



VICEROY NORTHWEST INSTITUTE FOR CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH



CySER Virtual Seminar

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Beyond the Harm Principle: What Students Can Teach Us About Cyber-Sanctity

Mar. 3, 2026, 1:10 – 2 PM Pacific

Team Link: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

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Call in (audio only) +1 509-498-6399 | Phone Conference ID: 112 422 694#

Abstract:

Current ethical frameworks in cybersecurity seem to gravitate toward utilitarian-style or rights-based harm reduction, yet this fails to capture the full scope of moral injury. Drawing on recent experiences developing and co-teaching a new Cyber Ethics course (CptS 424) at WSU, this talk interrogates how a pluralistic ethical approach, informed by Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), can expand our understanding of cyber vulnerability. By adopting MFT's broader vocabulary, students moved beyond a limited harm-centric model to address the non-physical sense of vulnerability inherent in digital intrusion. Students frequently brought forward a perspective centered on Purity, which is a foundation often sidelined throughout most ethical discourse. Students highlighted that the injuries resulting from violations of the Purity foundation can occur across the entire lifecycle of data, from its initial creation to its access and potential dissemination. They observed that cybersecurity incidents are often experienced not just as technical failures, but as violations of the integrity of personal identity and private digital sanctuaries. This language of integrity, which is central to the concept of Purity, provides prima facie evidence that our students have made progress towards identifying the underlying ethical principles that ground our practical security implementations. This inquiry seeks to help students, researchers, and practitioners recognize that cybersecurity is as much about maintaining moral sanctity as it is about preventing functional damage.

Bio:

Sherri Lynn Conklin is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the School of Politics, Philosophy, and Public Affairs (PPPA) and holds a faculty affiliation with WSU's CySER Institute. She conducts research on topics at the intersection of metaethics, normative ethics, and moral psychology, especially on the nature of moral justification and moral-worthiness. Her work has expanded into AI ethics, especially regarding questions related to AI moral status, responsible AI (broadly construed), as well as applied social and moral epistemology, especially relating to the norms governing information flow for cybersecurity tools as well as in the development and deployment of deepfakes. Her work emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary collaboration between science and the humanities and engaged philosophy.



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