This presentation provides ethical theories and frameworks for professional engineers so that they can make ethically defensible decisions that balance rights, duties, benefits, and harms among multiple stakeholders in complicated situations.
Applied Professional Ethics for Engineers

Agenda

1. Presentation overview
2. Introduction to ethical analysis
3. Business ethics vs. Professional ethics
4. Ethics and Leadership
5. Questions
Applied Professional Ethics for Engineers

- BOB’s Family
- BOB’s Profession
- BOB’s Job
- GENERAL PUBLIC

Duty

BOB
Power Systems Engineer

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- How can Bob expand his approach to ethical reasoning to make better decisions?
- How can Bob explain his professional status to others in the business world?
- How can Bob help shape a more ethical culture at his workplace?
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Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Velasquez:

Characteristics of moral standards

“Moral standards...deal with matters that we think are of serious consequence, are based on good reasons and not on authority, override self-interest...”
Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Rhode:

Goal of applied ethics

“To define ethical conduct using objective standards and an analysis of benefits, harms, rights, and needs”
Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Kohlberg’s stage theory of moral development

Post-conventional: Social Contract and Universal Ethical Principles

Conventional: Peers and Laws

Pre-conventional: Punishment and Reward

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Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Four Lenses of Ethical Analysis:

1. Utilitarian Analysis
2. Individual Rights Analysis
3. Justice and Fairness Analysis
4. Ethic of Care Analysis
Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Utilitarian Analysis – consequences

Greatest good for greatest number
Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Individual Rights Analysis – intent

Freedom, choice, and dignity
Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Justice and Fairness Analysis – balance

Benefits and burdens, punishment, equality
Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Ethic of Care Analysis – relationships

Web of connectivity, duties of care
Introduction to Ethical Analysis

Decision making framework

**Ethical Standards**

1. Maximize social utility,
2. Respect moral rights,
3. Distribute benefits and burdens justly,
4. Exercise caring

**Proposed action/inaction**

**Factual Information**

Concerning the policy, institution, or behavior under consideration

**Ethical Judgment**

On the rightness or wrongness of the policy, institution, or behavior
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Business Ethics

Business ethics is ________________.

a) an oxymoron. Everyone knows business and ethics don't mix.

b) unnecessary. It doesn't lead to competitive advantage.

c) common sense. Just do the right thing and don't do bad things.

d) a key part of strategic management. Companies that "do good" can also "do well."
Business Ethics
Business Ethics

Discrimination

The prejudicial treatment or considerate of a person, racial group, minority, etc. based on category rather than individual excluding or restricting members of the grounds of race, sex, or age.
Business Ethics

“What does ethics mean to you?”

"Ethics has to do with what my feelings tell me is right or wrong."

"Ethics has to do with my religious beliefs."

"Being ethical is doing what the law requires."

"Ethics consists of the standards of behavior our society accepts."

"I don't know what the word means."
What does it mean to be a professional?

What does “professional” mean to you?
What does it mean to be a professional?

3 necessary features for a profession:

1. Extensive training – at least college, usually graduate school
2. Intellectual component (as opposed to physical skill) – providing advice and counsel
3. Provides service to society
What does it mean to be a professional?

Professions provide important services that require extensive intellectual training.

Other features of professions:
1. Process of certification or licensing
2. Organization of members – to advance the goals of the profession
3. Autonomy in work – self directed, using judgment and discretion
What does it mean to be a professional?

Common bias –

Professionals are **primarily** devoted to service and are only **secondarily** devoted to earning a living/making money (**not necessarily true**).
What does it mean to be a professional?

Two primary categories of professions:

1. Consulting professions:
   - Law, medicine, architecture, accounting, dentistry, psychiatry, **ENGINEERING**

2. Scholarly professions:
   - Research scientist, professor
What does it mean to be a professional?

Consulting professions generally focus on providing services to clients for a fee.

1. Provide important services (health, safety, welfare)
2. Usually have a monopoly
3. Disciplined internally – less public control
What does it mean to be a professional?

Professions “profess,” take vows (orig. religious order)

One “professes” to be skilled and to follow the vocation

Historically only a few professions:
- Divinity, law, medicine, military
What does it mean to be a *professional*?

To “profess” to know better than others

Claims exclusive rights to practice as vocation and to give specialized advice

- Asks to be trusted – client must trust judgment and skill – divulge confidential or sensitive info
- Sets the terms and definitions within the field; self-governing
What does it mean to be a professional?

“Occupation” and “profession” are two end points on a spectrum

“Emerging professions”:
Elite within the field take the lead toward professional status
- Construct and publish codes of ethics
- Seek licensure from state
- Establish a professional association
- Establish measures and titles
- Establish or strengthen professional schools
What does it mean to be a professional?
What does this mean for the individual professional?

if

you know more than the general public
others must place trust in you
you have power/influence/authority
What does it mean to be a *professional*?

What does this mean for the individual professional?

*then*

You have **greater access** to resources and information

You have **less supervision**

You are supposed to act in **the best interests of others**
What does it mean to be a professional?

What does this mean for the individual professional?

*and you must guard against*

**Acting or failing to act** in order to

- Enrich yourself at the expense of others
- Use information provided in confidence for self-benefit
- Evade societal control or scrutiny for self-benefit
What does it mean to be a *professional*?

As a professional **you are in a better position** than those who are not in your profession **to know** whether your conduct is ethical or unethical.

**Role morality:** Depending upon the role you play in society, the moral rules and obligations are different.

Professionals are held to a **higher standard**.
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Ethics and Leadership

Complexity of human dishonesty

- “Bluffing” vs. lying in negotiations
- Effect of “psychological distance”
- Impact of “relational” conflicts of interest
- Moral “depletion” in high-stress situations
Ethics and Leadership

Complexity of business organizations

- “Cluelessness” of managers and leaders
- Four frames of organizations
  1. Structural
  2. Human Resources
  3. Political
  4. Symbolic
Ethics and Leadership

Behavior of organizational leaders

- Five primary mechanisms that a leader can use to influence an organization’s culture
  1. Attention
  2. Reaction to Crises
  3. Role Modeling
  4. Allocation of Rewards
  5. Criteria for Selection and Dismissal
Bob will strive to use the ethical lenses of utility, rights, justice and care in his ethical decision making (not just his instincts).
Bob will make his **professional status**, and duty to the safety of the public, clearly known to those with whom he interacts on a daily basis.
Bob will remember that humans can be irrational, clueless and strongly affected by workplace culture. He will work to help create a workplace culture that reduces temptation, approaches problems from different and diverse perspectives, and aligns managerial behavior with professional duties and goals.
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Thank you!

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