DC/GAM/IT 228-102: Ethics in Computer Games and Cinema
Fall Quarter 2014-15 | MW1:00 pm-2:30 pm
Location: LPC, Levan 305

Instructor Information
Jef Burnham
Email: jburnha1@depaul.edu*
Office: Student Center - 2250 N. Sheffield, Room 332
Office Hours: Mon./Wed. 11:30am-12:45pm (or by appointment)

*If you do not receive a response from me within 24 hours, assume I did not get your email.

Course Description

Societies function based on normative ethics utilizing common sense to distinguish between ethical and unethical behavior. Most of us are not aware of the underlying theories when arriving at ethical judgments about right and wrong. However, the fast pace of progress in information technologies and digital entertainment creates an environment, in which ethical challenges are particularly complex. In the eyes of many, games and movies are violent, offensive and immoral. This course will concentrate on analyzing the impact of digital entertainment on an individual and society. Implications of certain values embedded in games and movies will be discussed. Elements of the ethical code of conduct for a game or movie creator will be formulated. The issue of balancing individual creativity vs. cultural impact particularly on children will be discussed.

Prerequisites

No previous knowledge of ethics or digital entertainment is required.

Learning Domain Description

Societies function based on normative ethics utilizing common sense to distinguish between ethical and unethical behavior. Most of us are not aware of the underlying theories when arriving at ethical judgments about right and wrong. However, the fast pace of progress in information technologies and digital entertainment creates an environment, in which ethical challenges are particularly complex. In the eyes of many, games and movies are violent, offensive and immoral. This course will concentrate on analyzing the impact of digital entertainment on an individual and society. Implications of certain values embedded in games and movies will be discussed. Elements of the ethical code of conduct for a game or movie creator will be formulated. The issue of balancing individual creativity vs. cultural impact particularly on children will be discussed.

Learning Outcomes

1. Using multiple perspectives, students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems.
2. Students will be able to evaluate philosophical questions, issues and/or problems using informed judgment. Students will be able to analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.
3. Students will be able to develop an understanding of the historical context of philosophical topics, figures, and texts.
4. Students will be able to write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion.

5. Students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze ethical issues, applying philosophical tools drawn from various ethical traditions to concrete cases pertinent to a variety of subject matters.

Required Text
The Elements of Moral Philosophy by James Rachels (7 Ed.)
Mcgraw-Hill 2009
ISBN-10: 0078038243 **ISBN-13:** 978-0078038242

Additional readings will be provided in .pdf format on D2L.

Grading Scale
A   93-100 %
A-   90-92 %
B+   87-89 %
B   83-86 %
B-   80-82 %
C+   77-79%
C   73-76 %
C-   70-72 %
D+   67-69 %
D   60-66 %
F   0-59%

Grade Breakdown

Exam 1	30 points
Exam 2	30 points
One Best Plan Paper	10 points
Two Peer Review Papers	20 points [10 pts. each]
Two Review Responses	10 points [5 pts. each]
Ethical Issues in Media Paper/Presentation	40 points [20 pts. each]
Attendance/Participation	10 points
TOTAL:	150 pts.

Writing Expectations:
You will be expected to complete a minimum of 10 pages of writing for this course. This writing may take the form of essays, response papers, take-home exam essays, critical analyses, etc. At least one of the assignments will be able to be revised (and only once) as noted in the assignment guidelines, and the revision may count toward the 10-page minimum.

Notes on the Evaluation of Student Work:
Grading rubrics according to which each paper/presentation is assessed will be provided to you on D2L for reference. These rubrics will detail specific point breakdowns for the elements on which you will be graded. In general, written work will be evaluated according to the clarity and strength of your thesis, the coherence and specificity of your argumentation throughout with specific regard to organization, and basic mechanics (i.e. spelling, grammar, and punctuation).

Course Policies

Attendance/Participation
Each week's class consists of a combination of lectures, screenings, and class discussions and/or group exercises. Attendance is mandatory. Participation in class discussions and group exercises is mandatory. For the purposes of this class, an absence is defined as not showing up for class, sleeping in class, or showing up 15 minutes late or more for a class. All absences will result in a reduction of one point from your overall attendance/participation grade; **if you are absent more than three times, you fail the course**. Note: Excused absences may be obtained from the Dean of Students Offices under certain circumstances and given the proper documentation.

Assignments
Reasonable deadlines are given for completion of each assignment. Reading assignments must be completed by the date on which they are listed as being due in the syllabus. **Written assignments must be uploaded to D2L by 11:30am on the date specified in the syllabus.** No late work will be accepted. Printed submissions or submissions by email will also not be accepted. (I suggest backing up work with a Cloud file storage service, as computers do crash.)

Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled period of time will receive a failing grade for exams unless they have contacted the instructor in advanced to arrange for a make-up exam. Make-up exams will be administered by the college according to its make-up exam schedule.

Course Lectures/Readings
Lecture presentations will occur weekly. The independent readings supplement the lecture presentations. The lecture content *and* the readings will be referenced in exams. BOTH SOURCES ARE NEEDED.

Changes to Syllabus
This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L, and sent via email.

Technology Statement
Be courteous with your cell phones, iPods, laptops, etc. Laptops may be used during lectures/discussions to take notes. However, please do not game, surf the web, scroll endlessly through your Facebook feed, etc. on your laptop or phone. Remember, cell phones are distracting to your fellow students and the instructor, and you are asked to keep yours on vibrate or silent and to check it discretely only if you *absolutely must*. Please excuse yourself to the hallway if there is an emergency. If you are expecting such a call, please let the instructor know in advance.

Online Course Evaluations
Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continuing to provide the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three

weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. **Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on tests are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class.** There are no exceptions to this rule. Actions taken by the instructor in this regard do not preclude the university from taking further action, including dismissal from the university. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could also result in criminal or civil prosecution. Additional Information and the complete Academic Integrity policy can be found at: http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/.

Academic Policies
All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

IMPORTANT DATES:
Sept. 16- Last day to add classes
Sept. 23- Last day to drop classes with no penalty, last day to select pass/fail option
Oct. 28- Last day to withdraw from classes, receiving a grade of "W"

Harassment Policy
The policy as specified in the student handbook will be adhered to in this program. It is the policy of DePaul University that no person shall be the object of discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, parental status, family relationship status, physical or mental disability, military status, or other status protected by local, state, or federal law in its employment or its educational settings. DePaul University reserves the right to take actions that are consistent with its policies and procedures to deal with individuals found to have engaged in harassment, discrimination and/or retaliation in violation of university policy.

Students with Disabilities
Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.
To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.
Phone number: (312)362-8002
Fax: (312)362-6544
TTY: (773)325.7296

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Sept. 10): Course Introductions & The Minimum Conception of Morality

READINGS DUE:
    Rachels, Chapter 1 "What is Morality?"
    Rachels, Chapter 2 "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

Week 2 (Sept. 15 & 17): Subjectivism, Proofs and Moral Facts, Morality and Religion, and Egoism

READINGS DUE:
    Rachels, Chapter 3 "Subjectivism in Ethics"
    Rachels, Chapter 4 "Does Morality Depend on Religion?"
    Rachels, Chapter 5 "Ethical Egoism"

ASSIGN: **Peer Review Paper One** (Write a 2-3 page paper detailing the arguments *against* the basic principles of the moral theories covered in the first two weeks. Find details/rubric on D2l. Papers must be uploaded to the specified D2l discussion board for peer review **by 11:30 am on Weds., September 24.**)

Week 3 (Sept. 22 & 24): Utilitarianism and Kantian Ethics

READINGS DUE:
    Rachels, Chapter 7 "The Utilitarian Approach"
    Rachels, Chapter 8 "The Debate over Utilitarianism"
    Rachels, Chapter 9 "Are There Absolute Moral Rules?"
    Rachels, Chapter 10 "Kant and Respect for Persons"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Peer Review Paper One (Wednesday, September 24 by 11:30am.)

ASSIGN: **Peer Review Response One** (Review at least three of your classmates' papers and post them as replies on your peers' discussion threads on D2l. Details on D2L. *If a student has three or more peer reviews listed, please read someone else's paper.* **Due: Wednesday, Oct. 1 by 11:30am.**)

Week 4 (Sept. 29 & Oct. 1): Social Contracts, Feminism and the Ethics of Care, and Virtue Ethics

READINGS DUE:
    Rachels, Chapter 6 "The Social Contract Theory"
    Rachels, Chapter 11 "Feminism and the Ethics of Care"
    Rachels, Chapter 12 "Virtue Ethics"
    Rachels, Chapter 13 "What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory Be Like?"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Peer Review Response One (Wednesday, Oct. 1 by 11:30am.)

ASSIGN: **Best Plan Paper** (Write a 2-3 page "Best Plan" paper explaining your view of a "Satisfactory Moral Theory." Find details/rubric on D2l. Papers must be submitted to the specified D2l dropbox **by 11:30am on Wednesday, Oct. 8)**

Week 5 (Oct. 6 & 8): Media Ethics and Media Effects

READINGS DUE:
>Reynolds, "Playing a 'Good' Game: A Philosophical Approach to Understanding the Morality of Games"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Best Plan Paper (Wednesday, Oct. 8 by 11:30am)

ASSIGN: **Exam 1** (Will be available on D2l on Oct. 8. **Complete by: Weds., Oct. 15 by 11:30am.)**

Week 6 (Oct. 13 & 15): Ethical Choices and Media Creation

READINGS DUE:
>Ferguson, "Blazing Angels or Resident Evil: Can Video Games Be a Force for Good?"
>Devane and Squire, "The Meaning of Race and Violence in Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Exam 1 (Complete by Wednesday, Oct. 15 by 11:30am.)

ASSIGN: **Peer Review Paper Two.** (Write a 2-3 page paper discussing a particularly violent children's game or movie that you grew up with. Find details/rubric on D2l. Papers must be uploaded to the specified D2l discussion board for peer review **by 11:30 am on Wednesday, Oct. 22.**)

Week 7 (Oct. 20 & 22): Sex and Cinema, Reality TV, and Rewriting History

READINGS DUE:
>Shaw, "Putting the Gay in Games: Cultural Production and GLBT Content in Video Games"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Peer Review Paper Two (Complete by Wednesday, Oct. 22 by 11:30am.)

ASSIGN: **Peer Review Response Two** (Review at least three of your classmates' papers and post them as replies on your peers' discussion threads on D2l. Details on D2L. *If a student has three or more peer reviews listed, please read someone else's paper.* **Due: Wednesday, Oct. 29 by 11:30am.**)

Week 8 (Oct. 27 & 29): Presenting "Reality" and "Truth" in Media

READINGS DUE:
>Dodig-Crnkovic and Larsson, "Game Ethics: Homo Ludens as a Computer Game Designer and Consumer"
>Calvert and Richards, "Free Speech and the Entertainment Software Association"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Peer Review Response Two (Wednesday, Oct. 29 by 11:30am.)

ASSIGN: **Exam 2** (Will be available on Oct.29 on D2l. **Complete by: Wednesday, Nov. 5 by 11:30am.)**

ASSIGN: **Ethical Issues in Media Paper/Presentation** (Together, you and a team member will prepare a 5-7 minute **presentation** and *individually* write a 4-6 page **paper** about a media topic of your choosing. Find details/rubric on D2l. Papers must be submitted to the specified D2l dropbox **by 11:30 am on Wednesday, Nov. 12.** Presentations will be delivered on **Nov. 12, 17, & 24**.)

Week 9 (Nov. 3 & 5): Copyright, Piracy and Fair Use

READINGS DUE:
      Allen, et al., "Copyright and Fair Use: An Issue of Ethics in a Changing Learning Environment"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Exam 2 (Complete by Wednesday, Nov. 5 by 11:30am.)

Week 10 (Nov. 10 & 12): The Value of Virtual Spaces and Virtual Goods/Presentations Begin

READINGS DUE:
      Herzfeld, "What Is The Legal Status Of Virtual Goods?"
      Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyber Space"
      Lyons, "League of Legends"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE:
      1. Ethical Issues in Media Paper (Wednesday, Nov. 12 by 11:30 am)
      2. Ethical Issues in Media Presentations begin Wednesday, Nov. 12.
      (ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. Failure to attend will cost you one letter grade.)

Week 11 (Nov. 17): Presentations Continue
ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Ethical Issues in Media Presentations (ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.
Failure to attend will cost you one letter grade.)

Final Exam Period: (Nov. 24, 2014, from 11:45 AM to 2:00 PM)
Presentations continue [as needed].