

COMM 215 - 201 Ethics and Communication

Fall 2015

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-11:15 a.m.

Corboy Law Center 304

Professor Lee Hood, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3 p.m.; Thursdays 3-4 p.m. (or by appointment)

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◆ Course Goals and Objectives

This course is designed to make you aware of the underlying ethical values that relate to public communication processes, and to learn to apply them in increasingly complex situations. The course aims to provide you with an “ethical toolbox” – a set of principles, philosophies, relevant questions and ethical decision-making tools to apply to dilemmas that arise in public communication practices. The class not only seeks to prepare future media professionals, but also aims to increase media literacy and critical awareness for students who may not pursue a media career. Whether in a professional or a personal context, we are all communicators and face ethical choices in our communications, both public and private.

The course will rely heavily on class discussion, based on readings and other material presented in class. We will examine various ethical philosophies, then work toward applying them to real-life cases by systematically analyzing the dilemmas and various stakeholders to arrive at rational, defensible conclusions. Ethical choices are not always a simple matter of “right” or “wrong,” but often represent shades of gray and conflicting interests among different constituents. The goal is for you to develop an ethical framework within which to ground your own communication practices and to assess those of others.

◆ Required Reading

Media Ethics: Issues and Cases (8th edition) by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins, 2014, McGraw-Hill Publishers. (Also available for rent or as an e-book.)

Additional supplemental readings will be distributed via Sakai.

Please note: Because of our heavy reliance on class discussion, it is imperative to have completed all the required readings before coming to class. Failure to do so will negatively impact your class participation grade because it will hamper your ability to contribute to meaningful discussions. Also, you will be given regular short quizzes on the readings (more information below).

◆ Expectations, Classroom Conduct and Etiquette

Because participation and discussion are crucial components to the class, anything that distracts you from being fully engaged is a detriment to both the class as a whole and to your ability to get the most out of the class material. Therefore, to help you stay focused on the subject matter at hand and to enhance your participation grade, please:

- Turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before class begins and keep them off for the duration.
- Do not use a laptop or tablet computer during class, unless you provide proof that you have a documented need to use one to take notes.
(See disabilities section below. Note: PowerPoints presented in class will be available on Sakai.)

As part of demonstrating ethical communication in the classroom, it is important to be respectful of other people's opinions. During discussions, please show respect and tolerance for those whose opinions may be different, unfamiliar or challenging to you. It is possible to disagree without being disrespectful.

◆ Grading

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Quizzes/short assignments	10%
Current issues cases & debates/presentations	10%
Class Attendance/Participation	10%
Case Analysis Paper	10%
Research Paper	20%
Exams (Midterm & Final, 20% each)	40%

Weekly quizzes/short assignments (10%)

There will be regular quizzes on assigned readings and the week's discussion topic. These will be given at the beginning of class (either Tuesday or Thursday) or online through Sakai, and cannot be made up. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. This allows you to miss one without penalty, but plan wisely so as not to use up this allowance too early in the semester. Other short assignments will be announced in class and available on Sakai.

Current issues cases and debates/presentations (10%)

Ethical dilemmas occur frequently in the various areas of public communication. To encourage your engagement with these issues, you will be required to identify at least **four** current issues and post the information and a short commentary, either to a social media platform, on your own blog or the blog section of the class Sakai page. At least two of the four will be due by mid-semester. Additional guidelines will be distributed in class.

Once this semester, you will participate with other classmates in debating different sides of an ethical issue or otherwise presenting pertinent information to the class. You will be asked to sign up for a debate or presentation based on a topic that interests you, and will present the material in class.

Class Participation (10%)

This course relies heavily on discussions and student contributions. It is through exchanging ideas that you can hone the ability to present a well-argued position. Therefore, class participation is an important component of the class and you will be graded on participation. Coming to class well-prepared (in particular, by doing the readings) and ready to contribute to the discussion is the best way to positively impact your participation grade.

In addition, your class participation grade will include attendance and punctuality. You are expected to attend every class, and absences will impact your ability to get the most out of the course. *It is important to be on time and stay for the whole class period.* Arriving late or leaving early will impact your participation grade. In addition, points may be deducted for excessive disruption or obvious disengagement from class sessions.

Some people may find it difficult to speak up in front of their peers. If this describes you, please speak to me about an alternative assignment. However, contributing during class time is strongly encouraged.

The grading scale for participation is as follows, assigned as a cumulative evaluation over the course of the semester:

- A range (90-100 points): Frequent and meaningful contributions to class discussions showing insight, understanding of, and engagement with the material
- B range (80-89 points): Somewhat regular contributions to class discussions
- C range (70-79 points): Arrived on time, listened attentively but did not contribute to discussions in oral or written forms
- D range (64-69 points): Regularly arrived late or displayed disengagement; little or no contribution to class discussions
- F: Did not attend class regularly

Adjustments may be applied to individual cases. For example, if you make meaningful contributions when you are in class but do not attend frequently, do not expect an A for participation.

Other Attendance Notes

- If you have a genuine emergency, please notify me *prior* to class if possible. However, please note that you will not be able to make up in-class assignments (such as quizzes) you miss if you are late or absent.
- At Loyola, we respect that you may miss class due to religious observances. In these circumstances, please notify me ahead of time that you will be gone.

Case Analysis and Research Papers

Writing will help you demonstrate how you synthesize ethical principles and apply them to particular cases and issues. There will be two main writing assignments:

- 1) A 3-4 page case analysis paper (50 points, 10% of grade)
This paper will be based on a case of your choice from those at the end of each chapter. Due date: Thursday, Oct. 1, 5 p.m.
- 2) A 7-10 page final research paper (100 points, 20% of grade)
This paper will be worth 100 points, and will be due Thursday, Nov. 19, 5 p.m. You will be asked to apply ethical principles and reasoning to a contemporary

issue in public communication that you find interesting. The topic can range from a specific case study in your area of interest to a broader issue – for example, anything from whether negative political advertising discourages citizen participation to whether violent video games should be protected under the First Amendment. It *must* include, as a central issue, one or more ethical dilemmas in an area of public communication. If you have questions about whether your topic fits, or would like guidance on tailoring a topic, please ask.

- This paper is intended to be larger in scope than the shorter analysis paper and will require outside research, which can include references from academic journals or professional media, as well as interviews with communication professionals pertinent to the topic.

For both assignments, late papers will receive a grade reduction of 50%, and will not be accepted more than one week after the due date.

Please note:

- *You will be asked to turn in a hard copy of your papers, as well as submit them electronically through TurnItIn (accessible through Sakai).*
- *The analysis and research papers must be original, and cannot be a duplicate assignment in this or another class or from a previous semester's work.*

Additional guidelines and expectations for the papers will be distributed separately.

Exams (40%)

There will be two exams during the semester, a mid-term during class time on **Tuesday, Oct. 13** and a final exam on **Tuesday, Dec. 8 (1-3 p.m.)**. Each will be worth 20% of the grade. The exams will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and short essay, with an emphasis on applying principles learned in class.

Grading scale: Assignments will be graded on a point system, with cumulative points converted into a letter grade at the end of the semester using the following scale:

A 94-100%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 84-86%; B- 80-83%;
C+ 77-79%; C 74-76%; C- 70-73%; D+ 67-69%; D 64-66%

Loyola does not recognize a grade of D-, so a grade below 64% is failing.

◆ Student Rules and Responsibilities

Academic Dishonesty

Loyola University and the School of Communication expect academic integrity and have policies regarding academic dishonesty. Specifically for the SOC:

1. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (such as failing to properly credit a source or using someone else's ideas without clarifying that they are not yours). This is an academic community; being uninformed or naïve is not an acceptable excuse for not properly referencing sources.

2. It is dishonest to:

- Turn in the same work for two classes;
- Turn in a paper you have not written yourself; or
- Copy from another student or use a “cheat sheet” during an exam.

Turning in work that is not your own will result in failure on the assignment and possible dismissal from the class.

You can find Loyola’s policies regarding academic integrity at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml.

Special Needs

If you have a special circumstance that may impact your course work and for which you may require accommodation, please contact me early in the semester so arrangements can be made with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). We will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. Loyola’s policy is that it is the student’s responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates. Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SSWD website: <http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml>.

◆ Electronic Communication & Information

Sakai: Course information and assignments will be available on Sakai. Please notify me if you have any problems using the class Sakai site.

Email: I will answer email within 24 hours on weekdays but will not always access it on weekends. You may not receive a response to a late Friday email until Monday.

◆ About your professor

This is my seventh year at Loyola, after teaching at the University of Colorado. I have 18 years of experience in television news, including 10 years as a full-time producer. I worked at all the network TV affiliates plus one independent station (WGN’s sister station) in Denver, and before that produced and anchored newscasts in Huntsville, Alabama. My newscasts earned honors including regional Emmy awards for hard news and spot news and a Colorado Broadcasters Association best newscast award. I also have experience in reporting (both news and sports), photography and editing, and worked in radio and newspapers before starting my television career.

I hold a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Colorado. My research interests are local news and the audience relationship to it, as well as corporate and consolidation influences on local news and outsourced local news. I have a master's degree from the University of Colorado and a bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Missouri.

Ethics and Communication

Fall 2015 Schedule*

*Reading and other assignments are to be done by the beginning of class on the scheduled date.
Additional assignments, reading and otherwise, may be added as the semester goes on.*

Tues Aug. 25 General introduction

Thur Aug. 27 Taking your ethical pulse

- *Due: Forsyth Ethics Position Questionnaire (scored & posted on Sakai)*

Tues Sept. 1 Different philosophical approaches to ethical decision-making

Reading: P&W Foreword and Preface; Ch. 1: An Introduction to Ethical Decision Making

- *Due: Syllabus reading and notes (hard copy or Sakai)*

Thur Sept. 3 Ethical decision-making in practice

Reading: P&W pp. 86-90 Potter Box; pp. 119-120 John Rawls & the Veil of Ignorance

First reading quiz (in class)

Tues Sept. 8 Ethics in news industries

*Reading: P&W Ch. 2 Information Ethics: A Profession Seeks the Truth;
news organizations' ethics codes (links provided)*

Thur Sept. 10 Ethics in news continued

Guest speaker: Professor John Goheen, "Making Ethical Decisions in the Field"

Tues Sept. 15 Applying ethics to news dilemmas

Thur Sept. 17 Ethics in Public Relations and Advertising

Reading: P&W Ch. 3 Strategic Communication: Does Client Advocate Mean Consumer Adversary? Also read Public Relations Society of America ethics code (www.prsa.org).

Tues Sept. 22 "Strategic Comm and Journalism: Commonalities and Differences"

Guest speaker: Jon Kaplan, Chicago PR professional and former journalist

Thur Sept. 24 Strategic Communication ethics continued

Tues Sept. 29 Media Ethics Forum: Social Media in the age of ISIS (details TBA)

Thur Oct. 1 Loyalty as an Ethical Principle

Reading: P&W Ch. 4 Loyalty: Choosing between Competing Allegiances

- *Due: Case Analysis Paper*

Tues Oct. 6 Fall break

Thur Oct. 8 Mid-term preparation

- *Due: First two current issues posts*

Tues Oct. 13 Mid-term Exam

Thur Oct. 15 Ethics and Privacy

Reading: P&W Ch. 5 Privacy: Looking for Solitude in the Global Village

Tues Oct. 20 Ethics and Privacy continued: Examining the Steve Bartman case
Student presentations/debates

Thur Oct. 22 Media and Democracy

Reading: P&W Ch. 6 Mass Media in a Democratic Society: Keeping a Promise

Guest speaker: Jill Geisler, SOC's Bill Plante Chair in Leadership & Media Integrity

Tues Oct. 27 Media Economics and Ethics

Reading: P&W Ch. 7 Media Economics: The Deadline Meets the Bottom Line

Thur Oct. 29 Media and Democracy, Media Economics continued;
student presentations/debates

Tues Nov. 3 Ethics and the Visual; student presentations/debates

Reading: P&W Ch. 8 Picture This: The Ethics of Photo and Video Journalism

Thur Nov. 5 Ethics and the Visual continued

Guest speaker: Professor Pamela Morris, "Advertising & Images of Women"

Tues Nov. 10 Ethics and New Media

Reading: P&W Ch. 9 New Media: Continuing Questions and New Roles

Thur Nov. 12 Ethics and New Media continued; student presentations/debates

Tues Nov. 17 Ethics and the Entertainment World

Reading: P&W Ch. 10 The Ethical Dimensions of Art and Entertainment

Thur Nov. 19 Ethics and Entertainment continued; student presentations/debates

➤ *Due: Research paper*

Tues Nov. 24 Ethics and the media audience

Thur Nov. 26 Thanksgiving

Tues Dec. 1 Living a Moral Life; alternate/make-up quiz

Reading: P&W Ch. 11 Becoming a Moral Adult

Thur Dec. 3 Semester wrap-up and final exam review

Tues Dec. 8 Final Exam, 1-3 p.m.

*We will try to stick to this schedule, but there may be changes if circumstances dictate or special opportunities arise.