

COS 490 Computers, Ethics and Society

Syllabus

Spring 2009

INSTRUCTORS: Tom DeMarco, George Markowsky

TIME: Mondays 6:00-9:00 PM (Except 1/19, 3/2, 3/9)

ROOM: 227 Neville Hall

PREREQUISITES: COS 431 and ENG 317.

GOALS

1. To understand what we mean by ethics and how our understanding of ethics has evolved.
2. To understand what it means to be an ethical professional and person.
3. To gain some perspective on how the computer industry got to its present position.
4. To gain some perspective on how computers affect the lives of people in modern society.
5. To examine some of the key moral, ethical and philosophical issues which professionals will face in the future.
6. To learn how to read predictions critically.
7. To improve your use of spoken and written English. This course requires students to make presentations on the different topics discussed in class and to write four papers.
8. To improve your writing and public speaking skills.

TEXTBOOKS

1. *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli, translated by Daniel Donno, Bantam Classic, 2003.
2. *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre University of Notre Dame Press, 2007
3. *Hackers: Heroes of the Revolution*, Steven Levy, Penguin Books, 2001.
4. *Normal Accidents*, Charles Perrow, Princeton University Press, 1999.

GRADING

You will receive grades for the following activities:

1. Class room discussion (0-10 points each period)
2. Six papers worth 50, 50, 50, 50, 100, 100 points, respectively.
3. One oral presentation worth 50 points.
4. Reading Quiz (0-20 points each)

The maximum points are as follows:

240 points for the reading quizzes (0-20 points per quiz)
400 points for the papers (50, 50, 50, 50, 100, 100)
50 points for oral presentations and report (50 points per presentation)
130 points for participation in discussions (0-10 points per class)

820 points

The final grade will be based on the maximum number of points you could have scored and will follow the following scale. The scale will remain the same even if the numbers of quizzes, papers or presentations change.

Final Grade Table

A	90-100% of maximum score
A-	85-89% of maximum score
B+	83-84% of maximum score
B	80-82% of maximum score
B-	75-79% of maximum score
C+	73-74% of maximum score
C	70-72% of maximum score
C-	65-69% of maximum score
D+	63-64% of maximum score
D	60-62% of maximum score
D-	55-59% of maximum score
E	below 55%

You will be able to view a grade sheet via a protected website.

Additional Class Registration

To ensure that we have an accurate e-mail address and a 9-digit ID for use in the course we want all students to connect to <http://www.cs.umaine.edu/~markov>, click on the bullet for Student Registration and fill out the form. We do not want to use your student ID to post your grades.

Class Mechanics

Each class period after the first will begin with a short quiz on the reading. These quizzes will be short answer tests in which you will be allowed to use any notes that you make, but not the original book.

Students will get a grade for classroom participation. Each time a student says something relevant in class, that student earns 5 points up to a maximum of 10 points per class period.

We will give you more details about the papers and presentations throughout the semester.

Each class period (150 minutes total time) after the first will be made up of the activities listed below. The exact mix of activities will vary from class period to class period. For example, only two class periods are scheduled for student presentations.

1. **20 Minutes for the quiz** and miscellaneous administrative details. The quizzes are to ensure that everyone does the reading every week. Discussions are deadly when people don't do the reading. The reading quizzes are short-answer/multiple choice and you are allowed to use your notes. The questions will typically ask you about key points mentioned in the text. These will refer to statements in the text and will not be interpretations of the text. For example, we might ask you something like "What does the author give as the 4 main reasons for ..." **When you do the reading we expect you to scan the notes, preface, and acknowledgement section for important items. We will occasionally put some material from these sections on the quizzes to make sure that you are reading them.** Each class period after the first one will begin with the reading quiz.
2. **0-60 minutes for student presentations.**
3. **0-120 minutes for presentation of special material, speakers, and review of papers.** We plan to have some outside speakers this semester – details will be announced later.
4. **0-120 minutes for classroom discussion.**

OFFICE HOURS

Office : 237 Neville Hall.
Office Hours : TuTh 10:45-12:00, M 5:30-6:00 and by Appointment
Phone : 581-3940
e-mail : tdemarco@umcs.maine.edu, markov@umcs.maine.edu

Note that Prof. DeMarco does not have a First Class account, but Prof. Markowsky does have a First Class account. Please check <http://www.umcs.maine.edu/~markov/appointments.html> to make sure we will have time to see you. In general, it is best if you make appointments via the website. That way we can notify you in case anything changes.

If you are planning to come to office hours from far away please check with the Computer Science Office (581-3941) to make sure that some event will not prevent us from being at office hours.

If you run into problems with this course and need help come in to see us immediately. Attendance in this class is important since you are scheduled for oral presentations and get points for participation. If there are reasons that you cannot attend a particular class meeting please let us know as soon as possible.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

1/12	Intro to course, ACM Ethical Self Assessment Exercise
1/19	HOLIDAY – MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
1/26 *	<i>The Prince</i> , – (entire book)
2/02	<i>Locke, Kant and the Categorical Imperative (Lecture) Paper 1 Due (50 points)</i>
2/09	<i>After Virtue (chap. 1-4)</i>
2/16	<i>After Virtue (chap. 5-7, 9)</i>
2/23 *	<i>After Virtue (chap. 10-12 and 14) Paper 2 Due (50 points)</i>
3/02	SPRING BREAK
3/09	SPRING BREAK
3/16	<i>After Virtue (chap. 15-18)</i>
3/23	<i>Ethics: the 99% Solution (lecture) Paper 3 Due (50 points)</i>
3/30 *	<i>Normal Accidents</i> – (pp. vii-122) Paper 4 Due (50 points) Student Presentations (50 points)
4/06	<i>Normal Accidents</i> – (pp. 123-255) Paper 4 Due (50 points) Student Presentations (50 points)
4/13	<i>Normal Accidents</i> – (pp. 256-412) Student Presentations (50 points)
4/20 *	<i>Hackers</i> , – (pp. 1-223) Paper 5 Due (100 points)
4/27	<i>Hackers</i> , – (pp. 224-439)
5/04 *	Paper 6 Due. (100 points) NO CLASS – FINALS WEEK

Dates having * next to them are dates on which Tom DeMarco will not be available. Note that there are two due dates for Paper 4: March 30 and April 6. Those students who will be presenting on March 30 will have until April 6 to submit their papers. All other students have to submit Paper 4 on March 30. More details will be provided in class.

We reserve the right to modify the schedule. There are no prelims and no final in this course. The last paper in the course is due Monday May 4 during finals week.