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Physics 596 – Fall 2015

Scientific Ethics Case Study #10*

"While waiting for a referee's report on a paper of mine, I received (from the same journal) for review a paper with substantial overlap (but obviously independent of mine). The subject was [a field of theoretical physics] in which reviewing is notoriously capricious and often malicious. I was afraid that my paper would be rejected, while I knew, based on a casual glance, that I would write a favorable review of the paper submitted to me. In that event, the author of the other paper would receive priority and all the credit, even though we had both done similar work, independently and simultaneously."

Before discussing the case: Identify people in the group for the following presentation duties: (i) A person to present the 'case' in their own words to the rest of the class; (ii) a person to present one point of view in this study; (iii) a person to present the opposing point of view; and (iv) a person to lead a class discussion of the case. Feel free to take notes as necessary to present your discussions to the class.

Take 15-20 minutes to discuss this case study and prepare to relate your discussions to the rest of the class. Among the topics you might consider: Is it ethical for this person to referee this paper? What should this person do?