Some Questions

- 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?

- 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:

- 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

- **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")

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

- 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

- 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

- 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:

- Rights-Based
  - Natural Rights
  - Legal Rights
- Virtue-Based
- Just-Consequentialism
Next Class

◆ 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 11th, Sept 12th.

◆ A look at the schedule…
CMSC 304: Ethical and Social Issues in Information Technology
Course Schedule — Fall 2014

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

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

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