CS492 - Social Implications of Computing
Spring 2022

Prof. Robin Cohen

Time and location: (MWF 830-920am(sec2) (MC4040), 930-1020am(sec1) (MC4040))

This message is dated April 12, 2022.

Below we provide a general introductory note about CS492. A pointer to the website for this term of the course will appear on this webpage shortly before the term begins.

CS492 is a discussion-oriented course. There are no exams. During the time of Covid, anyone unable to attend a class due to medical conditions (self-reported) will be provided with an alternate way of contributing to the class discussion of that day, for credit.

We will encourage anyone who is ill or who thinks that they may have been exposed to illness to stay away from any in-person classes. After the first two weeks, we will introduce a number of classes that are entirely online, as well. We will follow any of the edicts of uWaterloo (for example, moving all classes to be entirely online if this is what is mandated). We will use Zoom for the online classes.

The value-added of CS492 is: a) a considerable opportunity to learn how to write (assignments on varied topics with very detailed feedback provided) b) a rarely-offered opportunity to think on your feet, to provide creative ideas (not only during discussions but also as a specific component of some of the written essays) c) perhaps most importantly an opportunity to learn about and to reflect upon the crucial topic of the social implications of computing, which all computer scientists should find essential to experience.

Teaching assistants in CS492 form an integral part of the delivery of the course, while the instructor assumes a very large portion of the overall grading in the course. We form a partnership to help to provide you with a valuable learning experience. A vast majority of the effort of the instructor goes into creating the course content: designing the assignments and additional exercises, selecting relevant and enlightening subtopics to include in our study this term, outlining how students are to be assessed and providing oversight on any of the grading done by TAs. During class, your instructional team does not really lecture but instead is more invested in directing discussion of the topic of the week, making parenthetical remarks to assist in your education.

Fortunately, this is a course where there will be considerable latitude for the instructor to handle special Covid circumstances of any given student. Communicate with us; we do care. As the term progresses, you will learn the first names of your fellow students and in this way begin to feel a part of a small community. This will be another value-added of the course as well.

All students who put in the effort (even if they are quiet in class) should do very well in the course. Those who are less skilled in writing will progressively improve, with the feedback that is provided.