

Computer Ethics

PHIL 3050X/CSCS 3050 – Fall 2024

August 22, 2024

Course Numbers: CSCI 3050/PHIL 3050x

Location: Ritter Hall 334

Pre-/Co-requisite: PHIL 2050

Credit(s): 3 Credits

Sections and Meeting Times:

Sec. 01 TTh 12:45–2pm

Instructor: Chris Holland

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: christopher.holland@slu.edu

Zoom: <https://slu.zoom.us/my/clholland>

Course Websites:

<https://chrislholland.com/csci3050/>

<https://canvas.slu.edu/>

1 Course Description

This course examines the moral, legal, and social issues raised by computers and electronic information technologies for different stakeholder groups (professionals, users, businesses, etc.). Students are expected to integrate moral theories and social analysis to address such issues as intellectual property, security, privacy, discrimination, globalization, and community.

2 Course Goals

To be able to analyze computing technologies for morally problematic issues and develop ethical arguments for the acceptability/unacceptability of these taking all stakeholders into account.

2.1 Learning Outcomes

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

- Analyze the impact of new technologies on society through the lens of human dignity and justice
- Use tools of moral disclosure and issue definition to identify moral issues raised by new digital technologies including those that affect power relationships and subject some to vulnerability and disadvantage
- Describe the ways that the ethics of respect, virtue ethics, and consequentialism can contribute to moral disclosure and cyberethical evaluation
- Compare the ways in which technologies create opportunities and impediments for well-being or flourishing in order to critically evaluate current technologies and to imagine new opportunities for creating a just society
- Evaluate whether technologies are consonant with the common good
- Articulate objections and relevant considerations posed by perspectives other than their own,
- Fashion their arguments to have broad appeal across perspectives so that each stakeholder in a technology is accorded human dignity

- Construct cogent moral arguments based on research into cyberpractices, using the framework developed in the course
- Demonstrate a good faith ability to contribute to the class as a community of inquiry

2.2 Dignity, Ethics, and a Just Society

This course is part of the Saint Louis University Core, an integrated intellectual experience completed by all baccalaureate students, regardless of major, program, college, school or campus. The Core offers all SLU students the same unified approach to Jesuit education guided by SLU's institutional mission and identity and our nine undergraduate Core Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Dignity, Ethics, and a Just Society is one of 19 Core Components. The University Core SLO(s) that this component is designed to intentionally advance are listed below:

University Core Student Learning Outcomes

The Core SLO(s) that this component is intentionally designed to advance are:

- SLO 1: Examine their actions and vocations in dialogue with the Catholic, Jesuit tradition
- SLO 3: Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions
- SLO 7: Evaluate the extent to which social systems influence equity and reflect innate human dignity

Additionally, the Core Component-level Student Learning Outcomes are listed below:

Component-level Student Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Analyze the cultural-institutional conditions and causes of just and unjust social systems using such concepts as social location, relationships, power, privilege, and vulnerability
- Apply such ethical concepts as human dignity, equity, well-being justice, and the common good to critically evaluate both existing social systems and proposals for social change
- Envision and articulate systemic social changes and other ways to promote flourishing, well-being, equity, justice, and the dignity of the human person

3 Required Materials

All required materials will be available on-line via Canvas, Perusall, and OneDrive.

4 Major Topics

The course will be broken into a few units:

- Professional ethics and issue identification
- Application of normative ethics to computer ethics
- A dialogical approach to addressing cyberethical practices
- Defining and applying moral concepts
- Group projects and papers

5 Evaluation and Grading

5.1 Overview

For the first half of the course, your primary out-of-class activities will involve preparation for the next class meeting. During the second half of the course you will also be working on a group project and a final paper.

1. **Prior to class:**

- *Perusall readings.* These readings will be from *Cogent Cyberethics* by William Rehg and other materials provided by the instructor. These readings are the primary course content on computer ethics and our method for analyzing moral issues that arise in the use of computing technology. To be prepared for class, you need to go through these readings carefully as they will be the basis for what we will be doing in class.
- All course readings will be available on Perusall. As part of the reading assignment, you will discuss the readings on-line and ask questions of your classmates. To receive full credit for the readings you must actively participate in the discussion.
- *Occasional Homework Assignments.* E.g., reflection papers, podcast summaries.

2. **During class:** Class time will be devoted to achieving a higher level of understanding of the materials and developing skills in ethical argumentation through examining case studies. We will be doing a variety of discussions, individual and group work during class to work towards our goals. It is imperative that you come to class prepared to fully engage the material.

3. **Exams:** We will have one take-home midterm exam during the first half of the semester.

4. **Group Presentation:** You will contribute to a 40-minute group presentation evaluating an ethical issue in computing technology.

5. **Group Paper (Final):** You will contribute to a group term paper evaluating an ethical issue in computing technology.

5.2 Grading

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Perusall Readings/Homework	30%
Attendance and In-Class Activities	20%
Midterm	20%
Group Presentation	10%
Final Paper	20%

Perusall Readings and Homework (30%)

Perusall readings and homework assignments will be graded on a four-point scale. Your three lowest Perusall grades will be dropped.

A few notes on Perusall.

- Perusall is not just a tool to enforce the class reading (and to replace in-class reading quizzes), it also helps you better read and understand the course material. Perusall's discussion feature is particularly helpful for meeting this goal and a large portion of your Perusall grade will come from your comment(s) on the reading.
- Perusall readings are graded by an algorithm. The algorithm I use should assign you full credit when you both (a) read the entire document and (b) provide at least one substantive comment (or reply). A substantive comment is a comment on a specific portion of the reading that demonstrates an understanding of the text in context and helps to clarify it, connect it to other ideas in the text, or helpfully extend the conversation to other course-relevant issues.

If you are concerned about the quality of your substantive comment, you can supplement 1 and 2 by upvoting comments made by your peers or by posting additional comments (or replies). Finally, if you believe you have met these requirements but received less than full credit, you may request that I review a Perusall grade.

Attendance/In-Class Activities (20%)

I will take attendance each day of class (see Section 6.2) and most days will include an in-class activity. In-class activities will be graded on a four-point scale. To receive credit you must be actively engaged in the exercise. You cannot make these points up, but I will drop your three lowest in-class activity scores.

In the event of serious illness, I will not count your in-class activities or attendance score and your asynchronous activities will be worth 60% of your grade.

Midterm, Group Presentation and Group Paper (50%)

These will be critically evaluated to judge your mastery of the course material.

Midterm. There is one midterm exam. It will be a take-home midterm that you will have seven days to complete. The midterm will include 7 essay questions. The typical length of the midterm is 2300–2600 words (about 350 words per question). It will be accompanied by approximately 50 pages of material to introduce you to the case. Your answers on the midterm should indicate that you have read and understood the material.

Group Presentation. You will give a group presentation using a method taught in class. This presentation will be about 40 minutes long to leave room for questions.

Group Paper. A 2300–3000-word Dialogical Cyberethical Evaluation of the cyberpractice presented by your group.

5.3 Grading Scale

A	(4.0)	93–100%	B–	(2.7)	80–82.99%	D	(1.0)	60–69.99%
A–	(3.7)	90–92.99%	C+	(2.3)	77–79.99%	F	(0.0)	below 60%
B+	(3.3)	87–89.99%	C	(2.0)	73–76.99%			
B	(3.0)	83–86.99%	C–	(1.7)	70–72.99%			

6 Policies and Guidelines

6.1 Communication

Occasionally, I will need to communicate important time-sensitive information outside of class. With this in mind, I expect you to check your school-supplied email at least once a day.

The best way to reach me is by email. I'll do my best to respond within 24 hrs. If a matter is urgent, include the word URGENT in the subject line.

Your email should include:

- An informative subject line with your course and section number
- A greeting/salutation (e.g., “Hello Mr. Holland,” or “Dear Chris,”)
- A thorough description of what you are trying to inform me of or ask me about
- A signature with your first and last name.

6.2 Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and we will take attendance. Your first three absences excused, or unexcused, will not reduce your attendance grade. Excused absences reduce your total number attendance grades. University-authorized absences are excused and require documentation (see the [university's attendance policy](#) for more information).

Other excused absences are granted at my discretion. An unexcused absence will result in a zero for that day's in-class assignment (the three lowest in-class assignment scores are dropped). An excused absence will for a day with an in-class assignment will reduce your total number of in-class assignment grades by one.

Please do not come to class sick. If you are sick tell me as soon as you can (before or after class). Your first "sick day" will be automatically excused, additional sick days require a doctor's note. I may also provide excused absences for various emergencies (again please contact me as soon as you can).

In the event that you miss several classes and are unable to meet the course objectives, you should contact me and your academic advisor to discuss a course extension (see the [Incomplete Course](#) policy) or withdrawal (see [Course Withdrawal](#) policy).

6.3 Distance Education Etiquette

Distance courses often bring together students with varying degrees of experience with online education. The guidelines below help to ensure all students know what to expect and how to engage effectively in distance courses.

Non-Video & Asynchronous Contexts (Canvas, Online Chats, Discussion Boards, etc.)

1. When using the "Chat" or "Discussion Board" (or similar) features of your course management system, remember that course-related communications with the instructor and other students should be professional in tone and content. Remember that course context and all related written work – including chat and discussion board transcripts – can be recorded and retrieved.
2. Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm; without the context of facial expressions or other body language, your tone or intent could be missed or misunderstood by others.
3. Respect and be attentive to the diversity of your classmates and instructor. Before communicating, consider your message in the context of the class's diversity in race, ethnicity, religion, ability levels, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, marital status, geography, etc. Consider the diversity you can see or know – as well as that you cannot.
4. Respect others' time and life circumstances, which often don't allow for an immediate response to a question or comment.

Synchronous Video Contexts (Zoom, etc.)

1. Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. Remember to un-mute yourself just prior to speaking. If your screen does not display your name, identify yourself when you begin speaking. (Note: while most participants in a class will display their name on the screen, that choice may not be appropriate in particular situations. If you are not able to display your name due to privacy or other concerns, please talk with your instructor about how best to engage with the class.)
2. Expect a few seconds of delay in getting a response from the instructor or another class member to a question; wait before repeating your question or assuming it was not heard.
3. If appropriate/possible, position your camera such that your video feed does not capture too much of your surroundings or other activity/sound from your home/location. Be conscious of posters, art, or other surroundings that others might find offensive or inappropriate for an educational context. If appropriate/possible, consider using a "blurred" background during synchronous sessions to minimize distractions.
4. Use the "Raise Hand" and "Chat" (or similar) features of your video-conferencing tool. This limits verbal interruptions and the confusion that can result when multiple people try to speak at once.
5. For maximum class engagement, limit side conversations, multi-tasking (on your computer or otherwise), and use of your cell phone.
6. Temporarily turn off your video feed and mute your microphone if engaged in any non-class conversation or activity.

7. Respect and be attentive to the diversity of your classmates and instructor. Before communicating, consider your message in the context of the class's diversity in race, ethnicity, religion, ability levels, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, marital status, geography, etc. Consider the diversity you can see or know – as well as that you cannot.
8. Remember that video-based class sessions (including chat transcripts) may be recorded and retrieved for later viewing.

6.4 Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the commitment to and demonstration of honest and moral behavior in an academic setting. Since the mission of the University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity,” acts of integrity are essential to its very reason for existence. Thus, the University regards academic integrity as a matter of serious importance. Academic integrity is the foundation of the academic assessment process, which in turn sustains the ability of the University to certify to the outside world the skills and attainments of its graduates. Adhering to the standards of academic integrity allows all members of the University to contribute to a just and equitable learning environment that cultivates moral character and self-respect. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: <https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/academic-integrity-policy.pdf>.

6.5 Generative AI

You are allowed to use generative AI in a limited capacity in this course.

All Assignments: You may use an AI grammar tool (e.g., Grammarly, Language Tool) to check for grammatical and spelling errors on any assignment (including the midterm and final). You may also use these tools to suggest alternate wording for content you create.

Select Assignments: Tools such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Gemini, Midjourney, DALL-E or GitHub Copilot can be used for specific assignments as directed in the assignment. If there are no AI directions, please request permission before using these tools.

Using a generative AI tool may assist your learning by simplifying texts, helping you brainstorm, assisting you with forming arguments, providing grammar checks or feedback for structure, debugging code or creating works of art. However, becoming dependent on generative AI could undermine your learning by eroding your ability to participate fully and intentionally in the writing process and it can stunt your creativity and critical thinking. The use of generative AI can also erode your voice from your work. Generative AI still produces inaccurate information and hallucinations are still common which if left unchecked can harm your grade on the assignment. Any work generated with AI should be fact checked to ensure accuracy. You are responsible for the content of your work.

If you have a question regarding if you are allowed to use generative AI for an assignment or whether you are using it appropriately, please discuss your concerns with me at your earliest opportunity.

If you choose to use a generative AI tool to assist with an assignment, you need to document its use. Please follow the Chicago Manual of Style's guidelines on this point. See CMS 18 §14.112 and §3.38. There should be a clear distinction between your original work and your AI assisted work. In addition, use of generative AI should conform to academic integrity policies for the university and regulations put forward by the College of Arts and Sciences. Please review item three in the section labeled Plagiarism in the [Saint Louis University Academic Integrity Policy](#).

7 Support and Services

7.1 University Writing Services

University Writing Services offers one-on-one consultations with trained writing consultants who help with everything from brainstorming, outlining, and proposing research questions to documenting sources, revising, and implementing feedback. These consultations can take place in-person, asynchronously, or via Zoom and can be scheduled through EAB Navigate—Student. Getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels on different writing projects (including but not limited to class assignments, conference papers, cover letters, dissertations, group projects, multimedia assignments, personal statements, senior capstone projects, short answer questions on applications, speeches, and theses). For additional information, visit <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/academic-support/university-writing-services/index.php> or send an email to writing@slu.edu.

7.2 Disability Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact CADR, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at accessibility_disability@slu.edu or by phone at 314.977.3484. Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from CADR and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact CADR. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

7.3 Student Success Center

The Student Success Center (SSC) supports students in reaching their goals in and out of the classroom. Providing a variety of resources, the Student Success Center houses both the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) and Academic Support, which includes Tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, University Writing Services, and Student Success Coaching. The Student Success Center is located in the Busch Student Center, Suite 331, and students can make an appointment with any SSC resource via EAB Navigate. To learn more about the Student Success Center and its resources, please visit: <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/index.php>.

7.4 University Counseling Center

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers free, short-term, solution-focused counseling to Saint Louis University undergraduate and graduate students. UCC counselors are highly trained clinicians who can assist with a variety of issues, such as adjustment to college life, troubling changes in mood, and chronic psychological conditions. To make an appointment for a wellness consultation, call 314-977-8255 (TALK), or visit the clinic on the second floor of Wuller Hall. For after-hours needs, please press #9 after dialing the clinic number.

7.5 Wellness

With our Jesuit commitment to *cura personalis*, the University sees your academic success as connected to your health and well-being and provides resources to support your holistic wellness.

All students experience stressors and challenges at some point, and seeking support is both normal and beneficial. Such challenges may be the result of academic concerns (such as those related to particular assignments or content in a course), or they may be more personal in nature (such as concerns related to relationships, mental health, medical issues, loss, identities, alcohol or drugs, housing or food security, finances, or local/world events, among

other things). If you experience these or other difficulties that are impacting your well-being and/or academic work, please consider seeking support from the resources available to you.

- For questions or concerns related to this course, please contact me. I am invested in your success and will support your success in the ways I can.
- Additionally, you have access to the many resources SLU provides in support of your personal wellness. You will find a list of available resources on [the Well-being page of the SLU website](#).

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis: please consult [Crisis Support and Warning Signs on the University Counseling Center website](#) or call the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK (8255) and press #9 to be connected to a behavioral health nurse 24/7.

7.6 Basic Needs Security

Students experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and any other challenges that are impacting their personal and/or academic wellbeing are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office for support. Students can submit an [intake form](#), email deanofstudents@slu.edu, or call 314-977-9378 to connect with their office. Students may also communicate directly with their instructors about any challenges they are experiencing to receive support and resource referrals.

7.7 Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. Discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of assigned sex at birth, sex characteristics, pregnancy and pregnancy related conditions, sexual orientation and gender identity. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator that you shared an experience relating to Title IX**. This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you are pregnant or experiencing a pregnancy related condition, the Title IX Coordinator can assist you in understanding your rights and options as well as provide supportive measures.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; anna.kratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at <https://lighthouse-services.com/slu>. To view SLU's policies, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php>.