

Communication Ethics

Ethics Issue of the Day

On one assigned day during the semester, you and a partner will be in charge of “teaching” a current communication ethics issue to the class. You will randomly pick your day at the beginning of the semester. In addition, you’ll prepare a poster for the classroom that seeks feedback on your issue.

New issues in communication ethics are emerging all the time. In fact, I’ve often pondered teaching the class without a textbook or assigned readings and just seeing what surfaces. But I’m too much of a planner, and I don’t want to give up on some of the really interesting readings I’ve found. Therefore, I’m trying to strike a balance: schedule particular topics but also leave time to address new issues. I’ve taken care of the particular topics; teaching the emerging issues is up to you! Here’s your particular job:

During the semester, make sure you’re following the news, reading the trade press and otherwise keeping your eyes and ears open for current communication ethics issues. You’ll need to choose an issue that is happening now or has happened in the last six months and teach that issue to the class. Your issue must also be different from what other students present. What this means is that students who randomly draw an earlier date will have to prepare more quickly but will have more choices. On the other hand, students who draw a later date will have more time to prepare, but it’s more likely that someone else will have already covered a topic you like.

Part I: The Presentation:

On your day, you’ll have up to 20 minutes (but not less than 15) to “teach” the issue to the class. You can choose the teaching method and style, but you should meet the following criteria:

- Your presentation should deal with a current issue in communication ethics. Your issue must be less than six months old (and something other students haven’t already covered).
- Your presentation should be informative. All of us should understand the ethical issue when you’re finished.
- Your presentation should be engaging. Ethics is interesting, so your job here is relatively easy. You do, however, want to think about how you can impart your knowledge in a way that attracts and holds our attention.
- Your presentation should be analytical and morally sophisticated. It’s one thing to simply present an issue; it’s another to get us thinking about it in ways we wouldn’t do on our own. Go ahead—foster our moral development! We also want to know what you think about the issue. What is *your* analysis of it?
- Your presentation should incorporate other things we’ve covered in class and/or outside resources. The ideal lesson draws connections between different course materials. For example, you may find that your issue is a great example of an ethical theory in action; you may want to use a decision making model to walk through the issue; you may want to relate the issue to a reading we’ve done; etc. You are also encouraged to bring in outside materials (extra research is great).
- Your presentation should be well-planned and well-executed. Teaching takes preparation. Make sure you have a plan, and make sure you’ve practiced what you’re going to do. This will ensure that things go smoothly on your teaching day.
- Your presentation should be primarily a presentation, not a group discussion. Discussion and group activities are great, but this is your chance to teach us about your issue; we want to hear from you.
- Both teammates should contribute equally to the presentation.

You are welcome to use any technology that's already available in the room. If you have other technology needs, you'll need to make arrangements with IRT. Please arrive early on your day to do any needed set-up. You should be ready to go at the beginning of class. Please also note that just because one team does, for example, a PowerPoint, that doesn't mean every team needs one. Use a teaching technique that works best for your issue; there is no set formula for these presentations, so use your creativity (while not sacrificing learning).

We'll fill in the presentation schedule together, so you'll know who is going before you. That way, you can confer with your classmates to make sure you're not planning to do the same issue. You're also welcome to share any ideas you have with me prior to presenting.

Part II: The Poster:

The second part of this assignment involves preparing a poster for the classroom that will introduce your issue to others who have class in our room. You'll also solicit their feedback on the issue. (I used to do something similar to this, hanging posters in Scooter's. It was always really interesting to see what people thought.)

Your poster needs to include enough information so someone reading the poster will understand the issue. Be careful, however, not to include too much or people won't have time to read it and respond before or after their class. Obviously, an attractively designed poster will also garner more attention. Somewhere on the poster, you need to leave space for responses. Headline that section: "What do you think?"

You can choose the size of your poster, but please make sure it can be hung on the wall. We'll leave your poster up for 3-4 weeks, and we'll save some time at the end of the course to review responses.