CS 3043 Ethical Analysis Guide

# Kantianism

## Identify the moral agents in the scenario

### Who is doing the action? Who is being affected by this action?

## Identify the rule deciding the action

## Universalize the rule so everyone must follow it

## Examine the consequences of this rule and identify any contradictions.

### Does universalizing the rule lead to logical contradictions or invalidate assumptions about the situation? If so, the rule is unethical. If there are no contradictions, then consider step 1.5

## Consider how the primary moral agent is treating the other agents in the scenario.

### Is the primary moral agent treating the others in the scenario as a means to an end, using them solely for their own benefit? An example would be withholding information you believe might be a factor in their decision making. If so, the action is unethical. If they are not, and are instead treating the other moral agents as equals, then the rule is ethical.

# Act Utilitarianism

## Identify the moral action to be evaluated

## Identify the stakeholders, the agent making the action, the moral agents directly affected by the action, the entities of moral worth impacted by the action.

## Decide how to quantify the effects of the action on the stakeholders

### How are you going to give a numerical value to the utility (happiness) of the action? Can you place a dollar value on the consequences? If not, how else can you give a specific quantity to the effects of this action?

## Give a numerical value to each positive and negative consequence of the action on each stakeholder.

### How much money will be made from this one action and by whom? How much will be lost and by whom? If you’re not dealing in money, how can you quantify these consequences in specific amounts?

## How likely is each consequence? Assign a probability (0-100%) to each.

## Subtract the cons from the pros.

### Apply probabilities to each numeric value of pros and cons.

### Add the positive consequences and subtract the negative ones. If the end result is positive (>0), the action is ethical. If the sum is negative (<0), the action is unethical.

# Rule Utilitarianism

## Identify the rule deciding the action

## What would happen if everyone acted this way?

## Identify the stakeholders, the agent making the action, the moral agents directly affected by the rule, the entities of moral worth impacted by the rule.

## Decide how to quantify the probable outcomes of the rule on the stakeholders

### How are you going to give a numerical value to the utility (happiness) of the rule? Can you place a dollar value on the consequences? If not, how else can you give a specific quantity to the expected effects of this rule?

## Give a numerical value to each positive and negative consequence of the rule on each stakeholder.

### How much money will be made from this rule and by whom? How much will be lost and by whom? If you’re not dealing in money, how can you quantify these consequences in specific amounts?

## How likely is each consequence? Assign a probability (0-100%) to each.

## Subtract the cons from the pros.

### Apply probabilities to each numeric value of pros and cons.

### Add the positive consequences and subtract the negative ones. If the end result is positive (>0), the rule is ethical. If the sum is negative (<0), the rule is unethical.

# Social Contract Theory

## Identify the moral agents involved in the scenario.

## Identify the rights involved in the scenario.

### What are the rights of the primary moral actor? What about the other moral agents in the scenario?

## Are the rights of any moral agents being compromised in this scenario? If so, for what purpose?

### Are the rights being compromised absolute, or limited? Weigh the violation of the rights with the motivations of the people violating them.

## If a moral agent’s rights were violated for selfish reasons not consistent with the common good, then the action is unethical. If not, move on to step 4.5.

## Assume the position of a moral agent behind the veil of ignorance. How does not knowing if your rights are the ones being violated affect your perception of the issue?

### If the harm done to vulnerable populations or to the individuals whose rights are being violated is disproportionate to the service it does to the common good, the action is unethical.

# Virtue Ethics

## Identify the roles relevant to the issue present in the scenario.

### Parent, teacher, employer, etc.

## Identify the moral characteristics relevant to the issue and roles.

### Honesty, bravery, compassion, etc.?

## Identify how these moral characteristics can appear as both a virtue or a vice.

### Honesty is the middle ground between lying and tactlessness, bravery between cowardice and foolishness, etc.

## Envision how a moral agent exhibiting the relevant virtue would react in this scenario. If this behavior aligns with the actions taken in the scenario, the action is ethical. Otherwise, it is unethical.