



AI Ethics in Business and Society

MULT-UB 60

Spring 2026

1/20/2026 - 5/5/2026

11:00 AM - 12:15 PM Tu Th

Instructors

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Course Overview and Objectives

This multidisciplinary course explores the rapidly evolving field of AI through the lens of philosophical ethics, equipping business school students with the tools to think critically and creatively about AI's ethical challenges in business and society. Future leaders will not only face the technical and strategic opportunities of AI but also the reputational, regulatory, and societal risks that come with it. This course helps students build the ethical fluency and strategic judgment needed to navigate those challenges responsibly and competitively.

After an introduction to AI technologies and ethical frameworks, students analyze societal and sector-specific impacts of AI, both positive and negative. Through business cases, philosophical texts, debates, and research, they confront dilemmas such as human identity and meaning, job displacement, equitable access, environmental impact, privacy and surveillance, and more.

For each issue, students evaluate real-world business cases, connect them to primary-source philosophical texts, and respond through in-class debates and persuasive essays to guiding questions about whether, and how, AI can be used ethically in business and society.

Underlying the course is the recognition that we are all living through a time of tremendous technological change. To survive and thrive as managers, innovators, and decision-makers, business school students must develop not only analytical rigor but also ethical imagination—skills that will distinguish effective leaders in the AI-driven economy.

During this course students will:

- Develop a broad understanding of the ethical issues (+/-) relevant to AI;
- Apply philosophical concepts to identify and analyze relevant ethical issues pertaining to AI in business and society;
- Cultivate the capacity to evaluate applications of AI in specific domains of business and society in practice;

- Learn strategies to guide businesses to benefit society in the development and adoption of AI technologies;
- Practice the critical thinking and argumentation skills relevant for leadership in business and society.

Course Proceedings

Each week we will discuss, through the lens of philosophical concepts, a specific ethical dilemma posed by AI. Students will complete a series of assignments that require reading, participating in class discussion, and writing post-hoc reflections on that discussion. Elements of this assignment will include:

- Arguing one side of a pro/con debate resolution related to the week’s ethical dilemma;
- Writing, on an individual basis, and in parallel, 3-5 main points in support of that position;
- Discussing in groups what they've written with other students arguing the same side of the case;
- Engaging in a debate with students arguing the opposing position;
- Participating in a reflective discussion involving the entire class, following the debate, about what they argued, what they really think, etc.;
- Writing, again on an individual basis, a short, post-hoc reflection that references the framing philosophical texts, the substance of what was argued in class, and their own values, identities and aspirations.

Grading Policy

Final grading will follow the following rubric:

| Component | Weight |
|--|--------|
| Pre-Class Weekly Preparation Written notes showing preparation for in class debates and discussion, including analysis of the case, application of the fundamentals of AI, making sense of the philosophical perspective, open-ended questions, etc. | 20% |
| In-Class Participation In-class debates and discussions | 50% |
| Post-Class Weekly Reflections Written reflections (2pp) on learnings from in-class debates and discussions and how it shaped student perspectives and understanding of the ethical dilemma | 20% |
| Final Written Reflection Written reflection (5pp) on how the process of debating AI ethics issues prepares you for leadership in the tech industry. | 10% |
| Total | 100% |

Your participation grade will be determined by how consistently you contribute and how insightful those contributions are. Quality is more important than quantity. Drawing on readings and frameworks shared in class is highly valued. If you are concerned that difficulty with English or some other situation will interfere with your ability to participate, please discuss this with us during the first two weeks.

This is not a lecture course. You are responsible for many of your and your peers' engagements. Please attend classes prepared for each class, contribute actively, and listen carefully to others. The emphasis on personal study and reflections makes it crucial to prepare for class. Additionally, the course includes in-class debates, group work and interactive discussions based on your having completed the pre-class assignments and post-class reflections.

Course Outline (subject to change - draft)

| Week | Date | Topic (subject to change) | Case Study (subject to change) |
|------|----------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Tu. 1/20 Th. 1/24 | <p>Course Overview. What is AI? What is Ethics?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of AI fundamentals, innovations and applications in business and society • Overview of the philosophy of ethics and how it applies to AI | |
| 2 | Tu. 1/27 Th. 1/29 | <p>Fundamentals of critical thinking and debate in engaging with ethical implications of AI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading philosophical texts while navigating ethical dilemmas. • Primer on critical thinking as well as persuasive speaking, debating and writing. | |
| 3 | Tu. 2/3 Th. 2/5 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Human Identity and Meaning</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Does AI enhance or diminish what it means for us to be human?</p> | <p><i>Replika AI Chatbots</i> simulate intimacy and companionship, raising ethical concerns about emotional authenticity and human connection.</p> |

| Week | Date | Topic (subject to change) | Case Study (subject to change) |
|------|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 4 | Tu. 2/10 Th. 2/12 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Consent and Autonomy</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Can individuals truly give informed consent when interacting with opaque AI systems?</p> | <p><i>SAG-AFTRA</i> secured new protections requiring film studios to obtain informed consent and provide fair compensation before using AI-generated replicas of an actor's voice or likeness, ensuring performers maintain control over their identity.</p> |
| 5 | Tu. 2/17 Th. 2/19 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Privacy and Surveillance</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Do the benefits of AI-powered surveillance outweigh the ethical cost to privacy?</p> | <p><i>Clearview AI</i> scraped online photos to create a facial recognition database used by law enforcement — without users' consent.</p> |
| 6 | Tu. 2/24 Th. 2/26 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Bias and Fairness</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Should companies be held legally responsible when their AI systems produce biased or discriminatory outcomes?</p> | <p><i>Predictive policing</i> and AI have faced significant challenges concerning issues of equity and discrimination.</p> |
| 7 | Tu. 3/3 Th. 3/5 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Access and Inequality</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Should access to advanced AI technologies be treated as a public good?</p> | <p><i>AI in Global Health</i> (e.g., <i>Google's Diabetic Retinopathy Tool</i>) shows promise, but disparities in infrastructure limit benefit to underserved populations.</p> |
| 8 | Tu. 3/10 Th. 3/12 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Accountability and Responsibility</p> <p>Debate Prompt: When AI systems cause harm, who should be held responsible?</p> | <p><i>Uber's Self-Driving Car</i> killed a pedestrian in 2018. Legal ambiguity followed over whether Uber, the safety driver, or the software creator should be accountable.</p> |
| 9 | Week of 3/16 | NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK | |

| Week | Date | Topic (subject to change) | Case Study (subject to change) |
|------|----------------------|---|---|
| 10 | Tu. 3/24 Th. 3/26 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Manipulation and Behavioral Influence</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Should AI be allowed to manipulate consumer decisions or political views through personalization?</p> | <p><i>Facebook's</i> role in the Myanmar genocide reveals how the platform amplified hate speech and incited violence against the Rohingya minority, while legal loopholes, weak international regulation, and corporate immunity have shielded it from accountability.</p> |
| 11 | Tu. 3/31 Th. 4/2 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Job Displacement and Economic Impact</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Does society have a moral duty to support workers displaced by AI?</p> | <p><i>Amazon's Warehouse Automation</i> reduced human roles and increased productivity monitoring, leading to worker dissatisfaction and turnover.</p> |
| 12 | Tu. 4/7 Th. 4/9 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Environmental Impact</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Should AI development be limited due to its environmental footprint?</p> | <p><i>Spruce Pine, Quartz Mines</i> illustrate the hidden effects of AI, from the minerals mined in a small North Carolina town to the data centers driving up electricity bills.</p> |
| 13 | Tu. 4/14 Th. 4/16 | <p>Ethical Dilemma: Geopolitics and Global Power</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Is it ethical for nations to pursue AI dominance despite risks to global stability?</p> | <p><i>U.S.–China AI Race</i> intensifies economic and military competition, with global repercussions for ethics, trade, and cybersecurity.</p> |
| 14 | Tu. 4/21 Th. 4/23 | <p>Student Presentations</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Students will formulate their own prompts.</p> | |
| 15 | Tu. 4/28 Th. 4/30 | <p>Student Presentations</p> <p>Debate Prompt: Students will formulate their own prompts.</p> | |

| Week | Date | Topic (subject to change) | Case Study (subject to change) |
|------|---------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 16 | Tu. 5/5 | Final Reflections | |

Course Readings

The readings required for this course will include:

- Peer-reviewed academic publications from relevant disciplines including philosophical ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of technology, business ethics, etc.;
- Policy statements from relevant firms, industry coalitions and regulatory bodies pertaining to the ethics of AI;
- News media reports on the latest developments within the field of AI design, development and deployment.

Relevant Books:

1. *Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI*, Ehan Mollick, 2024
2. *Rewiring Your Mind for AI: How to Think, Work, and Thrive in the Age of Intelligence*, David A. Wood 2025
3. *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*, Cathy O’Neill 2017
4. *The Oxford Handbook of Ethics of AI*, Markus D. Dubber (ed.), Frank Pasquale (ed.), Sunit Das (ed.), 2020
5. *Critical Thinking: A Concise Guide (5th ed.)*. Bowell, T., Cowan, R., & Kemp, G. (2019)

NYU Stern Undergraduate Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance is required in all class sessions, and any unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your final grade. Accommodations can be made for COVID-related situations. Contact your professor if you have attendance issues.

According to university policy, excused absences are only granted in cases of documented serious illness, grave family emergency, religious observance, or civic obligation. Please report any religious observance or civic obligation to your instructor by the first week of class. Unexcused absences include recruiting activities, job interviews, athletic events, and incompatible travel plans. As in any professional situation, you need to notify your instructor of the reasons for any absence before class if possible or, at a minimum, after class.

You will receive credit for attendance only when you arrive in class on time and remain until the end of the class period. You may enter class late or leave class early only if given permission by the instructor and if you can do so without disrupting the class.

Religious Observances and Other Unique Situations

NYU Stern is committed to ensuring an equitable educational experience for all students regardless of identity or religious/cultural background. The observance of religious and cultural holidays/traditions and the recognition of unique circumstances - such as serving as a caregiver- are important aspects of this commitment. Please review all class dates at the start of the semester and review all course requirements to identify any foreseeable conflicts with exams, course assignments, projects, or other items required for participation and attendance. Please contact me within the first two weeks of the class semester to discuss any potential conflicts.

Student Wellness

Classes can get stressful. We encourage you to reach out if you need help. Our aim is for students to be as successful academically as they can, and to help them overcome any impediments to that. Bookmark the NYU Stern Well-being Resource Hub (www.stern.nyu.edu/wellbeing) for existing services at NYU and Stern covering a wide variety of topics including financial well-being, relationship well-being, mental well-being, and more. Any student who may be struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (see also [the Student Accessibility section of this syllabus](#)) at 212-998-4980 to discuss academic accommodations. If mental health assistance is needed, call the NYU's 24/7 Wellness Exchange hotline 212 443-9999. Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide relevant resources or referrals. There are also drop-in hours and appointments. Find out more at www.nyu.edu/students/health-and-wellness/counseling-services.html.

Name Pronunciation & Pronouns

NYU Stern students now have the ability to include their pronouns and name pronunciation in Albert. We encourage you to share your name pronunciation and preferred pronouns this way. Please utilize this link for additional information: [Pronouns & Name Pronunciation](#).

Academic Integrity

Our undergraduate [Academics Pillar](#) states that *we take pride in our well-rounded education and approach our academics with honesty and integrity*. Indeed, integrity is critical to all that we do here at NYU Stern. As members of our community, all students agree to abide by the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct, which includes a commitment to:

- Exercise integrity in all aspects of one's academic work including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers, and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.
- Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others (human or machine) when submitting written work as one's own. Ideas, data, direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others should be fully referenced.
- Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to adversely affect the NYU Stern community.

The entire Stern Student Code of Conduct applies to all students enrolled in Stern courses and can be found here: www.stern.nyu.edu/uc/codeofconduct.

General Conduct & Behavior

Students are expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards of professional conduct and behavior. In addition to the Stern Student Code of Conduct above, please familiarize yourself with Stern's policy regarding in-class behavior & expectations (www.stern.nyu.edu/portal-partners/current-students/undergraduate/resources-policies/academic-policies/index.htm) and the NYU Student Conduct Policy (www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-student-conduct-policy.html).

The safety and freedom of all members of the university community to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning are essential. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behavior that interferes with the educational process, compromises the personal safety or wellbeing of another, or disrupts the administration of university programs or services.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Representing the ideas of others as your own is plagiarism, whether accidental or by design --- and includes presenting prose generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT as your own. Do not plagiarize. Here are three helpful links:

- Plagiarism and How to Avoid It: Overview from NYU Libraries guides.nyu.edu/plagiarism.
- "How to Avoid Plagiarism" from Northwestern University, www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/how-to-avoid-plagiarism.html.
- "Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It" from Indiana University, wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/plagiarism.html.

All references need to be cited or explained. See easybib.com or owl.purdue.edu for more about research and citations.

To further help ensure the integrity of our learning community, written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin. The software will compare your submission to a database of prior submissions to Turnitin, current and archived web pages, periodicals, journals, and publications. Additionally, your document will become part of the Turnitin database. Please ask your

professor if you need more clarification.

Student Accessibility

If you will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, you must notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980, mosescsa@nyu.edu) verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations it recommends. If you will need to take an exam at the Moses Center for Student Accessibility, you must submit a completed Exam Accommodations Form at least one week prior to the scheduled exam time to be guaranteed accommodation. For more information, visit the CSA website:

www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html.

Electronic Device Policies

Laptops, cell phones, smartphones, recorders, and other electronic devices may be addictive.¹ As such, you should think critically before using electronics anytime. One goal of this course is to develop listening skills, focused attention, and critical thinking. Therefore, you should not use any unnecessary electronics unless requested by the instructor.

¹ Alter, Adam L. *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*. New York: Penguin Books, 2018.