

# WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT ETHICS?

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Aug 2013

# KNOWLEDGE

- Ethics is the field of Philosophy devoted to the study of what we should do because it is right, or alternatively, how to achieve good
- Why do we care about Philosophy?
  - Some (most?) of you want to get a PhD – Doctor of Philosophy!
  - Professional ethics plays an important role in what you do

# WHAT ARE ETHICS?

- Various classes of ethics study, including normative, applied, and meta-ethics
  - We are more concerned here with normative ethics – what you should do in any given situation
- Various classes of application, including personal, professional, and societal
  - We are interested in professional ethics, which should match personal ethics

# BASIC ETHICS

- Which is more the goal – to do what is right (deontological), or to do what brings the best results (ontological, or consequentialism)? Do ethics really matter at all (cf. nihilism and existentialism)? Are we just to all (justice theory)?
- Our society is primarily based on deontological grounds, with some consideration of utilitarianism and justice
  - “It isn’t whether you win or lose, it is how you play the game” (yes)
    - Dismissal of charges if procedures (e.g., Miranda) not followed
  - “I had to follow orders” (no)

# PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: RESPECT

- Respect for science
- Respect for colleagues
- Respect for subjects
- Respect for the public

# RESPECT FOR SCIENCE

- Fundamental issue is to adhere to good scientific principles
  - Do not misrepresent or manufacture results
  - Always present full results
  - Be open to alternative results and refutation
  - Disclose and avoid conflicts of interest
  - Do not represent expertise you do not have
- Most all – remain objective!

# RESPECT FOR COLLEAGUES

- Always provide credit for those who contribute to your results
- Do not take credit for work you did not do
- Cite support work appropriately
- Evaluate new and contradictory results as objectively as possible, or declare conflicts
- Always evaluate results rather than colleagues
- Provide reasoning and citations in reviews

# RESPECT FOR SUBJECTS/USERS

- Be aware of rules for human research (and animal research, if appropriate)
- Treat subjects / customers as people rather than as items
- Respect and protect privacy; provide appropriate security
- Provide opportunities for informed consent, and withdrawal (autonomy), as appropriate
- Never use improperly-obtained results
- Do not blame subjects / customers for unexpected results

# RESPECT FOR SOCIETY

- Do not endanger others with experiments or products
- Be aware of impact of results, and seek to mitigate harmful results
- Respect property rights
- Be prudent in use of (public) funding
- Seek to integrate new knowledge into common use
- Use your expertise when you see a problem

# ENGINEERING ETHICS

- Design and build with failure consequences and modes in mind (safety, security)
- Protect privacy
- Protect property rights
- Know personal limits and represent them accordingly
  - Includes staying current
- Recognize social norms and accommodate them if possible

# SUMMARY CONCEPT

Present in many systems of ethics:

“Treat others – colleagues, subjects, and the public – as you would wish to be treated in a similar situation.”

# ISSUES

- Plagiarism
- Fabrication of data / results
- Whistleblowing
- Misconduct of various forms
  - Academic
  - Professional
- Leadership

# FOR MORE INFO

ACM Code of Ethics <<http://www.acm.org/about/code-of-ethics>>

SE Code of Ethics <<http://www.acm.org/about/se-code>>

IEEE Code of Ethics <<http://www.ieee.org/portal/pages/iportals/aboutus/ethics/code.html>>

CITI <<http://www.citiprogram.org/>>

National Academies “On Being a Scientist” <[http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=4917](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=4917)>

LANGURE Intro Course <<http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/comstock/langure/Corecourse.htm>>