

Syllabus: CITE 30533 Computers, Tech & Society
Spring 2010
Dr. Hannon

Text

Informal Logic: A Pragmatic Approach (IL)
Douglas Walton, Cambridge

A Gift of Fire: Social, Legal, and Ethical Issues in Computing, 3rd Ed. (GoF)
Sara Baase, Prentice Hall

Objective and Overview

This course will focus on the social, political, legal, and ethical aspects of technology, with an emphasis on computer technology. It will address these issues from both the perspective of a computer professional and an involved world citizen. To aid in our discussion, we will also look at how to present fallacy-free arguments, and how to use this knowledge to evaluate both our own and other's views of issues related to technology.

The lectures and discussions in this course fall into three basic groups; 1) a fairly rapid overview of the IL textbook to help us understand how to better argue our positions, 2) some general background material to help us understand the domain, and 3) a somewhat slower walkthrough of the social, political, legal, and ethical issues presented in the GoF textbook. The lectures and discussion from each group will overlap to maximize their usefulness.

The IL textbook is very useful for understanding the topic of informal logic at the level we are covering it in this course, but it is a bit wordy and sometimes a bit hard to read. Each chapter is about 30-40 pages long and you should plan for it to take you about two or three hours to completely understand a chapter. You will do much better in this course if you complete the reading assignments before we lecture on the material. Trust me, sitting down to read a hundred pages of the IL textbook before a section quiz will accomplish nothing; however, if you read it slowly, this textbook will give you an amazing amount of insight into informal logic.

The GoF is an excellent textbook that manages to avoid controversial stands with a skill that we should all learn to emulate. However, it was written long enough ago that some of the material is more relevant than others, so we will be augmenting it with some newer material on current hot topics like on-line health records, offshore outsourcing of technology jobs and the economic effect of creating the wrong kind of new jobs. We will also cover some additional topics like cybernetics and bioinformatics which are also more relevant to current moral and ethical issues in Computer Science.

Class Format

Eighty minute classes can sometimes get boring so I will use one of two class formats throughout the semester, each with two different Lecture Periods (LPs):

Format #1: LP #1 (9:30-10:10)
LP #2 (10:10-10:50)

Format #2: Section Quiz (9:30-9:50)
LP #1 (9:50-10:20)
LP #2 (10:20-10:50)

Most of the time, the LP1 and LP2 lectures will be over completely different topics. For example, in the first part of the semester, most of the LP1 lectures will be over material from the GoF textbook and the LP2 lectures will be over material from the Informal Logic text.

Grades

Grades will be determined using the following breakdown:

Topic Quizzes and Final	40%
Homework	32%
Discussion	16%
Presentation	12%

Section Quizzes and Final

Five section quizzes will be given during the first 20 minutes of a class period on scheduled dates during the semester and a final topic quiz will be given during the course's designated finals time in the Final's Week. Each topic quiz (excluding the 'final') is worth 8 points. The final is worth 16 points. If you take the final, either your two lowest quiz grades or the final grade will be dropped based on which method gives you the best grade. If you are satisfied with your quiz grades at the end of the semester, you do not have to take the final.

The final exam (or quiz) will be comprehensive. A time limit for all tests will be strictly enforced. Tests will consist of True/False questions, multiple-choice and short answer. The final will include an essay question. Essay questions are graded on clarity of ideas and presentation, not length.

Homework

All eight homework assignments must be **typed** and submitted in **hardcopy** by the date given in the schedule. All homework assignments will contain some questions over the related material in the *Informal Logic* book, but since this book is not a classic undergraduate textbook, these assignments will be taken from other sources. *The Gift of Fire* textbook is not only well written but contains some excellent discussion questions. A number of homework assignments will include questions from the *GoF* text. Some of the *GoF* questions may require the collection of data so, again, please do not wait to the last minute to look at the assignment. Since I will need to provide answers to some homework assignments immediately after the assignment is due, homework will **NOT** be accepted late.

Presentation

Four class periods will be reserved for up to eight student debates. During each of the two LP on these days, students will present their assigned side of a class related topic. Each student will be given 15 minutes to present their side of the argument and 5 minutes for a rebuttal of their opponents position. The number of students working together to defend a position will depend on final class size.

Your presentation will be graded on four factors; 1) content, 2) presentation style and quality, 3) creativity and interest, and 4) ability to rebut your opponent's position. I will make an attempt to assign students to topics which are interesting to them and positions to which they agree, but you should be prepared to have to cover a topic or position that is assigned to you, regardless of interest or your real moral position on the topic. Your part in these presentations is a major (12%) of your grade so I expect you to be prepared, fairly support your teammate (if you have one), and do a good job defending your assigned position.

Discussion

Due to the nature of this course, this class requires that your body and mind show up to every class. The lecture material in class is designed to allow the professor to have some time to open topics for discussion. In addition to simply being in class, you should come prepared to enter into a discussion of the material being covered that day. While I understand that some people are naturally shy and do not like to be 'put on the spot' and other people are always willing to share their ideas, I am going to take steps to ensure that everyone enters into the discussions and that these discussions are not dominated by anyone (other than myself :-). In other words, if you never volunteer to enter into the discussion, I will start calling on you.

Ten discussions/presentations will be selected for students to provide a written summary of the discussion/presentation. After these discussions/presentations, you should write a 100-to-200-word summary of the discussion/presentation. This summary should include

1) the basic argument for or against the position being discussed/presented, 2) which students (by name) did the best job of presenting their points, and 3) any logical fallacies you think were committed during the discussion/presentation. Summaries should be sent as a plaintext email (no attachments, no html) to *discussion@cog-sys.com* within 24 hours of the discussion. Eight of these summaries are identified as DPS in the assignment column of the schedule. The other two will be pick at random on discussion days earlier in the semester.

To be graded, the subject line of the email must include your name and student ID. The first line of the email must include only the date of the discussion. Again, failure to send the discussion within the required timeframe, provide the right information in the subject and on the first line, or sending it to the wrong email address will result in the summary not being graded. I will reply (with the phrase 'got it') to all emails that meet the required conditions for being graded.

Class Schedule

The schedules provided for this class should only be viewed as a guide (i.e., we can and will change things as we see fit). The first version is given on a separate link from the website's main page. We will attempt to keep the schedule updated as best we can, but I will need to deviate from the schedules based on things that happen through the semester. Please note that missing a discussion because the day of the discussion changes is absolutely no excuse.

Academic Dishonesty:

The Computer Science Department takes academic dishonesty quite seriously. Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Such acts are detailed in the current *TCU Bulletin* and include: copying, using, or in any way misrepresenting another's work as your own; substituting for another or having someone substitute for you; plagiarism; collusion; abusing resource materials; unauthorized use of computer software or hardware; fabrication and falsification; complicity in misconduct. Such conduct at a minimum results in a zero on the test or assignment, and may result in a failing grade for the course.

Students with Disabilities

Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. If you require accommodations for a disability, please contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services, located in Sadler Hall 11. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at 817-257-7486.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. *Each eligible student is*

responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator. Guidelines for documentation may be found at <http://www.acs.tcu.edu/DISABILITY.HTM>.

******Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.******