WHY DO I NEED TO TAKE A COURSE IN PROFESSIONAL ETHICS? I AM AN ETHICAL PERSON.

SHORT ANSWER: BECAUSE PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IS NOT LIKE PERSONAL ETHICS.

COMMON MORALITY, PERSONAL MORALITY, AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

1. COMMON MORALITY
   (THE DOMINANT SET OF MORAL IDEAS IN OUR CULTURE)

   1. BASED HISTORICALLY ON JUDEO/CHRISTIAN MORALITY, BUT INFLUENCED STRONGLY SINCE THE NINETEENTH CENTURY BY UTILITARIANISM.

   2. FOUND IN
      * PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES-RP AND UTILITARIANISM
      * THE LAW
      * ROMAN CATHOLIC MORAL THEOLOGY

   3. TWO LEVELS
      FIRST-ORDER PRECEPTS - PRINCIPLES AND JUDGEMENTS ABOUT WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG. (ACTS THEMSELVES)
      SECOND-ORDER PRECEPTS - PRINCIPLES ABOUT HOW WE JUDGE INDIVIDUALS. (PEOPLE WHO PERFORM THE ACTIONS)
      VOLUNTARINESS/ INVOLUNTARINESS
      INTENTION
      CULPABLE/ INCULPABLE IGNORANCE

   4. EXAMPLE
      AN ACTION CAN BE WRONG (KILLING), BUT AN INDIVIDUAL MIGHT NOT BE BLAMEWORTHY (OR NOT AS BLAMEWORTHY), BECAUSE THE INDIVIDUAL ...
      * WAS FORCED TO DO IT
      * BELIEVED THE ACTION WAS RIGHT
      * DID NOT INTEND TO DO IT

   5. COMMON MORALITY CAN CHANGE, IN ITS FORMULATION, BUT ESPECIALLY IN ITS JUDGEMENTS ON PARTICULAR ISSUES
      * SLAVERY
      * USURY
      * STATUS OF WOMEN
      * CONTRACEPTION

   6. THIS DOES NOT IMPLY MORAL RELATIVISM. IT MEANS THAT
      * CONDITIONS CHANGE
      * INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF BASIC PRINCIPLES CHANGE
II. PERSONAL MORALITY
1. USUALLY CLOSELY RELATED TO COMMON MORALITY, BUT MAY DIFFER, ESPECIALLY IN CONTROVERSIAL AREAS. YOU MIGHT THINK EUTHANASIA IS OK, EVEN THOUGH COMMON MORALITY SAYS (OR HAS SAID) IT IS WRONG.
2. PERSONAL MORALITY ALSO INCLUDES PERSONAL IDEALS. ONE MAY HAVE AN IDEAL OF SERVICE OR IMPROVING THE HUMAN CONDITION (GOOD WORKS).

III. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS- STANDARD ACCOUNT
1. PROFESSIONALS ARE GOVERNED BY IMPERSONAL STANDARDS THAT ARE CREATED BY THEIR PROFESSION, STATED IN CODES, AND ARE ENFORCED BY LAW.
2. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ARE SUPPOSED TO ENABLE THE PROFESSIONS TO BETTER SERVE THE PUBLIC.
3. THEY ARE APPLIED TO ALL PROFESSIONALS IN A GIVEN PROFESSION, REGARDLESS OF THEIR PERSONAL MORALITY.
4. THESE STANDARDS MAY IN SOME CASES BE DIFFERENT FROM ONE’S PERSONAL MORALITY.
   * ABORTION
   * EUTHANASIA
   * DEFENDING SOMEONE WHO COMMITTED A CRIME
   * DESIGNING MILITARY HARDWARE
   * DESIGNING A DAM THAT IS HARMFUL TO THE ENVIRONMENT
5. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS REQUIRES A DEGREE OF EMOTIONAL SEPERATION ("PROFESSIONAL DISTANCE") FROM THE PATIENT/CLIENT/EMPLOYER. ONE RELATES TO THEM AS A PROFESSIONAL, NOT AS A PERSON.
6. BECAUSE PROFESSIONAL ETHICS APPLIES EQUALLY TO ALL PROFESSIONALS, THE PATIENT/CLIENT/EMPLOYER CAN COUNT ON THE PROFESSIONAL TO PROVIDE ETHICALLY RESPONSIBLE SERVICE, EVEN IF THE PATIENT/CLIENT/EMPLOYER HAS NO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROFESSIONAL.
7. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOCUSES ON BEHAVIOR (FIRST ORDER), NOT AN INTENT OR MOTIVATION (SECOND ORDER).
8. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS ALLOWS PROFESSIONALS TO ACCOMMODATE THEIR OWN PERSONAL VALUES TO SOME EXTENT, BY PERMITTING THE PROFESSIONAL TO REFUSE TO RENDER SERVICES WHEN DOING SO WOULD SEVERELY VIOLATE THOSE VALUES. THE PROFESSIONAL MAY, HOWEVER, HAVE SOME OBLIGATION TO SEE THAT OTHER PROFESSIONALS ARE AVAILABLE TO PERFORM THE SERVICES SHE REFUSES TO PERFORM.
   * ABORTION
   * DEFENDING A CLIENT, UNLESS THE ‘LAST LAWYER IN TOWN’
   * ENGINEERS?
9. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS CANNOT WORK ENTIRELY INDEPENDENTLY OF COMMON MORALITY
   * PROFESSIONAL ETHICS NOT DETAILED ENOUGH (BE HONEST).
   * PROFESSIONAL ETHICS DOES NOT COVER SOME AREAS, AND MAY NEED TO BE CHANGED.
   * EUTHANASIA
   * THE ENVIRONMENT
   * PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS IN ENGINEERING
   * PROFESSIONAL ETHICS CAN CONTAIN CONTRADICTORY INJUNCTIONS (SERVE PUBLIC V. SERVE EMPLOYER)
IV. SO WHY STUDY PROFESSIONAL ETHICS?

AS MEMBERS OF A PROFESSION YOU SHOULD...

1. KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU AS A PROFESSIONAL.

2. KNOW HOW TO APPLY PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN PARTICULAR CASES AND ISSUES.

3. BE ABLE TO THINK ABOUT HOW AND WHY THE PROFESSIONAL ETHICS OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL SHOULD BE CHANGED.