CS 4002-2022
Robots and Society
Brainstorming Ideas

Issues come in two main varieties: "ought" or value issues and "is" or factual issues. "Is" issues are often expressed as questions starting with the words "is", "does", "will", etc. Resolving an "is" issue is a matter of finding out the facts of the matter using the methods of science, logic, journalism, etc. "Ought" issues, on the other hand, take the form of questions starting with the words "should", "ought", "must", etc. Resolving an "ought" issue is a matter of giving and responding to arguments concerning the consequences, lawfulness and virtues of different courses of action.

First select a scribe (to write down the minutes) and then a presenter (to outbrief your notes at the end of class). First write each team members name down. Then record each individual’s contribution’s (initials should be fine). Everyone must contribute something. The recorder should hand in their notes to me or the TAs at the end of class. If you have questions during the breakout request me or the TAs to join your group.

In small (4-5 people) groups, spend 10-15 minutes brainstorming on the production of two lists of issues concerning ONE of the following very broad topics (assigned to each group below):
(A) Robots and warfare (group 1, 6)
(B) Intelligent autonomous (sentient) robots, aka the singularity. (group 2, 7)
(C) Self-driving cars (group 3, 8)
(D) Domestic drones and privacy (group 4, 9)
(E) Robots and childcare (group 5, 10)

Your breakout group will address one of the topics listed above.

Your first list of issues should be "is" issues. The second should be "ought" issues. Spend about the same amount of time (e.g. five or so minutes) on each list, and make sure that you have at least four issues in each list. Pay attention to the definition of "is" and "ought" issues above and follow that format. You needn't have the answers, just the questions.

After the activity, time permitting we will discuss your issues as a class.

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Consider these questions moving forward: Which issues are connected and in what ways? How would one go about writing a term paper on them? What sources of information would be needed? Are there subsidiary issues that would also need to be addressed as part of the main issue? Which issues seem juicy enough -- not too broad, not too narrow, interesting to you personally, and of social significance--for you to care about for most of a semester?

This activity and the following discussion (especially the final question in the list above) should help you in your first term paper assignment, the proposal letter.