



BUSA 549: ETHICS AND PRIVACY IN THE AGE OF BIG DATA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2026

Instructor: Dr. Zaki Malik

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Please use emails to ask me questions, and use BUSA-549 in the subject line of the email. This is the fastest way to reach me.

Office Hours: Thursday 8.30AM – 12.30PM and 2PM – 3.30PM in Dallas (or online; Zoom Link posted in D2L)

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Modality

- In-person Classes please check the semester schedule. All course materials will be available through D2L.
- Online Class is asynchronous.

Course Materials

- No textbook required. All readings are freely available online — links and PDFs provided in each week's module on the course LMS.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate seminar examines the ethical and privacy dimensions of big data and artificial intelligence systems. We investigate how data collection, algorithmic decision-making, and AI deployment intersect with fundamental human values (including autonomy, dignity, fairness, and democracy). Students will develop both critical analytical skills and practical tools for ethical reasoning about technology.

The course is designed for graduate students from any discipline, who will engage with AI systems as designers, regulators, researchers, or citizens. No prior technical background is assumed, and technical concepts are introduced as needed.



COURSE OBJECTIVES

Introduce students to the major ethical frameworks and equip them to apply these systematically to emerging technology issues. Build foundational ethical literacy in how AI/ML systems work, sufficient for non-technical students to engage critically with technical claims. Survey the global privacy and AI regulatory landscape (GDPR, CCPA, sectoral US law, the EU AI Act) and its practical implications. Examine real-world case studies of algorithmic harm across domains. Foster interdisciplinary dialogue among students. Prepare students to produce original, evidence-based analysis and policy recommendations on a real AI system, culminating in a research presentation.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply major ethical frameworks (consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, care ethics) to analyze AI and data systems
 - Critically evaluate claims about algorithmic fairness, bias, and discrimination
 - Understand the key legal and regulatory frameworks governing data privacy globally
 - Identify privacy risks in the design and deployment of AI systems
 - Assess the social and political implications of surveillance, predictive analytics, and automated decision-making
 - Develop and communicate evidence-based policy positions on AI governance
 - Conduct an original research project applying course concepts to a real-world AI system
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GRADING

Assignment	Weight	Due
In-Class Exercises & Participation	25%	Each session
Homework Assignments (Classes 1–13)	35%	Various (see schedule)
Case Study Report (Class 7 or 12)	15%	Class 7 or 12
Final Group Presentation (Class 15–16)	10%	Class 15–16
Final Research Paper (3,000 words)	15%	Finals week



Final Grade

At the end of this semester, if your total is between 90 and 100, you will get an A; if it's between 80 and 89, you will get a B, and so on. **Please note that the actual points will be used to calculate your final grade.** No curving will be used in this class.

Points	Grade
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
below 60	F

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Standard grad school requirements.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

- If you ask me questions by emails, I will reply within 48 hours. However, I usually answer them much faster.
- All assignment due dates, deadlines, and exam time are central time in the United States.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Gee Library- Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu



Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

Campus Concealed Carry

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to (<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

AI use policy [May 2023]

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03/10 Undergraduate/Graduate Academic Dishonesty

Late Work: Assignments submitted late without prior approval lose 15% per day. Extensions granted for documented emergencies.

AI Tools Policy: You may use AI writing assistants for drafting only. You must disclose use in an appendix and all analysis, argument, and critical thinking must be your own. Submitting AI-generated text as your own analysis is academic dishonesty.

Participation: This is a seminar. Substantive weekly participation in discussion is expected and graded. Quality matters more than quantity.



Accessibility: Students requiring accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services and the instructor within the first week.

Academic Integrity: All work must comply with the university's academic honesty policy. Plagiarism will result in a zero and potential disciplinary action.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

Class	Title	Items
Class 1	Foundations: Ethics, Privacy, and the Digital Age	2 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Report
Class 2	Big Data: Architecture, Ecosystems, and Power	1 Book Chapter, 1 Article, 1 Video, 1 Report
Class 3	AI Fundamentals for Non-Engineers: What Every Ethicist Must Know	2 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Tool
Class 4	Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination	2 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Paper
Class 5	Privacy Law and Regulatory Landscape	1 Guide, 1 Report, 1 Article, 1 Video, 1 Legal Text
Class 6	Surveillance Technologies: Smart Cities, Facial Recognition, and Beyond	2 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Report
Class 7	Healthcare AI: Privacy, Consent, and Life-or-Death Decisions	2 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Report
Class 8	Explainability, Transparency, and the Black Box Problem	2 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Tool
Class 9	Disinformation, Deepfakes, and the Integrity of Information	2 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Report
Class 10	Consent, Autonomy, and the Ethics of Data Collection	3 Articles, 2 Videos, 1 Report
Class 11	AI and Labor: Automation, Surveillance, and Worker Rights	1 Article, 2 Videos, 2 Reports
Class 12	Responsible AI: Frameworks, Principles, and Governance	1 Framework, 1 Article, 2 Videos
Class 13	Generative AI, Copyright, and the Creative Economy	3 Articles, 1 Report, 1 Paper, 2 Videos
Class 14	AI Governance, Geopolitics, and Global Power	3 Articles, 1 Video, 1 Report, 1 Framework, 1 Resource, 1 Exec Order
Class 15	Agentic AI, Autonomous Systems, and Frontier Risks	1 Article, 2 Videos, 3 Reports, 1 Resource
Class 16	Student Research Presentations + Course Synthesis	2 Articles, 1 Report, 1 Guide



FINAL RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

Length: 3,000–3,500 words (excluding references and appendices)

Submission: PDF via LMS. Hard copy not required. Must be submitted by 11:59 PM on the last day of finals week.

Topic Approval: Submit a 200-word abstract and preliminary bibliography by Class 10 for instructor approval.

Requirements:

- Original analysis (not a summary) of a real-world AI or data system with significant ethical/privacy dimensions
- Application of at least three ethical frameworks covered in the course
- Engagement with relevant legal and regulatory context
- Evidence-based argument with at least 10 scholarly or primary sources
- Clear policy or design recommendations grounded in your analysis
- APA 7th edition citations throughout

Grading Rubric (150 pts):

Argument Quality (50 pts): Clear thesis, logical structure, persuasive reasoning

Ethical Analysis Depth (40 pts): Sophisticated application of multiple frameworks

Evidence & Sources (30 pts): Quality, breadth, and proper citation of sources

Recommendations (20 pts): Actionable, realistic, and ethically grounded proposals

Writing Quality (10 pt): Clarity, precision, and professional academic tone
