

CMSC 304  
Fall 2014



# Ethical Frameworks and Ethical Questions

*Adapted in part from slides by Dr. Eddie Roache, 2013*



# Some Questions

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- ◆ What do we mean by...
  - ◆ Moral obligation?
  - ◆ Moral responsibility?
  - ◆ Morally praiseworthy?
  - ◆ Morally blameworthy
  
- ◆ What are 'rights'?
  
- ◆ Morality vs. ethics:
  - ◆ When is something immoral?
  - ◆ When is something amoral?
  - ◆ Is there such a thing as absolute morality?



# What is Ethics?

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- ◆ A branch of philosophy (aka “moral philosophy”)
- ◆ The study of right and wrong action
- ◆ Descriptive (or comparative) ethics:
  - ◆ How do people think about these issues? What are the laws? What are the cultural norms?
- ◆ Prescriptive ethics:
  - ◆ How should one act? What should the laws and norms be? What is right and wrong?
- ◆ Partiality, impartiality, and moral partiality



# Ethical Theories are..

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- ◆ Coherent: the pieces form a unified whole
- ◆ Consistent: different elements don't contradict
- ◆ Comprehensive: applicable to a range of questions
- ◆ Systematic: generalizable rules
- ◆ Impartial: applied without prejudice
  - ◆ Actually, not everyone agrees on this!
  - ◆ Do you have the same moral responsibilities to your classmate and your mother?



# Branches of Ethics

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- ◆ Applied ethics
  - ◆ Identifying the correct course of action for real problems.
  - ◆ The focus of this class!
- ◆ Normative ethics (or just “ethics”)
  - ◆ What *should* people do? What should they think?
- ◆ Meta-ethics
  - ◆ How do we set about answering these questions?
  - ◆ What is the “good?” How are moral propositions defended?
- ◆ For philosophers, not descriptive ethics
  - ◆ That is sociology.



# Normative Ethics (“Ethics”)

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- ◆ Consequentialism/utilitarianism (consequence based)
- ◆ Deontology (duty based)
- ◆ Contractualism (contract based)
- ◆ Natural rights (rights based)
- ◆ Virtue (character based)

# Consequentialism

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- ◆ Sometimes “Utilitarianism”
- ◆ Maximize the overall good:
  - ◆ ‘The greatest good for the greatest number’.
- ◆ Impartiality and agent-neutrality:
  - ◆ Everyone's happiness counts the same.
  - ◆ My good counts for no more than anyone else's good.
  - ◆ My analysis of good is not me-specific.
- ◆ What’s “the good?” Pleasure? Beauty? Money?
- ◆ Where does this go right? Wrong?





# Deontology

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- ◆ The *right* is more important than the *good*.
  - ◆ It's about what you do, not what happens.
- ◆ It is moral to follow rules, and intent is what matters.
- ◆ Where do rules come from:
  - ◆ God
  - ◆ A list of duties and obligations
  - ◆ The rights of others
  - ◆ The social contract of rational agents:
- ◆ Where does this go wrong?





# Contractualism

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- ◆ Contractualism (contract based)
  - ◆ Do exactly and only those things where a rational agent would want to live in a world where everyone did those things.
- ◆ A “social contract” is a theory describing:
  - ◆ The source of the power of the state; the reason we follow authority; and a mechanism for agreeing on moral concepts.
- ◆ Where does this go wrong?
- ◆ What is a rational agent?
  - ◆ How is it required to help someone?
  - ◆ And people are not rational agents.



# Next class:

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- ◆ Rights-Based
  - ◆ Natural Rights
  - ◆ Legal Rights
- ◆ Virtue-Based
- ◆ Just-Consequentialism



# Next Class

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- ◆ A few more systems; some key concepts
- ◆ **Read: All About Reading Journals (schedule)**
  - ◆ You will be graded on quality and quantity.
  - ◆ Based partly on Participation Portfolios \* 3.
- ◆ The first RJ is due **by 9pm, ~~Sept 11~~ Sept 12<sup>th</sup>**.
- ◆ A look at the schedule...

# CMSC 304: Ethical and Social Issues in Information Technology

## Course Schedule — Fall 2014

**this class**

Read this by the time you come to this class (or earlier, when there's an RJ due)

**Homework.** The assignment itself, turnin links, and a **due date**. Everything you need to turn things in on time.

Handouts, info, links, and lecture notes will be posted here, usually just before this class

Class	Date	Topic	Reading	Homework	Slides, Handouts, Links to Assignments
1	Wed 8/27	Course overview			<a href="#">Writing guidelines</a> <a href="#">Academic honesty policy</a> <a href="#">Participation mini-assignment</a> <a href="#">Student survey</a> <a href="#">Slides</a>
3	Mon 9/8	Ethical frameworks		Due Sept 7 9pm: – <a href="#">Finding Readings Assignment</a>	Read <a href="#">All about Reading Journals</a> Lecture: Ethical Frameworks <a href="#">Slides</a>
4	Wed 9/10	Ethical frameworks	– <a href="#">Ethical Concepts through section 2.3 (pg 27)</a>	<b>CHANGED</b> Due Friday Sept 12 9pm: – RJ 1 (on Piazza; tag #rj1)	