Information Technology Ethics

In the digital world

What is Ethics

- Thinking about the effects of your actions and doing what helpful rather than hurtful.
- How do we know if something is ethical or not?
  - Apply the ethical tests of
    - Universality
    - Reversibility
    - Transparency
  - As part of these tests, think of the consequences for everyone involved

Ethical Tests

- What are the three ethical tests?
  - Universality - Do you think it is okay for everyone to behave like that?
  - Consequences - What if everyone did this? What would be the consequences for everyone else?
  - Reversibility – If someone did this to you, would you be okay with it?
  - Do you want to be treated the same way?
  - Transparency – Would you still do this if everyone knew about it?
    - If a TV camera was pointed at you, would you still do this action?

IT Ethical Topics

- Academic dishonesty
- Copyright infringement
- Ethics in communications
  - Responsible use of email
  - Spam
  - Spread of inaccurate information
- Ethics in search engine optimization

Academic Dishonesty

- A growing problem on college campuses
- Includes cheating, plagiarism, and other such activities.
  - Plagiarism is copying the work of someone else and turning it in as your own.
  - Cheating is unauthorized help during examinations and assignments

Academic Dishonesty (Cont)

- Ease of file sharing and web searching has made this an IT ethics problem.
  - Students copy papers, presentations or other work from the Web and turn it in as their own work.
    - Not only is this plagiarism, but it might be copyright infringement as well.
- Instructors have tools and resources to route out this type of work.
Applying the 3 Ethical tests

- Let's look at the three Ethical tests to determine if academic dishonesty is unethical behavior
- Something that fails all 3 tests is definitely unethical.

Applying Test of Universality

- Universality – Do you think it is okay for everyone to be dishonest in academics?
  - Consequences of everyone being academically dishonest
    - Educational degrees become worthless
    - Unemployment would rise as qualified people could not be found and economy would falter
  - If it's not okay for everyone, then it fails this ethical test.

Applying Test of Reversibility

- Reversibility – If someone did this to you, would you be okay with it?
  - How would you feel if you were a teacher and found out that a student cheated?
    - It's not a good feeling.
  - If you won't want someone doing this to you, then it fails this ethical test.

Applying Test of Transparency

- Transparency – Would you still do this if everyone knew about it?
  - Would you cheat if your family knew?
  - Would you still cheat if TV camera was pointed at you and everyone could see you cheating?
  - If you wouldn't do this in front of everyone, then it fails this ethical test.

Know the Consequences

- What are the consequences of Academic Dishonesty
  - Other consequences
    - Devalues the time and energy of the teacher
    - If many students cheat, then it devalues the whole school and could cause loss of accreditation.
    - Degrees from an unaccredited institution are not as valuable.

Copyright Infringement

- Unauthorized copying of text, software, graphics, multimedia including music & videos is illegal
- Illegal copying of software, music & video is often called piracy.
  - Piracy is considered to be stealing.
  - Popular entertainment items such as music and movies are illegally copied and uploaded for others to download
**Piracy**
- Piracy is most likely the #1 crime on the internet
  - Many people do not realize it's a crime
- The entertainment industry has begun to seek damages from companies and individuals who infringe on their copyright.

**Fair Use**
- Legal use of clips or limited portion of a work for review, critical, educational purposes
  - Quotes can be added to research papers, but always make sure it is indicated as a quote.
  - References should be cited always
- General rule of thumb limits
  - Can't use the entire work.
  - Written work – 10% or 1,000 words (which ever is less)
  - Music/video – 10% or 30 seconds (which ever is less)
  - Film/TV – 10% or 3 minutes (which ever is less)
  - Your work can not be made up of just fair use elements

**Legal or Not?**
- A common misconception is that it is okay to copy if you are not making a profit from the copy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Legal Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copying someone else’s music, videos, software, etc for your use</td>
<td>Illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying your music, videos, software, etc for someone else’s use</td>
<td>Illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making copies of something you already own as a means of backup and not for sharing</td>
<td>Legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remixing</td>
<td>Questionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends upon amount used &amp; purpose</td>
<td>most likely illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of limited amount for review or educational purposes</td>
<td>legal under fair use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Responsible Communications**
- Mind your attachment sizes in email
  - Use compressed (zip) folders to make your files smaller
  - Use alternative file types.
    - JPG or GIF instead of BMP/TIF for images
- Don't forward everything to everyone
- Verify information you are sending on to others
  - Stop hoaxes & myths from spreading
    - Be responsible, don't spread them further
- Don't send spam

**Spread of Inaccurate Info**
- Hoaxes and myths are often spread via email & online postings
  - Verify information before posting or emailing to others
  - Snopes is one site that verifies if information is a hoax or a myth or if it is accurate
- Inaccurate information can added to sites such as Wikipedia, and other publicly edited sites.
  - Be responsible when posting
  - Verify information you find

**Spam**
- Unsolicited email or online discussion usually advertising something.
  - Never send spam
  - If you receive questionable emails delete without opening
- Slamming
  - Stolen email addresses used to send spam
  - If you receive a number of returned undeliverable email that you haven’t sent:
    - Report it to your ISP
    - Consider changing your email address immediately.
Search Engine Optimization

- Some web masters seek out ways to beat the search engines in finding ways to get their sites listed higher on the listings
  - Black Hat SEO
- Others feel that in order for the search engines to work properly this should be avoided
  - White Hat SEO
- Be aware how these practices affect your web searches

Summing Up

- Think about the effects of your actions.
- Be helpful instead of hurtful
- Be aware of the laws and regulations that govern technology.
- Be safe!
- Use technology wisely and ethically.

Assignment – Ethical discussion