Professional Behavior and Ethics
or
Why You Can’t Date Your Students

CS 5300
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How to Get Fired

- Act as if you don’t have a ”real job.” It’s just a TA.
- Don’t show up for class. Several times. Without an excuse.
- Be insolent to faculty (especially your advisor), the students and the staff members.
- Call in sick every Monday. Leave for the city on Thursday afternoon.
- Never plan what you are going to do in class, this stuff is too easy, anyway.
• Make clear that research is everything; you are going to solve a great problem and join one of the top departments where you will only teach one graduate course a term.

• Skip office hours. Your officemates can take care of any of the students who’ll come by.

• Make it clear from the start that you don’t intend to do anything extra—in fact, you won’t do anything that you don’t get a salary for. And, you only do that under duress.

• End all your classes early. Can’t do this, you say? Too many questions? Simple to solve; just belittle the students who ask them—that’ll ease up on class time.

• Leave for vacations, breaks, and end of term early. South Padre awaits!
• Don’t hand in grades on time. Got some graduating seniors? So what! They didn’t like you anyway.

• Offer ”grades for favors”–only ”jokingly,” of course.

• Show up at undergrad parties. They’re so much more fun, anyway. Drink a lot. Leave at 2 a.m. with one of your students.

• Tick off the TA supervisor. He isn’t a real computer scientist, anyway. He stopped doing research about the time you were born.
Overview

- Ethics
- Your Duties
- Your Professional Responsibilities
Ethical Concepts and Theories

• Definitions
  – Society: Association of people organized under a system of rules Rules: advance the good of members over time
  – Morality
    * A society’s rules of conduct
    * What people ought / ought not to do in various situations
  – Ethics
    * Rational examination of morality
    * Evaluation of peoples behavior
• Moral Systems
  – rules for guiding conduct
  – principles for evaluating rules

• Characteristics
  – public
    rules are known to all members
  – informal
    not like formal laws in a legal system
  – rational
    based on logic accessible to all
  – impartial
    does not favor any group or person
Useful Ethical Theories

- Duty-Based (Kantianism)
  - Act on a rule that can be universally binding on all people
  - Act on the rule that ensures that all people will be treated as ends in themselves

- Consequence-Based (Utilitarianism)
  Principle of Utility: An action is right (or wrong) to the extent that it increases (or decreases) the total happiness of the affected parties.

- Rights-Based (Social Contract Theory)
- Positive, Negative, Limited, Absolute
Example

- Carla is a single mother who works full time
- She takes two evening courses/semester
- History class requires more work than normal
- Carla earning an A on all work so far
- Carla doesn’t have time to write final report
- Carla purchases report and submits it as her own work
Your Duties and Tasks??
• Responsibilities to Students in Lab or Classroom:
  
  – Don’t discuss their individual grades in public, and don’t compare the students to each other.

  – We have all met people who are very likable, but favoring them with ”hints” or ”extra help” that others don’t get is not fair.
Socializing can lead to difficulties, even in the most benign situation.

* If you are not sure how much fraternization to have with students (after all, we don’t want to be totally standoffish), ask trustworthy colleagues and faculty for their advice.

* Be careful the kinds of jokes and comments you make in front of students, who can be sensitive in very unusual ways.

* Risky Behavior
  - Socializing with a few students from your class
  - Meeting with individual students off campus (restrict your meetings to office hours with the office door left open).
  - Dating students currently in your class.
• Responsibilities to Faculty, Staff and Student Workers
  – Treat others with respect
  – Be trustworthy
  – Treat others fairly
  – Carry out your job duties well
  – Respect the diversity of the university
• Responsibilities to the Discipline
  – Prepare the material.
  – Show some interest in and respect for your assignment, and for the discipline in general.
• Responsibilities to the Profession
  – Protect the Security and Privacy of Hard and Soft Copy Information: student and faculty work and records
  – Conduct of Research
    * Disclose conflicts of interest
    * Avoid discrimination and harassment of all kinds
    * Don’t fake or hide data
    * Maintain proper records on data and methods
    * Do not misuse research funds
    * Respect the confidentiality of the peer review process
    * Do not plagiarize
    * Comply with university rules for human and animal subjects and for safety
Q: I was discussing mountain biking with one of my students. The student informed me that her mother owned a bike shop and offered me a 50 per cent discount on everything in the store. I couldn’t believe my good fortune. Should I take advantage of the offer?

A: Many TAs (and often younger faculty) often feel a closer kinship to their students than more experienced faculty members, making them vulnerable to dual role relationships with students. Although it is impossible to avoid all dual role relationships, it is important to be wary of possible conflicts of interest such as that described above. Gifts or favours from students currently enrolled in your class should be politely refused because of the potential for misunderstanding or manipulation. (Small gifts of appreciation from students once the course is over and grades have been distributed are usually not a problem.)