



Social and Ethical Aspects of Systems: MS008A

Kirsten Ribu

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Welcome!

Course materials:

- Ethics for the Information Age – Michael J. Quinn (second edition)
- Lecture notes
- Articles
- **Course home page:**
www.iu.hio.no/~kirstenr/etikk/ethics.html
- Evaluation: Essay/participation
- No exam

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'Don't be evil'



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Why do we include a course in Ethics?

- As System Administrators (or in other jobs) you will have **responsibilities**, and must make **decisions**.
- You will be writing **proposals** for projects or purchase of hardware for your company
- You may be producing and selling software, which you need to convince people that they need 😊

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More.....

- You might be asked to do something **unethical by your manager, for instance to read someone else's email**
- You must be able to argue in favour of your views and defend them
- You must know about:
 - Professional and ethical conduct
 - Laws and regulations
 - Professional responsibilities

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Course Topics

- Ethical perspectives
- Argumentation and presentation techniques
- Laws, regulations, copyright
- Protection of privacy, freedom of speech
- Computer crime
- Professional ethics and personal responsibilities

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The course consists of

- Lectures
- Exercises with discussions.
 - Find examples on the Internet and in the Press: *Search for examples of GOOD ethical conduct!*
- Writing exercises ("mini-writing")
- Writing argumentative essays, defending your own views.
 - = Preparations for writing your Master Thesis!
- Compulsory participation (at least 80%)

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Today

- What are Ethics?
- About argumentative essay writing

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Introduction to Ethics: Ethics vs. morality

- **Morality** refers to the rules and standards governing our conduct in society.
- **Ethics**: The philosophical study of morality.

Analogy:

Society= a town full of people driving car

- **Morality** is the road network, the traffic rules and regulations
- **Ethics** is the observation and evaluation of the drivers' conduct:
 - *Ethical (staying on the road) or unethical (taking short cuts, speeding, drunk driving etc).*

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What is Computer Ethics?

An attempt at definitions:

- Computer ethics is concerned with standards of conduct **applying to the use of computers.**
- Computer ethics can be understood as that branch of applied ethics which **studies and analyzes social and ethical impacts of information technology.**

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Why do we need computer ethics?

- New technology poses new problems.
- The growth of the Internet has created several new legal issues = global issues (?)

Discuss!

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Copyright

- Some main concerns in computer ethics today are
 - questions of copyright
 - privacy
 - censorship
- **Example:**
 - *My MSc. thesis was copied and parts were published under a different name.*
 - *Is this something I should anticipate since I published my work on the Internet without any copyright restrictions?*

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Basic Ethical Principles

- The same in all professions and other aspects of life
 - Honesty
 - Responsibility
 - Fairness
 - Tolerance
- There are cultural differences.
 - *Example: In Poland it is unethical to throw away bread.*
- Ethics change with the times and a change in laws
 - *For instance: Homosexuality was prohibited by law in Norway until the beginning of the seventies.*
 - Some people still regard it as immoral, or a 'sin'

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New technology = new ethical problems

- Traditional rules of conduct are not always applicable to a new medium
- A question that often arises: Should a device, a technique or technology be restricted because people can use it for illegal or harmful actions as well as beneficial ones?

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Example

Mobile phones with cameras. Pupils at school take photos of other pupils in the shower, and publish the pictures on the Internet.

- **Discuss.** How to deal with this?

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The 'Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics'

1. THOU SHALT NOT USE A COMPUTER TO HARM OTHER PEOPLE.
2. THOU SHALT NOT INTERFERE WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S COMPUTER WORK.
3. THOU SHALT NOT SNOOP AROUND IN OTHER PEOPLE'S COMPUTER FILES.
4. THOU SHALT NOT USE A COMPUTER TO STEAL.
5. THOU SHALT NOT USE A COMPUTER TO BEAR FALSE WITNESS.
6. THOU SHALT NOT COPY OR USE PROPRIETARY SOFTWARE FOR WHICH YOU HAVE NOT PAID.
7. THOU SHALT NOT USE OTHER PEOPLE'S COMPUTER RESOURCES WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION OR PROPER COMPENSATION.
8. THOU SHALT NOT APPROPRIATE OTHER PEOPLE'S INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT.
9. THOU SHALT THINK ABOUT THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROGRAM YOU ARE WRITING OR THE SYSTEM YOU ARE DESIGNING.
10. THOU SHALT ALWAYS USE A COMPUTER IN WAYS THAT INSURE CONSIDERATION AND RESPECT FOR YOUR FELLOW HUMANS.

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Important! Acknowledgement of Source

Reference:

- *COMPUTER ETHICS INSTITUTE*
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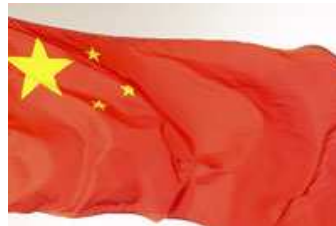
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Chinese version of Google News

- <http://www.pandia.com/sw-2005/09-china.html>



China has succeeded in putting such pressure on global search engines like Google and Yahoo that they have conceded to make certain information inaccessible in some of their Chinese versions.

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RSF



- The organization Reporters Without Frontiers (RSF) has reported about this:
 - Article: [Google launches censored version of its search-engine](#)

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BREAK

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Argumentation

'Argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify the standpoint'.



Eemeren, F.H. van, Grootendorst, R. & Snoeck Henkemans, F. et al (1996). Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory. A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

What an argument is not

- A mere statement of certain views
- Stating prejudices
- Unpleasant and pointless
- A verbal fistfight



What an argument can be

To give an argument is to:

- Offer a set of reasons or evidence in support of a conclusion
- An attempt to support certain views with reasons
- Not pointless, but essential

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Argumentative essays

- In this course you also will be writing argumentative essays.
- There is a difference between merely **stating your views** and **offering reasons for your views**.
- This course is concerned with the basis of your beliefs
- You will question your beliefs and work out and **defend your views**.
- **This means thinking for yourself.**
- **The ability to defend your views is a measure of individual reflection**

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Argument means inquiry

- **Inquiry** is a way of finding out which views are better than others.
 - Not all views are equal!
- Some conclusions are supported by **good reasons**
- Others have **weaker** support
 - Often we do not know which are which!
- We must give argument for different conclusions, then assess the arguments to see how strong they are.

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Arguments support conclusions

- We **arrive at a conclusion** supported by reason
- We **defend** our conclusion with **arguments**
- A good argument **does not repeat conclusions**
- It offers reason and evidence, so that people can make up their own minds
- In order to convince others of your view you must **explain** how you arrived at the conclusion
- It is **NOT** a mistake to have strong views, even controversial ones.

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General rules for Arguments

1. **Distinguish premises and conclusion**
2. **Present your ideas in a natural order**
3. **Start from reliable premises**
4. **Use definite, specific, concrete language**
5. **Avoid loaded language**
6. **Stick to one meaning for each term**

Source: A Rulebook for Arguments – Anthony Weston

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Distinguish premises and conclusion

- 1.step: What are you trying to prove?
- 2. step: What is your conclusion?
- 3. step: Give reasons for your conclusion. Answer the '**whys?**'.
- The statements which give your reasons are called 'premises'.

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Example:

- **Winston Churchill:** *'Be an optimist. There is not much use being anything else.'*
 - This is an **argument**: Churchill is giving a **reason** to be an optimist.
 - **The reason = The premise:** *'There is not much use being anything else.'*

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Using arguments as a means of inquiry

- Start with the **conclusion** you wish to defend
- State it clearly.
- Ask what **reasons** you have for drawing the conclusion
- **The Churchill example:** What reasons can you give to prove that we should be optimists?
 - Because Churchill was an authority? Many famous people have recommended pessimism 😞
- So, what are **your** reasons for thinking we should be optimists?
- **Do optimists more often succeed?** If this is your premise, say so clearly.

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Present your ideas in a natural order

- Set out your ideas in an order that shows your line of thought.
- Put your conclusion first, followed by your reasons,
or
- put your premises first and draw the conclusion at the end.

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Start from reliable premises

- Your conclusion will be weak if your premises are weak, or not true.
 - **Example.** *'Nobody in the world is really happy. Therefore, it seems that human beings are not made for happiness. Why should we expect what we can never find?'*
- **Premise:** *Nobody is really happy.* Is this true?
- Then what about the conclusion?

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Lack of logic

Premises:

*Nothing is better than eternal happiness.
But a cheese sandwich is better than nothing.*

Conclusion:

'Therefore, a cheese sandwich is better than eternal happiness.'

What is wrong here?

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Use definite, specific, concrete language

- Write concretely, avoid abstract, vague, general terms.
- Use **short sentences**.
- **Do not state several different things in one sentence.**
- **Do not copy from others** (for instance the web). It will be obvious that it is not your own language or your own view.

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Stick to one meaning for each term

- Do not use a single word in more than one sense!
- **Example:** *"Women and men are physically and emotionally different. The sexes are not equal, and therefore, the law should not pretend that we are!"*
- Problem with the argument:
 - The word 'equal'. Equal = identical.
 - Equality before the law means something different: Entitled to the same rights.

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Assignment:

- Write a short note, approximately 1 page.
- **Topic:** 'Internet Censorship. Is it necessary, or desirable?'
 - What is your view? Use arguments to explain how you arrived at your conclusion.
- **Deadline: 1 week from today.**

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Next 2 lessons:

- **Friday:** Writing – essays and sketches – tips and tricks.
- **Tuesday:** Ethical Theory.
 - Prepare for the lecture, read chapter 2 "Introduction to Ethics".