CSA 1370 – Cyber Ethics

Department of Computer Science

Summer I 2026 (Online, Asynchronous)

Faculty Information

Dr. Mainuddin Shaik

Email: mainuddin.shaik@sulross.edu

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM **(via Teams or by appointment)**

Response Time: All emails and Blackboard messages will be answered within 24 hours on weekdays, and within 48 hours on weekends.

Course Description

This course introduces the ethical, legal, and social dimensions of computing in the age of artificial intelligence, ubiquitous data, and networked everything. Students examine classical ethical frameworks and apply them to contemporary computing challenges, including privacy and surveillance, algorithmic bias, generative AI, intellectual property in the age of model training, cybersecurity practice, professional codes of conduct, and cyber conflict. The course is delivered fully asynchronously online and uses a scaffolded, portfolio-based assessment model. Each week, students contribute a graded artifact that builds toward a culminating Personal Cyber Ethics Portfolio rooted in their own experiences, communities, and professional aspirations.

Course Materials

Required Textbook: None. All required materials — recorded mini-lectures, readings, articles, news clips, podcasts, and links to professional codes — will be provided each week through Blackboard at no cost to the student.

Recommended Free Resources (linked in Blackboard each week):

- ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (free, acm.org)
- IEEE Code of Ethics (free, ieee.org)
- Markkula Center for Applied Ethics – Internet Ethics resources (Santa Clara University, free)
- Electronic Frontier Foundation (eff.org) – privacy, surveillance, and digital-rights case archive
- SRSU Library databases for incident research (free with LoboID): Nexis Uni, ProQuest, EBSCO
- Selected articles, podcasts, and short videos posted weekly on Blackboard

Technology Requirements: Reliable broadband, a webcam and working microphone (required for video submissions), a free Blackboard account, and a smartphone or scanner capable of producing legible photos of handwritten work.

Important Dates – Summer I 2026

- May 27 (Wed) – First day of classes, Session I
- May 29 (Fri) – Last day for late registration and schedule changes; payment deadline
- June 1 (Mon) – Census Day (4th class day)
- June 12 (Fri) – Mid-term of Session I; Midterm Reflection due
- June 19 (Fri) – Last day to drop a Session I course with a 'W'
- June 26 (Fri) – Final Portfolio Project due by 11:59 PM
- June 29 – July 1 – Grading and feedback window (no new class activity)
- July 1 (Wed) – Final grades submitted; end of Session I

Program Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and apply classical ethical frameworks to computing and cybersecurity dilemmas.
- Recognize the legal, social, and ethical impacts of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.
- Evaluate professional codes of conduct relevant to computer science and cybersecurity practice.
- Communicate ethical reasoning clearly in written, spoken, and visual form.
- Demonstrate personal responsibility in the use of digital tools and information.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define ethics and distinguish among utilitarian, deontological, virtue, and care-based frameworks.
- Analyze contemporary privacy and surveillance cases using multiple ethical lenses.
- Evaluate ethical issues raised by artificial intelligence, including algorithmic bias, generative content, and AI authorship.
- Apply principles of responsible disclosure and ethical hacking to cybersecurity scenarios.
- Map a real-world dilemma to specific provisions of the ACM and IEEE codes of ethics.
- Produce a personal portfolio that documents ethical reasoning grounded in their own experience.

Marketable Skills

Students completing this course will develop:

- Ethical Reasoning – Structuring arguments using established moral frameworks.
- Critical Analysis – Evaluating technology cases for stakeholder impact and value trade-offs.
- Professional Judgment – Applying ACM/IEEE codes to real situations.
- Risk and Harm Awareness – Identifying privacy, security, and bias harms in computing systems.
- Written and Oral Communication – Explaining complex ethical issues to technical and non-technical audiences.
- AI Literacy – Recognizing both the capabilities and the ethical limits of generative AI tools.

Asynchronous Course Format

This course has no scheduled live meetings. Each week's materials open Monday at 12:01 AM and consist of: (1) a recorded mini-lecture video (15minutes) from the instructor, (2) 2–4 assigned readings, articles, podcasts, or short videos (all free, linked in Blackboard), (3) a short knowledge-check quiz on Blackboard, (4) a weekly Portfolio Contribution assignment centered on a real-world incident, and (5) a graded discussion post and peer reply. Students may engage with materials at any time but must meet the weekly deadlines listed in the Course Schedule.

Typical weekly cadence (recommended):

- Monday–Tuesday: Watch the lecture, complete the readings, take the knowledge-check quiz.
- Wednesday–Thursday: Draft the Portfolio Contribution; post the discussion.
- Friday: Submit the Portfolio Contribution by 11:59 PM (Central).
- Saturday–Sunday: Post at least one substantive peer reply by 11:59 PM Sunday.

Course Assignments and Grading

Assignment Type	% of Final Grade	Description
Weekly Knowledge-Check Quizzes	10%	Four short (10-question) Blackboard quizzes, one per content week. Open-book but timed (20 minutes) and randomized.
Weekly Discussion Posts and Peer Replies	15%	Each week, a 250–350 word post that explicitly quotes the assigned reading by page number, plus one substantive 150-word reply that quotes a classmate. Required across Weeks 1–4.

Assignment Type	% of Final Grade	Description
Portfolio Contributions (Weekly Artifacts)	30%	Each of Weeks 1–4 produces a graded artifact (Contribution #1–#4) that becomes a chapter of the Final Portfolio. Each artifact is individually anchored to the student's lived experience.
Midterm Reflection	15%	Due June 12. A recorded 5–7 minute oral reflection (video, webcam-on) tying Weeks 1–3 to a single ethical decision the student has personally faced.
Final Portfolio Project	30%	Due Friday, June 26 at 11:59 PM. An integrated portfolio of all weekly contributions plus a synthesis essay and a 3-minute recorded oral defense.
Total	**100%**	

Grading Scale: A 90–100 | B 80–89 | C 70–79 | D 60–69 | F below 60.

Late Assignment Policy: Because Summer I is compressed, assignments are due by 11:59 PM Central on the listed date. Late submissions are accepted up to 48 hours late with a 15% per-day deduction. Work more than 48 hours late will not be accepted unless prior arrangements are approved. The Final Portfolio cannot be submitted late under any circumstance because of the tight grading window.

Academic Integrity and the Use of Generative AI

This is a course about ethics. Submitting work that another entity — human or AI — generated for you is itself an ethical violation of the kind we will study. Beyond that, the central purpose of this course is to help you develop your own ethical voice and judgment. Outsourcing that work to a language model defeats the purpose of taking the course at all.

Why this course uses anchored, verifiable assignments

Every graded assignment in this course is engineered to require something a generative AI tool cannot produce on its own: a specific lived experience of yours, a verifiable local detail, your own voice on camera, your own handwriting, or a response that explicitly engages with material from earlier weeks of your own work. This design is not adversarial — it is pedagogical. Anchored assignments produce better learning because they force you to connect abstract ethical frameworks to your real life.

Course AI Policy

Generative AI tools (including ChatGPT, Claude, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Perplexity, and similar) are permitted in this course only for the following limited purposes:

- Spell-check, grammar correction, and proofreading of text you have already written.
- Brainstorming definitions or examples during your study of the readings (but not for inclusion in submitted work).
- In Week 3, AI tools are required for one specific exercise where you will critically evaluate AI-generated output. Detailed instructions will be provided.

Generative AI tools may NOT be used to:

- Draft, summarize, or paraphrase any part of a discussion post, portfolio contribution, reflection, or final synthesis.
- Generate the oral content of any video submission.
- Produce ethical analyses, scenario interpretations, or stakeholder maps that you submit as your own.
- Translate or rewrite your work into more polished prose for submission.

Required disclosure: Every submitted assignment must include a one-paragraph AI Use Statement disclosing exactly which tools (if any) you used, when, and for what purpose. Submitting an assignment with a false or missing AI Use Statement is a violation of academic integrity and will result in a zero on the assignment and a report to Student Life. A template is provided on Blackboard.

Required University AI Statement

The University does not recommend or endorse any specific AI tools or resources. Students should be aware that many generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) store user input and may use this data to train future models. For this reason, students should never upload or share personal, confidential, or identifiable information—such as names, ID numbers, health data, or assignment submissions containing such details—into any generative AI platform. When using AI tools, students should verify whether the tool complies with student privacy standards as indicated by the University. Faculty may recommend specific tools that better align with institutional data privacy policies, but ultimate responsibility for data protection rests with users. Students are encouraged to use faculty-recommended platforms when engaging in coursework involving generative AI. The University is not liable for any adverse experience or impact when students interact with these tools.

Course Schedule – Summer I 2026

Summer Session-I, runs from May 27 through July 1, 2026. The course is organized into four content weeks plus a final submission week. Each content week opens at 12:01 AM Monday and closes at 11:59 PM the following Sunday. Week 5 has no new instructional content.

Wk	Dates	Topics	Portfolio Contribution	Anti-AI Authenticity Mechanism
1	May 27 – May 31	Foundations of ethics; utilitarian, deontological, virtue, and care frameworks; introduction to computing ethics; course AI policy briefing.	Contribution #1: Personal Ethics Inventory + Foundational Incident Analysis (Therac-25 or Volkswagen Dieselgate) + scenario selection.	Handwritten chart + dated personal incidents + 2 primary sources on historic incident.
2	June 1 – June 7	Privacy, surveillance, and data ethics: from Snowden to data brokers; smart devices; behavioral advertising; biometric surveillance.	Contribution #2: Personal Data Audit + Recent Privacy Incident Case Study (within last 24 months) + stakeholder map.	Screenshots of own settings + photographed stakeholder map + 2 primary sources on recent incident.
3	June 8 – June 14	AI Ethics: algorithmic bias, generative AI, deepfakes, AI authorship, AI in hiring and policing. Midterm Reflection due June 12.	Contribution #3: AI Output Critique anchored to a real algorithmic-harm incident (e.g., COMPAS, Amazon hiring tool, Rite Aid facial recognition) + Midterm Reflection video.	AI transcript + recorded oral reflection + 2 primary sources on the chosen incident.
4	June 15 – June 21	Cybersecurity ethics: ethical hacking and responsible disclosure; dual-use research; intellectual property in the AI era; professional codes (ACM/IEEE); cyberwarfare.	Contribution #4: Texas-Local Cyber Incident from last 12 months mapped onto specific ACM and IEEE code clauses.	Working link to local news + direct code-clause quotations + 2 primary sources verified by instructor.
5	June 22 – June 26	No new instructional content. Office hours expanded to Mon/Wed/Fri	Final Portfolio Project: integrated portfolio +	Internal cross-references to Contributions

Wk	Dates	Topics	Portfolio Contribution	Anti-AI Authenticity Mechanism
		2–4 PM. Optional peer-review forum. FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE FRIDAY JUNE 26 AT 11:59 PM.	synthesis essay + 3-min recorded oral defense.	#1–#4 + on-camera oral defense.
–	June 29 – July 1	Grading window (no student activity required). Instructor grades and posts final feedback; final grades submitted by July 1.	—	—

Appendix A: Portfolio Contribution Rubrics

Contribution #1: Personal Ethics Inventory + Foundational Incident (5% of final grade)

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
Historical incident research (Therac-25 or VW)	Accurate summary, 2 verifiable sources, direct quotes	Mostly accurate, 2 sources, minor gaps	Errors, missing sources or quotes	20%
Specificity of personal incidents	Three dated, vivid, plausible incidents	Three incidents, some specifics missing	Generic or undated	15%
Application of frameworks	Each framework correctly applied	Minor conceptual errors	Frameworks confused or misapplied	25%
Handwritten chart authenticity	Clear handwriting, dated index card visible	Index card missing date	Typed or unverifiable	15%

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
Scenario statement	Clear, focused, viable for the term	Adequate but vague	Unfocused	15%
AI Use Statement	Complete and specific	Present but vague	Missing	10%

Contribution #2: Recent Privacy Incident + Personal Data Audit + Stakeholder Map (7.5%)

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
Recent incident research (last 24 months)	Accurate summary, 2 verifiable working sources, direct quotes	Mostly accurate, minor sourcing gaps	Sources broken, fabricated, or missing	20%
Screenshot authenticity	Four screenshots with visible date stamps	Some dates obscured	Generic / unverifiable	15%
Contextual integrity analysis	Framework correctly applied to both incident and audit	Adequate application	Surface-level	20%
Stakeholder map (handwritten)	Six+ stakeholders, clear benefit/harm arrows	Four to five stakeholders	Fewer than four	20%
Written analysis quality	Clear, well-organized, specific	Generally clear	Vague or disorganized	15%
AI Use Statement	Complete and specific	Present but vague	Missing	10%

Contribution #3: Algorithmic-Harm Incident + AI Output Critique (7.5%)

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
Algorithmic-harm incident research	Accurate, 2 verifiable sources, direct quotes	Mostly accurate, minor sourcing gaps	Sources broken or fabricated	20%
AI transcript and screenshot	Complete transcript + timestamped screenshot	Transcript only	Missing or partial	10%
Specificity of critique (researched vs AI)	4+ specific weaknesses, direct quotes of AI	3 weaknesses identified	Generic critique	30%
Use of prior weeks	Clear references to Wk 1 and Wk 2 work	Some references	No continuity	15%
Ethical reasoning quality	Sophisticated, framework-grounded	Adequate framework use	Surface-level	15%
AI Use Statement	Detailed and accurate	Present but vague	Missing	10%

Contribution #4: Local Code Mapping (10%)

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
Local news source	Texas-local, last 12 months, working link	Texas but older or weak link	Not local or no link	15%
ACM/IEEE clause mapping	4+ ACM + 2+ IEEE clauses correctly cited	Mostly correct mapping	Incorrect citations	30%
Continuity with #1–#3	Explicit references throughout	Some references	None	20%

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
Annotated code PDF	10+ substantive margin comments	5–9 comments	Fewer than 5 or generic	20%
Writing quality + AI Use Statement	Clear, polished, AI use disclosed	Adequate	Unclear or missing AI statement	15%

Appendix B: Final Portfolio Project Rubric (30%)

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
Integration of Contributions #1–#4	All four chapters seamlessly integrated, lightly revised	Integration mostly clear	Chapters disconnected	20%
Synthesis Essay quality	Coherent argument across the four chapters; quotes each	Adequate synthesis	Summary only, no synthesis	25%
Oral Defense (3 min)	Confident, unscripted, directly answers the random prompt	Answers prompt, slightly read	Scripted or off-topic	25%
'How My Thinking Changed' reflection	Honest, specific, traces causation	Adequate	Generic	10%
Professional presentation	Polished PDF, clear navigation	Minor issues	Unclear	10%
Consolidated AI Use Statement	Complete and consistent	Present but vague	Missing or contradictory	10%

Criterion	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Weight
	with weekly statements			

Required University Statements

ADA Statement

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartze@sulross.edu or ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. RGC students can also contact Alejandra Valdez at 830-758-5006 or email alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832.

Students who need accommodations for the video-on requirements of this course (Midterm Reflection, Final Oral Defense, dated index card photos) must contact Accessibility Services in the first week of the course. Alternative authentication methods will be arranged in coordination with the instructor.

Student Responsibilities Statement

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the

course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

Counseling

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting Timelycare/SRSU. The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

Libraries

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123). Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff.

Classroom Climate of Respect

Importantly, this course will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues. Ethics requires conversation, and conversation requires respect.

Supportive Statement

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. I understand that the recent pandemic, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events may impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. The compressed Summer I schedule makes this especially important. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to reach out. I want to be a resource for you.

— End of Syllabus —