

LMC 4813 Syllabus

Special Topic: Values & Ethics in Digital Media, 3 Credits
Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

Description

The desire to see technology companies address social values in computational media technologies has been surfaced in new ways, in part due to new laws (e.g., the California Consumer Privacy Act and the EU General Data Protection Regulation), concerns about the social implications of new technologies like AI, public scandals like data breaches, the deployment of systems that cause harms to communities, as well as technology worker actions such as walkouts and letter writing.

This course explores how we can analyze these socio-technical debates different types of engagements, and the types of interventions or levers that can shift the design of these systems. This course covers perspectives from human-computer interaction, values in design, law and policy, and science & technology studies. This class will help build critical thinking and analysis skills, as well as experience with practices and tools that can be used for engagement with values in technology.

Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe different relationships between people, technologies, and social values
- Apply different tools related to values and ethics in technology design
- Compare the benefits and limitations of different tools, approaches, and perspectives.
- Assess a sociotechnical system for its values and ethical implications
- Formulate plans of action to address or shift the values in a sociotechnical system.

Required Course Materials

All required readings will be available as PDFs through Canvas/Perusall or the Georgia Tech library.

CORE Impacts

Not applicable.

Grading Policy:

Major Assignments during the class add up to 100 points total:

- **Writing Assignments: 20%** (2 x 10 points each)
- **Lab Write Ups: 20%** (10 x 2 points each)
- **Perusall Comments: 24%** (12 x 2 points each)
- **Discussion Leader: 6%**
- **Attendance and Participation: 11%**
- **Final Project: 20%**

Final grades are based on your total points: A (100-90), B (89-80), C (79-70), D (69-50), F (49 and below).

Description of Graded Components

Writing Assignments: 30%

There will be 2 longer written assignments throughout the semester. Each assignment should be approximately 1000 words pages long, and include citations and references to at least 2 readings.

Lab Write Ups: 20% (Complete 10 out of 12, each is 2 points)

After each lab, you will be asked to submit a short summary or documentation of what you did. Specific guidance about what should be included in the write ups will be provided in class during each lab session.

Artifact Presentation: 5%

During the semester, each student will do a short 5 minute presentation on a technology artifact of their choice (an interface, technology object, device, algorithm, digital game, etc.) and offer a brief analysis that introduces the artifact and reflects on its values implications.

Perusall Comments: 24% (Complete 12 out of 14, each is 2 points)

We will use the online tool Perusall, which allows for collective group notes on readings. Students are expected to provide their own comments, notes, reactions, and questions on the readings **24 hours before class starts** in order to give the Discussion Leader enough time to collect people's responses.

Discussion Leader: 6%

Students will each sign up to co-lead the seminar discussion for 1 session. The Discussion Leaders will primarily help summarize the class comments from Persuall, and post the summary to the Canvas Discussion Board by the start of class. This will help us see what the main points of interest or questions are from the class. And then we can spend the class looking through the readings and going through these discussion points.

Participation and Attendance: 20%

This will be a hands-on class, with significant seminar discussion and interactive activities. I encourage you to use your Perusall comments on the readings as a starting point for participation.

Final Project: 20%

For the course final project, you will prototype a new AI transparency/explainability tool.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

In-person attendance and participation in this class is important so that we can explore and understand the readings together in seminars, and do hands-on activities in lab sessions.

3 unexcused absences are allowed (you do not need to provide any specific reason – but it may include a job/internship interview, health reasons, traffic, needing to do a presentation for another project, or other unexcused activities that conflict with class). However additional unexcused absences will lower the student's overall grade by 1% each time. If you feel that you are falling behind due to an illness, emergency, or other reason, please contact me and we can make a plan for alternate arrangements.

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

Assignments in this class may not always feel straightforward (that's the nature of interdisciplinary courses!). There can be temptation to turn to a Gen AI tool as soon as you hit a challenge. It's ok to sit for a while and be unsure, or work on something else for a while and come back, or talk to a person. I'd rather you talk to your peers first for ideas and brainstorming before turning to Gen AI.

That being said, I know that generative AI tools can be useful for grammar checking and other tasks. We will broadly follow the ACM Policy's on generative AI software tools (<https://www.acm.org/publications/policies/frequently-asked-questions>):

- You cannot plagiarize, misrepresent, or falsify content (textual, visual, or otherwise)
- The resulting work you create is an accurate representation of the authors' underlying work and novel intellectual contributions and is not primarily the result of the tool's generative capabilities. (You cannot have the AI generate its own response to a class prompt and turn that in!)

- You accept responsibility for the veracity and correctness of material you turn in

If you use generative AI software tools, you will need to disclose its use as following in an appendix or footnote:

- For the **creation of any content** (textual, visual, or otherwise), you must indicate:
 - Which section(s) were created by generative AI
 - What tool you used and what tool version
 - Attach the transcript of your interactions/chatlog with the generative AI tool
 - Describe any post-generation editing you did (such as re-phrasing the generated text)
 - (For small amounts of generated text – a sentence or less – you do not need to share the input prompts).
- For the **editing of any human-created content**, you must indicate:
 - Which section(s) were edited by generative AI
- For the **inspiration of any content** (e.g., finding sources or clarifying concepts), you must indicate:
 - What types of content you searched for or asked for when using generative AI

Late Assignments

For late submissions, one half point will be deducted for every late day (0.5 point for up to 24 hours late, 1 point for up to 48 hours, etc), up until half credit. If there are extenuating circumstances preventing you from turning in assignments on time, please contact me.

Student Use of Mobile and Computing Devices in the Classroom

Please use computers and other devices in class thoughtfully and for activities related to the course (referring to readings, Perusall notes, sharing comments in our Canvas group, etc). We are all busy and have a lot of commitments, but our class time is one of the few times we have to actually discuss and think about the readings in person together. If computer and device usage gets in the way of our discussions, I may ask us to limit our in-class computer/device usage.

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:

Academic Support: Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at success.gatech.edu/tutoring, email us at tutoring@gatech.edu, or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

Student Well-Being:

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list](#) of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](https://student-resource-guide.gatech.edu)). If you are experiencing anxiety or depression or a medical, personal, or family crisis, or if you just feel overwhelmed, please do not hesitate to reach out for help. The Dean of Students has a list of services that may be helpful for academic, financial, or personal assistance (see <https://studentlife.gatech.edu/dean-students/academic-financial-personal-assistance>).