

Tuesday 8 March 2011

Be careful to clearly answer the question that is asked. If a question has several items requested, make sure you give an answer to each part. If a question asks for an analysis (e.g., how do these two things differ?) do not simply define each of the two things. Finally, pay attention to point values and allocate your time and amount of writing accordingly.

- 1. Before punched cards were used in data processing systems and computers, they were used in tabulators — mechanical devices that could sort cards and compute totals. What were these tabulators used for? (5 points)**

One of the first, and best-known, uses was to process the 1890 census in only two years — much quicker than the eight years required to process the 1880 census. They were also used by railroads and heavy industry (for accounting) and by stores (to analyze sales).

- 2. The early French telegraphs were considerably different from the device that Samuel Morse later invented. What were those early French telegraphs, and how were they used? (5 points)**

These were towers constructed across France within sight of other towers in the network. Operators raised and lowered two signal flags to send letters or symbols of a message. Viewers at the next tower would then repeat that message to the following tower, propagating the message at speeds approaching 350 miles per hour.

- 3. One of the ethical theories that we examined in Chapter 2 was Cultural Relativism. What is this theory, what is the case for this theory, and the case against this theory? (20 points)**

From the author's slides (graded as 6 points, 6 points, 8 points):

Definition: What is “right” and “wrong” depends upon a society's actual moral guidelines. These guidelines vary from place to place and from time to time. A particular action may be right in one society at one time and wrong in other society or at another time.

Case for: Different social contexts demand different moral guidelines. It is arrogant for one society to judge another.

Name: _____

Case against: Because two societies do have different moral views doesn't mean they ought to have different views. It doesn't explain how moral guidelines are determined. What if there are no cultural norms? It doesn't account for evolution of moral guidelines. It provides no way out for cultures in conflict. Existence of many acceptable practices does not imply all practices are acceptable (many/any fallacy). Societies do, in fact, share certain core values. Only indirectly based on reason.

4. The First Formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative is "Act only from moral rules that you can at the same time will to be universal moral laws." What does this mean? (15 points)

It is saying that if you can justify a particular rule being universalized — applying to everyone — then it is a universal moral law and it is your duty to follow it. A good example is to consider honesty vs. dishonesty. It's easy to justify honesty applying to everyone, especially if you ignore potentially negative outcomes in certain situations. It's harder to justify being dishonest under certain conditions, because then no one would trust anyone else since they could easily be lying.

5. How is Rule Utilitarianism similar to Act Utilitarianism, and how is it different? (10 points)

Both Rule and Act Utilitarianism consider actions good if they increase benefit, happiness, good, etc., and bad if they decrease those things. Both suffer some of the same disadvantages, including the need to reduce all consequences to a single (usually numerical) scale and the possibility of unjust distribution of good consequences.

Act Utilitarianism focuses on a specific situation, and the absolute benefit / harm caused in that situation, whereas Rule Utilitarianism considers the general case, and the benefit / harm caused in general by actions of this kind, resulting in a general "rule" that must be followed.

6. Why was Kant opposed to censorship, and what was his argument against it? (10 points)

Kant's views were formed during the Enlightenment in the early 1700s, when the Monarchy and Catholic Church were very powerful. His argument was that people should think for themselves, instead of just letting the lawmakers and clergy tell them what to believe. This implies free access to information and an opposition to censorship.

7. What are the arguments for, and against, installing web filters on computers in libraries to block pages containing pornography (10 points)

Name: _____

For filtering: Helps protect children from seeing pornography. Libraries do not have to provide pornographic magazines or videos, so why should they have to provide pornography via the web?

Against filtering: Innocent pages can be blocked by mistake, and people asking to have access to those pages have to spend extra time to do so and may have their motives questioned. Many people only have access to the internet at libraries, and should have free and equal access to all types of web content.

8. List five or more examples of trademarks. (10 points)

Many possible answers...

9. Article I, Section 8, of the US Constitution gives Congress the power to protect certain types of intellectual property for “limited times”. What is the “limit” on trade secrets, trademarks, and patents? (15 points)

Trade secrets are protected as long as the information remains confidential.

Trademarks are protected as long as they do not become commonplace nouns or verbs.

Patents are protected for 20 years.