

**Common Course Outline**  
**PHIL 250**  
**Ethical Issues in Information Technology**  
**3 Semester Hours**

**The Community College of Baltimore County**

**Description**

**Philosophy 250—3 credits—Ethical Issues in Information Technology** explores ethical problems associated with the use and abuse of information technology. Relevant ethical and philosophical theories are surveyed, discussed and applied to the resolution of these problems. A code of conduct for information technology users and professionals is developed and defended.

(ENGL 052 or ESOL 052), (RDNG 052 or ESOL 054) and (Math 081).

**Overall Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. explain the concept of information technology;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the social context and operation of different information technologies, such as networked computers, cell phones, and so on;
3. explain how different information technologies have given rise to a new and unique range of ethical problems;
4. explain the concept of cyber ethics;
5. identify specific ethical problems associated with the use and abuse of different information technologies;
6. compare and contrast ethical problems in information technology with traditional problems in ethics;
7. apply basic concepts and principles of ethical theories to the solution of ethical problems in information technology;
8. generate plausible and coherent solutions to ethical problems in information technology by applying relevant ethical and philosophical theories;
9. compare, contrast and evaluate different codes of conduct for professionals in various information technology fields; and
10. practice the information virtues.

## **Major Topics**

- I. A survey of different types of information technologies, their uses, and abuses.
- II. A survey of ethical issues emerging from information technology use and abuse such as:
  - a. problems of privacy,
  - b. security,
  - c. intellectual property,
  - d. the regulation of on-line speech and content.
- III. The foundations of cyber ethics:
  - a. What is ethics?
  - b. What are the branches of ethics?
  - c. What normative theories are relevant to cyber ethics?
- IV. Logical tools and critical thinking skills useful in resolving ethical problems.
  - a. An analysis of descriptive and prescriptive language.
  - b. How to argue for prescriptive (ethical) conclusions.
- V. A survey of ethical codes from other professions.
- VI. An analysis of sociological and psychological factors associated with cyber ethical issues such as the digital divide, and the impact of information technologies on education, politics, work, class, intelligence, and values.
- VII. Formulation of a cyber ethical code.
- VIII. What are the information virtues and why should they be practiced.

## **Course Requirements**

Grading/exams: Grading procedures will be determined by the individual faculty member but will include the following: a minimum of three reading quizzes and two writing assignments, participation in at least two electronic discussion board discussions, a mid-term and final exam.

Writing: The instructor will determine specific writing assignments but must minimally include two critical reflection essays.

## **Other Course Information**

This course is an elective in the Network Technology Program.

This course is taught in a computerized environment.