* **Wheel of words**
  + Obligation (a special relationship that occurs when you promise something, “I do” “ I will”). Ill mow your lawn, or ill be at your house at 6.
  + Duty (an obligation that doesn’t need to be established, it is inherent)
  + Social responsibility (like duties and obligations but there is no specific target other than society in general)
* **Barriers to ethical decision making**
  + Reasoning with false equivalency: e.g. if it’s legal, then it’s moral.
* **Ethical awareness**
  + Avoid moral negligence: ask yourself if there is a moral dimension to the problem. As long as you ask yourself this you are being negligent (but you may be morally illiterate if you don’t identify them all). This is similar to Kant. If you make a choice without considering the morality of the options (even if you make the right decision), you were being morally negligent.
  + Avoid moral recklessness: have you adequately addressed the moral concerns? You may cover all ethical issues (so not morally blind), but whether you address all ethical issues properly is an issue of recklessness.
  + Avoid moral blindness/illiteracy: not identifying ALL the moral issues involved
  + Exhibit moral competence: not attempting to solve is recklessness, not solving adequately is incompetence.
* **Ethical caution**
  + Precautionary principle: when you don’t know what the outcome of an action is, assume it is bad. If you are unsure if there is risk, assume there is risk.
  + Provide safe exits: provide mechanisms for mitigating against certain things if they do come to fruition.
  + **Engage in risk avoidance**: even if it won’t be your fault if the bad thing happens, you should still take action to make sure it doesn’t’ happen. Just because you wont be held accountable, doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try stop it.
* Dirty hands
  + A situation in which doing something right means you will be responsible for something that is wrong, and that wrongness won’t disappear just because of the rightness of your act. E.g. firing squad situation, if you apologise to the mum then that reveals dirty hands, if you are sympathetic but not apologetic, then you don’t have dirty hands.
  + Dirty hands is basically, was the bad thing in the trade-off bad enough that it still warrants an apology after the fact.
  + Even when you’ve done the right thing, you’re not off the hook.

Lecture 1 – Theoretical underpinnings of ethics

**Key point 1: What is, and what is not, ethics?**

Ethics, specifically prescriptive ethics, is the philosophy of deciding right from wrong. It aims to answer the questions “What should I do?” and “What kind of person should I be?”. The key in answering these questions is considering the interests of others, rather than acting purely out of self-interest. This is not to be confused with descriptive ethics which investigates what people **think** is okay.

Ethics is also not moral relativism. It argues that ethics are contextual to time and place. The problem with relativism is it either simply describes what happened (descriptive) or it accepts all different views as equally correct (normative), which isn’t ethical because it isn’t actually distinguishing right from wrong e.g. just because slavery was once tolerated, doesn’t mean it should have been - it was always morally wrong.

**Key point 2: Ethical arguments and their considerations**

Ethical issues are not problems. They cannot be solved in the same way equations can. Instead they are dilemmas that we can navigate through, where some paths are better than others.It should be noted, however, that if it is possible to turn an ethical situation into a non-ethical (not unethical) situation, then this should be done as this essentially means turning it into a no-loss situation (no one’s interests are violated). All valid ethical arguments must moralize an actual yes or no answer that relates back to a normative issue, which in turn relates back to a general principle. For example, “he should **not** have taken the money (moralizing), because it was **stealing, which is bad** (issue), and stealing **minimizes happiness** (general principle)”. On top of these requirements, they must not be political, prudential, artistic, preferential, or negotiable.

**Key point 3: Kant, the deontological perspective**

This perspective aims to answer the question, “what should I do?”. Kant argues that the only good acts are acts that are done out of a good will. It’s the difference between “were your intentions good?” and “was the act good and intentional?”. Kant believed the central notion of morality that should be used to decide whether an act is good is duty, stating this can always be related back to a general principle. This places morality on acts themselves, and not the consequences of such acts.

**Key point 4: Mills, the teleological perspective**

This perspective also aims to answer the question, “what should I do?”. Mills argues that all that matters when deciding if an act is ethical or not is the consequences of said action. Consequences are most often ranked by how much they maximize something, most commonly happiness (the utilitarian perspective). The degree to which an action is right is proportional to the sum of its consequences.

**Key point 5: Values, the virtuous perspective**

This perspective aims to answer a different question, “What type of person should I be?”. This pertains specifically to virtues, the qualities that enable us to function well as humans. These are universally accepted to include honesty, integrity, fairness, compassion, and openness. Aristotle came up with the golden mean, a method for building a virtuous character, which essentially meant feeling the right amount. For example, you should not be rash (too much), nor should you be cowardly (too little), but you should be courageous. Once you do it enough, he argued it will become a habit and part of your character, then you will do it by default and no longer have to ask, “what should I do?”. Plato similarly advocated for focusing on being a good individual, as a good society will naturally come of this.

No single one of these moral perspectives should be accepted as correct or accepted over others. There are many equally valid theories, which is known as moral pluralism.

Lecture 2 – Moral Reasoning and Professional Ethics

This lecture was focused on highlighting what makes moral reasoning so difficult, practically, in the professional world, as well as some insights to help remedy this.

**Key point 1: Different types of ethical undertakings**

Not all ethical undertakings are the same. For example, common decency is simply expected of you and doesn’t actually make you more of an ethical person. This is known as being a minimally decent good Samaritan. An actual ethical undertaking, however, must cost one of the parties involved (an actual good Samaritan). Other ethical undertakings differ in that they are explicitly or implicitly agreed to. Obligations only occurs because you explicitly agree to them, whilst duties are the same except that they are implicitly established. Other ethical undertakings differ in that the target can be specific or general. For example, in duties and obligations, it is likely a specific target (protecting someone) whereas with social responsibilities the target is society in general. Finally, some ethical undertakings differ in that they are so costly that it’s hard/impossible to argue that anyone is ever obligated to do them (e.g. being a whistle-blower is too detrimental to yourself to ever be required to do). The difficulty here comes from deciding which one trumps another in specific ethical dilemmas.

**Key point 2: Barriers to ethical decision making**

Part of the reason why moral reasoning is so hard in practice is because there are subtle fallacies that can impede your logic. These are things that hinder you from making the best ethical decision, even when you’re trying to be as ethical as possible. These include **partisanship** (where you lose objectivity of what is right and wrong from favouring the interests of a relation), **rationalisation** (where you tell yourself a story to justify your actions, even if they’re wrong e.g. “everyone does it”), **implicit bias** (where you subconsciously ignore the facts of something in favour of preconceived stereotypes of it), **ethical blindness/illiteracy** (you are not even able to recognise there is an ethical dimension to the situation), **reasoning with false equivalency** (e.g. assuming legal means ethical), and **using an ethical script** (that doesn’t fit the ethical situation).

**Key point 3: Accountability versus responsibility**

There is a clear and important distinction made between accountability and responsibility. Accountability refers to how accurately you follow specific directives, whilst responsibility is about making your own judgements and owning them. For example, teachers are held accountable for delivering certain material to students (e.g. course outline, rubrics, lectures etc.), but their actual responsibility is to make sure we learn. Responsibility is much more important for ethical decision making because it supports ethical empowerment – the ability for individuals to make their own ethical judgements. This is not possible to do with accountability because there are too many ethical dilemmas to consider. Both, however, can help you act more ethical. A code of conduct is useful for addressing specific and/or repeatable problems, which saves time on making judgements. A code of ethics on the other hand is useful for guiding individuals’ moral judgements where there is no clear right answer.

**Key point 4: Ethical awareness and caution**

**Ethical awareness** helps you clarify whether your actions are ethical. It consists of ideas like **avoiding moral negligence** (not even considering ethics), **avoiding moral recklessness** (not addressing all ethical aspects), **avoiding moral blindness/illiteracy** (not identifying all ethical aspects), and **exhibiting moral competence** (addressing all ethical aspects adequately). Conversely, **ethical caution** helps you prevent unforeseen ethical issues. It consists of principles like being **precautious** (assume unknown outcomes are bad outcomes), providing **safe exits** (mechanisms for mitigating against the ramifications of risks when they come to fruition), and **avoiding risk** (even if you’re in the right). These are almost mandatory to consider when making ethical judgements.