

**COMM 206 Professional & Research
Ethics in Communication
Spring 2008
Thursdays 5:45 – 8:25 Johnston Hall 419**

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Office Hours (in person & online): Monday 12:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. & Thursday 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Purpose

This course is designed to acquaint you with various value perspectives in human communication. The theoretical material covered in this course will be used to evaluate the ethicality of practical "real world" persuasive influence attempts in interpersonal, organizational, corporate, and public settings. You will be introduced to various ethical codes and principles governing communication transactions and will be called upon to engage in critical analysis and application of these normative standards through oral and written assignments. Advocacy and reasoning over various "moral" issues will also be examined.

Course Format

This course is a seminar with student-led discussions on various readings, reports and projects. The success of this course depends on **YOUR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**. My role is to set context, facilitate productive discussions, raise some questions and keep us on track. Each week designated class members will lead the discussion of the assigned readings, summarize the readings, identify the most important idea they got from the readings, and prepare questions for the rest of the class about the implications of the readings. All students must complete weekly reading assignments and are expected to come to class prepared to discuss them. Your participation will be an important factor in determining my evaluation of your performance of the class.

Graded Activities and Assignments

Oral Team Presentation (15%) You will be required to present a team presentation focusing upon one of the chapters in the *Media Ethics* text. Teams are expected to facilitate a discussion that integrates both the theoretical and practical implications of the chapter along with topics from class discussions, course readings, and current practices in communication. Your presentation should cover: (a) a synopsis of the chapter in the book (**however, keep in mind that the class also read the chapter so do not spend too much time regurgitating the chapter to us**); (b) a thorough discussion of its strengths and weaknesses; and (c) personal reactions to, observations about, and/or extensions of the material encountered in your reading. Audio-visual aids are encouraged. **Team Presentations** will begin **January 31**. I will distribute a sign-up sheet.

Book Review (25%) You will read and review one communication ethics book (suggested titles are included in both course text books) and present your critique in class. Reports will follow this structure:

- Complete citation
- Brief description of book.
- Key quotation, with citation. Select a sentence or passage that will give us the flavor of the work, as well as its essence.
- Your critique. Include why you selected this book, any personal background that might affect your interpretation of the material, both your personal and intellectual responses to the book, your opinion of how the writer presented the material, and an explanation of the book's organization and contents.
- Conclusion. Include how the book relates to other ethical perspectives with which you are familiar; the study's significant to the understanding of communication ethics; the book's contribution to class discussions/presentations; and the overall significance of the book.

We will present our critiques to each other orally on **March 6th**, when the review is **due**. Book reviews should be three to five pages in length and take no more than 10 minutes of class time (please provide handouts for class).

Term Paper (50%) A 15 – 20 page paper will be required. This paper should be construed as a major research paper. You must treat substantive literature, have a clear thesis, a clearly specified method, and a well-developed argument that is replete with helpful examples supporting your case. Your paper will focus on an ethics issue of choice. I am happy to meet with you individually to discuss a variety of options for fulfilling this particular requirement. We will discuss the assignment in detail before it is **due** on the last day of class on **May 8th**. At that time, you will share the results of your investigations with each other in class.

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Expectations. My expectation is that you will attend each and every class, read the required materials on the night assigned, and make every effort to contribute to our discussions with intelligent commentary and probing questions. I will also require a **one-page response paper** to the week's set of readings. You may respond to one of the book chapters, case study chapters, or articles I assigned or to a combination of readings. These activities merely satisfy THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS for this course. You are expected to attend every class session. If you will be unable to join us on a particular evening or will be late, **please let me know in advance** via phone or email.

Ethics in the News. Beginning in February (with our fourth class session), I will set aside class time to discuss specific *ethical issues* in the news. You are to acquire an article of interest that seems to you to be **applicable to that particular week's readings**. We will do this for four consecutive weeks. These responses will be turned in lieu of the regularly assigned weekly responses to the readings. I will keep you posted on due dates. Your efforts will be factored into the participation grade. Please turn in each article with a full citation regarding the source, along with a brief typed abstract outlining its contents and importance. I will record these efforts, whether or not we have time in class to discuss each one. Please be faithful to this additional element of participation and feel free to offer the article as a source of class discussion and/or debate. It will help keep things lively. **To repeat and clarify: On nights when we engage ethics in the news, you will not be required to write an additional separate paper that responds formally to the week's set of readings. If you cannot find a suitable ethics in the news article or are particularly interested in responding to the week's readings, please feel free to do so. If you respond to the week's readings, you do not have to turn in an additional ethics in the news article.**

Participation

In general, students will be evaluated on the quality of their obvious contributions to class discussions (being a good listener is important, but your participation will be assessed on speaking and more obvious behaviors). You must demonstrate that you have done a thorough reading of the week's assigned readings and are able to provide insightful, thought provoking, and sometimes even challenging perspectives. Discussion is imperative to a graduate seminar and should focus on how theory intersects with the practice of communication-related activities. Keeping current with industry publications will also help connect trends, issues, and cases with the readings and case study presentations. Your peers will expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and case studies; your lack of participation will surely impair our discussions.

Class Policies

Regular attendance and active participation in graduate seminars is expected. Professional communication is a deadline business. Late work will be accepted only for excused absences. An excused absence can be granted under circumstances involving your health or the health of an immediate family member, or for a university-sanctioned event. If you happen to miss a class, you are responsible for discovering, completing, and delivering any missed assignments.

You are expected to meet all deadlines, as you must do in the work world. Late assignments will be deducted a minimum of one full grade, and all assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Written Assignments

All written assignments must be proofread, page numbered, computer-processed and double-spaced with one-inch margins and 12-point character. Associated Press style guidelines must be followed. When references are included, they should follow APA guidelines. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, neatness and style are expected to be accurate. Points will be taken off for errors in these areas.

Grade Definitions

A: An "A" student is an outstanding student—one who never misses class, always completes assignments on time and participates very actively in class discussions. This student demonstrates a concrete understanding of course material in all of their work. A student who wishes to earn an "A" demonstrates skills beyond the "norm" through curiosity, dedication, organization, creativity and insights.

B: A "B" student is clearly an above-average student. They meet attendance requirements and demonstrate a clear understanding of course materials. A "B" student earns their grade by limiting intellectual inquiry to the materials required and rarely seeks more insight or information from their fellow students or the professor.

C: A "C" student may best be characterized as an average student. This student may miss a class and might not complete readings before the beginning of class. A "C" student infrequently participates in class discussion. Finally, a student earning a "C" may, in fact, know the material but does not often apply that knowledge.

D: A "D" student is a below-average student. As graduate students "D" work is not acceptable.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Ignorance of what academic dishonesty is not an excuse. Students who plagiarize material – intentionally passing off the work of others as their own – will receive an “F” for the course.

You should be aware of the Marquette University policy that provides a partial explanation of academic dishonesty: “It is not feasible to develop a list of all conceivable examples of academic dishonesty, but it may be helpful ... to note that they all involve an attempt to deceive, to distort perceptions of reality, to gain a record of academic accomplishments greater than earned. All who are parties to the deceit are involved in academic dishonesty.” (More info: <http://www.marquette.edu/rc/academichonesty.shtml>)

In accordance with the high standards of excellence set forth by, and for, all members of the Marquette University community, the College of Communication finds it imperative that each student understand that the responsibilities associated with high standards of excellence include ensuring that all class work undertaken in this College is performed in an environment that promotes serious scholarship and moral rectitude. Therefore, the College herein delineates a zero-tolerance policy for acts of academic dishonesty. All acts of suspected academic dishonesty will be thoroughly investigated in a manner that is fair, timely, and efficient and done so in a manner that protects the rights of both the faculty member and the student. Any individual that is found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty may receive a penalty, up to and including expulsion from Marquette University.

Special Needs

Please inform me during the first week of class if you have any conditions that may limit or affect your ability to participate in this course so that we can make necessary arrangements. You may also contact the Office of Student Educational Services (OSSES), located in AMU 317 (288-3270) for additional information (see also: <http://www.marquette.edu/osses/>).

Counseling Center

Sometimes personal issues or health issues, such as depression, anxiety, stress, career uncertainty, and/or relationships, can interfere with your ability to function as a student. If you feel that this is happening to you, please contact the Counseling Center. The Counseling Center offers free, confidential counseling services for all full time students. For more information or to make an appointment, call 414-288-7172, or visit their website at www.marquette.edu/counseling.

Emergency Plan

Every Marquette University campus building has emergency shelter and evacuation plans. Please familiarize yourself with the plans of each building in which you take classes or attend meetings. Make sure to note the routes to the lowest level of the buildings for shelter during inclement weather, as well as exits from the buildings in the event of fire or other emergency.

Course Schedule, Readings and Assignments

***This schedule represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Additional readings can be found online by accessing class reserves via Marquette University library.**

- January 17 Introduction/Orientation
- Motion Picture for Discussion: *Return to Paradise* (1998); Directed by Joseph Ruben; 111 Minutes
- January 24 Ethical Responsibility
- Johannesen, Preface, Chapter 1
 - Patterson & Wilkins, Forward, Chapter 1
 - Callahan, "Goals in the Teaching of Ethics"
 - Arnett et al, "Communication Ethics: The Dialogic Turn"
 - **Due:** One-Page Response Paper (include reaction to *Return to Paradise*)
- January 31 Political Communication; Mass Media in Democratic Society
- Johannesen, Chapter 2
 - Rao & Lee, "Globalizing Media Ethics: An Assessment of Universal Ethics Among International Political Journalists"
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 7
 - **Due:** One-Page Response Paper
- February 7 Religious Perspectives; Information Ethics
- Johannesen, Chapter 6
 - Christians, "Utilitarianism in Media Ethics and its Discontents"
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 2
 - **Note:** If possible, please try to attend Mission Week's Keynote Panel, "War, Peace and People of Faith" at 4 p.m. in the Varsity Theatre
<http://www.marquette.edu/library/information/news/2008/MissionWeek.html>
 - **Due:** Ethics in the News #1
- February 14 Human Nature Perspectives; Loyalty
- Johannesen, Chapter 3
 - Plaisance, "Transparency: As Assessment of Kantian Roots of a Key Element in Media Ethics Practice"
 - Stoker, "Loyalty in Public Relations: When Does It Cross the Line Between Virtue and Vice?"
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 4
 - **Due:** Ethics in the News #2
- February 21 Dialogical Perspectives; Public Relations
- Johannesen, Chapter 4
 - Stoker & Tusinski, "Reconsidering Public Relations' Infatuation with Dialogue: Why Engagement and Reconciliation Can Be More Ethical"

- Patterson & Wilkins, Chapter 5
 - **Due:** Ethics in the News #3
- February 28 Situational Perspectives; New Media & Entertainment
- Johannesen, Chapter 5
 - Pratt, “Critique of the Classical Theory of Situational Ethics in US Public Relations”
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 10 & 11
 - Babcock & Whitehouse, “Celebrity as a Postmodern Phenomenon, Ethical Crisis for Democracy, and Media Nightmare”
 - **Due:** Ethics in the News #4
- March 6 Book Reviews Due
- March 13 **No Class (Spring Break)**
- March 20 **No Class (Easter Break)**
- March 27 Some Basic Issues; Photojournalism
- Johannesen, Chapter 7
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 9
 - Lowrey, “Normative Conflict in the Newsroom: The Case of Digital Photo Manipulation”
 - **Due:** One-Page Response Paper
- April 3 Interpersonal Communication & Small Group Discussion; Privacy
- Johannesen, Chapter 8
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 6
 - Gauthier, “Privacy Invasion by the News Media: Three Ethical Models”
 - **Due:** One-Page Response Paper
- April 10 Communication in Organizations; Advertising
- Johannesen, Chapter 9
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 3
 - Murphy, “Ethics in Advertising: Review, Analysis and Suggestions”
 - Polonsky & Hyman, “A Multiple Stakeholder Perspective on Responsibility in Advertising”
 - **Due:** One-Page Response Paper
- April 17 Feminist Contributions, Intercultural & Multicultural Communication; Media Economics
- Johannesen, Chapters 11 & 12
 - Steiner & Okrusch, “Care as a Virtue for Journalists”
 - Craig & Ferre, “Agape as an Ethics of Care for Journalism”
 - Grunig, Toth, & Hon, “Feminist Values in Public Relations”
 - Wilkins & Patterson, Chapter 8 & 12
 - **Due:** One-Page Response Paper

- April 24 Codes of Ethics; Research Ethics (Humans Subjects, Internal Review Boards)
- Johannesen, Chapter 10
 - Codes of ethics of the Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ), Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and American Advertising Federation (AAF). (Available online at the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions, (http://ethics.iit.edu/codes/codes_index.html))
 - The Catholic Church's Handbook on Ethics in Advertising (Available online at <http://advertising.utexas.edu/research/law/catholic.html>)
 - Kuhn, "Interactivity and Prioritizing the Human: A Code of Blogging Ethics"
 - Perlmutter & Schoen, "If I Break a Rule, What Do I Do, Fire Myself? Ethics Codes of Independent Blogs"
 - Research Ethics Readings TBD
 - **Note:** For today's class, I also want you to pick out and report on a new, recent scholarly article on ethics and communication. Please provide a full citation and an abstract of the article for each of us. Please be ready to provide a brief discussion of the article.
 - **Due:** One-Page Response Paper
- May 1 **No Class (Dr. Berg Out of Town)**
- May 8 Turn In and Share Final Paper