Syllabus
CMSC 295 (CTZN 110): Inquiry into citizenship—Inhabiting and constructing an ethical digital world

Fall 2017

Time:	TR 9:30am
Room:	Ruffner 352
Website:	`http://cs.longwood.edu/courses/ctzn110/`

This course uses an inquiry-based approach to introduce students to aspects of citizenship, with an emphasis on the development of critical thought, civil discourse, and applied ethical reasoning. Sections of the course pose discipline-specific topics and questions to facilitate students exploration of citizenship. Students will build and refine their skills for academic success and will identify strengths and weaknesses in their oral communication. 3 credits.

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Office hours:	Mon 2–3pm, Tue 11am–noon, Thu 1–2pm, Fri 1–2pm

General info

The study of ethics is as old as ancient Greece, but still has the power to help us inform ourselves on how we can act, how we should act, how we must act, and how we want to act. Technologists sometimes imply or even explicitly state that their work is independent of ethical analysis or constraint; but our discipline of computer science gives us many examples of ethical questions, some of which are old questions wearing new hats, some of which are entirely new, and some of which are long-discussed hypothetical questions that are rapidly becoming concrete.

In this course, we will learn several frameworks with which to explore ethical questions, and we will investigate case studies and policy questions with relevance to the discipline of computer science and the technologies it builds

upon.

About the Core pilot

As you may have heard, Longwood will soon be adopting a new Core Curriculum (replacing the current General Education program). As part of the transition, we are currently running a few courses to "try them on for size", so to speak. This is one of those pilot courses: a section of what will be called "CTZN 110: Inquiry into citizenship". To make this non-disruptive for you, since you are still under the old General Education requirements, it will count as a Goal 12 course and appear on your transcript as CMSC 295. Any feedback about the course is appreciated!

Book

The book for this course will be Michael J. Quinn's *Ethics for the information age*, 7th edition. ISBN 978-0-13-429654-8.

The 6th edition of the textbook may be available more cheaply, and many of the sections are identical between the two editions. Reading assignments will be given with respect to the 7th edition, but if you take responsibility for verifying any differences between the two, you can get the 6th instead.

Course objectives

In this course, students will:

1. investigate foundations of citizenship, which include ethical reasoning, critical thought, and civil discourse; and

2. analyze and use speaking conventions appropriate to different audiences. Students will identify strengths and weaknesses in their own speaking in order to improve.

At the end of this course, the successful student will be able to:

3. identify and describe relationships between a citizen's individual rights and responsibilities and the broader responsibility to the common good;

4. demonstrate critical thinking by identifying, explaining, and analyzing arguments;

5. demonstrate ethical reasoning by articulating and evaluating reasons designed to support ethical conclusions;

6. practice speaking and listening techniques for holding constructive conversations about controversial issues; and

7. create and deliver oral messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context.

Graded work

The gradable work for this course is as follows. I figure that I have, on average, about 8–10 hours of your time every week, including class time as well as reading and otherwise preparing for class. While there is no explicit, separate attendance component, this is built in (along with participation) to other portions of the grade.

General ethics exam. The first few weeks of the course will be devoted to covering the basics of ethical theories. This unit will culminate in an exam, worth 15% of the course grade.

Case study presentations. Our first round of case studies will proceed as presentations. In pairs, students will present 20-minute analyses of interesting ethical problems posed by computers, networks, and related technology, based on readings from the book augmented by additional source material. Students not in the presenting pair will give feedback on content and presentation, sometimes verbally and sometimes in writing. Each student will present twice. The unit will be worth 15% of the course grade (5 for each presentation given and 5 for attentiveness and feedback on others' presentations).

Midterm paper. The first paper will be roughly 3 pages in length and will articulate both sides of a policy question with ethical implications, arguing for one of them. The paper is worth 15% of the course grade.

Case study discussions. The second round of case studies will follow a discussion format. Again in pairs, students will lead 25-minute discussions based on longer-form reading from news and magazine articles. The leaders will do some additional background reading and frame the

question, but the whole class will be expected to participate in the discussions. Each student will lead twice. The unit will be worth 15% of the course grade (5 for each discussion led and 5 for attentiveness and thoughtful participation in other discussions—quality rather than quantity of discussion is important here).

Debate. The last few weeks of the course will involve pairs of students debating policy questions with ethical implications; in each case the student will be arguing the *opposite* side of the same topic they wrote their midterm paper on. The format will be a slightly modified form of the "Lincoln-Douglas debate" style, and the full format and rubric will be distributed and explained in detail later in the semester. Debate performance will constitute 20% of the course grade, plus 5% for online feedback and discussion of others' debates.

Final paper. The final paper will be a longer written response to one of the debates. Details will be provided shortly before the debates start in November. This paper will be due at the final exam period and will also be worth 15% of the course grade. (There is no separate final exam.)

Grading scale

I tend to grade hard on individual assignments, but compensate for this in the final grades. The grading scale will be approximately as follows:

A−	[85, 90)	A	[90, 100) [1]		
B−	[70, 75)	B	[75, 80)	B+	[80, 85)
C−	[55, 60)	C	[60, 65)	C+	[65, 70)
D−	[40, 45)	D	[45, 50)	D+	[50, 55)

While there will be no "curve" in the statistical sense, I may slightly adjust the scale at the end of the term if it turns out some of the assignments were too difficult.

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[1] Alas, no A+, unfortunately.

Calendar (tentative)

Wk	T	R
	August	
1	**22** Introduction Scenario analysis	**24** §2.1.2 Presenting scenarios Critiquing others' presentations
2 *	**29** §§2.2–2.5 Relativism Divine command Egoism	**31** §§2.6–2.8 Kant Categorical imperative Utilitarianism
	September	
3	⎡ Labor Day **no class** ⎤	**7** §§2.9–2.11 Social contract Virtue ethics Comparing ethical theories *Case study prefs due*
4	**12** §2.12 Breaking the law Analysis of case studies Choosing good sources	**14** *Exam*
5	**19** Case study presentations (3) *Policy prefs due*	**21** Case study presentations (2+)
6	**26** Refining presentation technique Presentation planning Writing exercises *Case study prefs due*	**28** Case study presentations (3)
	October	
7	**3** Case study presentations (2+)	**5** Leading discussion Sample case study discussion Writing exercises

* **28 August**: Deadline to add/drop classes (5pm)

Wk	T	R
October		
8 *	**10** Case study discussions (2)	**12** *Paper draft due* Case study discussions (+) Writing exercises Paper editing—work day
9	$\left[\begin{array}{c}\text{Fall Break}\\ \textbf{no class}\end{array}\right]$	**19** *Paper due* Case study discussions (2)
10	**24** Case study discussions (1) Refining discussion-leading	**26** Case study discussions (2)
11	**31** Case study discussions (2)	**November** **2** Case study discussions (1) Debate format introduction
12	**7** Mock debate planning Mock debate	**9** Case study discussions (+) Debate planning—work day
13	**14** TBA	**16** Debates (2)
14	**21** Debates (2)	$\left[\begin{array}{c}\text{Thanksgiving}\\ \textbf{no class}\end{array}\right]$
15	**28** Debates (1+)	**30** CTZN pilot debriefing and discussion

December

Final paper due: Tue 5th, 2pm

* **9 October**: Deadline to withdraw from a class (5pm)

Policies

Honor code policy

Above all, I ask and expect that you will conduct yourself with honesty and integrity—and not to ignore the other ten points of the Honor Code, either. Take pride in what you are capable of, and have the humility to give credit where it is due.

The two main forms of academic dishonesty are "cheating" and "plagiarism". "Cheating" is getting help from someplace you shouldn't, and "plagiarism" is presenting someone else's idea as if it's your own. If you ever find yourself inclined towards either of these, know that there are always other, better options. Persevere! See my website[2] for some discussion and examples of how to steer clear of these problems, and feel free to come talk to me if you need help finding some of those other options (even if it's for another course).

Cheating or plagiarism (on any assignment) will normally receive a *minimum* penalty of a lowered *course* grade, ranging up to an F in the course. Cases will also be turned in to the Honor Board. But: I believe in your potential, and I hope that you will, or will grow to, observe this policy not simply to evade punishment but positively as a matter of character.

Accommodations

If you have any special need that I can accommodate, I'm happy to do so; come speak to me early in the term so we can set things up. If you have a documented disability, you should also contact Longwood's Office of Disability Resources (Graham Hall, x2391) to discuss some of the support the college can offer you. All such conversations are confidential.

Attendance and late policy

Attendance is required, and assignments must be turned in on time. That said, if you have a good reason to miss class or hand something in late, I tend to be fairly liberal with extensions if you ask in advance. (Good reasons do include assignments due for other classes.) (And medical and family emergencies are exempted from the "in advance" part, of course. But contact me ASAP.)

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[2]`http://cs.longwood.edu/~dblaheta/collab.html`

Frequent absence will result in a lowered participation grade; habitual absence may in extreme cases result in a failing grade for the class. *Unexcused* late assignments will normally be given a zero.

Inclement weather policy

I don't plan to cancel class for weather unless the entire college shuts down. If you are commuting or are otherwise significantly affected by a weather event, use your own best judgement; and if you do miss class for this reason, contact me as soon as possible to make up missed work.

Early bird policy

Nobody's perfect, and on occasion an assignment gets written a little unclearly (or, once in a while, with an actual error in it). If you catch one and bring it to my attention early, so that I can issue a clarification or correction to the rest of the class, there'll be some extra credit in it for you.