**CMSC 304 - Discussion Questions for Tuesday 3/12
(Targeted Advertising)**

Here are two mini-cases for you to consider:

1. A well known search company named Noodle hires you to update their advertising system. This new approach will integrate targeted ads seamlessly into the search results, highlighting results from paid sponsors in a way that is indistinguishable from normal search results. Clicking on these results will also set specialized prices by the sponsoring company that will match their model of a customer’s “expected value” for the products being advertised. Noodle has a separate division that helps sponsors to build these value-prediction models based on the customer’s search history.
2. A medical insurance company (Purple Cross/Purple Shield) hires you to work on a software project that will use targeted-advertising technology to mine publicly available data for use in their risk assessment module. The results of this analysis will enable PCPS to set premiums more accurately, based on customers’ public history of behaviors that may influence their health positively (purchases of exercise equipment) or negatively (purchases of junk food). The company is considering offering a sign-on bonus to customers who make their Facebook accounts available to the company so that they have additional sources of data for this module.

Choose one of these cases, and discuss the following questions:

1. What moral imperatives and professional responsibilities (from the ACM Code of Ethics) apply to this situation? Which principles (and subitems within the principles) from the ACM Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice apply?
2. What are the ethical tradeoffs involved? (principles/values, stakeholders, consequences)
3. What are the policies that you would suggest to Noodle or PCPS to ensure that their processes are fair and nondiscriminatory?
4. What questions do you have about applicable laws that might need to be understood in order to determine whether the proposed software processes are actually legal?
5. Would you take these jobs? If so, under what conditions?

Of course, if you have time, you may also discuss the second case.