



Lecture 9-1

Professional Ethics

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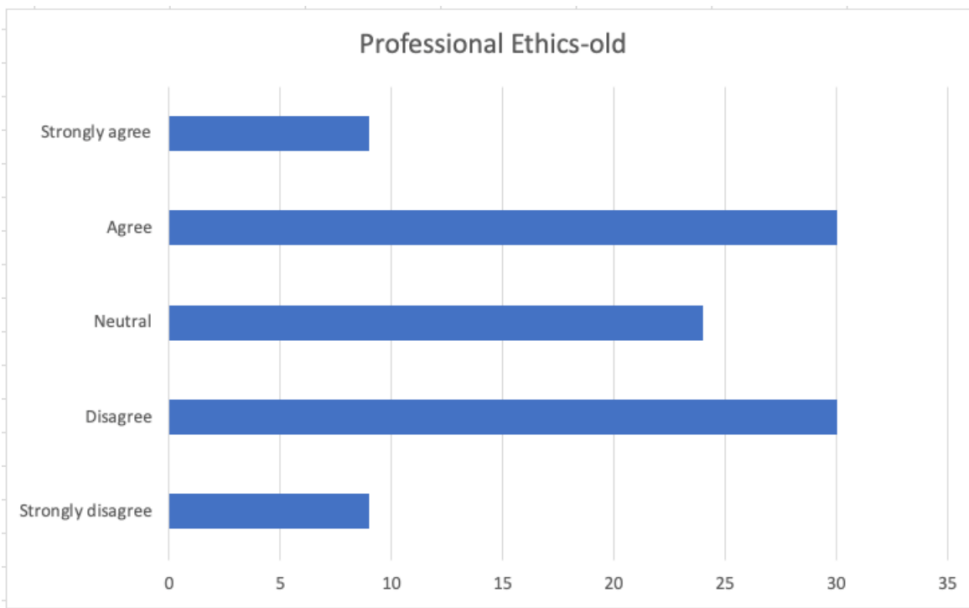
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Is Software Engineering a Profession?

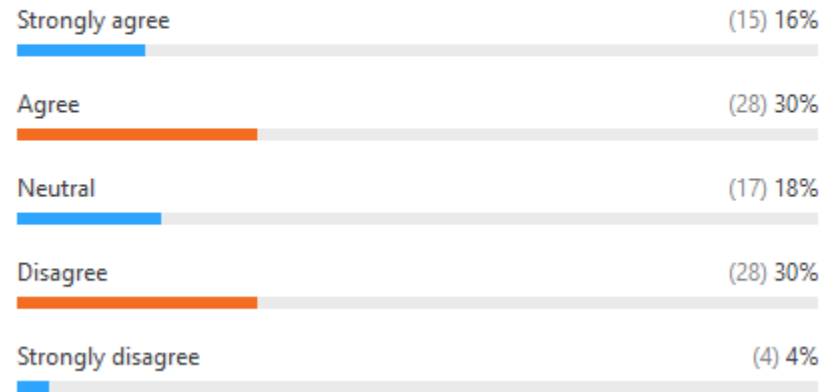
- In many ways software engineering is similar to other professions such as law or accounting
 - Dependence on professional education and practical training
 - Professional associations (IEEE, ACM)
 - Potential for bad decisions to cause significant public harm
- It's not a “full-fledged” profession:
 - No formal accreditation/licensing system
- All the same, sensible to ask software engineers to follow a code of ethics.
 - One with significant support is described in the book.
 - Nothing it says ought to come as a big surprise at this point in the course 😊.

Professional Ethics

“It is unethical for computer scientists to aid in the development of autonomous weapon systems.”



1. “It is unethical for computer scientists to aid in the development of autonomous weapon systems.”



Whistle-Blowing

- Revealing a real or potential harm to the public being caused by your employer.
 - Not an attempt to take revenge on the employer, e.g., for turning down a promotion
 - Not an attempt to avoid personal responsibility for a problem that is about to come to light anyway.
- *Under what circumstances is whistle-blowing morally **justified**? When is it morally **necessary**?*

Software Warranties

- Software companies tend to write license agreements saying that the software may not perform as promised
 - “we expressly disclaim ... the implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose”
- Why is this reasonable?
 - Software is expensive
 - Other expensive goods are backed up by warranties
- *Do software makers have a moral obligation to produce software that does what it promises?*