GAM/IT/FLM 228 - 201
Ethics in Computer Games and Cinema
Winter Quarter 2019-2020
Depaul University

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Rosiak

Time and Location: Mondays and Wednesdays 9:40 am - 11:10 am, Lincoln Park, Levan Center, Room 305

Contact: drosiak@depaul.edu (I will respond to emails within 24 hours)

Office Hours: Monday 1:00-2:30pm (or by appointment), Student Center Room 332

Course Catalogue 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.

Course Method and Overview

The course will investigate and critically examine ethical theory from a variety of perspectives, and will give the student the capacity to analyze, assess, and propose principled resolutions to particular ethical dilemmas in the fields of Internet Technology, Gaming, and Cinema. While we will look closely at a number of prominent ethical *theories*, to which many of the lectures will be devoted, an equal part of the course (in the form of "lab" assignments) will be devoted to applying and testing these ideas in the context of various "cases" in what you might think of as "ethics labs." In this course, students will develop the skills to make reasoned arguments about ethical dilemmas and situations, to defend and argue against a position, and to develop a heightened sense of ethical awareness and responsibility.

The course will mainly involve learning how to think hard and systematically about problems worth thinking hard about, problems that you have likely *already* wondered about. Among other things, this involves learning how to think critically; reading and discussing primary philosophical texts; and learning how to develop your own arguments and ideas

in a systematic and productive way, as well as engaging meaningfully with the ideas and arguments of others. The student will be evaluated in terms of participation, two papers, and the weekly "lab" assignments.

Learning Domain Description

GAM/IT/FILM 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). These courses address questions of how such topics impinge upon, shape, and challenge student lives.

This course also emphasizes writing, requiring a minimum of 10 written pages throughout the quarter.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the quarter, students will demonstrate an ability to do the following:

1. Identify, address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems, specifically as they relate to a **developing sense of ethical judgment and responsibility** in the areas of Internet Technology, Gaming, and Film.

2. Analyze, interpret, and compare the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems, specifically the ways in which **ethical theories are developed and applied** to address ethical situations native to the fields of Internet Technology, Gaming, and Film.

3. **Engage with** philosophical topics through **primary sources** to evaluate the relative merit of ethical theory as a means to address ethical issues in the fields of Internet Technology, Gaming, and Film.

4. **Learn methods for testing and systematically comparing ethical theories** against real-world situations.

5. **Write an analytic essay** treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion, specifically an ethical analysis of a particular ethical issue in Internet Technology, Gaming, and Film.

Assignments/Grade Breakdown

- You will be responsible for completing 8 total weekly "lab" assignments (none Week 5, when your Midterm paper is due, or Week 10), due each Sunday at noon (30% of your total grade)

  See the "Guide for Labs" on D2L for more detail.

  I drop the lowest of your 8 "lab" grades.

- Midterm Paper (due 02/09) (30%) (See the "Paper Writing Guidelines and Expectations" on D2L)
- Final Paper (due 03/18) (30%)
- Participation (10%)

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: 63-66
D-: 60-62
F: 0-59

Grading Rubrics

Rubrics and Assignment Guidelines (for Papers and the Labs) are posted on D2L. Both the midterm and final papers will be 5 pages double-spaced.

Required Texts

In fulfillment of the Philosophy Inquiry (PI) domain requirements, this course will often use primary source material and media (provided on D2L or through links on the Course Calendar); however, this will also be supplemented with readings from the following textbook (which you need to acquire, and which serves as the main text for this course):

- Rachels, Stuart, and James Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy.* 9th ed., McGraw-Hill Education, 2018. (**ISBN**: 1259914259)

Readings on D2L

- The remaining readings and media are posted on D2L and/or as links directly in the the syllabus course calendar below

Drop Date

For the drop date, you should consult
https://offices.depaul.edu/oaa/academic-calendar/Pages/Full-Year-2017-2018.aspx

Course Policies

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 continue to provide you with 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 students identity. Since 100 percent participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Please see https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx for additional information.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at https://offices.depaul.edu/oaa/faculty-resources/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx.

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: http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at `http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx`

Students with Disabilities

DePaul University is committed to ensuring equal access to its educational and extracurricular opportunities for students with disabilities. The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) offers reasonable academic accommodations and services to support our students. We also serve as a resource to the many university departments that have a responsibility to accommodate students. Please see `https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx` for Services and Contact Information.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is expected and required. I will take attendance everyday. Students are expected to attend each class and remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. Three absences for any reason may constitute failure for the course.

If you have to miss class, the burden will be on you to make sure you are up to speed on the material for the next class. Absences from class may count against your participation grade.

You must actively contribute to the class to get a good participation grade. Although there are many ways to participate (and please note that while class discussion is a big part of participation, simply talking a lot does not, on its own, necessarily constitute strong participation) here are some of the ways you can participate:

- Suggest passages for us to discuss together and why they struck you as significant or worth highlighting
- Take up in further detail an idea or argument that has been raised in that day's or previous days' discussions
- Tie together discussions or arguments from the previous classes with the current discussion
- Contribute to a close reading of the primary text by commenting on argumentative contradictions or strengths, etc. in a passage or in a set of passages
- Build on, react to, defend, dispute, or modify the comments, arguments, and questions of your peers, the reading, or me

- Ask for clarification of something you dont understand
- Propose an alternate interpretation of a passage discussed in a lecture
- Make a connection to a "real-world" ethical situation
- Raise a criticism

Film Showings

Students will also need to view several videos and films outside of class (listed on the Course Schedule below). All films/videos will be available to you on YouTube and/or ColTube. Screenings and readings must be completed on your own time before we discuss them in class.

Course Calendar (Subject to Change)

Note: All readings and media listed are to be COMPLETED by the start of class the date they are listed. So, for instance, under the heading for Week 2 Monday, it says the Reading is "Plato Selection" and the Media is a video on "The Allegory of the Cave." That means that you are to come to class on Monday having already FINISHED reading the Plato selection and watched the video.
The LABS assigned each week are DUE at the end of the week, on Sunday at noon, submitted through D2L's designated folder.

First Half (Weeks 1-5)

- **Week 1: Course Intro; Basic Concepts of Reasoning and Ethics**

  Monday: Course/Syllabus Overview, and Covering Basics of Arguments

  Description: We will go through my "Basic Concepts of Logic for Ethics" (Rosiak) slides together in class; the full document is available on D2L, for your convenience as you complete the lab.*

  Wednesday: Introduction to Ethics

  Readings:

  – Finish reading through (or review) my "Basic Concepts of Logic for Ethics" slides
  – Rachels (*Elements of Moral Philosophy*) textbook, Chapter 1

  Media:

  – Watch "Ethics" (2 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/ethics`

- Watch "Moral Philosophy (2 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/moral-philosophy`
- Watch "Moral Myopia" (6 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/moral-myopia`
- Watch "Self-serving Bias" (2 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/self-serving-bias`

LAB1: *Applying Basic Logic Tools to Arguments* (assignment on D2L; to be submitted to the dropbox folder on D2L)

• Week 2: Motivating Connections between Ethics and Media

Monday: Ethical Issues in the Creation/Consumption of Virtual Worlds

Description: Exploring one of the first careful looks at how the various ways we *represent* reality, as a society, through "virtual worlds"—whether through a story, a play, a movie, a video-game—can give rise to and shape our *models* of reality itself; and how, in doing so, these "virtual worlds" cease to be "morally neutral." On Wednesday, we will develop some heuristics for thinking more systematically about values in video games in particular, and consider how we can think of various media (games, films) as chances for exercising and encouraging something called "moral imagination."

Reading:

- Plato Selection ("Allegory of the cave" from *The Republic*, on D2L under "Readings" tab)

Media:

- Watch "Plato On: The Allegory of the Cave" (6 minutes) here:
  `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWlUKJIMge4`

Wednesday: Extracting Values; Moral Imagination

Reading:

- "Notes on Values in Games" (Rosiak, on D2L under "Readings")

Media:

- Play one of the *Values at Play* games, here:
  `https://www.valuesatplay.org/play-games`
- Watch "Moral Imagination" (2 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/moral-imagination`

LAB2: *Extracting Values from a Video Game* (on D2L)

- **Week 3: Foundations**

  Monday: Overcoming Moral Relativism

  UNIVERSITY OFFICIALLY CLOSED: NO CLASS MEETING (MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY)...but still do reading.

  Reading:

  – Rachels *Elements* textbook, Chapter 2

  Media:

  – Watch "All is Not Relative" (6 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/all-is-not-relative`

  Wednesday: Subjectivism; Whether there are Proofs in Ethics

  Readings:

  – Rachels *Elements* textbook, Chapter 3
  – "A Framework for Ethical Decision Making," here:
  `https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/a-framework-for-ethical-decision-making/`

  LAB3: *Cultural Relativism, Subjectivism, and Proofs in Ethics*

- **Week 4: Beginning with Ethical Theories**

  Monday: Consequentialism and Utilitarianism

  Readings:

  – Rachels textbook, Chapters 7
  – Selection from J.S. Mill (on D2L)

  Media:

  – Watch "Consequentialism" (2 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/consequentialism`
  – Watch "Utilitarianism" (2 minutes), here:
  `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/utilitarianism`

  Wednesday: Utilitarianism (Revised, plus Complications and Criticisms)

  Readings:

  – Rachels textbook, Chapter 8
  – Read how to use the utility principle, in "Best Outcomes Test," here:
  `https://www.ethicsops.com/best-outcomes-test`

Media:

- Watch VSauce's "Greater Good: The Trolly Problem" video, here: `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sl5KJ69qiA`
- Listen to RadioLab's *Morality* podcast (up to 13:45), here: `https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/episodes/91508-morality`

LAB4: *Trolly Problem (Different Versions) and Utilitarianism Questions*

- **Week 5: Deontology and "Rights"; Ethics of Self-Interest**

  Monday: Absolute/Categorical Rules (Deontology); Rights

  Reading:

  - Rachels textbook, Chapter 9
  - Read article on Rights, here: `https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/rights/`

  Media:

  - Watch "Deontology" (2 minutes), here: `https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/deontology`
  - Watch "Kant and Categorical Imperatives: Crash Course" (10 minutes), here: `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bIys6JoEDw`

  Wednesday: Ethical Egoism (crude version) and Ethics of Self-Interest/Power (nuanced version)

  Readings:

  - Rachels textbook, Chapter 5
  - Rosiak Notes on Spinoza's *Ethics* (on D2L)

Midterm Paper Due (submitted through dropbox on D2L) Sunday 02/09 by Noon (covering material from first half of course)

Second Half (Weeks 6-10)

- **Week 6: Social Contract Theory**

  Monday: Social Contract Theory

  Reading:

  - Rachels textbook, Chapter 6, sections 6.1-6.2

Wednesday: Advantages and Problems with Social Contract Theory; and a bit about "Justice/Fairness"

Readings:

- Rachels textbook, Chapter 6 continued, sections 6.3-6.5
- Recap of Class Activity on Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma Strategies (D2L)
- Read article on "Justice and Fairness," here:
  `https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/justice-and-fairness/`

Media:

- Play through the following "Explorable" version of our Prisoner's Dilemma and the "Evolution of Trust" (30 minutes), here:
  `https://ncase.me/trust/`

LAB5: *Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma: Strategies and Lessons*

- **Week 7: Virtue Ethics**

Monday: Virtue Ethics Introduced

Reading:

- Rachels textbook, Chapter 12

Media:

- Watch "Aristotle and Virtue Theory: Crash Course" (9 minutes), here:
  `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrvtOWEXDIQ`

Wednesday: Aristotle's Basic Ethical Theory

Reading:

- Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Selection (D2L)
- Read article on "Ethics and Virtue," here:
  `https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/ethics-and-virtue/`
- Read how to use the virtue/character test, here:
  `https://www.ethicsops.com/character-test`

LAB6: *Playing, Analyzing, and Designing Virtue Ethics Games*

- **Week 8: Ethics of Care; Beginning Applications**

Monday: Ethics of Care

Reading:

– Rachels, Chapter 11

Media:

– Watch Carol Gilligan video here:
`https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=30&v=2W_9MozRoKE`

Wednesday: Sex and Gender Representation in Games and Films

Readings:

– "Gender Representation in Video Games," here:
`https://www.radford.edu/~mzorrilla2/thesis/gamerepresentation.html`
and
Read the ***Abstracts*** *of the following*:
– "Sex, Lies, and Video Games" here:
`https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-007-9250-0`
– "Sexy, Strong, and Secondary: A Content Analysis of Female Characters in Video Games across 31 Years" here:
`https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/jcom.12237`
– "Effects of exposure to sex-stereotyped video game characters" here:
`https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022103108001005`
– "Video Games Exposure and Sexism in a Representative Sample of Adolescents":
`https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00466/full`

LAB7: *Case Study: Care Ethics and Gender Representation in Games*

- **Week 9: Applications: Violence in Games; Expressive Powers and Responsibilities of Designers**

Monday: Do Violent Games/Films Really *Cause* Violent Behavior?

Readings:

– Selection from *Moral Combat: Why the War on Violent Video Games is Wrong* (on D2L)
– TBA (on ethics of immersive documentaries)

Media:

– (Optional) Haneke's *Funny Games* movie, here:
`https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvWW0dajKl0`
Warning: the movie can be disturbing at times; one of the "points" of the movie, according to the director, was to "make the viewer form their own thoughts about their own part in this international game of consuming violence, which is a big business after all."

Wednesday: Expressive Powers of Game Designers

In-class activities: playing some procedural games and unpacking values

Reading:

- Read Bogost's "The Rhetoric of Video Games" (on D2L)

Media:

- Watch "The Procedural Rhetoric of Games," here:
  `https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLCaTO8sWZE`

LAB8: *Case Study on Immersive Documentary; Procedural Rhetoric and Ethical Design*

- **Week 10: Building your Ethical Toolkit**

Monday: Ethical Practices for Designers/Media Creators

Readings:

- Overview of Ethics in Tech Practice:
  `https://www.scu.edu/ethics-in-technology-practice/overview-of-ethics-in-tech-p`
- An Ethical Toolkit for Engineering/Design Practice:
  `https://www.scu.edu/ethics-in-technology-practice/ethical-toolkit/`

Wednesday: Ethical Toolkit Design; Mission Statement

Readings:

- Best Ethical Practices in Technology:
  `https://www.scu.edu/ethics-in-technology-practice/best-ethical-practices-in-te`
- Guideline for Crafting your Personal Mission Statement ("Final Paper Assignment" document on D2L)

Final "Personal Mission Statement" Assignment Due (submitted through dropbox on D2L) 03/18 by 11:59 pm