

### **Ethics as a collective responsibility**

Ethical decision making is not merely an individual responsibility. It is also a collective responsibility. It is a responsibility of corporations, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, governmental institutions, public service agencies, and many other entities. But ethical decision making is a complex collective capacity that needs to be developed. The purpose of this assignment is to foster the development of this capacity.

### **Informed, principled decision making**

Ethical decision making in a group requires several distinct abilities. First, it requires the ability to create an inclusive environment in which every participant has a voice but no one dominates, communication is thoughtful and respectful, diverse perspectives are welcome, and every participant listens with the intent to learn from the contributions of others and a willingness to change their own views when warranted. Second, it requires the ability to articulate and agree on ethical criteria or principles that will be applied to the decision making process. Third, it requires the ability to become informed about the potential consequences of decisions on others beyond the decision making group – including the consequences on distant others (distant in both space and time). This latter ability often requires seeking out and listening to the concerns and experiences of others, as well as researching relevant sources of information and analysis regarding the subject at hand.

### **Assignment description**

For this assignment you will work in small groups. Each group will have to make a decision on an assigned topic with ethical implications. In order to do this, the group will have to (1) create an environment that is conducive to ethical decision making, as discussed above; (2) agree on relevant ethical criteria or principles to apply to the decision making process; (3) become informed through research and other means regarding the potential consequences of the decision on others; and (4) strive to make a decision by consensus but settle for a majority agreement if consensus is not possible. After arriving at a decision, the group will make a presentation to the rest of the class explaining its topic, the decision it arrived at, and how it arrived at that decision, including an overview of relevant principles and background information. The presentation should be 10 to 15 minutes long plus time for questions and comments.

### **Objectives**

Students who participate in this assignment should develop and refine their capacity to engage in group decision-making processes that are guided by ethical reasoning. These outcomes support the core program level outcomes of team work and ethics.

**Evaluation**

This assignment will be evaluated in three ways. First, every student will perform a self-evaluation, worth 5% of their total grade for the course. Second, every student will receive peer evaluations, the average of which will be worth 5% of their total grade for the course. Third, every student will receive an instructor evaluation, worth 15% of their total grade for the course. Under most circumstances every student in the same group will receive the same instructor evaluation. However, in exceptional circumstances the instructor reserves the right to evaluate students individually.

**Self-Evaluation & Peer-Evaluation Rubric**

Participated regularly in the group's process and made substantive contributions.	1	2	3	4	5
Contributed to environment conducive to collective decision making (inclusive, no domination, thoughtful, respectful, listening, open-mindedness).	1	2	3	4	5
Assumed responsibility for a fair share of the background research.	1	2	3	4	5
Completed responsibilities in a timely manner.	1	2	3	4	5
Total =					/ 20

unsatisfactory = 1 / poor = 2 / satisfactory = 3 / very good = 4 / excellent = 5

**Professor's Evaluation Rubric**

Presentation was clear, engaging, rehearsed, and within 10-15 minute time frame.	1	2	3	4	5
The issue was explained effectively to the class.	1	2	3	4	5
Background information and research was summarized effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical principles/criteria were presented and explained clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
The decision and the rationale behind it were presented and explained clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall coherence and attention to detail.	1	2	3	4	5
Total =					/ 30

unsatisfactory = 1 / poor = 2 / satisfactory = 3 / very good = 4 / excellent = 5