

INFO 350

Ethical Systems #4

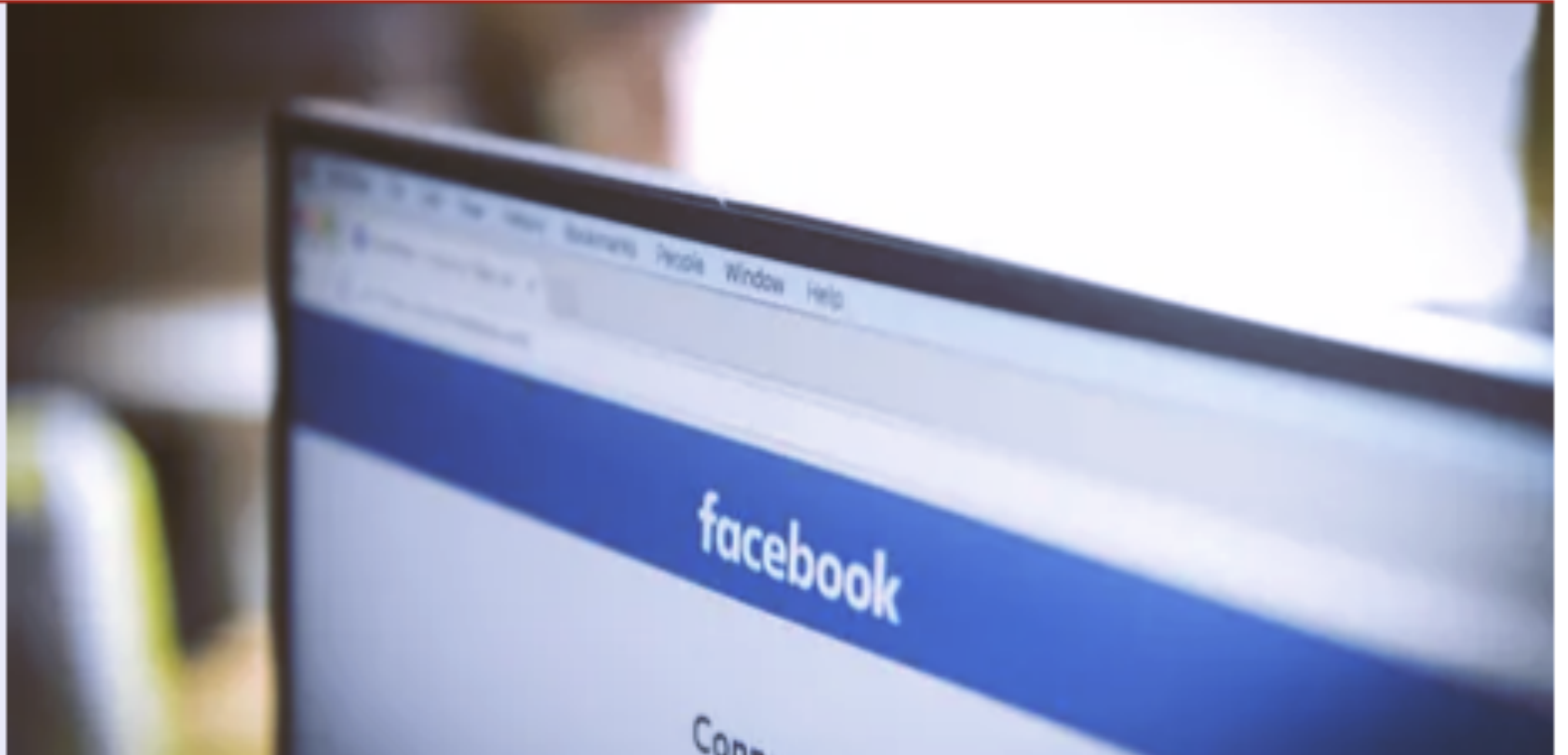
INFO Policy, Law, and Ethics...



Oh, Facebook.

Facebook / Firm
uploaded email
contacts of 1.5m
users without
consent

Company says it has stopped
using password verification
feature that collected data



- Facebook has admitted to “unintentionally” uploading the address books of 1.5 million users without consent, and says it will delete the collected data and notify those affected.
- The discovery follows criticism of Facebook by security experts for a feature that asked new users for their email password as part of the sign-up process.
- As well as exposing users to potential security breaches, those who provided passwords found that, immediately after their email was verified, the site began “importing” contacts without asking for permission.
- Facebook has now admitted it was wrong to do so, and said the upload was **inadvertent**.

Recap

So far...

Four ethical systems (deemed “workable”)

- Kantianism (aka deontology)
- Utilitarianism (Act and Rule)
- Virtue Ethics
- Social Contract

Table of Ethical Theories

Theory	Emphasis	Distinctions
Kantian / Deontology	Rules based on “rightness.” Obligations, dignity, equal consideration of persons	What is right is more important than consequences. Means (esp. people) more important than ends.
Act Utilitarianism / Consequentialism	Goodness of consequences	Every action calculated for greatest “net utility” – Ends justify means
Rule Utilitarianism	Goodness of consequences <i>overall</i>	Rules or principles to produce greatest net utility overall. - Ends justify means.
Social Contract	Society’s rules based on what “free” people will/would agree to.	Emphasis on rights. Pursuit of some vision of “justice.”
Virtue Ethics	Character, developing one’s “excellences”	Rather than rules or calculations, a virtuous person develops the character to act well

Contemporary Ethics

Critical Perspectives

- Ethics does not end with Kant and Mill
 - (or Aristotle, Plato, Buddha, Confucius...).
- Twentieth century developments
 - Post-colonial history produces post-colonial theories
 - Recognition of wider range of cultural and intellectual value
 - Critical race, critical gender, feminism (U.S. & Europe)
- Common themes
 - Existing ethical frameworks leave a lot of people out
 - Social hierarchy, oppression, and domination – need to be addressed

Problems with Traditional Ethics

- Generally promote existing social structures:
 - Greeks: slavery
 - Chinese: social position
 - Europeans: slavery, colonial domination
 - **All**: cultural *chauvinism* – (what does this mean?)
- Feminist ethics
 - Traditional ethics is *gendered* (not neutral)
 - Does not account for, or rejects the feminine

Feminist Ethics: Gender in Philosophy

- Moral theory emphasizes the conquest of *reason* (remember Kant?) – over nature, instinct, emotion.
 - The feminine is associated with the nature, instinct and emotion).
- Gendered division of labor as described by the Greeks: women's domain is the home, men in the public sphere
- Later philosophers wrote women out of the script, focusing on “atomistic” accounts of “free” men. Denial of mothering, nurturing, etc.
- Some declared that women are incapable of reason
 - Have you ever heard of a “woman of reason?” but you have probably heard of a “man of reason.” There's a reason for that.

Feminist Ethics: The Problem of Abstraction

- Kantianism (deontology) and in Utilitarianism share a reliance on a highly abstract, universal principle as the appropriate source of moral guidance...and both denigrate emotion.
 - Kant: Categorical Imperative
 - Utilitarianism: Calculating net utility
- These theories assume that moral agents are capable of knowing their options and nominally free to choose among them.
- They tend to reject the contextual nature of ethical problems.

Feminist Ethics

- **Context:** Real human concerns take place within the smaller contexts of life experience.
- **Freedom:** Women are an oppressed class. For every society in which women have (in theory) equal rights and privileges, there are dozens in which they do not.
 - What is the meaning of “autonomy” to a woman who is not permitted to leave the house without a male family member? Or who lives in constant fear of violence by men?
 - Do oppressed people (of any sort) see the world as governed by reason alone?

Alternative models

Feminist Ethics: Ethics of Care

- Emotional ties are fundamental to moral commitments
 - We have different ethical obligations based on relationships and their meanings.
 - Ethical obligations to others linked to compassion, which can lead to general principles.
- “Caring, empathy, feeling with others, being sensitive to each other’s feelings, all may be better guides to what morality requires in actual contexts than may abstract rules of reason, or rational calculation, or at least they may be necessary components of an adequate morality.”

Feminist Ethics: Concept of Self

- Traditional ethics emphasizes the individual – a free and independent character who stands apart from others.
- Feminist philosophers seek recognition of the ties that bind people to each other. The self is defined by its social relations.
 - The “relational self.”
 - Recognizing interaction as fundamental to humanness – this is the point of ethics
 - Motherhood as the exemplar case: the parent/child relationships are crucial to the development of the person.
 - Autonomy (again) – we are never completely free from obligations to others.

Ethical Challenge

- First: Go online and find an ethical dilemma
 - News item, social post, historical event – something that involves a choice or set of choices yet to be made, or that you can evaluate.
- Second: Summarize the case in a discussion post (one per person), state the ethical dilemma
 - What is the choice involved? What are some of the options available?
- Third: **Find a partner.** Working together, apply at least two of the ethical theories we have discussed to each other's problems.
 - Did people act ethically? Could/should they have acted differently?
 - Or – what does your ethical investigation suggest they do?
- Fourth: Document the exchange between you and your partner as replies to your initial post.

Quiz #1 on Tuesday (second half of lecture)

- All content through today's lecture
- 13 multiple choice/matching/TF questions
- 2 Essay questions
- 1 Bonus essay question
- Closed book, closed notes