



Debating Ethical Scenarios

Objectives

An ethical scenario is one that raises issues fundamental to our behavior as professionals, and to our reflections on our own and others' behavior. By raising and debating such scenarios we hope to enhance:

- your awareness of the expectations of professional societies for its members, and in turn for the profession in general;
- your ability to analyze, develop and express ethical positions; and
- your use of oral presentations as a vehicle for disseminating information.

In the on-line debates you are encouraged to express views that reflect complementary or contrasting positions in an argument, so as to bring out all perspectives on the underlying issues. As a result it is quite possible that any one individual may post a set of positions or comments that are not internally consistent!

Please do not contribute material that is frivolous or petty, and above all, let us all recognize that this is an academic debate, intended to bring out all views, and that **the views expressed are not necessarily the personal views of the person posting a statement** -- they are simply contributions to the debate.

Only class members will be able to contribute to the debate: you will be asked to enter your last name (no capitalization) as your ID, and the

last four digits of your social security number as your password. To join the debate, click [here](#).

The Debates

There will be 14 debate teams of four students each. You can see the teams and weekly debate schedule by clicking [here](#).

Each team will manage the debate of one scenario (numbered to match the team number). The managing team's first task will be to develop and post two pro and two con positions for your scenario. Each team member should contribute one position; the team should negotiate in advance (e.g., over email) what the general content of the positions will be, so that the material reflects a coordinated effort to cover the important points. As with the paper writing assignments, keep track of your work in developing debates material for inclusion in your journal.

In developing your positions and comments, try to incorporate where possible the material that we have been (and will continue to be) discussing in class -- e.g., concerning ethical theories, codes of conduct, professional responsibilities and so on.

Mechanics

Debates will be conducted on-line through the use of an application written by Phil Isenhour; access to the debates requires a forms-capable Web browser such as Mosaic or Netscape. If you believe this will be a problem for you, please contact [Dr. Rosson](#) or [James](#) immediately.

Posts to the debate pages will be restricted to members of this class; you will be asked for an identifier and a password. Your identifier will be your last name; your password will be the last four digits of your student identification number.

During the first week we will have two debates running in parallel; subsequent weeks will have four debates each week. Each debate will

proceed as follows:

1. At approximately 8am on Monday, the debate pages will be opened for posting of scenario **positions** by the managing team. The team should provide a minimum of two **pro** and two **con** positions, each consisting of 50-100 words.
2. At 5pm on Friday, the debate pages will be opened to the rest of the class, who may then post **comments** (on the positions or on the scenario itself); class members may also post new pro or con positions. The comments can be used for many purposes -- to agree or disagree with a position, to elaborate on it, to ask for clarification, etc. While the main point of a comment may be indicating agreement or disagreement, it should contain some explanation of why or with what the commenter is agreeing or disagreeing; simply stating "I agree" contributes little to the discussion.

Contributions to the debates are part of your class participation activities. I expect each of you to contribute at least one comment per week to one or another of the open debates (not counting position-posting by the managing teams).

3. At 5pm on the following Wednesday, the debates will be closed, and the managing teams will prepare a summary oral presentation to give the following week (i.e., during Wednesday's class). These summaries are not intended to reopen the debate, but should be presented by the team in a point/counterpoint style. At the end of each presentation, class members will have an opportunity to "vote" on the debate outcome.
4. A report on the debate (e.g. a script of the summary presentation) should be included in each student's portfolio that is required at the end of the course.

The Debate Summary and Presentation

The summary of the debate should take 10-12 minutes. The summary will be judged on how well the pieces of the presentation address the issues raised. The group should work together prior to the presentation so that each member knows what arguments will be made. There should be no surprises when the debate is presented. A "group grade" will be assigned based on student evaluations, and the instructors' evaluations. Individual grades will be based on the group grade and on peer evaluations provided by the members of the debate team. These team member evaluations are designed to insure that each member participates equally in the debate management and presentation preparation.



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