**CSC 480 Social and Ethical Issues in Computing**

TERM PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

This document contains:

Guidelines/specifications for the paper

Some warnings

Requirements for submitting your topic description

Tips for interviews

Grading criteria

Deadlines

Suggested Topics

**GUIDELINES/SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE PAPER**

Investigate the topic. Use articles and/or books, etc., for background. Your project must include some background research and some activity, e.g., an interview or a site visit. (If you choose a topic for which you can't think of an appropriate activity, discuss it with me.)

Don't just report. Discuss pros and cons. Evaluate. Use your own words. Quote where appropriate. Give citations for facts and quotes.

The paper should be approximately 3000 words.

The paper style is as follows:

Double-spaced,

Times New Roman font size 12

APA style for references

Each paragraph should be started with 0.5’ indent

Page margins: top and bottom: 1"; Right and Left: 0.5"

Outline for the paper (roughly)

Cover page with title and your name

Introduction/overview of topic and issues to be discussed

Background, description, and/or history of the issue

Issues, various points of view

Results of interviews, observations, etc.

Your comments or evaluation

Summary

List of references

Appendix

Use information and/or quotes from your interview or site visit in the appropriate place(s) within your paper. The Appendix should contain the name, position, and company (or other relevant information) for the person(s) you interviewed or the places you visited. For interviews, include your list of questions and indicate if the interview was in person, by phone, or by e-mail. Include the person's answers. (A summary is ok.) If you identify the person fully and quote extensively from the interview in the body of your paper you do not have to include the appendix. The Appendix does not count toward the 3000 word requirement.

**SOME WARNINGS**

Remember what this course is about. Students have handed in papers that are purely factual or historic (e.g., a history of the Internet, a summary of computer technology used in the military). Such papers will not get high scores. You must include discussion of issues.

One of the most common problems with papers is poor organization. Write an outline. Organize your thoughts. You may use section headings to indicate the topic or purpose of sections of the paper.

A few students have waited until late in the semester to get started, then discovered that most information on their topic was classified or people they wanted to interview refused. Start early in case you have to change topics or find a new interviewee or site visit.

Use a variety of sources for information and arguments. If you use articles from the Web, give the URL and the organization sponsoring the site. There's a lot of junk and unsupported opinion on the Web. Pay attention to quality of your sources.

Now and then, a student hands in a paper he or she did not write at all or in which large segments are copied from other sources. Please don't do this. It is dishonest, unfair to your fellow students, and unpleasant for both you and me. Cases of plagiarism are reported to the Guidance Office. Write in your own words. Start working on your project early; talk to me if you are having problems.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMITTING YOUR TOPIC DESCRIPTION**

This counts as your term project.

Include a title and one or two paragraphs describing what you plan to do. Tell what interviews or site visits you plan. Be specific if you can. Include at least one good reference you plan to use (e.g., a book, an article, a Web site).

There will be a limit on the number of students doing any single topic, so it will be good to have a second topic in mind in case you choose one that has too many people.

**TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS**

Use ingenuity in choosing and finding interviewees. Choose someone in a position to have special knowledge of the topic. Don't be afraid of asking well-known people, but be prepared for refusals.

Start early. It may take time to find someone, schedule the interviews, and do follow-up.

Plan; write up your questions in advance. Start with easy questions, getting general information. Ask about positive things before asking about problems. Take notes so you get details right.

Be polite. Identify yourself and your project. Thank the person.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

The project is worth 25% of the course grade. It will be graded 0-100, not with letter grades. A few points of your grade will be based on your critique of another student's paper. A few points will be based on your interview/site visit.

Grading criteria include: background or history, presentation of issues and various points of view, interview or other activity, quality of argument and analysis (principles, examples, counterexamples), structure/organization, clarity of writing, sufficient references, sufficient length and originality. You should define terms where necessary. Be sure to read and edit your final copy before handing it in.

**DEADLINES**

Friday, June 12, 2015 Topic description due.

Monday, June 29, 2015 Paper due, to be read and critiqued by another student.

Wednesday, July 1, 2015 Critiqued papers to be returned, with comments.

Friday, July 3, 2015 Oral presentations (10-12 minutes) of the paper in class

using PowerPoint

**SUGGESTED TOPICS**

Your topic does not have to come from this list. These are merely suggestions.

A company announced plans to sell an identification chip that is implanted under a person's skin. About the size of a grain of rice, it could contain personal information and emit a radio signal that

identifies the person. Discuss beneficial uses of such a chip, potential problems and abuses, and appropriate guidelines for its use.

Health information on the Web.

Research and report on Web-based health information sites, including such issues as benefits, reliability of the information, privacy protections, and techniques being developed to rate or accredit sites, impact on medical care.

Computerized medical record systems.

Many large Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) have implemented computerized patient record systems. If you can find a contact at a local HMO, you could report on its system, focusing on its benefits, privacy risks and protections, how well it is accepted by doctors and staff, and other relevant issues. A separate but related issue is the controversy about the federal government's plan to assign everyone a unique medical ID number. The plan was dropped because of strong public objection. What are the arguments?

Privacy on the Web.

What's happening now? Recent abuses and improvements. Describe Web

site policies, arguments for and against government regulation, etc.

Use of biometrics for identification.

Benefits, problems, issues.

Government surveillance of communications.

Copyright on the Net.

Issues related to MP3s, Napster, Gnutella, etc. What's being done to protect intellectual property (music, movies, etc.) and encourage sales on the Net.

Copyright and software.

What's happening with "free" software? What is the impact of Linux and Apache, for example? What are the implications for consumers? For big companies like Microsoft?

Children on the Internet.

There are several problem areas: availability of material not appropriate for children, contact with people who seek to abuse children, and privacy risks from game sites that ask children for extensive personal and family information (for marketing purposes). How serious are these problems? What is being done about them? Evaluate various solutions. Do benefits for children on the Net outweigh risks? Can we arrange to have the benefits without the risks?

Telemedicine.

From remote consultation to remote surgery. Benefits, possible problem areas (privacy, errors, loss of personalized care).

Computers in law enforcement.

Issues include benefits to crime fighting, invasion of privacy, problems caused for innocent people because of errors in databases. Describe cases where the computer system has been very helpful in catching a criminal, and describe cases where it has caused serious problems.

Electronic commerce.

Implications for the economy, for privacy, etc. Which industries will benefit? Which will be hurt? How will daily activities be affected? Are there significant social benefits or detriments from electronic commerce?

Electronic commerce.

There are many more specific topics. For example, Smart Cards: uses, benefits, privacy implications and protections in a particular application or industry. Another example: Several companies are working on technology for micropayments on the Net. What will the impact be (on the structure of businesses, physical store locations, communities, etc.) if we can easily make little purchases on the Net? What are the privacy and security issues?

Automated systems.

Study progress and safety and social issues related to an automated system like automated highways and self-driving vehicles.

Censorship of the Internet.

Some aspect not covered in the text, or study some issue in more detail. Some possibilities: filtering Internet terminals in libraries, control of the Net in other countries.

Information warfare.

Will the next wars be fought without bombs? Will computer networks and computer-controlled infrastructure be the targets of military hackers? What is happening now? What kinds of defenses are possible?

Computer crime, perhaps focusing on credit card fraud and identity theft.

Computers and conservation.

How are computers used by nature researchers and organizations. What do environmentalists think of computers? Are there ideological conflicts?

Political activism on the Net.

How has the Internet helped or hurt political groups outside the mainstream? How is it used by major political parties and candidates? What is the impact? How do/should current regulations about political campaigns affect individuals and small organizations that set up Web pages to support/oppose candidates and issues?

Violence in video/computer games.

What is the impact on children? There haven't been many serious studies yet. You could use studies on the impact of violence on television for background. Interview people who write and publish computer games to find out their policies and views about violent games.

Use of computers in schools.

How are they used? Are they really helping to teach or to babysit?

Distance learning.

What are the likely uses? What will be the impact on universities? On adult education? Is cheating a problem?

Policies of employers concerning monitoring of employees' use of the Web and/or reading employee e-mail.

Perhaps study a few local large businesses. A useful part of a project on e-mail privacy could be writing sample policies for different kinds of employers (e.g., for your university, covering students, faculty, and staff, and for a software company in a highly competitive business).

Cyberspace communities.

What makes a "community"? How do cyberspace communities handle decision making, dealing with troublesome members, etc.? Find one community to study in depth, preferably one that you are a member of or have a special interest in.

Computing and network access in other countries.

What will the world be like 50 years from now? How will electronic communications and commerce affect the power of centralized governments? Everyday life? What will happen as computers are connected to the human body? Deep Blue beat Garry Kasparov at chess in 1997. Will human intelligence be of less value in the future? Several experts have written books addressing these issues.

Voting on the Internet.

Will most political elections be held on the Internet in the future? Discuss the problems of maintaining secrecy of each person's vote while preventing election fraud. What other issues are relevant? How are some countries planning to handle these issues?