Internet

- Usage

- Government Control
  - Limit Access: Myanmar, Cuba, North Korea
  - Control Content (censorship):
    * Saudi Arabia—single point of traffic
    * China–ISP agreements
      filtering can affect transmission to other countries
  - Standards vary in West
    Germany forbids Neo-Nazi sites, but U.S. does not
• Pornography

  – Sexually explicit depiction of persons created to elicit significant sexual arousal on the part of the consumer
  – Kant: treats a person as a means to sexual gratification
  – Utilitarians:
    * harmful consequences
    * reduces dignity of human life
    * reduces likelihood that victims receive justice (desensitization)
    * encourages imitation that is criminal (e.g. rape)
    * offends most people, poisons the environment
    * diverts resources from more worthy activities
– Adults vs. Children

* If children are involved in production or consumption, it is immoral and exploitative (almost universal)

* Parents have the right to protect their children. Opens door to government role.

* If all are adults
  - Producers make money
  - Consumers derive pleasure
  - Harmless outlet for exploration

– Arguments can be contradictory – do we need descriptive ethics here?
- Censorship
  - Attempt to suppress or regulate public access to material considered offensive or harmful
  - Historically exercised by government or religious institutions
  - The printing press changed the game
  - Forms of Direct Censorship
    1. Government Monopolization
    2. Prepublication Review
    3. Licensing and Registration
  - Government Monopolization
    * Soviet control of all forms of publication and broadcast
    * No private copiers
    * Effective
    * Made more difficult by electronic computer and communication technology
  - Prepublication Review
    * Essential to keep material secret
    * Examples: nuclear weapons program, national security documents, material injurious to the reputation of leaders
− Licensing and Registration
  * Controls media with limited bandwidth – radio and TV broadcast at particular frequencies
  * FCC banned the use of certain words. (Look up George Carlin and Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television 1972)
− Self Censorship
  * ratings systems – TV and movies
  * scheduling – TV
  * web ratings – spotty
  * motivations: avoid persecution, maintain channels of communication and relationships, protect employees
− Internet Challenges
  * Many to many communication
  * Dynamic nature of users
  * Size
  * Lack of international control
– Kant – lived in an age of institutional thought control, opposed censorship (duty-based argument ?)

– John Stuart Mill opposed censorship
  * censorship may silence the voice of truth
  * censorship may silence part of the truth
  * in the clash of ideas truth is tested and validated
  * a tried and tested opinion is likely to have a ”vital effect on character and conduct”

* Principle of Harm –
  · an institution should intervene in the conduct of an individual if the individual’s activities are harming others
  · ”The only ground on which intervention is justified is to prevent harm to others; the individual’s own good is not a sufficient condition”
• Freedom of Expression
  – First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

• Children and the Internet
  – Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
    * Requires libraries receiving federal funds for Internet access to prevent children from accessing visual depictions of obscenity and child pornography
    * An adult can ask a librarian to remove the filter
    * In 2003 the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 for the law (U.S. vs. American Library Association)
      · Since libraries don’t offer X-rated print material or movies, they should not be obliged to offer pornography on the Internet.
      · Filters also block inoffensive pages. Asking to have filters removed can stigmatize patrons
• Identify Theft
  – 9 million victims in 2005
  – 12% computer related
  – mechanism: phishing
  – origination often outside U.S., hard to prosecute
  – average age is 40, experienced computer users

• Chat Room Predators

• False Information

• Addiction
  – Persistent, compulsive behavior that the addict recognizes to be harmful
  – Gambling, food, sex, long-distance running, programming (1976)