PHIL 3202 – Data Ethics

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Office: 104 Manchester Hall
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 pm — 3:00 pm or by appointment

Fall 2024
MWF 11:15 am — 12:05 pm
110 Herbst Hall

1 Course Description

Ethical and epistemological questions encountered in collecting, interpreting, inferring from and acting upon data—including when these activities are automated or carried out on large observational data sets. Issues may include data privacy and ownership; informed consent; algorithmic bias, equity, and transparency; the theory-ladenness of data; the logic of scientific inference; corporate and institutional responsibility; and implications for democratic and other social values.

2 Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and assess philosophical arguments
- Make connections between philosophical ideas and personal experiences and perspectives
- Engage in ethical analysis of relevant cases
- Demonstrate personal philosophical reflection through writing

3 Required Text

All readings are available on HuskyCT.

4 Grading

Your grade in the course will be composed of the following:

Discussion	25%
Quizzes	25%
Case Studies	25%
Final Exam	25%

Assignments and final grades will be according to the following scale:

A	93	Excellent
A-	90	Excellent
B+	88	Very good
B	83	Good
B-	80	Good
C+	78	Good
C	73	Average
C-	70	Fair
D+	68	Poor
D	63	Poor
D-	60	Merely passing
F		

5 Assignments

5.1 Discussion

Class time will be spent in a combination of lecture and discussion. On days allotted for discussion, students will submit a claims card. On either side of an index card, students will submit one substantive philosophical or ethical claim from the readings for that week which they agree with and would be willing to defend in class and one substantive philosophical or ethical claim which they disagree with and would be willing to critique in class. One of the two claims may be substituted for a substantive question about the assigned reading. Both claims (or both claim and question) should include a citation to the text.

5.2 Quizzes

For each course topic, there will be a quiz assessing comprehension of the reading assignments. Quizzes will consist of five multiple choice questions to be answered during the final ten minutes of class. Quizzes are open book and open note.

5.3 Case Studies

During the course of the semester, students will write two case studies. Possible cases will be circulated for each assignment. Students will select among the given cases and write an ethical analysis of the case. Case studies have a limit of 1,500 words maximum and should be submitted in PDF or .docx format. An example case study is available on HuskyCT.

5.4 Final Exam

The final exam will consist of essay questions. A list of possible essay questions will be distributed prior to the exam. On the day of the exam, a subset of those questions will be selected for the exam and students will choose which questions to answer from among that set. Exams are open book, but not open note.

5.5 Due Dates

Work will not be accepted after the due date. If for some reason you find yourself unable to complete your work by the due date, talk to me and we can discuss the possibility of an extension. Once the due date has passed, however, no late work will be accepted.

6 Electronics

The use of personal electronics (laptops, cell phones, etc.) is not permitted during class meetings except when such use is required as part of an approved accommodation.

7 Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is dishonest or unethical academic behavior that includes, but is not limited to, misrepresenting mastery in an academic area (e.g., cheating), failing to properly credit information, research, or ideas to their rightful originators, representing such information, research, or ideas as your own (e.g., plagiarism), or using ChatGPT (or similar) to generate material which is submitted in fulfillment of an assignment. Any instances of academic misconduct will result in grade penalties ranging from a lower grade on the assignment to failure of the course and will be reported to the Office of Community Standards. Information about university policies regarding academic misconduct is available at https://community.uconn.edu/academic-misconduct/.

8 Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Interpersonal Violence

Academic and professional excellence can flourish only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an academic and work environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination or discriminatory harassment. In addition, inappropriate amorous relationships can undermine the University's mission when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their authority. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment, as well as inappropriate amorous relationships, and such behavior will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University. Additionally, to protect the campus community, all non-confidential University employees (including faculty) are required to report sexual assaults, intimate partner violence, and/or stalking involving a student that they witness or are told about to the Office of Institutional Equity. Please be aware that while the information you provide will remain private, it will not be confidential and will be shared with University officials. More information is available at https://equity.uconn.edu and https://titleix.uconn.edu. Information about accessing medical care can be found at https://titleix.uconn.edu/get-help/urgent-medical-care/. Information about accessing confidential resources relating to sexual assualt and domestic violence can be found at https://titleix.uconn.edu/get-help/confidential-advocacy/.

9 Disability Accommodation

If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or https://csd.uconn.edu/.

10 Course Schedule

Date	Topic/Reading	Assessment
	Course Introduction	
Aug. 26	Syllabus/What is Philosophy?	
Aug. 28	What's the point of education?	
Aug. 30	How to be successful in college	
Sep. 2	No class	
Sep. 4	Making and evaluating arguments	
Sep. 6	What is ethics?	
	Moral Theory	
Sep. 9	Corvino, "The Fact/Opinion Distinction"	
Sep. 11	Huemer, "Subjectivism"	
Sep. 13	Discussion	
Sep. 16	Shafer-Landau, "Morality and Religion"	
Sep. 18	Shafer-Landau, "Eleven Arguments Against Moral Objectivity"	
Sep. 20	Discussion	Quiz
	Privacy	
Sep. 23	Thomson, "The Right to Privacy"	
Sep. 25	Marmor, "Privacy in Social Media"	
Sep. 27	Discussion	
Sep. 30	Custers et al, "Privacy and Consent"	
Oct. 2	Solove, "Privacy Self-Management and the Consent Dilemma"	
Oct. 4	Discussion	Quiz
	Bias	
Oct. 7	O'Neil, "Bomb Parts: What is a Model?"	
Oct. 9	Castro, "What's Wrong with Machine Bias"	
Oct. 11	Discussion	Case study 1
Oct. 14	Fazelpour and Danks, "Algorithmic Bias: Sense, Sources, Solutions"	
Oct. 16	Lin and Chen, "Artificial Intelligence in a Structurally Unjust Society"	
Oct. 18	Discussion	Quiz
	Transparency	
Oct. 21	Burell, "How the Machine 'Thinks'"	
Oct. 23	Langer et al, "What Do We Want from Explainable Artificial Intelligence?"	
Oct. 25	Discussion	
Oct. 28	de Laat, "Algorithmic Decision-Making Based on Machine Learning from Big Data"	
Oct. 30	Baum et al, "From Responsibility to Reason-Giving Explainable Artificial Intelligence"	
Nov. 1	Discussion	Quiz
	Responsibility	
Nov. 4	Goodpaster, "The Concept of Corporate Responsibility"	
Nov. 6	Diamantis, "AI and the Law"	
Nov. 8	Discussion	
Nov. 11	Castro and Pham, "Is the Attention Economy Noxious?"	
Nov. 13	Tamburrini, "The AI Carbon Footprint and Responsibilities of AI Scientists"	
Nov. 15	Discussion	Quiz

	Research	
Nov. 18	Godfrey-Smith, "Induction and Confirmation"	
Nov. 20	Ladyman, "Underdetermination"	
Nov. 22	Discussion	Case study 2
Nov. 25	No class	
Nov. 27	No class	
Nov. 29	No class	
Dec. 2	Hanson, "Observation"	
Dec. 4	Nuzzo, "Fooling Ourselves" and Gelman and Loken, "The Statistical Crisis in Science"	
Dec. 6	Discussion	Quiz