THE POTTER BOX

SYSTEMATIC ETHICAL REASONING
ETHICS

• Ethics are a system of guiding principles.

• Situations are handled better when a system for evaluating ethical problems are in place before a situation arises.
THE POTTER BOX

• Created by Ralph Potter, Harvard Divinity School
• The box helps guide the decision-making process
THE POTTER BOX — DEFINE

1. Define — A simple statement of the ethical situation
The Potter Box — Values

2. Values: What values do you hold? What values apply to the ethical situation?

- Right to know
- Immediacy
- Privacy
- Honesty
- Consistency

- Competency
- Harmony
- Non-violence
- Others...
THE POTTER BOX — PRINCIPLES

3. Principles — What philosophical principles do you adhere to? How would these principles apply to the ethical situation?
EXAMPLES OF PRINCIPLES, PART 1

- **Aristotle** – **Golden Mean**: Between two extremes, there is a middle ground

- **Kant** – **Categorical Imperative**: Apply a maxim you would want to be universal law

- **Mills** – **Principle of Utility**: The greatest happiness for the greatest number of people
EXAMPLES OF PRINCIPLES, PART 2

• **Rawles — Veil of Ignorance:** Make decisions without consideration of social, economic, gender, race, class or other social differentiations

• **Judeo-Christian — The Golden Rule:** Love your neighbor and put yourself in the other person's shoes

• **Lao-tzu — Wu Wei:** Don't go against the current and stick up for the weak
THE POTTER BOX — LOYALTY

4. Loyalty — Who are you loyal to?

- Friends
- Family
- Church
- Profession
- Stock holders
- Community