Lecture 2-1:
Introduction to Ethics
Define ethics—how is it different from morality?

**Ethics**

Study of morality

**Morality**

What people ought to or ought not to do

Why do we have a course about ethics and technology?

- Generally need a way to decide the best thing to do
- New problems accompany new technologies
- “Common wisdom” may not exist for novel situations brought about by new technologies
How do we evaluate whether an action is ethical?
• **Ethics**: a rational, systematic analysis

• **Workable ethical theory**: produces explanations that aim to be persuasive to a skeptical, yet open-minded audience

• Good, persuasive *arguments*.
Subjective Relativism

“Who are you to criticize my values?”

- There's no universal standard of right or wrong.
- Every individual must decide for himself or herself.
Cultural Relativism

“Who are you to criticize my culture's values?”

- Moral actions are based on a culture’s actual moral guidelines.
- Different cultures have different moral standards.
- It is presumptuous to judge another culture’s values.
Divine Command Theory

“Stealing is wrong, because the Bible says so.”

• Good actions are actions that God has willed.
• We should therefore use holy books as guides for moral decision making.
Ethical Egoism

“Surly looks out for one guy: Surly!”

- People’s self-interest is their only ethical obligation
- Morally right actions are those which advance one’s own long-term interests
- Helping others is moral only insofar as it advances one’s own interests