

JMC 493-1 Communication Ethics

Dr. Virginia Whitehouse

Spring 2011

Class Location: Weyerhaeuser 303

Class Time: 2:20 to 3:40 p.m. Tuesday & Thursday

Office: Lindaman 113

Office Hours: 10 a.m. – Noon, Monday, Wednesday & Friday

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Objectives

- Understand the basic principles of *ethical decision-making* and *truth-telling*.
- Be able to *identify ethical dilemmas* and *understand strategies for analysis*.
- Be able to *apply ethical standards* within the communications professions.
- *Develop the ethical decision-making skills* that will help you fulfill your Whitworth University and Department of Communication Studies educational goals listed below:

Demonstrate critical thinking skills required to excel in the intellectual, professional and personal dimensions of life.

Students will be able to apply higher-level thinking skills to human communication situations. Higher-level thinking skills include: application of communication principles in the classroom and beyond; analysis of the parts, organization, arrangement, relationships and principles of communication; synthesis of parts of communication to produce unique communication messages; and evaluation of communication by making appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative judgments of communication.

Demonstrate skills necessary to make and defend sound ethical decisions.

Students will understand the need for sound ethical decision-making, and the concepts necessary to make such decisions. Students will practice defining, resolving and defending ethical decisions. Students will clarify their personal ethical values and explicitly relate them to the professional environment that they plan to enter.

Texts

Wilkins & Patterson, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*, 6th Ed., 2008.

Neher & Sandin, *Communicating Ethically* 2007.

Christians & Merrill, *Ethical Communication: Moral Stances in Human Dialogue*, 2009.

Miller (Ibsen), *An Enemy of the People*, 1979.

Penguin Handbook

Course Assignments

You can earn up to 500 points over the course of the semester, plus any additional assignments that may be given.

Midterm	75	Final Exam	75
Participation and Attendance	125	Reflection Papers	100
Professional Ethics Cases	75	Application Presentation	50

Final grades will be based on a percentage of your point total: 100 to 92 percent = A; 90 to 91 percent = A-; 88 to 89 percent = B+; 82 to 87 percent = B; 80 to 81 percent = B-; 78 to 79 percent = C+; 72 to 77 percent = C; 70 to 71 percent = C-; 68 to 69 percent = D+; 62 to 67 percent = D; 60 to 61 percent = D-; Below 60 percent = F.

Deadlines

All assignments must be posted on Blackboard by the beginning of the class period the day they are due. Any late paper posted by the beginning of the next class period is eligible for half-credit. Papers more than a class session late will not be accepted. **Frequently class discussion will be based on assignments so you will want to have access to your responses during class.**



Attendance and Participation

In this senior-level capstone course, you will be expected to attend each class. *You will be expected to come to class having read all the assigned chapters. In-class quizzes based on assigned readings may be part of the grade for the day.* The enthusiasm you bring to all projects will affect your enjoyment of the class, what you learn, and your final grade. **Students may receive three points per class for attendance and participation.** If you miss class for any reason including illness or university-approved activity, you will need to complete a make-up assignment to regain the lost points.

Text messaging, checking Facebook or personal email, and doodling during meetings would at best be perceived as inattentive and at worst be perceived as highly disrespectful in a professional setting. You may feel adept at multi-tasking but those activities distract you and others from the job at hand. Meanwhile, using the Internet to check on an idea or concept being discussed would be seen as appropriate and helpful.

Therefore, please use your laptop and even your pen for things that will be helpful in class, including note-taking and research. Turn off your cell phone and other electronic devices. Please know that your choices on how you use your laptop may impact your participation points.

Readings

Reading is an important part of class participation. You will want to come to class having completed the assigned readings and taken time to consider the impact these ideas have on current issues. During the course of each class period, I will ask nearly every student to comment

on the readings and related questions. We want to create an atmosphere of respect and critical thinking within this class. Some views may change during the course of the semester, while others may be further solidified. Be open to new ways of perceiving problems and finding solutions.

Creating a Class Case Portfolio

Identify one area of professional interest that you plan to pursue after graduation, such as public relations, ministry, journalism, fundraising, etc. You will work with the professor to identify a professional code of ethics online and appropriate for this field.

You will write **three** ethics cases from your professional area. You may find the information for cases in news articles, trade publications, academic journals, and interviews from professionals working in the field. The ethics cases may include instances where ethical values were courageously upheld, where serious ethical lapses occurred, or where the right decision is hard to decipher. These may involve keeping promises, telling the truth, cross-cultural conflicts, secrets, privacy, and even the particular challenges with new media. **This assignment comes at the beginning of the semester and will serve as a foundation throughout the term. Once your cases have been edited and revised, we will create a Blackboard class portfolio to use in reflection papers. You will use a different case for each reflection paper so you will want to plan ahead.**

Sample cases are included on Blackboard as examples, but these events cannot be included in your portfolio. Your texts also provide examples of good ethics case writing however *Media Ethics* includes only verified, real cases with real sources. These should be your models for writing. Particularly good examples from *Media Ethics* include: Visualizing September 11th by Sara Getts (Case 2-A) and Looking for Truth Behind the Wal-Mart Blogs by Patrick Plaisance (Case 5-F). Two cases written by your professor in *Media Ethics* may be helpful to you.

Your cases should provide facts including how and why ethical choices are made, along with justifications by major players where available. Do not include your own opinions in the case.

Case selection requirements:

- Cases must be based on real scenarios that have occurred since 2001.
- Again, you may find the information for cases in news articles, trade publications, academic journals, and interviews from professionals working in the field. You may draw from multiple sources to describe a single case.
- Client names may be changed if needed but source names must be included accurately.
- Do not use hypothetical cases, cases from your own experience, or cases based on the experience of immediate family members. Do not draw cases from your textbooks.
- Sources interviewed must have had first-hand knowledge of the case. Interviews with administrative assistants, Whitworth professors and instructors, and those who left the field since 2001 are not appropriate for this assignment.

Writing requirements:

- Each case will run 2-3 pages in standard type, Times New Roman, 12-point, one-inch margin, double-spaced. You need to include enough appropriate detail so that you and your classmates can apply ethical theories later in reflection papers.
- Describe the facts of the case as you would a research paper or news story. Follow the chronological order of events.
- You may include a range of opinions about events in this case and draw from a number of sources, but do not include your own commentary. Do not use first person (I, we, our) or second person (you, one).
- Paraphrase articles and interviews. *Do not use direct quotes.*
- Include a title or headline and your name at the beginning of each case. Include a works cited list or bibliography at the end of each case.

Important Note on Grading: Because the entire class will be relying on these cases throughout the term, you must produce quality work. Half-done work not only hurts you but also others. Therefore, either cases meet the specifications described here or they do not. *Students will receive 50 points by completing three acceptable cases by the due date, 25 points for completing three cases by the class period after the due date, or zero points.* The professor is available to help you succeed, but it requires a time commitment beginning on the first day of class.

Reflection Papers

You will take a single case from your class case portfolio on Blackboard and apply to questions listed in your syllabus. Writing requirements:

- Each reflection paper will run 2-3 pages in standard type, Times New Roman, 12-point, one-inch margin, double-spaced.
- Put your name and a case name at the top of your paper.
- Summarize the relevant ethical questions of the case in no more than a paragraph. Please do not restate the entire case.
- Assert your arguments and offer your best analysis without using first or second person. You may paraphrase from the portfolio and text as needed. ***Do not use direct quotes.***
- While the portfolio is a team project, reflection papers should be individual work. You certainly may discuss the case with classmates but please write your own paper.

Grading will be based on the Writing Expectations outlined later in the syllabus. Most important: Make sure you answer all parts of the question asked. ***Reflection papers take the place of a research paper; therefore expectations for quality writing and analysis are high.***

Application Presentation

You and a team of students will identify an ethics case involving entertainment, such as historical misrepresentation in a particular movie, objectification of sex in a particular advertisement series, etc. You will make a 20-minute presentation explaining the case and offering analysis on the ethical decisions. You will need to use PowerPoint. *Material covered in presentations may be included on exams.* Follow this format:

- Briefly explain the background & details of the assigned case or issue (5-8 min.)
- Explain the ethical decision(s) (5-8 minutes)
- Lead the class discussion on (5-8 minutes)
 1. Whether this was a good decision/result
 2. How class members would have decided the case
 3. Avoid asking general questions, such as, “So, what do you think?”
Consider how you can lead a discussion that generates conclusions.

Grading Criteria: Be engaging. Include motivations and intent of the case actors, but do not draw conclusions about their intent unless you have documented evidence. In each presentation, you must do all of the following:

- Identify primary loyalties/duties
- Identify applicable professional standards/codes
- Identify possible alternatives and outcomes
- Make your recommendations on what could be done differently.

Exams

Your mid-term and final exams will combine identification questions, short essays, and application of principles discussed in class. Both will be closed book and conducted in class.

Special Needs

Whitworth University is committed to providing its students access to education. If you have a documented special need that affects your learning or performance on exams or papers, you will need to contact the Educational Support Office (Andrew Pyrc – ext. 4534) to identify accommodations that are appropriate.

Ibsen

After reading *Enemy of the People*, be prepared to answer EACH of the following questions **in class discussion and most importantly on the Mid-Term:**

- a) How did Morton Kill try to justify his decision to purchase all the stock in the Kirsten Springs? What fallacies do you find his argument?
- b) What would have been the most ethical thing for Dr. Stockman to do after the town meeting?
- c) Explain whether Peter Stockmann’s actions were or were not justified.
- d) Explain who acted with the most integrity. Why? (Defend your answer.)
- e) Explain who acted with the least integrity. Why? (Defend your answer.)
- f) What would Kant or Mill say about the choices made by Dr. Stockmann and Peter Stockmann?

Other things to consider as you read the play:

- What is the role of money in resolving ethical conflict?
- What is the role of the press in this play?
- How does Dr. Stockmann resolve the ethical tension within himself?
- What do you think Mrs. Stockmann really wanted to do?
- How did Dr. Stockmann treat his family in this play?
- Is the will of the majority always right?

Writing Expectations

This is an intensive course and you will be expected to articulate ideas on paper and orally. You will be expected to clearly explain basic ethical principles, identify ethical problems and show decision-making skills. All assignments written outside class must be **typed**, double-spaced in 12-point, Times New Roman or a similar font with one-inch margins. All work you turn in should be original. Any information or ideas gathered from other sources should be attributed.

A/A-	Answers the question asked with clearly defined arguments Goes beyond summarizing readings/lectures Identifies ethical problems Explains relevant ethical principles Applies principles to the problem Recognizes conflicting viewpoints Avoids generalizations and stereotypes Uses correct facts and attribution Uses proper grammar and spelling
B+/B	Answers the question but primarily relies on summaries Identifies ethical problem and explains relevant principles Recognizes conflicting viewpoints Avoids generalizations and stereotypes Uses correct facts and attribution Uses proper grammar and spelling
B-/C+	Answers the question but primarily relies on summaries May not identify either the ethical problem or the principles May not recognize conflicting viewpoints Relies on some generalizations and stereotypes Some problems with facts and attribution Some problems with grammar and spelling
C/C-	Does not answer the question directly Does not identify ethical problem or principles May not recognize conflicting viewpoints Relies on some generalizations and stereotypes Some problems with facts and attribution Some problems with grammar and spelling
D/F (5 points & below)	Does not answer the question Does not identify ethical problems or principles Does not recognize conflicting viewpoints Relies on generalizations and stereotypes Uses incorrect correct facts and attribution Uses improper grammar and spelling

Academic Honesty

Please note that I take extremely seriously the university's policy on the need for academic honesty in all your work. **I refer you to the Whitworth Catalog, and the current Student Handbook, where guidelines on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are spelled out. Any form of dishonesty in an assignment will lead to a zero on the assignment, and I reserve the right to give a grade of F for the course as well.**

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- Plagiarism. (Copying work written or published by others).
- Fabricating interviews or sources. (Making up people or events and passing them off as real. This includes making up quotes.)
- Looking at or copying another student's work, or allowing another student to look at or copy your work.
- Talking or otherwise communicating with another student during quizzes or writing assignments, unless instructed to do so.

These rules apply to all assignments, make-up work, and extra credit.

Quantity of Time for Class Preparation

The time spent in class preparation may be just as important as the time in class itself, and each course is a valuable part of your education. Therefore, expect to average between 6 and 9 hours each week in class preparation time for each three-credit course. The syllabus outlines due dates for assignments and tests. Please schedule your preparation time anticipating that items for this class may come due at the same time as items for other classes, both in and out of your major. The quantity of time spent preparing for each class generally correlates to the final grade earned.

Tentative Course Schedule

Class Topic

Feb. 1 Introductions and Welcome
 Review of Sample Cases

Assignment: Bring identified profession and ethics code to class, Post responses to questions on Blackboard Discussion Board.

Feb. 3 Definitions of Ethics: On what does it depend?
 Challenge of So-called Situation Ethics

Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 1, pp. 47-48

Practice Case Due: Post your practice case summary on Blackboard before AND bring a typed hard copy with you to class. Follow the case requirements in the syllabus. We will use your case to analyze situation ethics during class. This practice case may be one of your future three cases included in the portfolio later.

Feb. 8 To whom are you loyal: Introducing the Potter Box

Readings: *Media Ethics*, Chapter 4 and Case 7F
 Communicating Ethically, pp. 218-220
 In-class quiz

Feb. 10 Character and Virtue: Who do you want to be?

Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 2
 Ethical Communication, Chapters 7 & 23

Practice Reflection Due: Refer back to your practice case and write a reflection considering these questions following the reflection guidelines in the syllabus: What would Aristotle say about the choices that were made in your practice case? What would Confucius? What virtues seemed evident or were lacking?

Feb. 15 Role of Religion and Faith

Three Ethics Cases Due

Readings: *Ethical Communication*, Chapter 2, 19, & 21
 Communicating Ethically, pp. 41-43

Feb. 17 Social Contract: How should the world be ordered?

Ethics Cases Returned

Readings: *Ethical Communication*, Chapter 14, 22, & 25

In-class quiz

Note on Cases: Remember that your classmates are counting on you. **Students will be expected to make revisions on all three cases, and even identify new cases as noted in the professors' comments on Blackboard in order to earn credit for this assignment.**

Feb. 22 Deontology: Kantian Style

Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, pp. 36-40

Ethical Communication, Chapter 20

Reflection #1 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Identify a central ethical problem in one your own cases. Explain both parts of Kant's categorical imperative. What Kantian rule do you believe should be applied in this case? What might be the challenges of applying this rule in future cases? What would be the value of following the rule despite those challenges?

Feb. 24 Professional Panel

Revised Ethics Cases Due

Note on Cases: Before class begins, post your revised cases on Blackboard.

March 1 Habermas, Bok and Bonhoeffer's Revision on Kant

Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, pp. 52-55

Ethical Communication, Chapter 15 & 27

Reflection #2 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Explain what you believe Habermas meant by transparency and true consensus. Then, explain how transparency and consensus may have impacted how ethical decisions were made in your ethical case. What would Habermas say should have been done differently? How would Habermas' conclusion be different from Kant?

Notes on Cases: Look through the syllabus and the cases online to determine which might be appropriate for each reflection. Later in the term, you have reflections concerning privacy, cross-cultural issues, technology, etc. Remember you can only use each case once.

March 3 Universalism versus Cultural Relativism

Readings: *Ethical Communication*, Chapter 5

In-class quiz

March 8 Utility: Mill and Bentham
Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, pp. 60-70
 Ethical Communication, Chapter 3

Reflection #3 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Identify a case from the class portfolio on Blackboard. Explain all parts of Mill's concepts of utility. What would Mill say should be done in this ethical case? What might be the challenges of following this kind of utility in future cases? What would be the value of following utility despite those challenges? (Note: Utility is not egoist or self-centered.)

March 10 Making Distinctions: Machevilli and Dewey
Readings: *Ethical Communication*, Chapter 9 & 26

March 15 **Test #1**
Your test will cover theories, terms and ideas presented thus far in class and in readings. You should be ready to explain each theorist's position and apply them to an ethical problem.

March 17 Class Discussion of **Enemy of the People** (and point-earning opportunity)

SPRING BREAK: March 22 and 24

March 29 Meaning of Moral Development
Readings: *Media Ethics*, Chapter 12
 Ethical Communication, Chapter 4

March 31 Justifications and Truth
Readings: *Media Ethics*, Chapter 1 & 2

Reflection #4 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Your text reviews a number of ethical theories introduced in the first half of the semester. Identify a case having to do with deception, telling the truth, or justifying an evasion of the truth. Select two theorists of your choice from today's readings. How would they evaluate the choices made in your case? How would their conclusions be similar or different from each other?

April 5 Seeking Appropriate Self-Disclosure
Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 5, 7
 Ethical Communication, Chapter 28
 Media Ethics, Case 4-A

Reflection #5 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Identify an ethical case of your choice. Describe what you believe Martin Buber meant by I-thou versus I-it relationships. What evidence do you see in your case of I-it relationships? How could Levinas' ideas about "the other" be applied in this case?

April 7 Ethics of Persuasion
Readings: *Media Ethics*, Chapter 3, 5, plus pp. 158-159
 Communicating Ethically, Chapter 11, plus pp. 73-76

Reflection #6 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Rawls' theories originate in judicial review, but they apply well to ethical decision making. Explain what you believe Rawls means by stepping behind the veil of ignorance and using that veil to help make a good decision. Identify an ethics case of your choice. Do you see evidence that some of the players considered an evaluation resembling the veil of ignorance? If so, explain how. If not, explain how they might have made a better decision had they considered Rawls' ideas.

April 12 Ethics of Compassion: Mother Teresa and Dali Lama
Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 9
 Ethical Communication, Chapter 1, 6
In-class quiz

April 14 Cross-Cultural Ethics
Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 8

Reflection #7 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Possibilities for cross-cultural conflict occur in all professions. Consider a case where a significant miscommunication, cross-cultural or otherwise, occurred. How might Buber's I-Thou thinking and Casmir's Third Culture Building be applied here? How effective do you believe that would be?

April 19 Secrets and Promises
Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 12

Reflection #8 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Identify a case concerning breaking or keeping a secret or a promise. Identify as many primary stakeholders as possible (those immediately impacted) and as well as secondary stakeholders (those experiencing residual effects). Restate your understanding of Mill's ideas concerning utility and Rawls' veil of

ignorance. Considering all these stakeholders, what might Mill say is the most ethical act? How might Rawls' evaluate the ethical problem? Would they come to the same conclusion?

April 21 Ethics of Political Communication in a Democracy
Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 11
Media Ethics, Chapter 7
In-class quiz

April 26 Value of Privacy
Readings: *Media Ethics*, Chapter 6

Reflection #9 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Identify a case concerning privacy. Explain how there is an ethical issue here, apart from the law. Are the issues involved what Bok would call something that should be kept fully secret or something private with limited access? Considering your readings for today, how might Hodges' evaluate the situation? What actions do you believe should have been or should be taken to prevent harm?

April 28 Visual Ethics
Readings: *Media Ethics*, Chapter 9
In-class quiz

May 3 New Technology, New Ethics
Readings: *Communicating Ethically*, Chapter 13
Media Ethics, Chapter 10

Reflection #10 Due on Blackboard Before Class: Identify a case concerning new technology and an appropriate professional code of ethics from the selection on Blackboard. Is there a genuinely a new ethical issue here brought on with the technology or do traditional expectations still apply? Does the code address issues that should be applied in this case? In light of your readings, what additional information should be added to the code in order for the expectations for new technology clearer?

May 5 Ethics of Entertainment: **Application Presentations**
Readings: *Media Ethics*, Chapter 11

Final Exam

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, May 12 (Note time difference from official exam schedule)

THE PRICE OF A DEGREE

Cassington College is seriously in debt. It is a high-quality small college, which, like many other small colleges, has had difficulty keeping up with inflation. It needs to increase its funding substantially in order to avoid massive layoffs of faculty—or even a complete closing of the college. But it will lose students if it raises tuition and cuts back on scholarships. As a private college, it cannot receive support from the state. The college has tried hard to raise funds from alumni and other private sources. But not enough has been raised to solve the problem.

President William Winston is then offered an unusual opportunity. He is approached by a wealthy alumnus, Mr. A. Fluent, who is anxious to make a generous, anonymous gift to the college. But there is a catch. Mr. Fluent's son, Edward, has flunked out of two colleges already. Edward tries hard, but his ability to do college work is questionable. Cassington College's academic standards are quite high, which is why Edward did not apply there earlier. When Edward's application to Cassington was turned down, Mr. Fluent decided to intervene, making the following offer to President Winston: "I would like Edward to be admitted to Cassington and receive his degree within four years. I'll donate \$1,000,000 right away if you admit him. As long as he makes satisfactory progress, I'll donate an additional \$1,000,000 at the end of each year. When he receives his degree, I'll throw in another \$2,000,000. So all you have to do for \$7,000,000 is to make sure Edward gets through."

When Winston discusses the proposal confidentially with his good friend and director of admissions, Derek Yerby, Yerby advises: "Go for it. You have to be utilitarian about these things. Seven million dollars will pay a lot of salaries and provide a lot of scholarships for bright and deserving students. So we let one not-so-bright one through. That's a small price to pay to save a lot of jobs and raise the academic level of the institution. Besides, look at all the big-time athletic programs. They bend the rules to get some of the athletes through. But it helps the school—so they do it."

Next Winston turns to you, president of the faculty senate. He tells you that what he is about to say is strictly confidential—you should not even share it with your executive board. But he wants your advice. He tells you what Yerby has advised.

1. Write a one page answer to: What do you tell President Winston to do?
2. Then explain which ethical theory (egotism, pragmatism, utility, or Kant's principles) you use to make this decision.