

PHIL 3101 Syllabus

AI Ethics and Policy, Section CC

Summer 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

Description

We increasingly trust algorithms to solve our problems, delegating decisions about who to hire, who to date, and even who to incarcerate. But as this reliance on algorithms expands, human oversight diminishes. AI systems have the potential to bring great benefits to our lives, but they also involve significant risks. This course examines the epistemic and ethical risks of this reliance, including bias, loss of privacy, and information silos. Focusing on contemporary AI and Machine Learning cases, we will ask: how does AI technology shape our beliefs, desires, and society more generally?

Mode of Instruction

This course is asynchronous and fully online. We will use Canvas to organize discussions and course materials. I will post readings and lecture videos to give more background information on each topic. I will also post case studies of real-world AI technologies that we will ethically evaluate together.

Course Learning Outcomes

After finishing the course, students should show improvement in:

1. **Ethical knowledge:** You should be able to identify and explain key ethical theories, themes, and concepts within AI ethics.
2. **Ethical reasoning:** You should be able to analyze and evaluate ethical texts and arguments by the end of the course. This includes defining the theories and concepts that the arguments employ and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of those arguments.

3. Ethical communication: The course should help you improve your ability to communicate your own and other views, both verbally and in writing. This includes the ability to write a clear and plausible evaluative essay and give a verbal presentation of the philosophical issues presented in the course.

5. Ethical discussion: You should be able to participate in public discussions about AI policy by thinking creatively with others to propose mutually beneficial solutions and by responding to criticisms to those proposals. You should be better equipped to respectfully discuss topics that are controversial.

Required Course Materials

All readings will be available through Canvas (organized by week in the “Modules” tab). No textbooks or other course materials need to be purchased.

Grading Policy:

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scheme:

- A > 90% Excellent
- B 80-90% Above Average
- C 70-79% Average
- D 60-69% Below Average
- F < 59% Unacceptable

Assignments

- Participation: 10%
- Reflections (5 total): 10% (2% each)
- Exams (2 total): 40% (20% each)
- Group Proposal: 40% (10% peer evaluation; 30% presentation)

Description of Graded Components

There are four kinds of assessment in the course.

Participation includes asking and answering questions and engaging in respectful discussion with the class and in groups. Considering other perspectives and possible objections is essential to ethical thought and policy making. Anyone can read texts on their own, but learning from each other cannot be done alone. Therefore, participation is

mandatory and counts for 10% of your grade. Participation is scored based on responses to case studies and to others' presentations. Each week has two opportunities for participation credit: a small group discussion post and a class discussion post. You must post your own thoughts before you can view others' posts. Each discussion board post is worth 0.5% of your total course grade. Full participation each week (both boards) is worth 1%. Over 10 weeks, this adds up to the full 10%. You can either get full credit or half credit. Full credit is achieved by completing your own post and responding to 2-3 other posts. Half credit is achieved by completing your own post without engaging with other posts.

Reflections are short (3-5 sentence) weekly writing assignments in which you may ask a well-developed question; explain a passage in a text that you found particularly helpful or insightful; or criticize an argument that you found unpersuasive. Criticisms must be supported with reasons—it's not sufficient to merely state that an argument is unpersuasive. These are graded as incomplete (0), complete (1), or sufficient (2). Writing your own reflection gets you a point, but the extra point is earned by responding to at least 2 other posts. There are 8 opportunities to write reflections, and the lowest 3 grades are dropped. This means there are 5 graded reflections.

There will be 2 *exams* that consist of 10 multiple choice and one long-answer question (500-1000 words). The multiple choice questions ensure that you understand the main concepts in the readings, and the essay gives you practice crafting arguments about the ethical problems we discuss. The multiple choice questions are each worth 1 point, and the long answer question is worth 90 points because making arguments is a central skill of the course. The exams will be available for the entire week on Canvas, and there is no time limit. Because these are open and untimed, I expect your arguments to reflect your own ethical judgments, not summaries or AI-generated content. Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade.

The *Group Proposal* is an opportunity for you to practice democratic discussions aimed at creative solutions to pressing real-world problems. The goal is for you to work together by *including* different perspectives and interest groups rather than by arguing against opponents. In the last two weeks of class, you will work together with a team focused on a particular ethical problem in AI ethics. I will give you detailed instructions on Canvas about how to do this. The team will come up with a policy proposal to address the problem and then present this proposal to the class. The presentation will be done by recording a video of your team verbally explaining the proposal (with *no* script) and uploading the video to Canvas. On Canvas, the rest of the class and I will ask questions that the team must answer for full credit. The teams will be assessed based on their consideration of different perspectives, use of ethical principles from the course to evaluate the problem,

demonstration of how the proposal is good and useful, and responses to questions and concerns. Individuals within the team will be assessed based on an anonymous peer evaluation of each member's contributions, cooperation, role fulfillment, communication, and accuracy. Peer evaluations count for 10% of your final grade, and the proposal and presentation count for 30% of the final grade.

Course Policies

Attendance

Because the course is asynchronous and fully online, I do not take attendance beyond participation.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Use of Generative AI

There is no need to use generative AI in this course, and using it defeats the purpose of the assignments. The assignments are all designed to give you the opportunity to practice evaluating philosophical arguments, identifying points of interest for further discussion,

and crafting your own arguments. However, I cannot realistically prevent you from using AI. As such, clarity alone will not be sufficient for an excellent grade. I will prioritize precision, originality, and creativity—meaning that your analyses make connections beyond summarizing course material and discussions, such as to your own life or real world events. You may, if you like, use generative AI for feedback before you post assignments, but relying on generic responses will be detrimental to your grade.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Extensions and makeup work will only be given for approved institute activities, documented medical emergencies or illnesses, and religious observances. Students who participate in approved institute activities should get statements from the Office of the Registrar as soon as possible. Students are responsible for contacting the Office of the Dean of Students about medical emergencies or illnesses as soon as possible. Absence due to religious observances should be communicated with me within the first two weeks of class. I will then contact you to discuss deadlines and make-up requirements. These processes help you communicate your needs with me and help me be consistent and fair for all students in the class.