

# Ethics From My Seat

2020-2021



## Mission Statement

The Ethics from my Seat pod seeks to foster and nurture discussion of relevant ethical issues that apply to the University and the communities around it through weekly coffee shop-like discussions. The EMS pod hopes to advance the value of ethical discussion and reward its participants with knowledge that will benefit them in their future experiences. Above all, the EMS pod is committed to creating a safe space for students and staff to indulge in ethical discussion without prejudice of background or major.



## Fellow Hangs

What do you think of when you hear the word Power? The focus on the ethics of power in our world was front and center at our fellow hangs. Our subtopics under the umbrella of "Ethics in Power" consisted of Politics, Healthcare, Action, and Media. For Ethics in Power: Politics we had four subtopics: Political Honesty done by Amy, Campbell, Ricky, Campaigning by Andy, Jonathan, Rachel, Domestic Terrorism by Eesha, Emily, Nayeli, Jessica, and Voting by Esha, Karina, Katie. For Ethics in Power: Healthcare the topics were: Euthanasia by Andy, Campbell, Nayeli, Ricky, Food Insecurity by Emily, Eesha, Katie, Racial Bias by Jessica and Rachel, and Private vs Public Healthcare by Amy, Jonathan, Karina. The next topic was Ethics in Power: Action with the topics: Effective Altruism by Amy, Esha, Jessica, Jonathan, Karina and Intentions/Consequences by Eesha and Katie. Our last topic was Ethics in Power: Media with the subtopics: Politics in Media by Amy, Emily, and Nayeli and Influencers by Andy, Rachel, and Ricky. All subtopics were created by the pod and developed based on our own interests. We modeled our fellow hangs after discussion we'd have in the afternoons at the Parr Center. We experimented with a few platforms like wonder, me and zoom breakout rooms, but we ended up sticking with zoom. As for prep, we started off in groups and researched to create questions for the conversations, but then transitioned to on groups and off groups. One group would be presenting at the hang and the other would research to prepare themselves for the discussion. Fellow hangs consisted of fun and engaging conversations that prompted philosophical debates based on the research of our pod each week. Pod members were present at every hang to create engaging conversations and build on our own existing knowledge!

## Our Journey From Junior to Senior Fellows

During the Fall semester, the members of the EMS pod were Junior Fellows, holding a more participatory role. As Junior Fellows, we challenged ourselves by meeting to facilitate and conduct weekly meetings to discuss various ethical topics. In order to select topics and discussion leaders, we began by creating a document to share our ethical interests and our majors. From there, we selected a discussion leader for each week. Nayeli was responsible for our first discussion—the ethics of voting during the 2020 election—and it served as a model for all future discussion. Eesha then led a discussion on the ethics of prison/criminal justice policy. Andy led a discussion on the ethics of advancing AI medical technology. We finished the semester off strong with Karina leading a discussion on the public health code of ethics.

While we thoroughly enjoyed our discussion, we were eager to take on more responsibility. We utilized the mid-year program review survey to voice our opinions, identify issues, and make changes. We then worked with Sally to transform our casual, weekly meetings to fellowship-wide events that served as forums to promote ethical discussion and deliberation. These events resembled, as much as possible, casual Friday afternoons in the Parr Center. Our weekly pod meetings were transformed from topical ethic conversations to brain-storming sessions for our fellowship-wide presentations. Fellows, PC staff as well as PC grads were invited to these open conversations about a topic of our choosing in ethics. Because of this transition of work ethic we needed an executive member to lead our pod and be in contact with Sally at all times to voice our concerns and ideas.

After voting as a pod on those who were interested in the position, Katie Leonard was chosen as our exec member, and she could not have been a more perfect fit! Thanks to Katie, the EMS pod had direction and purpose in the fellowship. Although our transition from Junior to Senior Fellows came with lots of changes, we never lost the spirit and enthusiasm of our initial meetings. Because of the Parr Center, the members of the EMS pod have grown and flourished together—both as moral thinkers and as lifelong friends.

## Ethics of Power: Politics

On February 5th, we hosted a fellow hang discussing some of the ethical problems in politics. We began with a discussion of political honesty and the ethics of propaganda and continued onto dialogue about the boundaries of campaign tactics. This led us to question the ethical implications of our voting system and voter disenfranchisement. Especially with recent events, we concluded with a discussion of the definition of domestic terrorism and political movements.

Presenters: Political Honesty -- Amy, Campbell, Ricky Campaignings -- Andy, Jonathan, Rachel Domestic Terrorism -- Eesha, Emily, Nayeli, Jessica Voting -- Esha, Karina, Katie

### Takeaways:

It was interesting to see the difference between how the capital riots and the Black Lives Matter movement were depicted. For example, in Google Images, the images capital riots were depicted with patriotic colors or blue, red and white, while the images for the Black Lives Matter were depicted with fire and violence at the time of the discussion (now the images shown are of peaceful protests). Additionally, I had the opportunity to engage with the discussions of fellow EMS fellows in topics such as how technology has an effect on campaigning and political honesty.

### Sources:

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Questions: Bullshitting versus lying? Is there a moral difference? (creating own reality vs purposeful deception) Should politicians be honest? Is honesty really the best policy? What constitutes "honesty" in politics? (honesty vs. good leadership) Can politicians be honest? (Individual vs society) Do we reward honesty in politics? Is it even possible? Was the COVID-19 pandemic handled well in terms of political honesty? What are the bounds Big Tech has on campaigns and political advertisements? Should there be higher moral standards for politicians compared to individuals? What are the ethics of attack campaigns on the opposition? Who defines what terrorism is, and where does bias lay? Where is the line between protest and terrorism? Black Lives Matter vs. Capital Riots depiction in Media e.g. Google Image Search Is the electoral college just? Will all of the problems with the electoral college go away with its abolition? Given that the electoral college is only responsible for determining the presidency, should we first judge how important the POTUS is in governing in a three-branch system before determining the abolition of the electoral college? Does this even matter? How would we facilitate a system where the entire population of the US votes directly for the president? Is representative democracy innately controversial/problematic, or is it specifically the electoral college?

Direct voting as a whole (What would be the consequence of moving to an entirely direct democracy, popular vote for every issue? What about the influence of media, mis/disinformation, and understanding of the issues?) Do you think the electoral college has changed as America has evolved? How do you think the founding fathers would respond to the electoral college's effectiveness today? About the response to it? Voter disenfranchisement / Voting rights ethics Does our vote even matter? The electoral college is also rooted in racism. Should we abolish it? Reform it? How should we do it? Many argue that US citizens have a moral and ethical obligation to vote, but do we really?



## Ethics in Power: Politics

Discussions led by the Ethics from My Seat team  
Campaigning  
Domestic Terrorism  
Political Honesty  
Voting  
Pod in from 3-5PM this Friday! RSVP at go.unc.edu/fellowhang



## Ethics of Power: Healthcare

On February 26th, we hosted a fellow hang discussing euthanasia, food insecurity, racial bias in healthcare, and private vs public healthcare systems. We began with a discussion of the sanctity of life and its ethical implication in assisted suicide. Later, we discussed the racial biases prevalent in our healthcare treatment and the disproportionate effect of food insecurity on minorities. We concluded our discussion with an interesting analysis of what a balanced or ideal healthcare system would look like.

### Presenters:

Euthanasia -- Andy, Campbell, Nayeli, Ricky Food Insecurity -- Eesha, Katie, Emily Racial Bias -- Jessica, Rachel, Esha Private vs Public Healthcare Systems -- Amy, Karina, Jonathan

### Takeaways:

Death is commonly perceived as something bad and horrible and society influenced by various cultures has painted this picture of death to be something that you shouldn't look forward to, when in reality, death is something many are comfortable with at that point in their lives and welcome it. Many of the people facing the decision of euthanasia are suffering to the point where it really is just thinking about the quality of life that one is experiencing at that point in time. It was shocking to see how much racial injustices the medical field has occurred. Encouraging minority populations to become medical professionals may not necessarily mitigate all the issues so we must explore other solutions. The ability to make peace and ensure such biases doesn't occur is especially important in a time like today, where the COVID pandemic is threatening the lives of many.

### Sources:

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## Ethics of Power: Action

On March 19th, we hosted a fellow hang discussing effective altruism and Kantian vs Utilitarian motivations. Using the framework of intentions versus consequences, we looked at Peter Singer's view on giving. Ultimately, the 1% pledge was introduced and widely accepted within the fellows who participated. Debating intentions versus consequences is not solely valuable for how it affects our lives, but there lies value in the debate itself.

### Presenters:

Effective Altruism -- Amy, Esha, Jessica, Jonathan, Karina Intentions/Consequences -- Eesha, Katie

### Takeaways:

The debate between intentions vs consequences matters not only because of how the consequence of the debate roles our lives but also because value lies in the sheer intent of debating it! The sort of thinking that arises in philosophy classes, especially in the Q+A portions, are the closest we get to confronting the human condition—more so than in any other subject matter, in my opinion. The more assignments assigned, discussions engaged in, and classes attended, the clearer it becomes that interacting with philosophy is one of the most valuable tools a person can have. So shout out to Caldwell Hall for helping us think deeply, write precisely, and ponder everything a little more intensely. Forget finding an answer to this debate... merely considering it has value and might encourage a smidge more intentionality. Some people in the Fellow Hang said that they do feel more of a moral obligation to help their own community, which some didn't agree with but understood. Although effective altruism is meant to be something good it is hard to think about the intent of giving. If it is done with no intention it can kind of make the act of giving something fake and isn't genuine.

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### Questions:

If you saw a child on the street dying, would you intervene? Most people say yes, but 19,000 children die everyday. Does it make a moral difference that they aren't right next to us? Is it then morally wrong we aren't donating right now? We can make a change by donating 1% of our income. What do you think is the most effective way to increase school attendance in a rural community? If you saw a child on the street dying, would you intervene? Most people say yes, but 19,000 children die everyday? Does it make a moral difference that they aren't right next to us? Is it then morally wrong we aren't donating right now? Were any of the main cause areas listed for EA surprising to you? Do you want to take the 1% pledge? Do you have any questions about it? You may say you don't have enough money. But the average UNC salary is 55,000 right out of graduation. 550 is 1%. Is the difference between 55,000 and 54,500 going to make a difference in your life? Probably not. The ethical dilemma of where your priorities lie, is it ethical to set your intentions in something that won't bring you future value? Is it ethical to evade accepting responsibility for your consequences important/ethical?



## Ethics of Power: Media

On April 9th, we hosted a fellow hang discussing media ethics. Problems with the rise of social media as a form of political information were brought up and debated. We discussed the responsibilities of social media platforms in light of the recent removal of right-wing app, Parlor. We later questioned influencers ethical responsibilities and the most appropriate way to balance profit/clicks and moral standards.

### Presenters

Ethics in Media: Politics -- Amy, Emily, Nayeli Ethics in Media/Influencers -- Andy, Campbell, Rachel, Ricky

### Takeaways

New media offers both bad and good effects to democracy in that it can give voices to people, but still shows people content that is similar to their viewpoint. With it's purpose of engagement and clicks, new media can easily circulate false information, which can affect important events such as elections. Additionally, the fact that new media offers a method of self-exploitation (influencers) and in some cases new media does not adequately punish money-making influencers involved in criminal actions raises ethical concerns. The media can significantly change the course of someone's political career and can make or break politics. Influencers not only have to have a responsibility of using their platform for good, but also carrying themselves with those same ideas out of the spotlight and in their everyday life.

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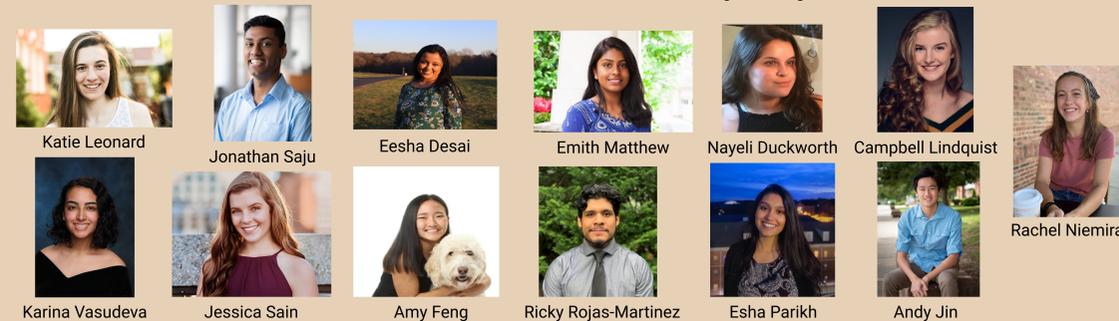
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### Questions:

In the Ted Talk "Digital Ethics and the Future of Humans in a Connected World", Futurist Gerd Leonhard says that "technology has no ethics". What do you make of this statement? Do you agree or disagree? What implications does your conclusion have in today's political platforms and climate? In "Media Ethics and Politics," Kim Wingrei argues that "over the last few years, our parliament has become more of a hotbed of unbridled bias, intolerance, and partisanship than ever before". What ethical responsibilities does the media hold, if any? What ethical responsibilities do consumers hold? If neutrality is not the goal of media, how do we tell the truth in a media environment that rewards engagement and clicks above all else? Do you think social media has the responsibility to maintain impartiality regarding elections and should there be legal restrictions for candidate's direct communication with voters? How does new media affect democracy? Is it ethical to remove people with malice from platforms and allow would be victims to be ignorant to what could happen to them? Would they feel safer not knowing? Should a predominant public figure be held to a different standard even though he is technically a "Youtube" doctor? Do YouTubers have to recognize certain ethical dilemmas surrounding privacy or is it all just for the clicks nowadays? How much is too far? Is it right for youtube to profit off of controversial YouTubers? (Mini ladd, CalimeCarson, etc.) What other actions should be taken place? Even though his friend is the one being accused of this certain incident does he have any responsibility?



## What EMS Means to Us



## Next Steps

If you enjoyed our Fellow Hangs, we have good news. We plan to transform the Friday talks at the Parr Center. That also means that you can expect the Ethics from My Seat pod to be back next year! We hope to continue to uphold our mission and continue to advance the value of ethical discussion and reward its participants with knowledge that will benefit them in their future experiences. Our work we do will help next year's junior fellows by encouraging them to expand their role in the Parr Center and take control of what they truly want to get out of this experience. We eagerly look forward to how the Ethics from My Seat pod and its impact grow.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we would like to extend a thank you to the fellows of the Parr Center who took time out of their Fridays to contribute to our Fellow Hangs. Without the fellows' support, our Fellow Hangs would not be fulfilling to both us and our mission. We would like to thank Dr. Sarah Stroud for her leadership in the Parr Center and for giving us fellows a place where we can enrich ourselves in ethical discussion. We would also like to thank Alex Richardson for allowing us to be moderators for the NHEsb, which us fellows have learned greatly from. Last but certainly not least, we would like to give a round of applause and thanks to Sally Moore. Sally has made the Parr Center fellowship unforgettable. Our pod greatly appreciates the timeless work and effort Sally puts into the fellowship to truly make it a learning experience for us all.

