Ethics: General Ethics

U of M mandates training in ethical conduct of research, scholarship, and teaching (see www.research.umn.edu/ethics).

“Of all the traits which qualify a scientist for citizenship in the republic of science, I would put a sense of responsibility as a scientist at the very top. A scientist can be brilliant, imaginative, clever with his hands, profound, broad, narrow — but he is not much as a scientist unless he is responsible.”

There are many sources of ethical principles: religion, philosophers, national leaders, etc. We’ll discuss some universal themes, starting with those from the Western tradition.

**Nonmaleficence** Do no harm to yourself or others.

**Beneficence** Help yourself and others.

**Autonomy** Allow rational individuals to make free, informed choices.

**Justice** Treat people fairly; treat equals equally, unequals unequally.

**Utility** Maximize the ratio of benefit to harm for all people.

**Fidelity** Keep your promises and agreements.

**Honesty** Do not lie, defraud, or mislead.

**Privacy** Respect personal privacy and confidentiality.

For your group’s principle, think of one situation from everyday life where that principle might influence a decision or action.
Here are six Confucian virtues (taken from Southern Methodist stat ethics course).

- benevolence (ren, 仁)
- righteousness (yi, 义)
- ritual propriety (li, 礼)
- wisdom (zhi, 智)
- trustworthiness (xin, 信)
- filial piety (xiao, 孝)

For your group’s virtue, which of the previous principles are related, and how?

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Think of a statistical situation (in business, science, or academia) where one (or more) these ethical principles might influence a decision or action

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Think of a situation (either general or statistical) where your principle or virtue conflicts with another principle or virtue.

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Think about a time you had to make an ethical choice. Describe the situation. Which principles or virtues did you consider?