CSE 303, Winter 2009, Societal Implications Papers
Due: Friday, March 13, 11 pm

Because this is the last day of classes, no late papers will be accepted, even if you have late days remaining.

Your paper should use a common file format like pdf, word doc or docx, or rtf. Turn it in using the regular course dropbox.

Note: It is *not* wise to put this assignment off until the last two days of the quarter.

Overview: You will write a *short* paper describing and critiquing a recent article relevant to a societal-implications topic either brought up in class or a similar topic. Anything related to computer privacy, software quality, liability, diversity, electronic voting, professional responsibility, or other similar topics is great. The purpose is to demonstrate critical thinking and coherent writing about the connection of a computer-science topic to society and the role of ethics in that connection.

Requirements:

- Your paper should be approximately 1 1/2 single-spaced 12-point font pages. Anywhere between 1 1/4 page and 2 pages is probably fine, but each sentence should have a point (i.e., not be a waste of space). Do not play with margins, etc.

- Be sure include your name in the heading of your paper.

- Do *NOT* plagiarize.

    - Ask if you have questions.
    - Cite sources; do not quote or paraphrase the arguments of others.
    - Do not use a paper written by you or anyone else for another purpose.

- Before your paper, list a full citation for the article you are critiquing.

- The article you critique should be:

    - Published in the last 18 months
    - In a somewhat reputable venue (a magazine, newspaper, etc.) — an online magazine is fine, but an informal blog posting from an unqualified author is not.

- You may cite 0–3 other sources.

- Use about half your paper to *describe* the article and the other half describing what you think is *wrong* with it. There are many ways to be wrong: for example an article can be misleading, oversimplified, biased, or based on outdated information. Have a clear thesis and make it, though it is desirable to discuss counter-arguments also.

- Part of the assignment is finding relevant articles, so do not write about articles somebody else found for you.

Other Information and Optional Help:

- You may show your instructor a draft.

- Your instructor has provided an example.

- There are writing resources on campus. For example, see
  http://www.uwtc.washington.edu/research/ewc/.

Assessment:

- Hopefully everyone will receive a very good grade.

- (Of course), it does not matter whether the instructor agrees with you.

- You should agree with you; write something you care about. Put thought into your essay.

- Have a point and make it. Write clearly.

- Make every sentence count.

- Use *crisp*, *dense*, *rational* language. Writing computer-science text has similarities with writing code. See below.

Writing Example:

Terrible:

There are a lot of issues related to web-site usage policies and whether you can expect someone to read them. This article discusses some of these issues. For example, one issue is whether the policy is really long with the unusual parts hidden in the middle or if the policy is short and easy to read. Another issue is whether a web user can get in trouble for doing something that the policy says they should not do.

Good:

If we expect users to read and be responsible for web-site usage policies, we must consider how concise and unsurprising the policy is. We should also consider what penalties are reasonable for policy violation.