# Research methodology seminar
# A lively introduction to Ethics (in Science)

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Engage current research trainees in discussions about proper and improper scientific conduct (with an emphasis on the field of Computing).
Make you *think* about several situations and debate.

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**Why talking about Ethics?**

- The modern life creates many highly controversial topics.
- Misbehavior in science may affect all of us.
- Because the world is not split between Science and daily life...

# When Science meets Society

Many people are talking about Ethics (in medicine [1], climate changes, resource waste, practices and products issued from AI, etc.).

The concept covers several aspects

- moral
- integrity
- deontology
- the code of law
- etc.

The purpose of this talk is to discuss them (using lively analysis of case studies).

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[1]like euthanasia, assisted reproduction, genome manipulation, augmented bodies, transhumanism, etc.

# Integrity

- The Latin etymology is "integer/entier".

Today, many meanings of the term retain this notion of wholeness and indivisibility, as when we speak of preserving the integrity of a nation.

The idea behind integrity is often assimilated to "be yourself" or "stay true to yourself".

Notice that for many people behaving with integrity would simply mean acting ethically.

# Deontology

- The term deontology comes from the ancien greek word "*deontos*", which means duty.

In its common acceptation, deontology refers to the obligations that people are required to respect in their work.

The obligations shared by a group of people reflect values and principles that are –appear to be– fundamental.

# Ethics

Ethics is close to moral[2].
Looking at the classical *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* 1776, ethics is definied as the Science of moral.

Etymology: 2 significations of the word *ethos*:

- set of behaviors
- the right place for everything

Both Deontology and Ethics refer to human social activities (daily life, individual/collective, ...) while integrity is a more personal concern.

But all are more than common activities (taking the tramway, eating, sleeping, etc.),
There is a dimension of *sense of life* or *social rules* that should be followed.

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[2]but it does not mean that it refers to Good and Evil or any type of religion

# L'éthique au sein de quelques institutions

- CCNE (Conseil consultatif national d'éthique)
  Build a network between the various existing committees, thus, being aware of the practices in different fields, share informations and think together[3].
- COMETS du CNRS
  - draws the attention of research and management staff to the ethical and societal dimensions of all kind of research.
  - aims to shed light on the exercise of freedom of research with regard to the duties and responsibilities that these persons have towards CNRS and more generally towards society.
- Inria, INSERM, INRAE, ...
- Universities (since 2016) and Doctoral Schools.
- HCERES has its own committee since 2017

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[3]A good example is the pandemy

# Studying Ethics

Prepare, conduct, and report of scientific research including professional issues

## Examples:

Peer review, conducting research, authorship, research fraud, conflicts of interest, working in questionable topics, right level of communication about scientific issues, ...

**Methodology.** Let us study some of the previous topics by groups of students who will analyze concrete situations and deliver a –clear– analysis.

# Freedom of expression

Les enseignants-chercheurs, les enseignants et les chercheurs jouissent d'une pleine indépendance et d'une entière liberté d'expression dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions d'enseignement et de leurs activités de recherche, sous les réserves que leur imposent, conformément aux traditions universitaires et aux dispositions du présent code, les principes de tolérance et d'objectivité.
article L952-2 du code de l'éducation, révisé en 2020

University teachers and researchers enjoy full independence and freedom of expression in their teaching duties and research activities, subject to the limitations imposed on them by the principles of tolerance and objectivity, in accordance with university traditions and the guidelines of this code.

# Scope of researchers' activities

- Academic research:
  There exist ethical rules that apply to teachers and researchers but do not apply to PhD students.
- he/she shall perform his/her duties with dignity, impartiality, integrity and probity.
  In the exercise of these duties, he/she is bound by the obligation of neutrality.
- A code of Ethics has been proposed in most public organizations such as CNRS.
  It consists of very general rules, for example on courtesy (conforming to the habits of one's community). This may vary from one field to another, as for instance Computer Science is different from medicine...
  see https://comite-ethique.cnrs.fr/

# Freedom of expression in the public space

As researchers in the public domain, we have an **obligation of reserve**, i.e. to observe restraint in the expression of our opinions, especially in political matters (interpretation on their part) or with restraint regarding disagreements with the administration or institution.

# Duty of reserve

There is no law as such on this subject, but there is the duty consecrated by the jurisprudence of the Conseil d'état.
On the website of the Ministry of the Interior, it is mentioned that every public agent is obliged to show reserve in the expression of his/her personal opinions.

- This concerns the way opinions are expressed, not the opinions themselves.

And this applies both during and out of work time!
Outside of work time, one continues to express oneself as an agent of the public service, but there is a right to an opinion, within the limits of the law...

# Public expression

- The main criticism of researchers who speak publicly is that they do not always make it clear in what capacity they are speaking.

It is important to specify on which side you are speaking (for example, in an activist context, you specify that you are not speaking as a representative of the research organization).

For instance, a researcher speaking at a panel or within a citizens' association must specify very clearly that he/she is speaking in his/her own name.

# Questions

- Would formulating things as a question and not an assertion be enough for the researcher to protect himself?
- Can there be a conflict between integrity and the code of ethics?
- What recommendations could be made for speaking out on a sensitive topic?
- To what extent can drifts be harmful to science and public life?
- Are there any additional obligations for those who are high in the hierarchy?

# The expertise problem

The main criticisms appear when the researchers leave their expertise.

- Aggravating circumstance: the position taken has a social impact.
  For instance, some communications about political decisions on the fight against the pandemic.
- There is sometimes a misuse of the principle of academic freedom, which is not a right to say anything and everything.
  For instance, using one's notoriety to spread one's opinions.

# Questions

- Can academic freedom be invoked to justify the legitimacy of a position on a subject in which one is not an expert?
- as the world becomes more and more specialized, there will be more and more problems that cannot be discussed and there will never be an expert on large systemic issues...
  Is this intended to avoid having opposing experts?
- Is it ethical to accept to be funded by an NGO or by the crowd fundings to conduct certain research?
- Are we really free? Should we continue to study highly sensitive subjects? if so, what controls/guards should be considered?
- What are the avenues that researchers could consider to participate in the evolution of society?