

Ethical Questions In Many Disciplines

Philosophers are not the only people who pose questions about the ethics of any given course of action. As a campus deeply committed to forming ethical students in every field, it is a priority to help faculty from all academic and professional disciplines imagine how to frame material they teach in ethical terms when appropriate. Sometimes all it takes is a little prod to get the creative juices flowing. This document is a distillation of the ethical dilemmas at the hearts of Dundon-Berchtold projects undertaken by faculty-student duos over the past few years. You can peruse the entire list or search your own discipline while you enjoy some coffee or kombucha; sometimes a question that seems most at home under one category transfers quite well into another, with just a slight tweak.

Sample Ethical Questions in Business/Accounting/Marketing

- How can regulators determine the ethical nature of a financial transaction?
- Gray market goods are genuine goods that are sourced in an *unauthorized manner* from a distribution channel. How do consumers judge the ethicality of gray marketer's sourcing practice and what are the implications of such judgments?
- What micro-cultural habits of dishonesty are most likely to lead to a macro-culture of tolerance of corruption?
- Can children be taught principles of anti-corruption in ways that will last into their adulthoods?
- What happens to accounting ethics during war, especially when it comes to controls over procurements during the quick build-ups to war, such as the US Civil War or the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq?
- What are the ethical perceptions related to the white collar crimes of accountants and teachers who commit identical crimes (reporting fictitious results) in different environments?

Sample Ethical Question in Biology:

- What are the ground rules for conducting and reporting biological research in an ethical manner?

Sample Ethical Questions in Communication Studies

- Does the amount of power a person has in an organization have an impact how they perceive what constitutes "collaborative" decision-making, as well as its benefits or drawbacks?
- How does the pressure to create a steady stream of "clickable content" change the ways journalists conceptualize, gather, report and produce news?

- In what ways do alternative therapies administered to adults in custody as part of their rehabilitation in the Department of Corrections have an impact on their empathy and other pro-social skills?

Sample Ethical Questions in Education

- Does assistive technology provide ethically defensible educational support to a student with mild behavioral problems, or does it represent an unfair advantage, as other students are not allowed to use the same tool?
- What are strategies that teachers of young children (PK-Grade 3) can use in their general classrooms to increase the capacity of students to make ethical decisions?
- “In what ways does shifting educators’ paradigms from teaching to learning, employing a strengths-based system grounded in principles of neuroscience ensure that their students achieve literacy, which is their right in an education rooted in the aims of social justice?”

Sample Ethical Questions in Engineering:

- How do engineering students experience and value diversity within the academic community, through designing and engineering solutions, and in thinking about their roles as future professional engineers?
- How can engineering students develop and sustain study groups that are inclusive and representative of the diversity of students in the discipline?
- How much exposure do engineering students receive to ethics in their courses of study? How can engineering faculty increase that exposure in meaningful ways?
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Sample Ethical Questions in Nursing:

- What influences are uppermost in the ethical decision-making processes of student nurses as they engage with patients (whether individual, families, or population)?
- How frequently do post-licensure nurses demonstrate personal accountability and responsibility for their nursing practice; do they make decisions and take actions that are consistent with the obligation to promote health and provide optimal care or do they trust and defer to perceived experts at the expense of risking harm to the patient?

Sample Ethical Questions in Political Science:

- Choose an ethical framework (Rawlsian, Kantian or Consequentialist) to analyze the solutions to a global problem.
- Identify how an assigned actor /country views the world and how this contributes to or constrains solutions to a global problem in their sphere.
- Identify a solution to a global problem. What would it take to address the solution given the differing perspectives and interests of the actors who created the problem?

- How do the interests of a given country /actor reflect its history, as well as domestic and global influences?
- What ethical responsibility do educators bear for the actions of their students? For instance, if ideals instilled in foreign officers during their education in the US inspire them to overthrow the leadership of their own country, what ethical responsibility does the US educator have toward those officers?

Sample Ethical Questions in Psychology/Sociology:

- In what ways do sports create and/or reflect ethical dilemmas that relate to broader psychological and sociological issues (eg. fan behavior, professionalization of youth sport, concussions)
- How might writing about ethical issues be done as excellent “public scholarship,” making academic insights related to ethics relevant to a general audience?
- Does the well-documented decrease in religiosity as student progress through college translate into diminished focus on ethical behavior or less sophisticated ethical thinking?
- To what extent does delay discounting (our human tendency to value immediate gains over long-term gains) relate to unethical decision-making and behavior?

Sample Ethical Questions in Social Work:

- Do the Codes of Ethics from assorted human service professions and disciplines yield a stage-based model of ethical decision-making that can assist professional working with youth and volunteers learn to apply ethical principles in practice?
- How do social workers and social work educators in the U.S. interpret and mobilize the section of the NASW Code of Ethics addressing social workers’ ethical commitments to broader society?

Sample Ethical Question in Mathematics:

- How do one’s personal axioms shape one’s world both mathematically and personally, if an axiom is taken to be a statement believed without proof?