

A3: Ethics and Professional Conduct in Software Engineering

1 Introduction

In this assignment, you will get familiar with the ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct [ACM-CE'18] and will reflect on its impact in software development.

When preparing this assignment, consider that the goals of this activity are:

- i. To offer a space where students can reflect on the ethical implications of software engineering practices; and
- ii. To provide students with the opportunity to exercise and improve their written communication skills.



Professional conduct and academic integrity policies apply to all the activities in this course. Check the [CS414 website](#) for more information.

2 The brief

Read Bill Sourour's "The code I'm still ashamed of" [Sourour'16] and the "ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct: [ACM-CE'18].

The deliverable of this assignment is an **opinion essay** that answers the following question:

*Does someone in Bill's position [Sourour'16] have an ethical obligation to act differently?
If so, how should he have responded to the customer's requirements?*

Your essay must:

- i. Clearly state your opinion and be supported by reasons and/or examples. Use the "ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct" [ACM-CE'18] as a reference in at least one of these reasons/examples.
- ii. Be at least 900 words and at most 1,200 words.
- iii. Be submitted as a PDF file through Canvas before class (i.e., before 9:00am).



Guidelines on writing opinion essays were outlined in the brief of assignment A1. Please consider the feedback you received from A1. You are still welcome to google for resources on how to write opinion essays.

3 Notes

- Name your file as follows: A3-lastname.pdf.
- Proofread carefully your essay.
- You will not receive credit for this assignment if:
 - You do not submit your essay.

- The file you submit cannot be opened.
- You will get points off if:
 - Your essay contains typos or grammar errors.
 - Your essay does not fit the brief.
 - Your file does not follow the specified naming conventions.
 - Your file is not in the specified format.

4 Rubric

Item	Points
Title	/1
Introduction	/1
Thesis	/1
Arguments	/4
Conclusion	/1
Post-discussion*	/2
<i>Total</i>	<i>/10</i>

*During the due date lecture, we will develop an activity complementary to the essay. You must attend the lecture to participate in the activity and be eligible for the corresponding points.

5 More on unethical/illegal behavior in software engineering

Ethics should always be part of the conversation in IT. If you are interested in reading other stories about this topic, the following are some starting points:

- "Programmers are having a huge discussion about the unethical and illegal things they've been asked to do" by Julie Bort (2016). Available: <https://www.businessinsider.com/programmers-confess-unethical-illegal-tasks-asked-of-them-2016-11?r=UK>
- "Unethical and Illegal Practices in Coding: From Prevention to Action" by Sophie Vande Kerkhove (2019). Available: <https://www.welcometothejungle.com/en/articles/ethical-illegal-coding>
- "Are Programmers Ethically (and Legally) Responsible for Their Code?" by Jennifer Riggins (2018). Available: <https://thenewstack.io/are-programmers-ethically-and-legally-responsible-for-their-code/>
- "What is the most unethical thing you've done as a programmer?" in HackerNews. Available: <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=17692005>

6 References

[ACM-CE'18] ACM. 2018. ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics>

[Sourour'16] Sourour, Bill. 2016. "The code I'm still ashamed of". In freeCodeCamp news. Available: <https://www.freecodecamp.org/news/the-code-im-still-ashamed-of-e4c021dff55e>