Tutorial: Theories of Privacy
Fall Term, 2014
Department of Philosophy
Carleton University

Instructor information

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Tutorial description

In this tutorial we will explore various philosophical issues related to the concept of privacy. In addition to foundational concerns about the nature of privacy and a right thereto, we will address the role that privacy plays in the avoidance of such negative emotions as shame and the maintenance of such social values as friendship, love, and dignity, the putative paradox of privacy in public, and privacy-theoretic assessments of contemporary technologies of identity management and authentication.

Tutorial readings will be drawn from a range of privacy theorists, including Judith DeGew, Anita Allen, Helen Nissenbaum, J. David Velleman, Thomas Nagel, Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis, Judith Jarvis Thomson, Charles Fried, Alan Westin, Ruth Gavison, William Parent, Jeffrey Reiman, Ian Kerr, and your tutorial instructor.

Discussion topics & readings

1. Privacy
   Privacy as control
   Privacy as limited access
   Privacy as ignorance

2. The right to privacy
   Thomson, J. (1975). The right to privacy. Philosophy & Public Affairs, 4
3. Privacy, emotions, and personhood

4. Privacy in public

5. Privacy and invasive technologies

Evaluation

Critical commentaries (5x10%=50%). Two days before each tutorial meeting, you will be expected to provide three-page (c. 900 word) commentary. Each commentary should display familiarity with the assigned tutorial readings for that meeting, but may focus on a significant aspect of just one of them.

Final paper (50%). Your final paper may develop one or more of your critical commentaries. The paper should present a clear thesis, related to a core tutorial topic, a well-reasoned line of support for that thesis, and a bibliography that includes relevant references from any literature review you have conducted in preparation for the paper. The paper should be between 15 and 20 pages (c. 4,500-6,000 words) in length, and will be due on or before the final day of the fall term’s examination period.