

CA 445: Ethics and Social Responsibility in Communication

Dr. Brett Lunceford

T/R: 11.00AM-12.15PM

University Commons 1219

Office: UCOM 1016

Office Hours: T/R 12.30PM-3.30PM and by appointment

Phone: 380.2822

Email: lunceford@usouthal.edu

Course Description

This course provides an overview of ethical thought, applying this to the field of communication broadly. Students will also be introduced to professional codes of ethics for various professions within communication. Because this is the capstone course, students will write a research paper examining ethics within their chosen track.

This course has three primary goals:

- Provide students with an overview of ethical thought
- Provide students with opportunities to recognize and apply ethics
- Provide students with tools to evaluate ethical arguments

These goals will be assessed through two major assignments: a research paper and a presentation of that research.

I expect that each student will come to class prepared to discuss the readings for the day. According to the University of South Alabama's Academic Policies and Procedures, "Each hour of lecture usually requires two hours of outside preparation. Thus, a student carrying sixteen semester hours should be prepared to spend at least 48 hours in class and study per week."

Required Texts

Denise, Theodore Cullom, Nicholas P. White, and Sheldon Paul Peterfreund, eds. *Great Traditions in Ethics*. 12th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2008.

All other readings will be available through the library's online course reserves.

Class Climate

The questions that we will grapple with have no easy answers. There will be points where you may disagree with someone else. This is appropriate and, to some degree, desirable. However, respect for others in the class is an essential component of this class. Arguments should be made in a spirit of inquiry rather than as personal attacks.

Attendance Policy

This is an upper division course, so I assume that by now you recognize the value of regular class attendance. This course relies heavily on in-class discussion. Excessive absences will negatively impact your participation grade in this course. If you are not present, you are not able to participate and it is impossible to make up the discussion. You get three absences free—no questions asked. However, after these absences, each absence will decrease your final grade by 5 points (half a letter grade), so use them wisely. In addition, there may be in-class activities that are impossible to make up. If you are absent, please do not email me asking, “What did I miss?” You missed 75 minutes of discussion and perhaps an assignment. Make friends with your classmates and get the notes from them and/or come to my office hours.

Academic Honesty

From the Student Academic Conduct Policies: “Any dishonesty related to academic work or records constitutes academic misconduct including, but not limited to, activities such as giving or receiving unauthorized aid in tests and examinations, improperly obtaining a copy of an examination, plagiarism, misrepresentation of information, or altering transcripts or university records. . . . Penalties may range from the loss of credit for a particular assignment to dismissal from the University” (*The Lowdown*, p. 249). In short, don’t do it. I don’t like to bust students for plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty but I will. It isn’t fair to others and it isn’t fair to yourself. Plus, you really have to think about your future (and the irony) if you’re plagiarizing in an ethics course.

Here is the policy set forth by the Department of Communication:

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the Student Academic Conduct Policy. By registering at the university, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Conduct Policy, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the code. Please see *The Lowdown* for the complete **Student Academic Conduct Policy**.

Each instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the chair of the department. The student involved will receive written notification describing the alleged violation and the recommended penalty, along with a copy of the policy. The written notification will inform the student that if it is determined that previous incident(s) of Academic Misconduct have occurred, an additional or higher level charge may be brought.

The student involved has ten (10) Class days from receipt of the written notification to submit a written response to the instructor and request a conference with the department chair and the instructor.

Assignments

Reading Quizzes: In order to assess students’ understanding of the material, I will have regularly scheduled reading quizzes. These quizzes are listed in the course schedule, so you will have ample notice of them. They will take place at the beginning of the class on which they are

scheduled and when they are done they are done. There will be six quizzes and the lowest two will be dropped. Because of this flexibility, there will be no make up quizzes. If you must be gone on the day of a quiz, there will be other opportunities.

Paper Proposal: Each student will write a research paper of approximately 10 pages on some topic related to ethics. I strongly encourage you to consider real world cases to examine related to your chosen area of communication. For the proposal, you will describe the case you plan to examine, any applicable background of the case, and a brief description of why this case is important to study. Be as clear as possible, but concise as well. The proposal should form the introduction of the paper and run approximately 3-4 double-spaced pages. **The paper proposal is due on September 22.**

Research Paper: The final research paper will be approximately 10 double-spaced pages and provide a thorough, well argued analysis of the ethical issues surrounding your chosen case. I expect that you will engage the theorists we will use throughout the semester. **The final paper is due on December 8.**

Notes on the Papers: All papers should be well written and correctly use a standard citation method (APA, MLA, Chicago). Poor grammar and spelling will result in a lower grade, so make sure you proofread them thoroughly or, better yet, have someone else read the essay before turning it in. Papers should be written in 12 point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins.

Research Presentation: Each of you will have the opportunity to present your research to the class. This will be done much like a conference presentation in which you provide the main ideas of the study. The presentations will be 8-10 minutes long and should be well rehearsed. We will determine presentation order in class.

Participation: This class relies heavily on discussion. I assume that you will come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

There will be no final exam in this course; the research paper and presentation will serve that purpose.

Grading Scale

There are a total of 100 points available in this course:

Reading Quizzes: 20
Paper Proposal: 10
Research Paper: 25
Paper Presentation: 20
Participation: 25

A=90-100; B=80-89.99; C=70-79.99; D=60-69.99; F=below 60

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations.

If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please notify the instructor/professor and provide certification from Special Student Services. (OSSS is located in Room 270 of the Student Center (460-7212).

Keep in mind that OSSS prohibits me from making any retroactive accommodations, so if you will need special accommodations please talk to me as soon as possible. Moreover, I can make no accommodations unless you are registered with OSSS.

Statement on Diversity

The Department of Communication is committed to preparing students to work in a diverse society. As such, our classes will include lectures and activities which promote an awareness of and sensitivity towards differences of race, ethnicity, national origin, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age and disabilities. Such an environment will contribute to the growth and development of each member of the class, as it will encourage students to embrace diversity as a positive aspect of learning and scholarship.

A Note on my Teaching Philosophy

I believe that every student in my class has the ability to succeed in this course. My goal is to create a comfortable environment in which you can explore and improve your ability to think critically and skillfully present your ideas to an audience. I do not “give” grades; students earn grades—no one is entitled to get an “A” in a class unless they earn it. I cannot grade on effort—I must grade what you actually do. My job is to push students to do their best and to then exceed that standard. I recognize that this is futile unless I also provide the support and assistance that each student needs to excel. Therefore, I provide office hours and expect students to use them and am generally available through email. I assume that attaining a university degree is your first priority. If this is not the case, it is less likely that you will excel. Some of you are here because you want to get a better job. I believe that education should do much more than job training, but if you see it as job training, at least take it seriously. Recognize that you will probably be required to work 40 hours a week (or more) from 8am until 5pm. If you are chronically late, they fire you. If you do not do your work, they fire you. If you drop the ball, you probably will not get a raise, they may fire you, and in some cases legal action may be taken against you. Bottom line—you do your part to excel and I will be there to help you reach that goal.

Reading Schedule:

Note: Because some of you may be using different editions of this text, I have listed the author rather than the chapter number.

Week 1	Introduction to Ethics
8/23	Overview of course
8/25	Plato
Week 2	Ancient Foundations of Ethical Thought
8/30	Aristotle
9/1	Epicurus, Epictetus

Reading Quiz 1

Week 3	Religious Traditions of Ethical Thought
9/6	Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas
9/8	Benedict de Spinoza, Søren Kierkegaard
Week 4	Applied Ethics
9/13	Lecture: Potter's Box
9/15	Codes of Ethics: Part 1

Reading Quiz 2

Week 5	Applied Ethics, Continued
9/20	Codes of Ethics: Part 2
9/22	John Dewey

Paper Proposals Due

Week 6	Duty and Morality
9/27	Immanuel Kant, W.D. Ross
9/29	Thomas Hobbes, David Hume

Reading Quiz 3

- Week 7 Morality, Continued
- 10/4 **Fall Break: No Class**
- 10/6 William K. Frankena
- Week 8 Utilitarianism
- 10/11 John Stuart Mill
- 10/13 Henry Sidgwick

Reading Quiz 4

- Week 9 Writing Workshop / Cases
- 10/18 Craig, David A. "Wal-Mart Public Relations in the Blogosphere." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22, no. 2/3 (2007): 215-18.
Boynton, Lois A. "Commentary 1: This PR Firm Should Have Known Better." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22, no. 2/3 (2007): 218-21.
Baker, Sherry. "Commentary 2: A Case of Covert Persuasion." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22, no. 2/3 (2007): 221-25.
Pauly, John J. "Commentary 3: We Have All Been Here Before." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22, no. 2/3 (2007): 225-28.
- 10/20 Writing Workshop, Part 1
- Week 10 Social Justice
- 10/25 John Rawls
- 10/27 Philippa Foot

Reading Quiz 5

- Week 11 Writing Workshop / Cases
- 11/1 Whitehouse, Ginny. "Captured in North Korea." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2010): 69-72.
Ling, Laura, and Euna Lee. "Ling and Lee's Open Letter." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2010): 72-76.
Daniloff, Nicholas. "Comparing Experiences and Choices Two Decades Later." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2010): 76-80.

Hanson, Christopher. "Questions Deserve Answers." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2010): 81-83.

Whitehouse, Ginny. "Good Intentions Don't Equal Good Choices." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2010): 83-85.

Babcock, William A. "Bad Ethics." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2010): 85-86.

11/3 Writing Workshop, Part 2

Week 12 Challengers

11/8 Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre

11/10 Karl Marx, G.E. Moore

Reading Quiz 6

Week 13

11/15 Writing Workshop 3

11/17 **NCA Convention: TBA**

Week 14

11/22 Paper Presentations

11/24 **Thanksgiving: No Class**

Week 15

11/29 Paper Presentations

12/1 Paper Presentations

Week 16

12/6 Paper Presentations

12/8 Paper Presentations
Final Papers Due

Regarding Changes in Course Requirements

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the instructor may wish to modify the above requirements or their timing as circumstances dictate. For example, the instructor may wish to

change the number and frequency of exams, or the number and sequence of assignments. However, the students must be given adequate notification. Moreover, there may be non-typical classes for which these requirements are not strictly applicable in each instance and may need modification. If such modification is needed, it must be in writing and conform to the spirit of this policy statement.