

Reading schedule

This schedule assumes twenty class meetings.

If there are fewer than 20, combine some suggested classes on the same chapter (e.g., meetings #13 and #14).

If there are more than 20, you could easily turn meetings #4, #9, #11, #16, and #18 into multiple lectures. You could also add a meeting based on the book's introduction: what sorts of common, unhelpful clichés do we often encounter when thinking about social media apps? How should we go about evaluating the ethics of new and upcoming technologies? There are more discussion cases in the book than just those I've recommended here, and they can help conduct effective in-class discussions.

If you have even more contact time with students, I suggest using the supplementary discussion cases that are accessible through Hackett's site for the book.

I also suggest relying on students' own experience with social media as much as possible. For instance, when discussing cancel culture and misinformation, you should ask the students to bring in their favorite instances of misinformation or cancellations that they've come across. This sort of activity is very effective and offloads some of the work from you, while yielding excellent learning outcomes.

Meeting #1

The nature and value of privacy

Reading: Chapter 1, section 1

Discussion case 4

Meeting #2

The RALC model of privacy (with a brief look at the non-intrusion model beforehand)

Reading: Chapter 1, sections 2.1 and 2.2

Discussion case 1

Meeting #3

The CI model of privacy

Reading: Chapter 1, section 2.3

Discussion cases 2 and 3

Meeting # 4

The problems with the attention economy

Reading: Chapter 2, sections 1-3

Discussion case 1

Meeting #5

The solutions to the problems, and consideration of the upsides of the attention economy

Reading: Chapter 3, sections 4-5

Discussion cases 2 and 3

Meeting #6

What are nudges, and are they good or bad?

Reading: Chapter 3, sections 1 and 2

Discussion case 2

Meeting #7

Nudging people toward the bad (and the good)

Reading: Chapter 3, sections 3 and 4

Discussion case 1

Meeting #8

Why echo chambers arise

Reading: Chapter 4, sections 1 and 2

Discussion case 1

Meeting #9

What makes echo chambers bad (and, in some cases, good)

Reading: Chapter 4, sections 3-5

Discussion cases 2 and 3

Meeting #10

The harms and causes of misinformation

Reading: Chapter 5, sections 1 and 2

Discussion cases 1 and 3

Meeting #11

Language-games and the removal of misinformation

Reading: Chapter 5, sections 3 and 4

Discussion case 2

Meeting #12

The risks of cancel culture

Reading: Chapter 6, sections 1 and 2

Discussion case 1

Meeting #13

The upsides of cancel culture

Reading: Chapter 6, sections 3 and 4

Discussion cases 2

Meeting #14

Online caring

Reading: Chapter 6, section 5

Discussion case 3

Meeting #15

Why offline friendships are superior to online ones

Reading: Chapter 7, section 1

Discussion case 2

Meeting #16

Why online friendships are better, and the future of friendship

Reading: Chapter 7, sections 2 and 3

Discussion case 4

Meeting #17

One reason to quit social-media apps: our own well-being

Reading: Chapter 8, section 1

Discussion case 1

Meeting #18

Consequences and quitting

Reading: Chapter 8, section 2

Discussion case 2

Meeting #19

Complicity in evil


Reading: Chapter 8, section 3

Discussion case 3

Meeting #20

Conclusion of the class

An Introduction to the Ethics of Social Media

 Hackett Publishing Company, 2025

Douglas R. Campbell

Reading: Conclusion

Discussion: overall, what should we think about the ethics of social media technologies?