CS 4873 Computers, Society, and Professionalism

Spring 2021

**Section Discussion Guide**

Week 4

I.  Questions

* Go around the room with questions/observations/relevant news items

II. Politics of an artifact papers

* Discuss each person’s paper
  + What artifact did you write your paper about?
  + Did anything surprise you as you did research about it?
  + What about its implications are intentional?
  + What about its implications are unintentional?
  + What could technology designers do in response to this?
  + What could policy makers do in response to this?
  + What can/should individuals do about this issue?

III. Brief Review: Kantianism

* What are the two formulations of the categorical imperative?
* Which do you think is more useful?  Are they useful in different kinds of situations?
* How do you make a rule in Kant’s theory?
* What are the strengths and weaknesses of Kant’s theories?

IV. Brief Review: Social Contract Theory

* How do you make a rule in social contract theory?
* What are the strengths and weaknesses of social contract theory?
* What is the “veil of ignorance” and in what ways is this thought experiment helpful?
* Social contract theory goes beyond the question “Are my actions ethical?” to ask the broader questions “Is the world just?” and “What societal decisions can make the world more just?”  Is this way of thinking helpful in any questions currently facing society? In what ways?

V. Discussion: the mailing list

* You’ve been offered a lucrative consulting job writing membership management software for a non-profit organization you passionately disagree with
  + Do you take the job?
  + What more do you want to know about the situation in order to make a decision?
    - Does it matter if your code is the same as anyone else’s, or if you can write something more effective than other people’s code?
  + In what ways do those factors shape your decision?
  + What do the ethical theories we’ve studied so far say about this dilemma?
* Now suppose you run a company that sells software online to whoever pays for it
  + Is this situation the same as the consulting one, or different? In what ways?
  + Suppose a hate group using your software calls asking for tech support. Do you help them?
    - Why or why not?

VI. Third homework: applying ethical frameworks to a dilemma

* Discuss in detail
* You are graded on how well you show that you understand the theories (not on what you answer)

VII. Introduce the readings for next week

* Before section next week, put a quote from the Gilligan article on your section’s canvas and Teams channel (your TA will tell you which you should use). Include the page number.
  + Make sure it’s a quote that no one else has picked yet