Week 5: Professional Ethics
February 8, 2023
Do computer professionals need to worry about ethics like lawyers or physicians?
Jacobus Lentz, Dutch inspector of population registries before World War II

Partnership with the Nazi Government

Role in Hitler’s Final Solution
Do computer professional need to worry about ethics like lawyers or physicians?

Privacy and security
Recall Therac-25
Financial decisions (e.g., tax software)
Preamble of Code

• Software engineers have opportunities to do good or do harm
• Software engineers ought to be committed to doing good
• Eight principles identify key ethical relationships and obligations within these relationships
• Code should be seen as a whole, not a collection of parts
• Concern for the public interest is paramount
Software Engineering Code of Ethics: 8 Key Principles:

- Public
- Client and Employer
- Product
- Judgment
- Management
- Profession
- Colleagues
- Self
PUBLIC - Software engineers shall act consistently with the public interest
CLIENT AND EMPLOYER - Software engineers shall act in a manner that is in the best interests of their client and employer, consistent with the public interest
PRODUCT - Software engineers shall ensure that their products and related modifications meet the highest professional standards possible
JUDGMENT - Software engineers shall maintain integrity and independence in their professional judgment
MANAGEMENT - Software engineering managers and leaders shall subscribe to and promote an ethical approach to the management of software development and maintenance
PROFESSION - Software engineers shall advance the integrity and reputation of the profession consistent with the public interest
COLLEAGUES - Software engineers shall be fair to and supportive of their colleagues
SELF - Software engineers shall participate in lifelong learning regarding the practice of their profession and shall promote an ethical approach to the practice of the profession
Analysis of the Code

• Questions demonstrating the multi-faceted grounding of the code:
  ▪ Who is affected?
  ▪ Am I treating other humans with respect?
  ▪ Would my decision hold up to public scrutiny?
  ▪ How will those who are least empowered be affected?
  Are my acts worthy of the ideal professional?
Alternative List of Fundamental Principles

• Be impartial
• Disclose information that others ought to know
• Respect the rights of others
• Treat others justly
• Take responsibility for your actions and inactions
• Take responsibility for the actions of those you supervise
• Maintain your integrity
• Continually improve your abilities
• Share your knowledge, expertise and values
Class Discussion– Analyze the Software Engineering Code of Ethics
Class Discussion -- Software Recommendation

- List of clauses associated with these fundamental principles:
  - (Public) 2.06  Be fair and truthful in all matters
  - (Public) 2.08  Donate professional skills to good causes
  - (Judgment) 3.06  Disclose conflicts of interest
  - (Judgment) 3.07  Avoid conflicting financial interests
  - (Profession) 6.09  Place professional interests before personal
  - (Profession) 6.13  Share software knowledge
• Relevant fundamental principles:
  ▪ Be impartial
  ▪ Disclose information that others ought to know
  ▪ Share your knowledge, expertise, and values
Conclusion

• Professor Smith should have revealed her conflict of interest to Mr. Shaw.
• Examples situations:
  ▪ Actions/products of employer can potentially harm the public
  ▪ Fraudulent use of tax dollars
Morality of Whistle-Blowing
Whistle-Blowing as a Moral Duty