**Course Name:** Media Ethics and Laws

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**SCOPE, NATURE AND OBJECTIVES OF ETHICS**

Ethics is mainly known as the principle of moral conduct that makes a distinction between good and bad/ evil, right and wrong, virtue and non-virtue. The word ethics is derived from a Greek word ‘ethos’ meaning character. It is a branch of knowledge that governs right and wrong conducts and behaviors of an individual, profession, group or organization. It is a core of the professional and personal lives of people. Different scholars have defined ethics differently. However different their definitions might be, ethics is always concerned with morality and right vs wrong and good vs evil. It is applied universally. There is also ethics in professions such as journalism, advertising, education, medicine, etc.

**Scope of Ethics**

There are 3 different ***scopes*of ethics.** They are:

1. **Meta-Ethics**
2. **Normative Ethics**
3. **Applied Ethics**

1. **Meta-Ethics:**Meta-ethics comprises the area of situational ethics and deals with logical questions like ‘What do we mean by ‘freedom’ and ‘determinism’ etc. It delves into the nature of ethical properties, attitudes and judgments. For example, a media critic’s description of a TV series as ‘good drama’ does not necessarily denote that the program is morally sound. It is the function of meta-ethics to define such vague concepts in ethical terms. Some of the theories of Meta-Ethics are Naturalism, Non-Naturalism, Emotivism and Prescriptivism.

2. **Normative Ethics:**Normative ethics deals with standards or norms by which we can judge human actions to be right or wrong. It deals with the criteria of what is morally right or wrong. For example, if someone murders a person, everyone will agree that it is wrong. The question is: Why is it wrong to murder someone? There are a lot of different answers we could give, but if we want to specify a principle that stated why its wrong, the answer might be: Murder is wrong because when we kill someone, we violate their right to live. Another perspective might be – To inflict unnecessary suffering on the person being murdered or their family is wrong, that’s why to kill a person is wrong. There are three elements emphasized by normative ethics:

* The person who performs the act (the agent)
* The act
* The consequences of the act

3. **Applied Ethics:**Applied ethics is the problem-solving branch of moral philosophy. It uses the insights derived from meta-ethics and the general principles and rules of normative ethics in addressing specific ethical issues and cases in a professional, disciplinary or practical field. Applied ethics is the vital link between theory and practice, the real test of ethical decision-making. Applied ethics often requires not only theoretical analysis but also practical and feasible solutions.

Some of the key areas of applied ethics are:

* Decision Ethics
* Professional Ethics
* Clinical Ethics
* Business Ethics
* Organizational Ethics
* Social Ethics

Applied ethics takes into consideration issues such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, drug decriminalization, gay marriage, etc.

**Nature of Ethics**

* **Scientific Nature:**Ethics is a normative science which determines norms, moral values in a person and an individual’s character. It is a systematic explanation of what is right and what is wrong.
* **Not Art:** Ethics is not art as art deals with the acquisition of skill to produce objects, while morality deals with motive, intention, purpose and choice which are considered right or wrong in the light of goodness. (web)
* **Variable Nature:**Ethics is not static. It is not always the same. Human beings change and the morality and ethical perspective in them also changes.
* **Exclusively for Human Beings:**Ethics can only be applied to human beings as we are the ones who have the capacity for moral judgement. We cannot expect ethical behaviour from animals, as they are not as intelligent as human beings are so ethics is exclusively for human beings.

**Objectives of Ethics**

Ethical objectives are based on the following factors:

* Objectivity
* Impartiality
* Accuracy
* Public Accountability
* Fairness
* Truthfulness

The objectives of ethics are to study and assess human behaviour. It is also to establish principles and moral standards of behaviour. Ethics is not compulsory in a person’s life and it is not forced upon anyone but being ethical is one step forward towards being a good person.

**Media Ethics**

**Media ethics** is the best division of [applied ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Applied_ethics) dealing with the specific ethical principles and standards of [media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_media), including [broadcast media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadcast_media), [film](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film), [theatre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre), the [arts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts), [print media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Print_media) and the internet.

**Need of Media Ethics**

* Media ethics promotes and defends values such as a universal respect for life and the rule of law and legality.
* Media Ethics defines and deals with ethical questions about how media should use texts and pictures provided by the citizens.
* For both media industry as a whole and for individual within it, codes can also help keep attention directed towards principles that are particularly important as guidelines for appropriate behavior.
* Codes can help professionals develop a sense of what it means to work ethically.
* Codes can also help to protect the mass media and media practitioners from unrealistic expectations and criticisms
* Codes can help make the media more accountable
* Codes can sharpen the focus on ethical issues that people in all branches of the media must face regularly