<https://student.wp.odu.edu/cjone143/law-and-ethics-phil-355e/>

This course instructed students to analyze and define moral principles concerning information technology and computing based on real-world situations. This course has helped me understand the difference between ethics and morals. I have realized that ‘ethics’ is the set of norms dictating how we think things should be done, and morals relate to what you believe is right or wrong concerning the conduct of others. The two terms often mean the same thing; cybersecurity ethics, however, means learning ethical principles and understanding whether something is right or wrong in the workplace. We had to do a Case Analysis based on tools for ‘ethical reasoning’ that would justify or contest what was perceived using topics like Privacy, Whistleblowing, and Professional Ethics. These were the various available ethical tools: Consequentialism/Utilitarianism, Contractarianism, Deontology/Kantianism, Ethics of Care, Confucianism, Virtue Ethics, and Ubuntu.

This class is particularly interesting because I am a Cybersecurity major and Risk management and insurance minor here at Old Dominion University. Several of these topics are relevant to the jobs I have lined up for myself, and this class gave me a better idea of what cyber professionals deal with. The readings, videos, etc., also intrigued me about the field, and I can only appreciate that more as I get myself involved in IT roles. The discussion boards allowed me to see, have, and respond to my peers’ thoughts and feelings during our semester in PHIL 335E. I feel like I understood the topics more because of the discussion boards; I could listen to rationalizations I had never considered. The discussions have challenged me to step back and not give in to my instinctual reactions to situations. Through this process, I can see situations more clearly because I watch others justify or view these actions/situations differently. I believe that the discussion boards in this class are the most influential discussion boards ever required of me. It’s not limiting to just talking about my peers in class because they will all be in my fully-fledged career.

One topic that we went over was Privacy. My stance on privacy has not changed. To me, privacy was never really a thing; it was more of a privilege. None of us really can have privacy. Now, I understand more about privacy and how we should all have it, but will we ever truly receive it? The issue of privacy has gained considerable attention in the digital landscape, particularly in cyberspace and social media platforms. The vast amount of personal information available online, originating from various activities such as engaging in social media, conducting online banking, ordering food, and shopping, has raised significant concerns. This paper examines the privacy challenges of Google Street View (GSV) and its subsequent consequences. The introduction of GSV initially resulted in widespread protests as people expressed concerns about their images being displayed online. To address these concerns, Google took steps such as blurring faces and license plates and expanding its operations globally. However, my viewpoint on this issue has evolved. Google should have been more cautious and implemented stronger privacy policies before launching GSV while actively seeking user feedback. It never made sense why they didn't protect people's faces or license plates. To me, that was suspicious, and it could be a bad thing, especially because of robbers and identity thieves. Learning more about privacy overall helped me realize how important privacy is, but I still stand strong on the idea that we never truly had privacy in the first place.

The second and one of the most interesting topics to me was the whistleblowing cases (and perhaps the one which pushed my pre-conceived notions regarding the existence and parameters of cyber-ethics the most) presented by the individual forced to publicly draw attention to the conduct of the US government (who was breaking the law, he believed) in the absence of any other avenue to bring the matter to light: I liked this case the most, but since whistle-blowing was an entirely new concept to me (even the term itself I had not heard of) I have to admit this was the first time we were required to write on the topic; although intrigued, I still was not entirely sure what ‘whistleblowing’ was until I sat down to answer the question: From a cyber-ethics perspective, was it wrong to reveal the privacy violations of US citizens by their government (which he believed to be legally sanctioned classified data)? The US government is breaching ethics – or so it seemed, but it was violating citizens' privacy! Surely that was wrong. So, how could that possibly be? This is not an ethical dilemma but a moral one. Perhaps privacy is an ethical right, but was it morally right that Edward Snowden revealed the violations of privacy made by the US government against its citizens? To me, this was the case that made me think: We need to draw the line between ‘ethics’ and ‘morals’ and decide which one is primary; were I to find myself in a similar position as Edward Snowden, would I choose my morals and be prepared to lose my conscience, or should I keep my professional ethics foremost at the risk of losing my job? If my morals are challenged, I would be ready to take on the consequences and be content with my decision.

The third topic that interested me was Professional Ethics. It relates to me the most, and I have to consider it every day at my corporate job. In this particular instance, Bill Sourour was employed as a full-time coder for a marketing company based in Canada. His assigned task was to develop a website specifically targeted towards teenage girls. Although he had reservations about the nature of the project, he reluctantly proceeded with it. Unfortunately, a tragic event occurred when a young girl who had been using certain drugs took her own life. Overwhelmed by guilt, Sourour decided to resign from his position. I think the code developed for the website had inherent moral concerns, and Sourour could have approached the situation differently. While I acknowledge that he cannot shoulder complete blame for the tragic outcome, I believe that if he had raised more questions and expressed his concerns openly, the creation of the website may have been prevented. Reflecting on this case, I have realized the importance of voicing one's moral objections, particularly in a professional environment where our work can impact others.

In conclusion, the Ethical Reasoning tools gave me a valuable perspective on approaching and interpreting different situations. During the process of selecting the appropriate tool for a Case Analysis, there were instances where multiple tools seemed applicable. This realization has opened my eyes to the fact that there are often numerous valid explanations and justifications for various circumstances. Incorporating ethical tools into each paper broadened my perspective on different topics. I am grateful for this course as it has broadened my perspective and overall knowledge so that I could incorporate ethical reasoning into my future Cybersecurity or Risk Management and Insurance career.