The task:

* Analysing an existing Information Technology company in the context of the themes discussed in the Professional Issues and Ethics part of the course
  + Go back over these 2 lectures, potentially even the tutorial questions
* I am a fund manager for an ethical investment company (that is, we only invest in things deemed ethical). I need to **decide whether Tesla is ethical**.
* **Discuss a range of major professional/ethical issues that are relevant to the decision**
  + Have to be IT-related issues, and they have to be an ethical dilemma (there needs to be an ethical aspect and you need to emphasize it). For example, autopilot alone isn’t really an ethical problem, but giving autopilot to the general public is.
* then **provide an overall conclusion about whether the company meets expected standards of ethical behaviour (what are the expected standards? They are the ones from the ACM computer science code of ethics)**
* should also consider actions that could to be taken by the company to redress unethical behaviour (which in the context of this report could be understood as conditions under which investment in the company would be acceptable from an ethical point of view).
  + Renaming autopilot to driver assistance
  + Renaming full self-driving to partial self-driving
* Only cover the most significant issues.

Structure:

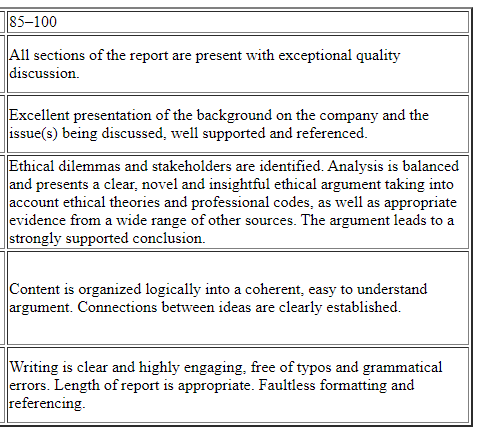
Introduction that outlines Tesla and the ethical issues to be discussed in the essay.

For each issue:

* Provide adequate background on the issue, to provide sufficient context, history and evidence i.e. the report must be self-contained. Just say enough for them to understand the argument.
* Identify the stakeholders. Stakeholders are broadly defined as anyone who is impacted by a decision. They are the ones with something at stake in the ethical dilemma e.g. Tesla has money at stake from lawsuits, people have their lives at stake from getting run over by AI cars, and also their jobs at stake from automation.
* In depth ethical discussion – analyse the issue with ethical reasoning. Present the perspectives from both sides of the issue (stakeholders perspectives), and analyse the issues in terms of ethical theories (duty, consequence-based) as well as one relevant code of conduct/ethics (e.g. the ACS Code of Conduct for an Australian IT company).
* Evidence in the form of reported case studies, (verified) media coverage, legal and court proceedings, and the company's own codes of ethics/conduct and policies including social and environmental responsibility statements, that supports your conclusions.
* Reasonable suggestions for plausible actions that could be taken by the company (or by other bodies) to mitigate the effects of the unethical behaviour.
* A conclusion as to whether the company has acted ethically with regards to this issue.

An overall conclusion must then be reached.

Rubric:



Note, however, that **while** **the rubric provides some guidelines**, **emphasis will be placed on having clear, well-structured arguments** that **demonstrate critical thinking** and an **ability to synthesize and apply the ethics content of the course**. In particular, the **quality** of the report is paramount, e.g. it is not enough to merely identify some (any) **ethical issue(s)**, but to **identify those most relevant** to the company concerned.

Issue dump:

* Tesla cars are basically like big recording boxes, and so if there are crashes we are likely going to know what caused the crash, more so than with normal cars (which MAY have a dash cam). But tesla doesn’t seem to keen on releasing crash data in some cases.
* How many deaths are caused by human drivers?
  + Need data specifically on crashes/deaths caused by human error
  + <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries#:~:text=Key%20facts,road%20traffic%20crashes%20by%202020>.
    - 1.35 million deaths per year from road traffic accidents
  + <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/features/global-road-safety/index.html#:~:text=Whether%20you're%20on%20the,protect%20your%20health%20and%20safety.&text=Each%20year%2C%201.35%20million%20people,on%20roadways%20around%20the%20world>.
* They will save millions of lives, but they will also take lives along the way. If you’re only concerned with minimizing death, then it’s obviously a good trade-off. Number of deaths may not be the only concern though, it could be that being killed by a self-driving car, rather than a human, is considered worse.
* General computing code of ethics: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics>
* Is it ethical to give FSD technology to members of the public, rather than having Tesla employees who are more contractually obligated to drive safe to do the testing? Is it also unethical to not geofence the testing?
* Drunk driver who fell asleep was saved because of autopilot. Imagine if he was in a normal car.
* The longer we hold back self-driving cars, the number of preventable deaths increases.
* Other ai car company’s criticize tesla’s public rollout: <https://www.reuters.com/article/tesla-selfdriving/teslas-release-of-new-self-driving-software-closely-watched-by-u-s-regulator-idUSKBN27727Y>
  + **NHTSA also states it has looked into 19 crashes with Autopilot engaged**

1. The professional opinion in the field of self-driving cars is that LIDAR needs to be used. Tesla believes otherwise. Tesla has also gone against the industry norms in more than one way. Testing via the public instead of privately.
2. Two groups say Tesla is being negligent: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-44225059>
3. Autopilot and FSD are misleading
   1. German court bans the names saying they are misleading <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-53418069> and PAVE citisizes too <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/10/21/tesla-self-driving/> (link this to the industry norm being for geofenced driving with professionals in the drivers seat). Furthermore CAS and Consumer Watchdog have complained to the FTC about Tesla’s misleading marketing. <https://www.autosafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CAS-and-CW-Letter-to-FTC-on-Tesla-Deceptive-Advertising.pdf>
   2. Survey shows people think autopilot means they can not pay attention <https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/new-studies-highlight-driver-confusion-about-automated-systems>
   3. Tesla shows that their in house teaching and warnings are educating their drivers enough <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/tesla-germany-owners-understand-autopilot-220954859.html> and <https://www.tesla.com/sites/default/files/blog_attachments/tesla_survey_autopilot_awareness.pdf>
   4. But the bottom line is that a change of name could only really do good, and if it wasn’t called AP or FSD they probably wouldn’t have to spend so much time trying to remind people that they still need to pay attention.
4. Elon went against his own terms and conditions by taking his hands off the wheel
   1. Cbs this morning
   2. 60 minutes interview
   3. Tesla YouTube channel also showcases no hands on driving: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlThdr3O5Qo>
5. People are either placing too much trust in the Autopilot systems, or are becoming complacent with them, and therefore distracted.
   1. Consumer reports ranks Tesla Autopilot the worse out of 4 level-2 systems for keeping drivers attention: <https://www.consumerreports.org/autonomous-driving/cadillac-tops-tesla-in-automated-systems-ranking/> , Cadillac super cruise uses eye tracking to make sure you’re paying attention and alerts within 4 seconds after becoming distracted, Tesla only uses the hands on wheel metric and takes 24 seconds, which is clearly insufficient in keeping drivers attention.
6. **Redress:** Tesla needs to do more to stop people abusing the Autopilot system. Even small changes such as a timer on the agreement pop-up to enforce drivers actually read it, a small follow-up quiz to ensure they read and understood the information, and a heavier penalty for violating the hands on wheel nag system could all easily be implemented.
7. Crashes where autopilot was on (include info about who is to blame, why the crash happened, death or not etc.)
   1. Concrete barrier death, driver was playing a video game : <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-51645566> and <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/tesla-model-x-in-fatal-autopilot-crash-sped-up-right-before-accident-2018-6>
      1. Someone recreates the crash: <https://thenextweb.com/artificial-intelligence/2018/04/02/human-error-is-teslas-biggest-problem/>
   2. semi-trailer 1: Joshua Brown, crashed side on to semi-trailer, cause was that camera didn’t pick up truck, radar was implemented because of this. The autopilot software also didn’t have the auto slow down to a stop and park if you ignore the hands-on warning at this stage. Morally reckless on Teslas part. NTSB rules the crash was mostly human error but : <https://thenextweb.com/artificial-intelligence/2017/09/12/tesla-doesnt-deserve-all-the-blame-in-fatal-2016-crash/> and <https://www.ehstoday.com/safety/article/21919260/ntsb-fatal-crash-involving-tesla-autopilot-resulted-from-driver-errors-overreliance-on-automation>
   3. semi-trailer 2:
   4. overturned truck, shows how Autopilot still fails on really basic situations, and this one was in 2020 so it’s really recent: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVgkWii5JdM>
      1. Could it be that the overhang before it caused the weighting of a large stationary object to be ignored?
      2. Highlights the issue that these algorithms work great on situations they see over and over again, but for new situations they don’t really know what to do
   5. Autopilot crashes into police car that was parked on the side of the road : <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/tesla-model-s-with-autopilot-on-crashes-into-police-car-2018-5>
   6. Autopilot crashes into a stationary fire truck, driver was on her phone, had autopilot on and her hands off the wheel for over a minute prior to the accident: <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/tesla-model-s-had-autopilot-engaged-during-crash-data-confirms-2018-5>
8. Saves
   1. Pedestrian saved by Autopilot automatic braking : <https://electrek.co/2016/07/21/tesla-autopilot-saved-life-prevented-serious-injury-pedestrian-dc/>
   2. Two teslas prevent death from falling tree: <https://cleantechnica.com/2020/02/17/tesla-autopilot-saved-8-lives-in-storm-dennis/>
   3. Video compilation of saves: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sicOh6LPBw>

From a teleological standpoint, there are both clear advantages and disadvantages for releasing Autopilot to the general public. Yes, autopilot does happen to save lives, but there’s no reason why we cannot

* It’s not simply a numbers game. Saving x amount of lives doesn’t allow you to cause y < x deaths. Saving a life and taking a life are two very different things. If Autopilot wasn’t called Autopilot, and instead called something like Driver Assist, and there were better checks in place for detecting driver attention and harsher penalties for not paying attention, then we would simultaneously save those x lives and cause a whole lot less deaths.
* It’s not Tesla’s fault that the software has bugs or makes mistakes, but it is there fault to market it as autonomous and not provide enough anti-distraction measures, especially since they are testing with the public.

READ AGAIN

* Examples of Teslas shady marketing in the FDC request : <https://www.autosafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CAS-and-CW-Letter-to-FTC-on-Tesla-Deceptive-Advertising.pdf>
* NHTSA says that their study that Tesla cites to claim they are safer than normal cars is flawed <https://arstechnica.com/cars/2018/05/sorry-elon-musk-theres-no-clear-evidence-autopilot-saves-lives/>

ARGUMENT SO FAR;

Ethical issue 1:

Argument flow: Background on Autopilot (AP and FSD, as well as the warnings that are issued when you use it)

Things to include: misleading (includes naming/marketing of Autopilot and actions of Elon on tv), poor driver engagement systems (includes crashes as evidence)

Misnaming, misrepresentation (Elon taking hands off wheel), and bad testing style -> Conclude that Tesla is being somewhat unethical deontologically (going against industry norms) but we must ask: what are the consequences? Deaths -> but in most cases it is because the drivers are breaking promises (not tesla’s fault entirely) -> saves lives (statistics on deaths caused by car accidents, third party safety rating of Tesla’s)

However, from a deontological perspective, the drivers are the party that are acting unethically. They have broken their promise to remain attentive at all times, and the trivial nature of the crashes heavily suggests they weren’t paying attention [TODO: don’t use ‘suggests’, use evidence instead e.g. NTSB placing blame mostly on driver for semi-trailer crash]

Redress: The names could be changed to Driver Assistance and Partial Self-Driving

**Argument 2: Autopilot potentially saves more lives compared to the number of deaths it causes**

Evidence: crash statistics and safety ratings given by third parties, compilations online of crash avoidances,

Counterpoint: Autopilot has also been involved in a number of crashes and deaths

Evidence: the two sardine can deaths. Did Tesla have the autopilot nag system in place at this stage? If not, then they were morally negligent but at least they’re being morally reactive (use proper terms)

Further point: It often fails in situations that are very easy for humans to solve

Evidence: cite crashing into overturned truck and the turning into oncoming traffic from Dirty Tesla example

Further point: crashes involving self-driving cars are often unlike those of human driven cars. There are numerous examples of Autopilot crashes which would have been trivial to avoid in normal cars.

Counter-Counter: Tesla was not the bad actor in these situations. Drivers are supposed to stay focused on the road at all times when using Autopilot. They are breaking their promise.

Evidence: Agreement messages when enabling Autopilot, and Tesla has even implemented a nag system, where the user must be holding onto the wheel whilst Autopilot is engaged, otherwise the car will stop and put the hazards on.

Counter: The Autopilot is only blocked for the rest of the current drive. This means you only have to park the car, then drive off again and Autopilot registers this as a new drive, hence unblocking it. **There must be a harsher penalty for breaking the rules**.

**Argument 3 (or extension of 2?): Autopilot isn’t affected by some of the most common causes of traffic accidents (drunk driving, sleep impairment, speeding etc.)**

Argument 4 – algorithmic decision making: The deep neural network, because of its nature, can make really silly mistakes (thinking a truck is an overpass or overhead sign).

Issues, with each stakeholder’s side, and supporting evidence

Should Autopilot and FSD software be available to members of the general public? Has Tesla acted ethically in its distribution of this software?

Against Tesla:

* Driver attention: Not a good enough system in place, over trust potentially caused due to the name and marketing
* Consequentialist: They are causing crashes and deaths

Pro Tesla:

* Consequentialist: They are saving lives and preventing crashes already
* Driver attention**:** It is the drivers who are breaking their promise (which they have been shown to largely be aware of), not Tesla

Should they be testing in the public (especially with beta features), and have they been ethical in this distribution and testing?

Clear up that in terms of technical approach, there isn’t yet a standard because of the age of the industry, even though most companies think LIDAR is necessary, but show that post about cameras being just as good. Also because of the age of the industry and the technique of machine learning, bugs and mistakes are obviously going to be present, but Tesla, nor any other company can be ethically required to program bugless and fully functional code immediately, the requirement is more so about safe testing.

Safety should be the number 1 priority (ACM CoE), and not whether the system annoys your customers. Too much focus on being user friendly instead of safe, which is unethical.

Public access has enabled them to train their machine learning algorithm on a huge amount of data, making it one of the best self-driving systems in terms of performance, one of the main benefits of which is that it’s already predicting and avoiding lots of accidents, and hence saving lives.

Could have a format like

*Introduction*

*Background*

*The Situation*

*Ethical Reasoning*

*Conclusion*

* There are clear benefits and also clear downsides (consequentialist – deaths and lives saved)
* Even if there are more lives saved its not just a question of save x > y therefore ethical, behavior also matters
* To decide whether Tesla is acting ethical it makes much more sense to look at their morality of their actions rather than the consequences anyway. Currently acting (actions rather than consequences) unethical and need to make the redresses before we invest. Especaially since they are an important figure in shaping the future of an industry that will have much larger ethical issues in the future e.g. automation taking jobs and “solving” the trolley problem.