CSE3PPE / CSE5003

Professional Practices and Entrepreneurship in I.T.

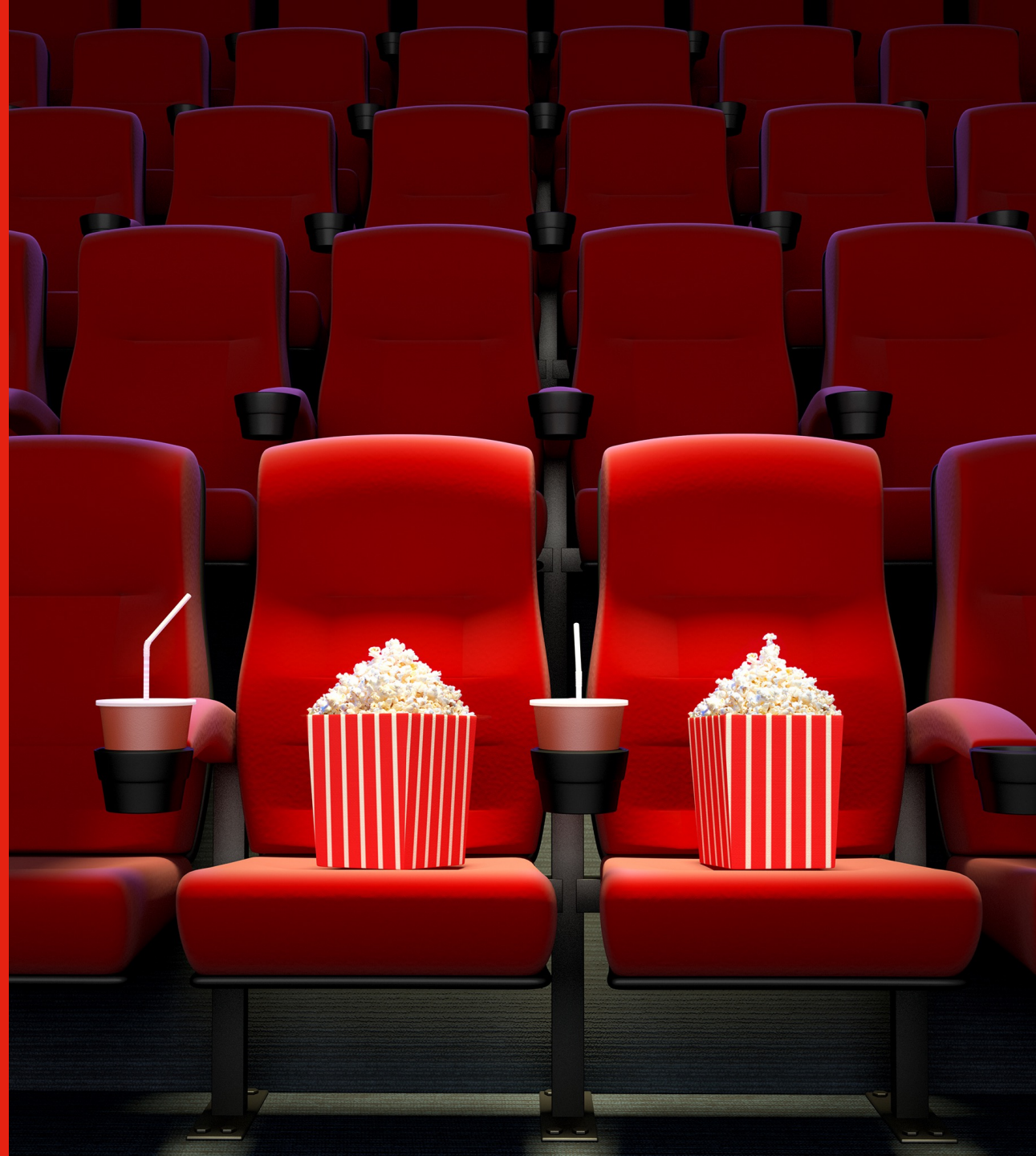
Lecture 8

Semester 1 2024

Lecture 8

Ethics

(Part 2)



What are the facts?

An important step in the Doing Ethics Technique is to identify facts.

With the increasing amount of misinformation available today, this can be difficult to work out.

In this next section we will break down flawed arguments. These are known as fallacies.

A fallacy is a flawed argument.

What are the facts?

Understanding when arguments or statements are incorrect is vital in the process of ethical decision making.

As humans, we like to believe what other people are saying.

We don’t always behave rationally.

We can be convinced to believe something that is not true simply from not detecting when fallacies are being used, or from making the effort to locate the real facts.

The first step in exploring facts is to recognise the difference between a fact and an opinion.

A fact is generally based on evidence, while an opinion is more centred around our personal beliefs.

Watch: the fact/opinion distinction

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0C3_W15Tc4
This video explores the distinction between fact and opinion and runs for 2 minutes and 29 seconds (John Corvino, 2018).

Common fallacie

Straw person fallacies

- **Bhumi:**

- The ancient Greeks first recognised that the Earth was a sphere from being able to detect changes in shadows across the year and used the positions of stars and constellations to calculate distances.

- They realised the Earth was a sphere from the shadow it casts on the moon during a lunar eclipse.

- Scientists have for many years confirmed the Earth is a sphere, and when you fly in an aeroplane, you can see the horizon shows the curvature of the planet.

Vijay:

What Bhumi is saying is wrong.

The ancient Greeks were terrible at keeping their society together, so why should we believe them?

People who can't maintain their society show they are incapable of proving anything.

The Greeks didn't invent cars or computers. Where is your evidence they were even smart? We can't believe stupid people who say the Earth is a sphere.

That's crazy.

Straw person fallacy

Vijay has countered Bhumi's argument about the discovery by the Greeks by **arguing about something else** (the Greek's ability to maintain their civilisation).

Bhumi did not present this as part of her argument.

Therefore, Vijay is arguing against a false premise, something Vijay created.

This is known as a **straw person fallacy**.

Straw person fallacy

Here is another example:

Gilbert:
You should be careful when hiking in the Australian bush. There are venomous snakes out there that can harm you.

Rosie:
Snakes are not dangerous! My friend has a python. It has never hurt anybody.

Here, Rosie has replaced the premise of the argument (dangerous venomous snakes in the bush) with an argument about a friend's pet python (a non-venomous snake). Gilbert didn't raise this in his argument.

Rosie has attacked a straw person.

False Dilemmas

A false dilemma is another technique used in arguments to create the scenario of a limited number of options when the reality might be one or more other options or positions to consider.

Consider the following:

My boss is either telling the truth or lying.

They are not telling the truth, so they must be lying.

False Dilemmas

This may not be the full picture. The boss might be misinformed or have made a mistake. That does not make them a liar.

Without considering this possibility, the argument above is presented as a false dilemma.

False dilemmas occur when someone tries to oversimplify something, or perhaps try to convince someone of only a small number of possibilities. It is important to be aware of this technique.

Countering false dilemmas.
This requires you to consider the limitations of the false dilemma and ask: are there other alternatives we should consider?

Slippery Slopes

A slippery slope is a fallacy where the impact of something will lead to something else happening (usually more disastrous).

- You shouldn't eat that cake! You will end up fat and die of heart disease.
- This new legislation will result in the end of democracy and society as we know it.

These are examples of slippery slopes.

More fallacies

There are many more fallacies that can be explored to help us better understand how arguments are formed, and how to work through the differences between facts and opinions.

The more we understand fallacies, the more we can identify facts and use these for the basis of sound ethical decision-making processes.

Additional videos on this topic will be provided at the end of this module.

Ethics and the workplace

We have spent some time exploring fallacies and distinguishing fact from opinion.

Why is this important?

These skills are important for navigating life, love, family, community and our workplaces. Most of us will spend a significant part of our lives in workplaces that combine challenges around working with other people, pressure and deadlines, and sometimes, moments where we need to make ethical decisions.

In the workplace, our decisions may be influenced by laws and personal beliefs. They can also be influenced by industry standards, company values, or codes of conduct. These may not cover every scenario.

What happens when you are faced with a dilemma and are unsure of the best way to decide on a course of action?

Ethical issues in ICT

Category	Ethical issue	Related issues
Censorship	Freedom of speech on the internet	Who is responsible?
Gender	Dealing with data skewed by gender	
Liability and accountability	In specifications In design and implementation	
Information and privacy	E-mail Monitoring Sniffing Who has access to your personal data? Matching across databases Selling database information	
Security	Passwords Creating systems that perform appropriately Responsibility for identity Software piracy Viruses Hackers Worms Encryption Trap doors Super-user privileges and responsibilities Firewalls vs. Free access	Respect for Others (Flaming) Identity (anonymity) Responsibility (web-page content)

Goals of ICT ethics education

- Argue from example, analogy and counter-example
- Identify and evaluate alternative courses of action
- Identify ethical principles and stakeholders
- Apply ethical codes
- Explore issues of common good versus individual good
- Develop strong self-awareness and good communication skills (relationships)

Ethics

- Personal ethics
  - Influenced by your parents, your peers, the schools you went to, your friends, significant others in your life, books you read and so on
- Professional ethics
  - Values that should guide a professional: in Australia, these are defined by the Australian Computer Society.
- Philosophical ethics
  - Defined by moral philosophers, both past and present

We want you to…

- Be aware of ethical principles that relate to the IT environment
- Be able to assess a situation and determine if there is an ethical problem
- Be able to assess the alternative courses of action and determine which is the most appropriate
- Be familiar with professional bodies' codes of ethics

Ethical guidelines

1. What is going on?
2. What are the facts?
3. What are the issues?
4. Who is affected?

This leads to:

5. What are the ethical issues and implications?
6. What can be done about it?
7. What options are there?
8. Which option is best – and why?

What ethics is not…

- Not just about religion
- Not a set of prohibitions (rather guidelines for our choices)
- Not a set of simple rules
- Not able to provide a single right or wrong approach

What ethics is…

- More than doing right or not doing wrong – it involves choice (even doing nothing is a choice)
- More than simply obeying the law
- Involves being reasonable – good reasons to support our choices

Ethical decision making

- Process that may yield differing (valid and supportable) conclusions
- Many models to help us make ethical decisions
  - Note a stakeholder is any person or organisation with a stake in the decision

One model…

- Set out the facts in a fair and balanced way
- List the main stakeholders (i.e. those in a position to be harmed or benefited)
- Record the major ideals that you believe play a role in the decision
- Which of the criteria are to be emphasized?
- To whom or to what is an obligation owed, and what sort of obligation is it?
- What are the likely consequences for each stakeholder? Major, short term, long term.
- Which actions will harm the stakeholders?
- Which actions will benefit the stakeholders?
- What would each of the stakeholders want to have happen?
- Is there a solution that satisfies all stakeholders? Should any one stakeholder get greater consideration, and why?
- Which actions show care and respect for persons; honour the relevant obligations; and are likely to bring the best balance of consequences to all of those affected.
- What is the best action? What should be done?

Ethical choices

- Right from wrong
- Right from right
  - Two or more alternatives each having some desirable result
- Defensible decisions
  - Two people may examine the same ethical situation and arrive at different courses of action

Is there an ethical dilemma?

- Does the law provide an answer?
- Actions may be classified as:
    1. Ethical and legal
    2. Ethical but not legal
    3. Not ethical but legal
    4. Not ethical and not legal

Is there an ethical dilemma?

Formal guidelines

- Does the act violate corporate policy?
- Does the act violate corporate or professional codes of conduct or ethics
- Does the act violate the Golden Rule? (Treating others as we want to be treated)

Code of Professional Conduct

The Australian Computer Society (ACS) guides industry professionals with their Code of Professional Conduct.

This guidance is for any ACS member who works in the field of information and communications technology (ICT).

> *This Code of Professional Conduct is aimed specifically at you as an individual practitioner, and is intended as a guideline for your acceptable professional conduct. It is applicable to all ACS members regardless of their role or specific area of expertise in the ICT industry.*
>
> (ACS 2014 p5)

Code of Professional Conduct

There are six core values which provide guidance on how to 'uphold and advance the honour, dignity and effectiveness of being a professional'. They are:

1. **The Primacy of the Public Interest**
   You will place the interests of the public above those of personal, business or sectional interests.
2. **The Enhancement of Quality of Life**
   You will strive to enhance the quality of life of those affected by your work.
3. **Honesty**
   You will be honest in your representation of skills, knowledge, services and products.
4. **Competence**
   You will work competently and diligently for your stakeholders.
5. **Professional Development**
   You will enhance your own professional development, and that of your staff.
6. **Professionalism**
   You will enhance the integrity of the ACS and the respect of its members for each other.

You can read the full code here:
https://www.acs.org.au/content/dam/acs/rules-and-regulations/Code-of-Professional-Conduct_v2.1.pdf

Additional Reading/Viewing

Straw person fallacies
(PBS Idea Channel 2014), the straw person fallacy is explained. The video runs for 2 minutes and 11 seconds. https://youtu.be/cGZkCPo7tC0

False Dilemma
With John Corvino (2018) This video runs for 2 minutes and 4 seconds. https://youtu.be/9ua74hdBhfI

Slippery-slope Arguments
With John Corvino (2018) This video runs for 2 minutes and 13 seconds. https://youtu.be/drz0Px10xss

Understanding fallacies and the structure of arguments
The John Corvino YT channel provides small snapshots of other fallacies:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIfaK23JF8w-x7LBEtuX0eg

Thank you