

COMS E6184, LAW L7777-1—Administrivia

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Computer Science


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Knight First Amendment Institute



The Course

- Anonymity and privacy—and free speech
 - **Anonymity and privacy are often prerequisites for free speech!**
 - Plus: technology
-  Anonymity and privacy: the Internet giveth and the Internet taketh away

Course Themes

Technology drivers

- Ubiquitous connectivity
- Ubiquitous computing
- Pocket supercomputers and tracking devices (AKA smartphones)
- Very cheap storage and processing
- Machine learning

Law and policy drivers

- Privacy
- Free speech
- State action versus private action
- Borders and international relations

The Cast

- Steven Bellovin Computer science professor; affiliate law faculty
- Alex Abdo Knight First Amendment Institute; formerly ACLU National Security Project
- CS students Mix of graduate and undergraduates; some pre-law or with other legal and policy interests
- Law students Some with a technical background; some without

Prerequisites

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- None...

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- None...
- Well, not quite...

Prerequisites

- None...
- Well, not quite...
- There are no specific computer science or legal prerequisites
- However, everyone is expected to learn something of the other's field
- Even in your own field, there are subtleties that turn out to be important in this context

How the Class Works

- This is a seminar, not a lecture class
 - You are expected to attend live
 - This is an interactive class; if you just sit back and take notes, you won't get much out of it.
- *You* are going to do much of the talking
- Specifically:
 - We will speak for about half the time, maybe less, giving the major technical and legal concepts
 - We'll then discuss the material and the implications:
 - How does technology constrain what the law and policy can be?
 - How must technology change to accomodate legal or policy requirements?

- Generally, there will not be slides
- This is a seminar...

- Generally, there will not be slides
- This is a seminar. . .
- However, we will generally prepare notes for the day, which may or may not be in the form of slides

A Malleable Syllabus

- We'll start each class with a few minutes discussing news items relevant to the class
- Come prepared to mention them!
- For really major news items, we may ignore the syllabus and discuss them instead

Reading Load

- Typically about 50 pages per week
- Most of it is primary source material, not a predigested text book
- You are expected to do the assigned reading before each class
- Yes, this is a graduate seminar. . .

Class Structure and Grading

- 15% Debate
- 10% Scoping paper—group paper (about 2000 words) on a topic of your choice describing what you intend to do
- 30% “Vision” paper—your part of the group project and what you see the final project as
- 45% Group project—an *integrated* whole, plus in-class presentation of that paper, tentatively during the scheduled slot for the final (December 18, 19:10-22:00)

No exams, no required programming, though you may choose to do some programming for your project

Note: percentages are approximate and *are* subject to change

The Papers

The goal is to produce a publication-worthy paper. We hope (but do not require) that some of these papers will be submitted for publication.

- A group effort; mixed law students and CS students on each team
- You can form teams or half-teams
- We'll do the rest of the team creation
- Pick your own topic related to the course's themes—it may be a subject covered in class, but it need not be
- Papers should be integrated wholes, not a tech piece and a law piece stapled together. That is, technical features often would include a legal justification or restriction; legal analyses could discuss technical alternatives (but things don't have to be divided up that way)

Because this is a group project, we ask for a moral commitment not to drop the class—that would hurt your teammates

The Scoping Paper

- A relatively short document describing what you plan to cover in your final paper
 - Also: what is *not* going to be covered
 - What resources do you need?
 - How will you obtain any necessary data?
 - What will each team member focus on?
 - What is the *scope* of the project?
- The primary purpose is for us to provide feedback on your approach and coverage
- You are “advised” to heed our advice. . .
- Note: a low grade indicates poor scope; consequently, you’re allowed to revise and resubmit if you wish

The Vision Paper

The team projects are just that, team projects. But of course, a group effort starts with the individual efforts of the team members. Write a short (3–5 page) paper describing your vision for the project: where you think it should go, and what *you* will contribute. As always, there is no requirement that you stick to your own subject area, CS or law.

Note that this is an individual assignment, and should not be shared with your team members.

The Final Paper

- A substantive body of work
- Oral presentation during the slot allocated to the final
- (Note: the date may change if necessary to avoid conflict with the law school's finals schedule)
- May be aimed at either a CS or a Law venue—but must combine both subjects
- Properly formatted, with proper citations—Bluebook-style if intended for a law review
- Note to law students: because this is a group paper, it does not qualify as your major writing project.

- No. Just no.

- No. Just no.
- We're teaching *you* to think and write
- Besides, ChatGPT tends to produce bland, generic answers
- It also “hallucinates”—it makes up citations and quotes, and never lets on that it has done that

Citations and Bibliographies

- A form of proper attribution
- Where to go for more information
- Sometimes a way to judge the credibility of the statement

- Seven debates, each of a pair of two-person mixed teams
- Structured as formal debates: **Resolved:** ...
- Should cover legal and technical aspects
- You decide who on the team says what
- Each team has a 6-minute opening statement, then a 4-minute rebuttal
- Remainder of time: questioning, by faculty and (mostly) by the class
- Total time: about 45 minutes, at the start of the class

- There is wisdom in the world not known to Google
- There are rooms and even whole buildings on this campus known as “libraries”
- The CU library network also has a lot of electronic works
- Often, you can get paywalled works for free via the library

Presenting Your Own Paper

- An oral presentation of the work during the slot assigned for the final
- Leave a bit of time for discussion
- Time to be set depending on the enrollment and number of teams—currently, about 22 minutes, counting Q&A

- Contrary to popular belief, Covid has not gone away
- We *strongly request* that you continue to wear a good mask during class—this is a small room with many people and inadequate ventilation
- Many people will contract Covid-19 or have a family member contract it
- If you have to quarantine, let us know—the class format is not great for Zoom, since there are no microphones around the room, but we can try
- If you experience any difficulties with this class due to pandemic-related issues, *please* contact us
- We'll do my best to help, understand, etc.

Incomplete Work

- If medical circumstances arise, let us know of expected absences
- 👉 We don't want or need to know the details (and are generally not allowed to ask for, let alone require, documentation)
- Especially for undergraduates, we're constrained in how merciful we can be without permission from the dean's office
- You're all adults; if there's a problem, it's up to you to take the initiative

Contacting Us

- Email is by far the best way to reach us outside of office hours
- For email pertaining to this class, use `smb+6184@cs...` and `alex.abdo@knightcolumbia.org`
- There will be a class listserv—we'll use it and you should use it to share news items, etc.

Bellovin

- If you need to see me and can't make it during my office hours, email me to set up an appointment
- My office hours (and exceptions) are posted on my web page:
<https://www.cs.columbia.edu/~smb>

Abdo

- By appointment—email for to schedule one

Co-operation versus Dishonesty

- Discussing assignments with others is encouraged—but all written material *must* be individual work unless otherwise instructed.
- Please use appropriate file permission mechanisms to protect your homework. (Looking at other people's work is forbidden.)
- Zero tolerance for cheating
- CS department academic honesty policy:
<http://www.cs.columbia.edu/education/honesty>
- Law school academic honesty policy <https://www.law.columbia.edu/community-life/student-life/current-llm-students/academic-integrity>
- We will assume that you have all read it; you are in any event responsible for its terms and provisions.

Questions?



(Bald eagle, Riverside Park, January 24, 2020)