

Ethical Decision Making in Engineering and Construction
May 10, 2023

David Schultz, Professor
Hamline University
dschultz@hamline.edu

Course description: What does it mean to act ethically as an engineer or in construction? Is there any relationship between your personal ethics and the ethics you practice at work? Is being personally ethical enough to acting ethically? This class examines the relationship between personal and professional ethics, how to identify ethical dilemmas, and how to engage in ethical decision making.

Goals

- * Describe what it means to be an ethical manager
- * Assess the role of personal values at work
- * Understand the difference between work and personal values
- * How to identify an ethical dilemma
- * Explore how to engage in ethical decision making
- * Explain what ethical diversity is and why it should matter to you

I. What does it mean to be an ethical employee/manager?

- A. What are the traits of a person you consider to be ethical?
- B. What are the traits of an employee/manager you consider to be ethical?
- C. Three case studies
 - 1. Southwest Corridor
 - 2. Canadian engineer
 - 3. NYC Engineer

II. The relationship between personal and workplace ethics

- A. Are the ethics of the workplace the same as our personal ethics?
 - 1. Is it important to have the right virtues or only appear to have them?

III. Ethics and Morals?

- A. What is ethics? How are they different from morals?
- B. What are values?
- C. Is there a place at work for our own private values or morals?
- D. Should you be able to refuse to do something because it is against your own conscience?

IV. What is an Ethical dilemma?

- A. Defining a dilemma?
 - 1. *Antigone's* saga
 - a. A conflict of competing (ethical) duties?
 - b. Competing personal and public values?

- B. What is distinctive about ethics?
 - 1. Four types of decisions
 - a. Legal
 - b. Ethical
 - c. Etiquette (manners)
 - d. Stupidity
 - 2. John Boatright, *Ethics and the Conduct of Business*
 - a. Impartial
 - b. Rational
 - c. Adjudicative
- C. Are ethics and professional rules of conduct the same as “liking chocolate ice cream?”

V. Is there a unique set of ethics for engineering and construction?

VI. The Elements of Moral Reasoning

- A. How do individuals engage in moral reasoning?
- B. Formal ethical models
 - 1. Outcome-based theories (utilitarianism)
 - 2. Rule-based models (Kant)
- C. Informal models
 - 1. Mirror model
 - 2. Jane Vanderpool model
 - 3. 10 PM news model
 - 4. Sleep model
 - 5. Marilyn Fischer model
 - a. Mission
 - b. Relationships
 - c. Sense of personal integrity

VII. What is Moral Diversity and Why should you Care?

- A. What is diversity? (or not another @#!*\$*&! class on diversity)
 - 1. What does diversity mean to you?
 - 2. Rethinking Diversity: Do we think about the world in morally different ways?
- B. Gender and Diversity
 - 1. Are Men and Women different?
 - 2. Deborah Tannen’s *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*
 - 3. John Gray’s series *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus : The Classic Guide to Understanding the Opposite Sex*
 - 4. How men and women learn and perceive the world?
 - 5. Sexual harassment
 - a. Application of "Reasonable Woman" standard

- (1) *Harris v. Forklift Systems* (1993) Need not show psychological harm so long as one could show that a *reasonable person* would find the conduct offensive or that it interferes with one's job performance
6. Gender and management styles
7. Do women think about ethics in a different voice?
 - a. Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*
- C. Culture
 1. Do people from other cultures/backgrounds think differently?
 2. Norman J. Finkel's *Not Fair! The Typology of Commonsense Unfairness*
- D. Working with Moral Diversity
 1. How do we make decisions with those whom we morally disagree?
 - a. Ignore it
 - b. My way or highway
 - c. Deference to administrative evil or hierarchy
 - d. Make moral disagreement part of administrative decision-making process

VIII. Conclusion: The postmodern world of work

- A. What do we do when public/private lives converge?
- B. How are personal and professional ethics connected?
- C. Do we all think about ethics in the same way?