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CIS 415

24 August 2020

K-State Honor Code

Unauthorized Collaboration: Unauthorized collaboration occurs when two or more students work together on an assignment that isn’t specifically stated to be collaborative. For a Computer Science student, a violation of this rule could involve students working together or sharing code when such actions are not permitted by the professor.

Unauthorized Aid: Unauthorized aid occurs when a student receives help on an assignment from a source that isn’t permitted by the professor. A Computer Science student could violate this rule by receiving help on an assignment from a website that isn’t permitted by the instructor. For example, if a student were to look at or copy code from Stack Overflow without their instructor’s permission, then they would violate the K-State Honor Code.

Falsification: Falsification is the act of lying on an assignment for one’s benefit. A Computer Science violate this rule by paying a student to complete a coding assignment for them. If the student in question were to submit this code with their name on it, then they would violate the K-State Honor Code.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism happens when an individual uses someone else’s work without giving them credit. Since Plagiarism is a broad term, it can be split into four different definitions.

Direct Plagiarism: Direct plagiarism happens when an individual uses another individual’s work word-for-word without giving them credit. A Computer Science student could participate in direct plagiarism by using the exact same words of an individual from the internet on their research project without using citations or quotation marks.

Self-Plagiarism: Self-plagiarism happens when a student submits the same work they completed in a previous class. A Computer Science student might self-plagiarize by reusing their past code on an assignment with a similar prompt.

Mosaic Plagiarism: Mosaic plagiarism happens when an individual takes someone else’s work, slightly changes it, and uses it as if it were their own. A Computer Science student might participate in mosaic plagiarism by stealing a snippet of code from the internet but changing the variable names.

Accidental Plagiarism: Accidental plagiarism happens when a student plagiarizes without realizing it. For a Computer Science student, this could mean using a block of code from the internet, but not realizing that doing so is plagiarism. Another example could involve a student using the words of an online source on a research project without using citations, but not knowing that citations were required.

Plagiarism for Computer Science Students: Plagiarism in a Computer Science course involves stealing or reusing work from some outlet, such as the internet or a past coding assignment, without citations. Students should be careful when viewing online help websites like Chegg or Stack Overflow. Copying or slightly modifying answers from these websites without citing the author is plagiarism and will result in a repercussion. This rule applies for all external sources, not just for online help websites. Even if students were to site their sources, it’s unlikely that external help will be allowed for a coding assignment, so be sure to only submit original work. For students that are struggling on assignments, it’s in their best interest to visit their professor’s office hours or use university tutors.

Unauthorized Collaboration for Computer Science Students: Unauthorized collaboration in Computer Science is very common, so it’s important for students to ensure that they aren’t the ones that are breaking the rules. If two or more students work together on a coding assignment without permission from their professor, than they are participating in unauthorized collaboration. It doesn’t matter if the students are giving each other advice, comparing code or sharing code. All of these actions are instances of unauthorized collaboration and can result in repercussions that are to be chosen by your instructor. This rule also applies for assignments that aren’t code-based, such as online quizzes, so be sure to ask your professor before deciding to team-up with a classmate. The best practice for avoiding unauthorized collaboration sanctions is ensuring that you understand your professor’s policies on collaboration.

Ethics vs. Morality

The terms “ethics” and morality” are often used interchangeably. This does not mean that the words are synonyms. Many different definitions are available on various dictionary websites. These definitions, however, do not capture the true essence of these words. Since individuals are likely to base their knowledge of these words on the definitions they see from these websites, they are prone to confusing the two words. I’m going to be analyzing the definitions of “ethics” and “morality” that are posted on dictionary website, and the definitions of these words according to several different authors. In doing so, I hope to unveil the true meaning of these two words. I will begin by taking a look at how a dictionary website defines “ethics”.

The website whose definition of ethics I chose to analyze is dictionary.com. This website states that ethics is “a system of moral principles” (“Ethics”). From the definition that this website has provided, it would seem as though ethics is something that belongs to an individual and that can vary from person to person. To play along with this definition of ethics, I’ll make a connection to my personal life. Allow me to share a common phenomenon that appears around dinner time. Sometimes, I’ll start eating dinner before everyone in the house has made their plate. In these situations, there is usually an individual who is moving rather slow, and therefor inconveniencing the rest of the hungry house. I find eating my food in these situations ethical because of my belief in utilitarianism. However, other households might find my behavior completely unethical. These examples show that from what dictionary.com has stated, ethics are a set of principles that differ from person to person.

For the word “morality”, I received a dictionary definition from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. This definition states that morality is a code of conduct that is accepted by an individual (“The Definition of Morality”). This is a rather vague definition, and therefore sounds almost the exact same as the definition I received for ethics. If I were to play along with this definition, I would use an extreme example. If a dad were to shoot a house intruder, some might consider that a morally correct action, since the individual was trying to protect their family. Others, however, might find it morally incorrect to shoot someone no matter what the scenario is. Just like the definition of ethics that was outlined earlier, Stanford’s definition of morality points to an individual’s beliefs. These two words are not interchangeable, but from the definitions I’ve retrieved, one would think they are. Perhaps looking at two authors’ definitions of these words might help unveil the differences between these words.

For the next round of definitions, I’ve decided to pull from scholarly sources. One of these scholarly sources is a book which takes a further look into what is meant by “ethics”. In John Roth’s book titled “Ethics”, he defines the words as the study of the judgments people make and the values that they hold (Roth). There is a huge difference between this definition and the definition that is shown on dictionary.com. Roth’s definition states that ethics is a study, not a system of beliefs that one can hold. In order to gain an understanding of how this definition relates to morality, I’m going to retrieve a definition of morality from another scholarly source. In Jonathan Haidt’s journal entry titled “Morality”, he defines the word as “interlocking sets of values, practices, institutions, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to suppress or regulate selfishness and make social life possible” (Haidt). While this definition sounds fairly complicated, Haidt is basically saying that morality is a set of actions that individuals take in order to be socially accepted. This definition is close to matching that of Stanford’s definition, which stated that morality was a set of rules that is accepted by an individual. The difference is in who’s accepting the behavior. If I were to ignore Haidt’s definition of morality, and were to focus on Stanford’s definition, I could make the connection that ethics is a study of morality. Ultimately, the definitions of these two words are a mess, as the context of these definitions differ from person to person. To get some clarity on the real meaning of these words, I’m going to turn to the definitions listed in our class’ textbook.

Michael Quinn, the author of CIS 415’s textbook, can help shine light on the true definitions of ethics and morality. According to him, ethics is “the philosophical study of morality, a rational examination into people’s moral beliefs” (Quinn) . From this definition, it’s clear that Quinn agrees with Roth that ethics a study. However, his definitions don’t agree with those listed on the dictionary websites I mentioned. This isn’t very surprising, since the definitions from the scholarly sources I listed above appear to be more well thought out than those listed on the dictionary websites. For morality, Quinn states that this term is the rules “describing what people ought and ought not to do in various situations” (Quinn). This definition is completely different from any of the definitions I listed above. The other two definitions of morality agreed in the sense that this term has to do with behavior that’s accepted by certain people. This definition, however, just states that morality has to do with what’s right and what’s wrong, without any mention of who’s judging the behavior. Quinn’s definitions have definitely provided a good insight for what these two words actually mean, and what they are commonly misunderstood for.

It’s clear from Quinn’s definitions of ethics and morality that these two words are commonly misunderstood. The contrast between his definitions of these words and the other definitions mentioned above really shows how little the vast majority of people know about these words. I’m glad I was able to dive deep into these definitions. Had I not been given this opportunity, I would’ve continued to use ethics and morality interchangeably.

Ethical Theories Reference Sheet

Kantianism/Deontology: Kantianism is the theory that people’s actions should be guided by universal rules of what is moral and what isn’t. These guiding rules must be backed up by reasons. Deontology is the belief that what is morally correct is adhering to one’s obligations to a group or individual, even if doing so harms others.

Utilitarianism/Teleology/Consequentialism: Utilitarianism is the theory that the most ethical choice is the one that benefits the most people. Those who follow this theory believe that limitations such as personal feelings can be ignored when making decisions as long as the majority of the people impacted by said decision are positively affected. Teleology is a belief that one’s actions are explained by the action’s result. Consequentialism is the belief that the morality of an action is defined by the action’s consequences.

Egoism/Altruism: Egoism is the belief that individuals should make decisions that are in their own best interest. These decisions should be made because they encourage individual survival. If our ancestors didn’t adapt egoism as a guiding principle behind their behaviors, they may not have survived. Altruism is the opposite of Egoism. Those with this mentality are focused on helping others rather than themselves. An example of altruism is donating to charity.

Social Contract Theory/Contractarianism: Social Contract Theory states that individuals are under a contract to aid the world that they live in. Therefore, people’s morals should be in line with what is best for their society. It can also be defined as a theory that everyone in a society has agreed to have a government that enforces rules that are in our best interest. Contractarianism is the lifestyle that those who follow the Social Contract Theory live by. In other words, Social Contract Theory is the governing principle behind the actions of contractarians.

Natural Rights Theory: The theory that when people enter this world, they have a set of rights that cannot be taken away from them by a government or other individuals. An example of one of these rights includes the right to live.

Virtue Ethics: A theory that holds a person accountable for their mentality rather than their actions. The components of one’s mentality that are focused on often include their motivation and morals. In other words, if a person acts differently in person than behind closed doors, their actions are incorrect.

Relativism: The belief that there isn’t a basis for what is morally correct, since everyone has their own truth. Therefore, what is morally correct for one individual doesn’t have to be morally correct for another.

Religious Ethics/Divine Command Theory: Religious ethics are the ethics of a certain religious group. Different religions have different beliefs on what is correct or incorrect behavior. Those who are a part of a religious group are expected to adhere to a set of principles set by that group. The Divine Command Theory is the idea that people should act in accordance with what God wants. If we think that God wouldn’t condone a certain action, then that action shouldn’t be taken.

Ethics of Reciprocity/Golden Rule Ethics: These two theories are joined by the belief that we should treat others in a way that we’d wish to be treated. This means that whatever behavior we dislike should not be acted upon when interacting with others.

Extra Credit

After reading the “Techlash Hits College Campuses” article, I have a newfound sense of anger towards big tech companies. It’s frustrating to see the extent to which power and money gets to the heads of these enterprises. For example. Google likely knew that a censored search engine would be jam packed with ethical dilemmas, but that didn’t stop them from working with China’s government from behind closed doors. This example alone helped me realize that large companies will stop at nothing to promote business. However, it’s clear to me that problems like these are inevitable.

While I’m mad at companies like Google for their negative behavior, I don’t consider working for them taboo. I’d even consider working for one in the future, because my personal values don’t impact who I’d choose to work for. To justify my reasoning, I’ll explain my perspective. All the companies listed in the article are powerful and rich. The power and money that these companies receive is toxic for the higher-ups. Most people don’t know what to do with fame and over a billion dollars. That’s why I’m not surprised when CEO’s make questionable decisions. I’m also not surprised when authority figures that aren’t CEO’s make questionable decisions. Sometimes, one of these leaders will have a set of values that don’t match their companies’ intended culture. It’s not easy for the CEO to discover when one of their employees’ values don’t line up with the company’s culture, because they have many other things to do. Therefore, these higher-ups could make negative decisions that could slip through the cracks. I’m not condoning the poor decisions made by these companies. However, I understand that power and money can turn certain individuals evil, and when multiple individuals are in charge, it’s hard for a company to filter the decisions being made. I have this viewpoint because I tend to focus on why certain events happen, not on the impact of the events. I believe that when people emphasize the negative impact of a company’s behavior, they forget all of the great things the company’s done. I would consider joining forces with one of these companies only if the project I’d be working on was ethical. Otherwise, I’d continue to use the services these companies provide, because even though their actions don’t always align with my values, I can’t ignore the positive impact that some of their services provide. Perhaps my viewpoint on business ethics flawed, but I’m trying to explain my current mindset in an honest fashion. I’m committed to self-growth, so I’m interested to see how my opinion changes throughout the semester.

Works Cited

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