

DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE**Ethical and Legal Aspects of Big Data**

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Department: Economics and Business

Central European University

Course Status: Elective, 2 credits. Spring 2017-18

Course e-learning site:

Time and location:

Office hours: Nador u. 11, room 303. Regular office hours: Th 15.00-17.00, also by appointment

Course Description

This course provides a forum for discussion on a selection of topics on the ethical and legal aspects of Big Data through mainly contemporary literature in ethics, developments in law, and advances in Big Data technology. We examine case studies on Big Data and then reach conclusions regarding the relevant ethical and legal issues. In examining these case studies, we will also discuss principles and problems of broader philosophical significance. Topics discussed will include the correlation vs causation in data analysis, identity, privacy, and mass surveillance. Principles and problems discussed will include the doctrine of double effect, doing vs. allowing harm, theories of personal identity, and aspects of liberal morality. We will also develop a framework to handle ethical and legal questions in the context of Big Data for individuals, companies and states. No background in ethics or law is required but some affinity to how Big Data is developing is assumed.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- demonstrate a clear understanding of debates on central ethical and legal issues in Big Data and be able to take part in these debates by critiquing significant arguments
- explain how various positions taken on these topics relate to deeper principles and problems in ethics
- be able to apply a framework of dealing with issues related to Big Data in their workplace
- perform their own evaluation and critique of the validity and soundness of arguments with care and clarity, both orally and in writing

Requirements

Regular attendance, carefully completing the assigned readings before class, and active participation in seminar discussions and online will be expected. The instructors will regularly pose questions at the e-learning site and ask students for their feedback and views. Participation in the online forum will count towards the overall grade.

In addition, there will be the following assignments:

1) An in-class presentation. Each (team of) students will give a 20-25 minute presentation on a selected case study. The presentation should include a brief exposition of the logic of an important argument from, or related to, the readings, and raise questions and potential criticisms for discussion. Students should prepare a power-point presentation. Advance consultation during office hours on the presentation is welcome.

2) A 3000 word (maximum) final paper. Due date:

Assessment

20% seminar participation, 20% online participation, 25% presentation; 35% final paper

Grading criteria for the presentations

A blank "Presentation Score Sheet" listing the evaluation criteria according to which presentations will be assessed can be downloaded from the course web site. It is most important that in-class presentations do not merely reproduce the readings: to earn at least a B+ grade, they must offer significant clarifications, raise important questions, and/or add the presenter's own well-grounded opinions and arguments. Presentations will otherwise be assessed primarily according to their clarity, focus, soundness of arguments, and helpfulness in understanding the topic. Excessively long or rushed presentations (exempting time taken for questions or other interruptions) will be marked down 1/3 of a grade. Participation in the rest of the seminar will count equally with the presentation, and will be graded according to attendance, preparation, attention to others, and quality of contributions in class throughout the term.

Grading criteria for the written assignments

To earn a B+, the written assignment must clearly and concisely address the agreed question, must be written in good academic English. Insofar as these are relevant, the paper must demonstrate a solid understanding of the arguments from readings in the course as well as in-class presentations and discussions. Important principles and concepts should be clearly explained. The views of others should, where necessary, be charitably, clearly and succinctly reconstructed, and properly cited. The paper must show that you have analyzed and independently organized the material yourself in response to the question, rather than simply following the organization of in-class presentations or parts of the literature. To earn an A-, the assignment must demonstrate all the above plus evidence of genuine progress as a result of your own independent thinking, such as your own substantive evaluation and critique of the validity and soundness of the arguments of others, or your own original positive argument. If there are any problems with the exposition or arguments in the paper, these will be minor. Any obvious objections to your argument will have been anticipated and answered. Papers that earn an A will demonstrate all the above virtues, to the extent that they are nearly flawless in writing style, organization, exposition and soundness of arguments. While remaining entirely relevant to the question, such a paper will be ambitious in scope and will demonstrate an exceptional degree of understanding and insight into the topic.

Course Schedule and Readings The schedule is not set in stone, but is subject to change for pedagogical reasons as the course progresses! The course web site always includes the latest information.

Session 1, April 19	Introduction: developing a general background for the case studies, Responsibility/Agency <i>Case Study: Uber and Self-Driving Cars</i>	
Session 2, April 26	Knowledge: Correlation vs Causation, Identity and Big Data, <i>Case Study: Google Flu Case Study: Right to be Forgotten and Google</i>	
Session 3, May 3	Personal Data Protection: <i>Case Study: GDPR</i>	
Session 4, May 10	Privacy, <i>Case Study: Snowden and NSA</i>	
Session 5, May 17	Surveillance: <i>Case Study: UK Snooper's Bill</i>	
Session 6, May 24	Democracy and Fake News: Facebook and Cambridge Analytica	
Session 7, June 1	Justice and Fairness, <i>Case Study: Preventive Policing</i> Discrimination and Bias: <i>Case Study: Biases in algorithm making</i>	
Session 8, June 8	Ethical and Legal issues in AI?: <i>Case study: Bots</i> Conclusion/Discussion	