

V. E. 1 Professional Ethics without Moral Theory

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My thesis is that any course in professional ethics—even in a philosophy department—is, all else equal, better without moral theory than with it. In defending this thesis, I shall return to a debate I had with Bernie Gert and Ed Harris a few years ago, itself the culmination of almost four decades of teaching professional ethics and more than two decades of teaching others to do the same. I am, I should make clear, not against moral theory (the attempt to understand morality as a reasonable undertaking). Indeed, not only do I enjoy teaching a course in moral theory every few years and publish on the subject now and then, I would agree that, in principle, moral theory can not only enlighten students but also be useful to them, helping them to identify moral issues they might otherwise overlook, seek information they might otherwise not think relevant, and formulate courses of action that might otherwise not occur to them. My thesis is entirely practical: Given the time normally allotted to a course in professional ethics (45 or so classroom hours), moral theory will never be useful enough. There is always a less-time-consuming way to do what moral theory can also do, leaving more room for other topics that a course in professional ethics should include. Moral theory is, therefore, always a waste of time in a professional-ethics course.

V. E. 2 Engineering and Human Well-Being

Charles Edward Harris, Philosophy, Texas A&M University

There is an increasing tendency to apply worldwide standards for engineering education and licensure. More controversial is the question whether the Western concept of professionalism should be adopted worldwide. Some scholars claim that the Western concept of professionalism has already been adopted in their societies and some scholars claim that it has not been adopted. Some even say that it may never be adopted. Adoption of the Western concept of a profession requires acceptance of the institution of professionalism by the public and identification of professionals with the ideals and commitments of the profession. After arguing that professions are social institutions, I make a case for the benefits of universal or near-universal adoption of the Western conception of professionalism. Then I offer four suggestions about how adoption of the Western concept of professionalism can be promoted.

V. F. An Artistic Touch to Science Ethic Education—The Movie

Ioanna Semendeferi, History of Science and Science Ethics, University of Houston

In the science--ethics course I teach at the University of Houston, a student whose father worked as an engineer at NASA wrote an excellent blog that summarizes her feelings and knowledge about the events leading to the Challenger disaster. This blog ends with the following sentence: "We need not only to teach future scientists to be ethical, but also how to stand up for what is right, even against authority, when faced with those thirty minutes." The thirty minutes she refers to, was when the engineers backed--up under managerial pressure and the fateful ok to launch the space shuttle was issued. This elusive but noble goal of teaching people how to stand up for what is right drives my educational effort. My method targets primarily moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral commitment. For this reason it has a strong emotional component that is delivered through films, 'heated debates', and experiences that are based either on role---playing in landmark historical events or on participation in a clinical practicum. This mixed method that traverses multiple time periods and blends scientific with artistic components is reflected in a short movie that I developed. The movie promotes the method using the method's elements.

V. G. Panel: Teaching Research Ethics: A Philosophical Approach

Gary Comstock, Philosophy, North Carolina State

Nate Sharadin, Research Ethics, University of North Carolina

Gary Varner, Philosophy, Texas A&M

Objective: To explore the resources, methods, values and limitations of a new approach to the pedagogy of teaching responsible conduct of research. We'll use as a guide a new text to which all three speakers have contributed.