep learning.

What you can expect from me:
I have designed our course following campus guidance and with current public health guidelines in mind. However, these guidelines may change in accordance with shifting infection rates or the emergence of new variants. If updated public health recommendations and university requirements make our current course format unfeasible, or if I experience a need to self-isolate, I will alter the format. This may include moving in-person sessions onto Zoom, modifying course assignments to work in a remote format, and reconfiguring exams (if applicable). I will communicate clearly with you via email or Canvas announcement about any changes that occur. I will provide as much advance warning as possible and give you all the information you need to transition smoothly to the new format. If you have questions about the changes, please reach out to me so I can answer them.

What I expect from you:
If you will need to miss an in-person class session due to illness or a COVID-19 exposure, let me know as soon as possible. You will be allowed to attend the class remotely until you are well or have tested negative. I will provide you with any additional materials you may miss from not attending class in-person, and will work with you to ensure you continue to make adequate progress.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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