

CS49/CS692 - Social Implications of Computing

Spring 2025

Prof. Robin Cohen

The course will run as two 80-minute slots, twice a week with Section 1 830-950 T Th and Section 2 10-1120 T Th.

This message is dated March 23, 2025.

I am currently lined up to be the instructor of CS492, Spring 2025 for all sections that are offered that term. Below we provide a general introductory note about CS492. Please NOTE that CS492/692 asks students to reflect on the Social Implications of Computing making use of their deep knowledge of the underlying technology and how it operates. This distinguishes the course from others on campus where students in other disciplines may be present. CS492 is a discussion-oriented course. There are no exams. We will encourage anyone who is ill to stay away from any in-person classes. Some of our classes (e.g. with excellent guest lecturers from afar) will be online. Online classes will be on Zoom and will not be recorded. At times we will be able to make use of breakout rooms for small group interactions.

Those enrolled will be asked to read Important Announcements on LEARN at start of term to be well positioned to succeed. 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 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.

In Spring 2025, we will have additional emphasis on the topical concern of Artificial Intelligence (professor and some TAs work in this area). We will also have some attention focused on the issues of virtual workplaces and on climate change (how CS influences this important concern). 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. When I teach, I prefer to assume a large portion of the grading myself, in particular to assist students to learn how to write well. 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. We will continue to integrate Role Playing Exercises into the course, an element of CS492 for many years now; this is a groupwork experience that enables the class to view certain social implications of computer science from different perspectives. There is both a written and an oral component to this exercise. Please note that you must form groups only with students in your section of the course and must also attend classes in your section only.

As the term progresses, you should be able to 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.

We have been able to re-introduce cross-listing with CS692 for Spring 2025. Graduate students will have additional expectations beyond those of undergrads. As of March 31, graduate students will be able to try to get a seat in the class. I will maintain a waitlist of those asking to join. I will be offline Apr 1 to Apr 3, so be patient if you have requested and I have not responded during that period of time. Requests before March 31 will be ignored. Note that there is only room for a tiny number of graduate students in each section and that requests to join will not be honoured after May 16 (when groups for the course must be completely settled).