Day 2

Themes
Ethics: Schools of Thought
Common Models
Rights

Old v. New
Lag time
Trade-offs
Kant, Trotsky,
Rousseau, Hobbes
Themes in “SocioTech”

Old problems in a new context: crime, pornography, violence, copyright issues, gambling...

Global reach of Internet: ease of communication with distant places can magnify/spread problems that were once local
Lag time

- Technology development is faster than legislation or education.
- Even when we are ready to legislate, lack of IT knowledge in legislators is troubling.
NEGATIVE FEEDBACK LOOPS

0 Damaging self-referential outputs in programs, usually in “black box” algorithms.
   0 Black box – can’t see inside. Could be due to proprietary software, NDAs, general secrecy...

0 Example: A criminal labeled as “high risk” in law enforcement database

→ longer prison sentence
→ harder to find a job when finally released
→ more likely to be poor and desperate
→ more likely to commit crime
→ “high risk”
   0 Unwittingly (?) included in various algorithms, but very hard to track (who gets to see inputs to an algorithm?)

0 Also see: payday loan interest rates, credit ratings, job application sorting...
Trade-offs

- Security vs. Freedom vs. Privacy
- Connectivity vs. Privacy
- Risk vs. Reward
- Life of one vs. life of many
Ethics

0 The study of what it is to “do the right thing.”
  0 Concern for entities that cannot defend or advocate for themselves
    0 Marginalized populations
    0 The environment
    0 Anyone not “in the room” when a decision is being made
  0 Different for individuals, cultures, philosophies...
  0 But one thing for sure: using money as a sole justification for dubious action is morally wrong.
  0 “Gut feeling” is too subjective to govern behavior on a wide scale
  0 Lenses
No easy answers

- Ethical theories do not provide clear, incontrovertibly correct positions on most issues.

- We can use the approaches we described to support opposite sides of many issues.

- Fully understanding each side of an argument leads to viable solutions to problems.

- Everyone brings their own lenses & filters to an issue.

- 9.3.1 Methodology attempts to aid in objective decision-making.
Common ethical justification models:

**DEONTOLOGICAL:** Step-by-step (rule based)

**UTILITARIANISM:** Outcome-based

[Outcome must be greatest good for greatest number of people]

“Live your life as though your every act were to become a universal law.” - Kant

“The end may justify the means as long as there is something that justifies the end.” - Trotsky

Common ethical justification models:

- Golden rule
  - Treat others as you would want them to treat you.

http://www.harryhiker.com/poster.gif
Common ethical justification models:

**SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY:**

Human lives without a law system are “nasty, brutish and short.”

People willingly submit to a common law in order to live in a civil society.

Hobbes: *Leviathan* (1651)

http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/philosophers/hobbes.html
Rousseau

Man is naturally good, society corrupts him (opposite of Hobbes)

“L’Homme est naturellement bon... La société déprave et pervertit les hommes.”

- Discourse on the origin of inequality, 1755

http://www.iep.utm.edu/soc-cont/#SH2c

http://la-philosophie.com/homme-nait-bon-societe-corrompt-rousseau
Common ethical justification models:

Gov’t/Citizen Rights

**NEGATIVE RIGHTS** *(liberties)*

- The right to act without interference

**POSITIVE RIGHTS** *(claim-rights)*

- An obligation of some people to provide certain things for others

Generally governmental in context but can extend further (consider assisted suicide).

Textbook p. 31
Wrong v. Harm

Some important distinctions:

0 Right, wrong, and okay
0 Distinguishing WRONG from HARM
  0 Drunk driving, rescuing someone
  0 Harm alone is not fundamentally unethical
0 Personal preference and ethics
0 Law and ethics
  0 Ethics fills the gap between legal standards (applying to ALL) and particular choices (in a SPECIFIC case).
  0 What is illegal is not always unethical (see: Fugitive Slave Act)
Is it...a right? A positive or negative right? Violation or not?

1. All students have free education options from Kindergarten to 12th grade.
2. A man stands in a park and lists reasons why we are all going to hell.
3. A man screams “FIRE!” in a crowded theater when there is no fire.
4. The right to health care.
1. The right to go to any church you choose.
2. The right to post a blog entry complaining about your job.
3. A woman refuses to let police officers, searching her neighborhood for an escaped fugitive, into her home.
4. The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
5. The right to use marijuana.
6. The right to have employees work in a warehouse with no windows and poor ventilation.
Deontological or Utilitarian?

It’s ok to spy on the public in order to catch criminals.