



Communication Ethics

Summer 2022, Session II

University of Erfurt, SPICE program

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Course Description

How ought I to communicate with others? If my job places me in situations of persuading others to act or believe in certain ways, how far ought I go in doing this job? These are the general issues that this course explores. This course examines the ethical issues involved in communication situations, ranging from face-to-face situations to mediated forms like Twitter or film. It will train students how to evaluate ethical issues and decisions in a range of communication activities. We will explore major theories of what makes an action "ethical," and then engage a range of interesting case studies in free speech, blogging, social media, public relations, advertising, political communication, journalism, fake news (e.g., Jon Stewart), photo manipulation, documentary film, and organizational communication. We will also discuss the ethical implications of newer online communicative practices, including Anonymous's anti-bullying operations on Twitter, WikiLeaks, and the growing plague of revenge pornography. Our discussions of documentary ethics and organizational communication ethics will be grounded by viewing the documentary *Kumare* and a site visit to the Topf and Sons Place of Remembrance (Topf and Sons are known as the "oven-makers of the holocaust").

This course will begin with an examination of some major theorists in normative ethics. We will read selections of important works from Aristotle, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, and Jürgen Habermas. Additionally, we will read contemporary sources in feminist and pragmatist ethics. We will then take our knowledge of moral decision-making and begin exploring contemporary topics in media and communication ethics. Through our examination of these ethical issues, we will continue to explore the uses and limits of the normative theories analyzed at the beginning of this course. Students are encouraged to determine for themselves which ethical system best captures what we think ought to be included in our concept of the person who lives and communicates with integrity.

Grading

Course grades will be determined on the basis of:

Class participation	15%
Short essay	20%
Exam	25%
Research presentation	40%

Please note the due dates for all assignments. Late assignments or papers are unacceptable.

Final grades will be based on the following scale:

93-100% = A	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+	59 & below = F
90-92% = A-	83-86% = B	73-76% = C	63-66% = D	
	80-82% = B-	70-72% = C-	60-62% = D-	

Consultations about grades are welcome in order to clarify course standards and procedures and to provide guidance that might improve future performance. Assigned grades will *not* be changed unless clear and significant procedural errors have occurred.

Requirements

Class Participation

To earn an "A" for participation, students should (1) be prompt and attend all classes, (2) complete all assigned readings prior to class (3) consistently participate in class discussion and (4) display an understanding of the readings and demonstrate an ability to creatively apply course concepts. Some participation exercises may be done in class. Computers and cell phones can be a distraction to you and others in this class, so use them responsibly. Texting, email checking, Facebooking, cell phone use, web-surfing, instant messaging, etc. in class will not be tolerated during official class time—we're here to mindfully discuss the readings and topics, so be focused on this. It is fine to use a computer for note-taking or referencing the reading during class time, but you should only use it for these two purposes while in my class—this means you will not have chat windows open, Facebook open, email up, and so forth. Participation will be assessed using the following criteria:

Grade	Description
A	Student shows up to class on time, attends regularly, has completed the assigned readings, is engaged and participates
B	Student shows up to most classes on time and has attended most classes, student is prepared and participates occasionally
C	Student has missed a number of classes or often comes to class late, student does not participate often in class
D	Student has missed many classes and participates only rarely in class
F	Student has missed most classes and does not participate

There are many ways that you can participate, here are some:

- Bringing up relevant questions and comments in class
- Answering questions during class
- Emailing questions and comments

Short Essay

Students will write one short essay. The essay should be no longer than four typed, double-spaced, pages (standard font, 1" margins). The paper assignment will be handed out in class, but it will involve the student applying a moral theory covered in class to a specific case study in communication ethics.

Exam

Halfway through the course, one test will be given. It will consist of multiple choice, true false, and short answer questions. I will give some kind of study guide in advance of this test to aid student studying. There is no final exam in this course.

Research Presentation

The course will end with students (in small groups of 2-3) giving research presentations on a topic in communication ethics of their choice. The presentation will consist of the students telling the course about the

ethical issues in play and applying a moral theory to argue for a correct course of action. This assignment is very similar to the short essay assignment, except it involves you researching your own case or topic in communication ethics.

Notes to Syllabus:

-Due dates: paper assignments must meet the announced due dates or be subject to a 20% penalty if turned in within two days (after two days, a zero must be recorded). Tests missed without medical, legal, or university documentation cannot be retaken.

-No extra credit will be offered.

-Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Using the text or ideas of someone else in your papers or presentations without clearly citing them is the stealing of those words or ideas, and significant cases will result in an "F" for the entire course (less significant cases will result in a "0%" on the assignment). I will also count the use of a papers, etc. produced for another class as plagiarism, so make sure you do original work that is solely your own creation for this course. As intelligent university students, I expect that none of you will resort to cheating on tests, papers, or presentations in this course.

Course Calendar

(Please note that assigned readings are subject to change with adequate email notice to students.)

UPDATED SCHEDULE FOR COMMUNICATION ETHICS (as of July 12, 2017)

Do listed readings BEFORE that class session

Week 1

(1) Friday, July 15 (4-8pm) Moral Theories: Aristotle

(r1) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I (selections)

(2) Saturday, July 16 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) Moral Theories: Utilitarianism & Kant

(r2) John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections)

(r3) Rita Manning & Scott Stroud, *A Practical Guide to Ethics*, pp. 39-66

(r4) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections)

(r5) Rita Manning & Scott Stroud, *A Practical Guide to Ethics*, pp. 81-84

(2) Sunday, July 17 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) Moral Theories: Rawls, & More

(r6) Jürgen Habermas, "The Principle of Universalization as a Rule of Argumentation," from *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*

(r6) Rita C. Manning, "Just Caring," from *Speaking from the Heart*

(r7) John Dewey, "Three Independent Factors in Morals."

(r8) Rita Manning & Scott Stroud, *A Practical Guide to Ethics*, pp. 69-81

Week 2

(3) Friday, July 22 (4-8pm) The Ethics of Lying and Communication

(r9) Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy"

(r10) Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Wall"

(r11) Rita Manning & Scott Stroud, *A Practical Guide to Ethics*, pp. 131-142

(r13) "Cases and Commentaries: Wal-Mart Relations in the Blogosphere," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22 (2&3), 2007, 215-228.

(4) Saturday, July 23 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) Blogging, Twitter, Revenge Porn, & Ethics

(r27) Martin Kuhn, "Interactivity and Prioritizing the Human: A Code of Blogging Ethics," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22 (1), 2007, 18-36.

(r28) Scott R. Stroud & Danee Pye, "Kant on Unsocial Sociability and the Ethics of Social Blogging," *New Agendas in Communication: Ethics in Communication Professions*

(r29) Scott R. Stroud, "The Dark Side of the Online Self: A Pragmatist Critique of the Growing Plague of Revenge Porn," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 29, 2014.

(5) Sunday, July 24 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) Exam; Photo Manipulation and Modelling

(r15) Sheila Reaves, Jacqueline Bush Hitchon, Sung-Yeon Park, & Gi Woong Yun, "If Looks Could Kill: Digital Manipulation of Fashion Models," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 19 (1), 2004, 56-71.

Week 3

(7) Friday, July 29 (4pm-8pm) Political Communication & Ethics

(r16) John Stuart Mill, "On the Liberty of Thought and Discussion," from *On Liberty*

(r17) Lynda Lee Kaid, "Ethics and Political Advertising," in *Political Communication Ethics: An Oxymoron?*

(r18) Franklyn S. Haiman, "Democratic Ethics and the Hidden Persuaders," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 44, 1958, 385-392.

(r19) Craig R. Smith, "Campaign Reform as Censorship," The Center for First Amendment Studies, 2011. <http://www.firstamendmentstudies.org/>

(8) Saturday, July 30 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) Journalism, Fake Journalism, & Ethics

Revenge Porn

Twitter Ethics

(r20) James B. Murphy, Stephen J. A. Ward, & Aine Donovan, "Ethical Ideals in Journalism: Civic Uplift or Telling the Truth?" *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 21 (4), 2006, 322-337.

(r21) Peter Ludlow, "Rethinking Conspiracy: The Political Philosophy of Julian Assange,"

(r22) Sandra L. Borden & Chad Tew, "The Role of Journalist and the Performance of Journalism: Ethical Lessons from 'Fake' News (Seriously)," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22 (4), 2007, 300-314.

(r23) Roderick P. Hart & E. Johanna Hartelius, "The Political Sins of Jon Stewart," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24 (3), 2007, 263-272.

(r24) Robert Hariman, In Defense of Jon Stewart, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24 (3), 2007, 273-277.

(r25) W. Lance Bennett, "Relief in Hard Times: A Defense of Jon Stewart's Comedy in an Age of Cynicism," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24 (3), 2007, 278-283.

(9) Sunday, July 31 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) Advertising & Public Relations; **Short Paper Due**

(r12) Hyo-Sook Kim, "Universalism versus Relativism in Public Relations," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 20 (4), 2005, 333-344.

Blogging Ethics

(r14) Peter D. Herschok, "Media, Attention, and the Colonization of Consciousness: A Buddhist Perspective," in *Reason and Insight*

(r31) Thomas P. Oates & John Pauly, "Sports Journalism as Moral and Ethical Discourse," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22 (4), 2007, 322-347.

Week 4

(10) Friday, August 5 (4pm-8pm) Organizational Ethics

(r26) James A. Jaksas & Michael S. Pritchard, "Ethics in Organizations: The *Challenger* Explosion," from *Communication Ethics: Methods of Analysis*

(r26) Carole L. Jurkiewicz, *The Foundations of Organizational Evil* (selections)

(11) Saturday, August 6 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) Sports Journalism Ethics, Film Ethics

(r30) Kate Nash, "Documentary-for-the-Other: Relationships, Ethics and (Observational) Documentary," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 26 (31), 201, 224-239.

*Watch documentary film *Kumare* *

Visit to Topf & Söhne Museum in Erfurt

(12) Sunday, August 7 (10am-4pm; lunch break included) *Group Presentations Due*; Final Thoughts

Memorial Ethics; visit to War Deserter's Monument in Erfurt