<u>DC/GAM/IT 228-302: Ethics in Computer Games and Cinema</u>
Spring Quarter 2017 | M/W 11:20am-12:50pm
Location: LPC, Levan 301

Instructor Information
Jef Burnham
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Office: Student Center - 2250 N. Sheffield, Room 332
Office Hours: Mondays 1pm-2:30pm (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.

Learning Domain Description
DC/GAM/IT Ethics 228 is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Philosophical Inquiry domain. Courses in the Philosophical Inquiry domain address conceptual issues fundamental to reflection on such philosophical topics as metaphysics (e.g., being and nonbeing, the one and the many, the nature of reality, same and other, self and other); epistemology (e.g., the nature and possibility of knowledge, different ways of knowing, knowledge vs. opinion, truth and falsity); ethics (e.g., right and wrong action, good and bad, objectivism and relativism in ethics, social and political philosophies, the idea of value, the problem of evil); and aesthetics (e.g., the nature of beauty, aesthetic value, the possibility of aesthetic valuation). Courses address questions of how such topics impinge upon, shape, and challenge student lives.

Learning Outcomes
1. Using multiple perspectives, students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems in essays, projects and presentations.
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 express an understanding of the historical context of philosophical topics, figures, and texts.
4. 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.
5. Students will be able to evaluate the ethicality of individual texts and propose alterations that will make the works more ethically defensible.

Required Text
Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy,* 8th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill
      Education, 2015.

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

Grading Scale
A	93-100 %
A-	90-92 %
B+	87-89 %
B	84-86 %
B-	80-83 %
C+	77-79%
C	74-76 %
C-	70-73 %
D+	67-69 %
D	60-66 %
F	0-59%

Grade Breakdown
Test 1	25 points
Test 2	30 points
Paper 1	10 points
Best Plan Paper	15 points
READR Method Assignment	15 points
READR Responses	5 points
Ethical Issues in Media Presentations	30 points
Attendance/Participation	20 points
TOTAL:	150 points

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 test 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.

Notes on the Evaluation of Student Work:
Assignment sheets, including grading rubrics according to which each assignment's components are assessed, will be available on D2L. In order to obtain the desired grade on any assignment, students must review and adhere to these guidelines. 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 arguments throughout with specific regard to organization, and basic mechanics (i.e. spelling, grammar, and punctuation). Please allow 7-10 days for the return of graded materials.

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. I assess both the quality and quantity of participation in class to elevate collective learning. Students who are absent obviously cannot participate in class.

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 1 point from your overall attendance/participation grade; **if you are absent more than 3 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.

Course Format: Readings & Outside Screenings

Lecture/discussion meetings occur weekly. Independent readings supplement the lecture presentations. The lecture content *and* the readings will be referenced in tests. **Pop quizzes may be administered at any time to ensure students are completing the assigned readings.**

Additionally, outside screenings of feature films and shorter videos relating to course material will be required for participation in lecture/discussion presentations throughout the quarter or as supplements to readings. All screenings will be available to you on YouTube or, where listed on the course schedule, ColTube. Screenings must be completed on your own time by the date listed in the course schedule.
> [DISCLAIMER**:** *Assigned features include adult language, violence, & sexual content.*]

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 the date and time specified in the syllabus. No late work will be accepted**. Any late work submitted will receive a grade of 0. 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 tests during the regularly scheduled period of time will receive a failing grade for those tests unless they have contacted the instructor in advanced to arrange for a make-up period.

Technology Statement

Be courteous with your cell phones, iPods, laptops, etc**. Laptops may be used during lectures ONLY to take notes.** 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 and 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.
> *If I receive complaints from your peers about the distracting nature of your technology usage, I will no longer allow your continued use of said technology in class.

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.

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 (whether plagiarizing others' or your own work) or cheating on tests are serious offenses and will earn the student a failing grade <u>for the course</u>.** 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:
> March 31- Last day to add classes
> April 7- Last day to drop classes with no penalty, last day to select pass/fail option
> May 12- 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 (3/27 & 3/29): 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 (4/3 & 4/5): Subjectivism, 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"

OUTSIDE SCREENING DUE:
> *TEDx Talks*, "Seeing the World as it Isn't – Daniel Simons"

ASSIGN: **Paper 1** (Write a 2-3 page paper detailing the arguments *against* the basic principles of the moral theories covered in Rachels, chapters 1-5. See assignment details/rubric on D2l. Papers must be uploaded to the appropriate D2L Dropbox **by 10am on Wednesday, 4/12**)

Week 3 (4/10 & 4/12): 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: Paper 1 (Upload to the D2L Dropbox **by 10am on Wednesday, 4/12**.)

Week 4 (4/17 & 4/19): 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?"

ASSIGN: **Best Plan Paper** (Write a 2-3 page "Best Plan" paper explaining your view of a "Satisfactory Moral Theory" that you would follow in your life and career and explaining how this plan would help you cope with at least one ethical dilemma you could foresee yourself facing. See details/rubric on D2L. Papers must be submitted to the specified D2L dropbox **by 10am on Wednesday, 4/26.**)

Week 5 (4/24 & 4/26): Media Ethics and Media Effects
READINGS DUE:
>   Reynolds, "Playing a 'Good' Game: A Philosophical Approach to Understanding the Morality of
>   Games"
>   Rachael, "How to be a Fan of Problematic Things"

OUTSIDE SCREENING DUE:
>   *Taken* (Pierre Morel, 2008) [on ColTube]

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Best Plan Paper (Upload to D2L Dropbox **10am on Wednesday, 4/26.**)

ASSIGN: **Test 1** (Will be available on 4/26 on D2L. **Complete by: Wednesday, 5/3 at 11:59pm.**)

Week 6 (5/1 & 5/3): Ethical Choices and Media Creation
READINGS DUE:
>   Valenti, Selections from "More than a Movie: Ethics in Entertainment"
>   Devane and Squire, "The Meaning of Race and Violence in Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas"

OUTSIDE SCREENING DUE:
>   *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976) [on ColTube]

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Test 1 (Complete/submit your test **by Wednesday, 5/3 at 11:59pm**.)

ASSIGN: **READR Method Assignment** (Perform a READR method analysis of a particularly violent
children's movie or video game you grew up with in order to determine how the work itself could have
been made more ethically defensible. Find details/rubric on D2L. Assignments must be uploaded to D2L
and the assigned D2L Discussion Board **by 10am on Wednesday, 5/17.**)

Week 7 (5/8 & 5/10): Sex and Gender in Media
READINGS DUE:
>   Shaw, "Putting the Gay in Games: Cultural Production and GLBT Content in Video Games"

OUTSIDE SCREENINGS DUE:
>   *Extra Credits*, "Sex in Games – How Games Need to Mature as a Medium"
>   *Extra Credits*, "Sexual Diversity – How a Gay Character Made *Persona 4* Great"
>   *PBS Game/Show*, "Would it Matter if Master Chief Were Gay"

ASSIGN: **Ethical Issues in Media Presentation** (Together, you and two team members will prepare an
8-10 minute **presentation** about a media topic of your choosing. You will *also **individually*** submit a 2-
page reflection paper exploring lessons learned from your group regarding effective teamwork and what
you've learned about yourself. Find details/rubric on D2L. Presentation materials must be submitted to
D2L **by the beginning of class on the day you are to present**. Presentations will be delivered on 5/31 &
6/5. Submit Individual Reflection Papers **to D2L by 1:45pm on 6/5.**)

Week 8 (5/15 & 5/17): Presenting "Reality" and "Truth" in Media
READINGS DUE:
      Dodig-Crnkovic and Larsson, "Homo Ludens as a Computer Game Designer and Consumer"

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: READR Method Assignment (Upload to D2L Dropbox **by 10am on 5/17**.)

ASSIGN: **READR RESPONSES** (You will review one of your classmates' READR Method Assignments on the D2L Discussion Boards and write a 2-page paper proposing alternate changes that could be made to your peer's chosen text to make it more ethically defensible. See assignment details on D2L. **Due by Monday, 5/22 at 10am.**)

ASSIGN: **Test 2** (Will be available 5/17 on D2L. **Complete/submit by Wednesday, 5/24 at 11:59pm.)**

Week 9 (5/22 & 5/24): Copyright and Fair Use / The Nature of Virtual Spaces
READINGS DUE:
      Allen, et al., "Copyright and Fair Use: An Issue of Ethics in a Changing Learning Environment"
      Herzfeld, "What Is The Legal Status Of Virtual Goods?" (p. 1-3)

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: READR RESPONSES (Upload to D2L **by Monday, 5/22 at 10am**.)

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Test 2 (Complete/submit **by Wednesday, 5/24 at 11:59pm**.)

MEMORIAL DAY (5/29): UNIVERSITY CLOSED

Week 10 (5/31): Presentations
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Ethical Issues in Media Presentations will be delivered on 5/31 & 6/5.
      Presentation materials must be uploaded to D2L by the beginning of class on the day you are to present. (ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. Failure to attend either day will result in a 10% deduction of your grade on this assignment.)

Final Exam (6/5/2017 from 11:30am-1:45pm): Presentations Continue/Reflection Papers Due
ASSIGNMENTS DUE:
1. **Ethical Issues in Media Presentations** (ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. Failure to attend will cost you one letter grade.)
2. **All Individual Reflection Papers** must be submitted to D2L by 1:45pm. Time will be allotted following any remaining presentations.