Goals of the Assignment

Develop a case study in ethics for freshman engineering students. The case study should involve an issue that is realistic for you to face as student. Some examples are plagiarism; sexist, racist or harassment of students, faculty or staff; littering or destruction of campus property, spreading false or disrespectful information about students, faculty or staff; or acting in ways that discredit the university, the department or the engineering profession. These examples are intended to stimulate your creativity, not limit your ideas for possible scenarios.

Your scenario could take the perspective of the person directly involved in the act, e.g. plagiarism, or it could take the perspective of someone witnessing the unethical behavior. If you choose a scenario involving either direct involvement or being a witness, realize that there are many choices, from direct and immediate action to waiting until you are safe to report the activity to someone else.

Try to avoid moralizing or blaming or presenting your example from a position of moral superiority. That does not mean you should avoid questions of morality or the consequences of making ethical decisions. The goal is to help incoming students anticipate and deal with the ethical challenges that they will face by exposing and exploring the consequences of choosing different courses of action. Your example will be more potent if you make it relevant to student life *and* if can use it to identify constructive or positive choices as opposed to simply condemning or giving simplistic answers.

To make the scenario realistic, draw upon your own experiences. At the same time, use your best judgment to avoid unnecessarily revelations that would allow specific individuals (either you or others) to be identified or shamed with incriminating or embarrassing information.

To the extent possible, relate your scenario to standards of professional behavior described in the ASME Code of Conduct. In doing so, keep your scenario grounded in the realistic experience of students. If you are stuck and have to choose, give more weight to making your example realistic to student life over being relevant to the practice of engineering after graduation.

Keep your scenario focused on a single issue. Don't make your scenario overly complicated or long. Don't worry about instructing students in the specific wording of the ASME code or in the terminology of ethical philosophy. In other words, minimize the theory and make the exercise practical.

Assignment

1. Write a one to three paragraph scenario that depicts a realistic dilemma faced by engineering students at Portland State University.

2. Write at least three study questions that would be used to guide small group discussions after reading the scenarios. These questions would prompt students to answer questions related to the moral reasoning framework presented in the class. Make your questions specific to the scenario. Include a fourth (or additional) question: "What would you (or should you) do in this scenario?"

3. Provide your own answers to the questions from part 2. The answers may or may not provide clear cut (right and wrong) advice, especially if there are multiple courses of actions that are consistent with ethical behavior. The purpose of the answers is to prepare a leader of the discussion group. Provide an answer (or answers) to the fourth question, "What would you (or should you) do in this scenario?". It's OK to list more than one answer to the fourth question.

Grading Rubric

ME 370, Fall 2014   Group Assignment 3

Points	Category
10	Grammar, spelling, professional format
10	Scenario is relevant to student life and not overly simplistic*
15	Quality and relevance of questions for discussion group
15	Quality and relevance of answers to study questions
50	Total

*Stealing from the bookstore or using a cell phone to cheat on an exam are examples of an overly simplistic scenarios because the obvious ethical behavior is to avoid doing those acts.