

PHIL 2106: Information Ethics
Winter 2021 – Carleton University

Course information

Instructor. Charles Côté-Bouchard, PhD (<https://www.charlescotebouchard.com/>)

Contact charles.cote-bouchard@carleton.ca

Please allow 48 hours to get a response; you may send me a reminder after 48 hours

Office Hours Schedule a Zoom appointment via cuLearn

Online format. This course will be entirely online. It will be a **blend** of pre-recorded (asynchronous) video lectures and mandatory Zoom (synchronous) meetings.

Typical weekly schedule. See calendar and email announcements for exceptions

Tuesdays 08:35am Pre-recorded (asynchronous) video lecture uploaded on cuLearn

Thursdays 08:35 - 09:55am Live (synchronous) online class via Zoom

Course description.

Objectives. This course will explore several ethical questions and debates surrounding information technology. The course will have two main parts. First, we will examine the *practical* side of information ethics, i.e., questions raised by information technology about what we should *do*, how we should *act*. This includes issues regarding intellectual property, privacy, online communication, and more. The second part will be devoted to the *epistemic* or *cognitive* side of information ethics. We will discuss some issues raised by information technology about what we should *believe*, how we should *think*. New information technology gave us powerful new methods and platforms for obtaining information. But should we trust them? Are they reliable ways to form beliefs about the world? On the one hand, most reliable sources now operate online. For countless topics, it has become nearly impossible to find information 'offline'. On the other hand, some recent trends raise doubts about the reliability of Web platforms. Various forms of misinformation have become commonplace online. Major Web platforms also use personalization algorithms that seemingly favor echo chambers and epistemic bubbles. We will discuss the nature and significance of these phenomena.



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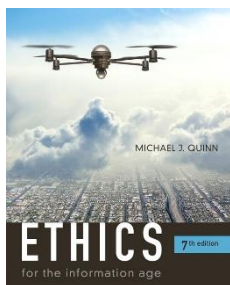
Learning outcomes. Become familiar with the methods of philosophy, and with philosophical notions, questions, theses, and arguments raised by information technologies. Develop fundamental philosophical and critical thinking skills. These include the ability to (i) construct, defend, and evaluate arguments in one's own words, (ii) understand and think creatively (both individually and in teams) about complex concepts, arguments, theories, and problems, (iii) understand and analyze complex academic texts, (iv) write clearly and concisely, and (v) discuss constructively and respectfully with others about complex questions.

Course materials

Textbook you must purchase. Quinn, Michael J. *Ethics for the Information Age*. 7th edition (2017). Boston: Pearson.

Additional readings: PDF documents freely available on the course website.

Technological requirements. Computer with Internet connection, microphone, and camera. Please visit this page for details: <https://carleton.ca/its/help-centre/faq-technical-specs-for-new-students/>



How this online course will work

Course website (CuLearn). You must visit the course's cuLearn site frequently. That is where you'll find the video lectures, the slides, the latest version of the course calendar, the readings that are not from the book, the evaluations, additional resources for each week (further readings, further videos, and podcasts), and the link to book office hour appointments.

Readings. For the first part of the course, the mandatory readings will be from Michael J. Quinn's book *Ethics for the information age*, which you must purchase before the semester starts. Make sure to get the 7th edition, published in 2017. For the second part, the readings will be available as free PDF documents on cuLearn. Additional (optional) readings will also be available each week as free PDF files on cuLearn.

Asynchronous video lectures. A pre-recorded video lecture will be uploaded via cuLearn on most weeks (see calendar for details). The purpose of each pre-recorded video lecture is to complement the readings and to prepare you for the weekly Zoom meeting. New material will come from *both* the readings and the video lectures. Anything from the video lectures and the readings is susceptible to be tested. It is best to do the readings *before* watching the video lectures. And unless specified otherwise, you must watch the weekly video lecture *before* the weekly Zoom meeting, which happens two days after the video upload.

Synchronous Zoom classes. We will have a synchronous meeting via Zoom every week. Attending the weekly Zoom meeting is mandatory; it is your responsibility to do so. With a few exceptions – which are marked in red in the calendar – Zoom meetings won't introduce new material, won't take the form of traditional lectures, and won't be recorded. Their purpose is rather to help you understand the material, to prepare you for the evaluations, and to allow you to discuss the material with your classmates. Zoom meetings will usually feature a team exercise (similar to the quizzes) in small groups using breakout rooms, and a Q&A session.

For those reasons, Zoom meetings will require your active participation and attention. You will need a microphone to talk with your teammates and to ask questions. It's preferable (though not mandatory) to turn on your camera during team exercises. Turn off your microphone when you are not talking, but don't forget to unmute when you are talking! Turn off your camera when you are *not* in a breakout room.

Email and questions. You'll receive all important announcements and updates via your Carleton email. So, you must check your Carleton emails frequently. You are welcome to email me directly if you have questions. However, before you do so, please verify that the answer is not already in the course outline or in recent email announcements. And if your question is about the material, consider booking an office hour meeting instead. With everything being online, we are all flooded with emails, so let's make an effort not to multiply them beyond necessity! For the same reason, I ask you to give me about 48 hours to reply to your emails. You may send me a reminder if I have not replied after 48 hours. For important advice on these topics, please visit the following pages before the start of the semester <https://carleton.ca/online/online-learning-resources/communicating-for-academic-success/>; <https://carleton.ca/online/online-learning-resources/emailing-your-instructor/>.

Online civility. The course will feature online discussion. For that to work, it is crucial that you all observe basic norms of civility and respect. Please start by taking a look at this page: <https://carleton.ca/online/online-learning-resources/netiquette/>. To ask a question or make a comment during Zoom meetings, please raise your hand virtually. Do not interrupt others. When debating with classmates, state your own views directly and substantively: focus on reasons, assumptions and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. Engage others' views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way. Violations of these guidelines will not be tolerated. Please reach out to me if you feel like those norms are not being respected.

Resources for online learning and accessibility. Please visit the following pages for helpful advice and tips for online courses: <https://carleton.ca/online/getting-started-in-your-online-course/>; <https://students.carleton.ca/>. If you have **accessibility requirements**, please visit: <https://carleton.ca/accessibility/student-support-services/>

Assessments and grading policy

Summary of assessments

Points	Assessment	Description	Distribution	Submission	Deadline
35%	8 quizzes; only top 5 counts	Multiple choice questions about readings and videos	About a week before deadline	Completed and submitted on cuLearn	See calendar
25%	Midterm take-home exam	1500-2000-word answers to questions about weeks 1 to 6	Feb 18 th	Word document submitted on cuLearn	Mar 11 th 8:35am
40%	Final take-home exam	1500-2000-word answers to questions about weeks 7 to 13	Apr 8 th	Word document submitted on cuLearn	Apr 27 th 8:35am

Quizzes (35%). There will be 8 multiple choice quizzes during the semester. They will test your grasp of the material from the readings and the video lectures. You must do the quizzes *alone*, but they are open book. You may – and should – consult your notes, the slides, the readings, and the video lectures while you do them. The quizzes are not very long, but the answers are not obvious, so you must take your time to do them. Read the questions and answer choices carefully, and take the time to verify your answers with the material. Quizzes are not timed, so you don't have to do them in one sitting. Your progress is saved as you do them, so you can pause and return to them later, as long as it is before the deadline. You have about a week to do them and late quizzes are not accepted. All quizzes are automatically submitted on the deadline, whether or not they are finished. You'll have the opportunity to do 8 quizzes, but only those with the 5 best scores will count.

Midterm (25%) and final (40%) take-home exams. Each take-home exam will take the form of long answers (1500-2000 words total) to questions about the material from the readings and the video lectures. You will be required to explain parts of the material clearly, concisely, accurately, comprehensively, and in your own words. You will also be expected to formulate and defend your own view. You will submit both take-home exams electronically, by uploading your .doc or .docx file on CuLearn. You will have about three weeks to write each take-home. Late submissions will receive penalties. You will lose 5% of your assignment grade for each day late. You will receive additional instructions as the midterm and final questions are distributed. You should receive feedback about three weeks after your submission date.

Carleton's grading system	
A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	0-49

Plagiarism. It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Extra credit. I don't do extra credit.

Calendar. See next page.

Tentative Calendar PHIL 2106 (subject to change – see cuLearn for latest version)

Topics	Date	What happens	What you must do
Part I. Practical ethics in the information age			
1) Introduction	Jan 12	- No video lecture uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Course outline ○ Quinn Chapter 1
	Jan 14	- Live Zoom meeting 1 (recorded and uploaded afterwards)	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No video lecture to watch ○ No quiz
2) Ethics: the basics	Jan 19	- Video lecture 'Ch.2' uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quinn Chapter 2: Introduction to ethics
	Jan 21	- Live Zoom meeting 2	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch 'Ch.2' video lecture ○ No quiz
3) Networked communication	Jan 26	- Video lecture 'Ch.3' uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quinn Chapter 3
	Jan 28	- Live Zoom meeting 3	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch 'Ch.3' video lecture ○ Submit first quiz
4) Intellectual property	Feb 2	- Video lecture 'Ch.4' uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chapter 4
	Feb 4	- Live Zoom meeting 4	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch 'Ch.4' video lecture ○ Submit second quiz
5) Privacy	Feb 9	- Video lecture 'Ch.5' uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quinn Chapter 5
	Feb 11	- Live Zoom meeting 5	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch 'Ch.5' video lecture ○ Submit third quiz
Feb 15-19: Winter break – No new video lecture, no new reading, no Zoom meeting; no quiz - Feb 18: Midterm take-home distributed			
6) TBD by vote	Feb 23	- Lecture 6 uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TBD by vote
	Feb 25	- Live Zoom meeting 6	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Watch video lecture ○ Submit fourth quiz
7) Revision	Mar 2	- No video lecture uploaded	No new reading assigned
	Mar 4	- Live Zoom meeting 7 (recorded and uploaded afterwards)	No quiz; no video lecture to watch; no new reading to do

Topics	Date	What happens	What you must do
Part II. What to believe in the information age			
8) Introduction to part II	Mar 9	- No video lecture uploaded	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael P. Lynch. 2016. <i>The Internet of us.</i> (selection)
	Mar 11	- Midterm deadline - Zoom meeting 8 (recorded and uploaded afterwards)	By 10:05am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit midterm take-home No quiz; no video lecture to watch
9) Belief from online searches	Mar 16	- Video lecture 'Online searches' uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.D. Magnus. 2009. 'On trusting Wikipedia' Thomas Simpson. 2012 'Evaluating Google as an epistemic tool' Michael P. Lynch & Hannah Kiri Gunn. 2019. 'Googling'
	Mar 18	- Live Zoom meeting 9	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch 'Online searches' video lecture Submit fifth quiz
10) Belief from social media	Mar 23	- Video lecture 'Social media' uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lynch. 2016. <i>The Internet of us.</i> (selection) Karen Frost-Arnold. 2014. 'Trustworthiness and truth: the epistemic pitfalls of internet accountability.'
	Mar 25	- Zoom meeting 10	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch 'Social media' video lecture Submit sixth quiz
11) Online misinformation	Mar 30	- Video lecture 'Misinformation' uploaded	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neil Levy 'The bad news about fake news' Regina Rini 'Deepfakes and the epistemic backstop'
	Apr 1	- Live Zoom meeting 11	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch 'Misinformation' video lecture Submit seventh quiz
12) Echo chambers and epistemic bubbles	Apr 6	- Video lecture 'Bubbles' uploaded	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lynch. 2016. <i>The Internet of us.</i> (selection) C. Thi Nguyen. 2020. 'Echo chambers and epistemic bubbles'
	Apr 8	- Live Zoom meeting 12 - Final take-home distributed	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch video lecture 12 Submit eighth quiz
Conclusion			
13) Revision and conclusion	Apr 13	Exceptionally on a Tuesday: - Live Zoom meeting 13 (recorded and uploaded afterwards)	By 8:35am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new video lecture to watch No new reading No quiz
Final take-home deadline	Apr 27	Submit final essay by 8:35am on Tuesday 27 April	

Other resources for students at Carleton

- [Health and Counselling Services](#)
 - Counselling services for students
 - Contact info: hcs@carleton.ca, 613-520-6674
- [Online Student Success Module](#)
 - Helping prepare students for online teaching and learning
- [Academic Advising](#)
 - Advising students on course selection and related matters
 - Contact info: academicadvising@carleton.ca, 613-520-7850
- [Centre for Student Academic Support \(CSAS\)](#)
 - Academic support, especially learning support workshops / sessions
 - Contact info: csas@carleton.ca, 613-520-3822
- [Writing Services](#)
 - Writing support for students
 - Contact info: csas@carleton.ca, 613-520-3822
- [Science Student Success Centre \(SSSC\)](#)
 - Academic support, especially for students in the sciences
 - Contact info: sssc@carleton.ca, 613-520-2600 x3111
- [Math Lab](#)
 - Academic support, especially for students studying math
 - Contact info: jo-anne.lefevre@carleton.ca, 613-520-2600 x2696
- [Elsie MacGill Learning Centre](#)
 - Academic support, especially for Engineering students
 - Contact info: info_engdesign@carleton.ca, 613-520-5790

Department policies: see next page

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

Sept. 9	Classes start.
Sept. 23	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 12	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 26-30	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 27	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 11	Last day of fall term classes. <i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i> Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 12-23	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 23	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 11	Classes begin.
Jan. 25	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 15	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 31	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 2	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 14	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses. <i>Classes follow a Friday schedule.</i>
Apr. 15	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 16-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735