Introduction to Ethics

- ☛ Cow conversations
- ☛ Moral reasoning
- ☛ Apply moral reasoning to COW conversations

Cow discussion topics

- ☛ What would you like to discuss?
- ☛ Genes and binge drinking
- ☛ Genes and History
- ☛ Clone armies, little Hitlers, baby killings, and other miscommunication
- ☛ Map your genes for only one grand!!
- ☛ Resolving moral dilemmas
- ☛ Organs anyone?
- ☛ An Animal's Place

Common elements of the discussions

- ☛ Focus on different aspects of the life sciences
- ☛ Raises moral dilemmas
  - ☑ "should" questions
  - ☑ Situations that raise conflicting obligation
- ☛ Question: how does one answer "should" questions?
  - ☑ Methods?
  - ☑ Evidence?
  - ☑ Are there right and wrong answers?

Example: Music File Sharing

- ☛ Moral question: should I/you share digital music files over the Web?
  - ☑ No - it is illegal to do so!
  - ☑ Yes - many people do it / common practice
- ☛ Seemingly compelling reasons for and against
  - ☑ How should I make a decision?
  - ☑ Are there ways to resolve moral dilemmas?
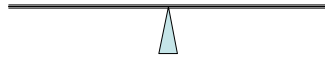
Reasons against files sharing

- ☛ File sharing is illegal ~ against copyright laws
  - ☑ Q. should one always obey the law?
- ☛ File sharing deprives artists of their property
  - ☑ Should composers be able to "own music"?
  - ☑ Does sharing deprives artists or musci companies?
- ☛ File sharing is immoral
  - ☑ Why is immoral behavior wrong?
  - ☑ Will file sharing practices influence other behaviors?
- ☛ Paying full price helps support the arts

Reasons for files sharing

- ☛ Helps the music industry
  - ☑ Use to decide on CD purchases and concerts
- ☛ No clear lines between right and wrong
  - ☑ Taping from radio seems to be OK
  - ☑ Copy TV programs that should not be copied
- ☛ File sharing encourages change
  - ☑ Current system is exploitive, needs to be changed
  - ☑ CDs are overpriced
- ☛ Copyright law is outdated, needs to be modernized
- ☛ Small bands are hurt by current system

Which position is correct?

Share
Reason 1
Reason 2
Reason 3
……

Do not share
Reason 1
Reason 2
Reason 3
……

☛How do pick one over the other?

Basic steps on moral reasoning

☛ 1. Clarify the issue or problem
☛ 2. Identify the stakeholders
☛ 3. Collect the facts
☛ 4. Sort out the moral arguments
☛ 5. Draw conclusions
☛ 6. Test your conclusions

Clarify the issue or problem

☛Genes and binge drinking?
☛Genes and History?
☛Clone armies, little Hitlers, baby killings, and other miscommunication?
☛Map your genes for only one grand!! ?
☛Resolving moral dilemmas ?
☛Organs anyone?
☛An Animal's Place ?

Identify the stakeholders

☛ Individuals or groups who/that have an interest (stake) in the outcome

☑ Public
☑ Business
☑ You personally
☑ A particular "interest" group
☑ Future generations
☑ The environment

☑ Topics
• Genes and binge drinking
• Genes and History
• Clone armies, ….
• Map your genes for only one grand!!
• Resolving moral dilemmas ?
• Organs anyone
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Collect the facts

☛ Laws
☛ Public opinion
☛ Economic impact
☛ Environmental impact
☛ Health impact

☑ Topics
• Genes and binge drinking
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Moral reasoning

☛**Two approaches to moral dilemmas**

☑**Applied ethics - basing decisions about moral responsibility on inference from examples and speculation about consequences**

☑**Normative ethics - basing decisions about moral responsibility on principles or procedures developed by philosophers**

Applied ethics

☛ Consequentialism ~ making judgments about the rightness or wrongness of outcomes
☛ Casuistry ~ the use of similar cases or parallel situations to draw inferences about specific cases
  ☑ Case studies

Normative ethics

☛ Based on the belief that there is a moral universe
☛ Moral universe has concepts, principles, values, and methods
  ☑ *Parallels the physical universe, which has matter and laws of nature*
☛ Philosophers do not agree on how the moral universe operates in the same way that scientists do
☛ Consequence, moral reasoning is more subject to significant differences of opinion

Examples of normative ethics

☛ Utilitarianism ~ greatest good for the greatest number of people
  ☑ *Looks at outcomes*
☛ Deontological ~ make decisions based on principles that are good for all people (Golden Rule)

Moral reasoning

☛ Study problems from different philosophical perspectives
  ☑ Casuistry
  ☑ Consequentialism
  ☑ Utilitarianism
  ☑ Deontological

☛ Topics
  ☑ Genes and binge drinking
  ☑ Genes and History
  ☑ Clone armies, ….
  ☑ Map your genes for only one grand!!
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Draw conclusions & test

☛ Draw conclusions based on moral reasoning
  ☑ Which philosophical system?
  ☑ Only one philosophical system?
  ☑ Justification vs. moral reasoning
☛ Test conclusions
  ☑ Am I comfortable with the conclusions?
  ☑ Can I tell my friends and family what I decided?
  ☑ Would I be comfortable if my decisions were printed on the front page of a major newspaper?