

# Communication Ethics for Professionals

## COM 563

### **Course Overview:**

This course will focus on both individual and institutional strategic communication ethics, and will consider the following questions: “What are the ethical virtues of character and the central ethical standards that should guide individual choices?” “What are the ethical standards and responsibilities that should guide the communication of organizations and institutions—public and private, corporate, governmental, and professional?”

### **Course Learning Goals:**

Students will understand and be able to discuss and apply key theories of individual and institutional ethics, and will be able to articulate and defend their ethical reasoning.

### **Course Work:**

Each unit will consist of discussion of several readings, both classical and contemporary, and on an overarching topic. Once during the semester each student will choose a topic and readings relevant to the class, and lead discussion on that topic. Finally, each student will write and present a final project.

### **Instructor Interaction:**

I will be active in the course space afternoons from 3-4 p.m. (Pacific time). You can expect responses to emails or questions received outside of these times during my next “office hour.”

### **Late Work Policy**

Work (papers, exams, final projects) will be due at 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Late work will be accepted the following day, but will lose one full grade. Work turned in after that time will lose one full letter grade for each business day it is late.

## **Grading:**

As this is a graduate-level Communication course, I have high expectations for your work. Assignments will be graded on both content and writing/presentation. If you have questions about any assignment, please ask. I will use the following formula for grading:

- A: Assignment is well above the standard in both content and writing/presentation
- B: Assignment meets standard for a graduate-level Communication course (argument is well articulated and supported; writing is professional quality; meets criteria specific to assignment)
- C: Assignment meets standard in either content or writing; or is just below standard in both
- D: Assignment does not meet standard in either content or writing

<b>Course Work</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Percent of Final Grade</b>
<b>Participation in weekly discussion</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Leading discussion</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final project and presentation</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>25%</b>

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A	93–100%	C	73–76%
A–	90–92%	C–	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%
B	83–86%	D	60–66%
B–	80–82%	F	0–59%
C+	77–79%		

## **Participation in weekly discussion**

Communication Ethics for Professionals is a participation-based class...students will do much of their learning through group discussion. Each week's discussion will center on several specific questions, or prompts, from the assigned readings. The participation grade must be earned through consistently demonstrating understanding of the readings, asking thoughtful questions, being able to answer questions, and constructively engaging in group discussion and activities. The participation grade (50% of the final grade) will be based both on the quality and the regularity of participation.

## **Leading discussion**

Once during the semester each student will have the opportunity to tailor the class and introduce classmates to topics and ethical dilemmas specifically relevant to the individual student. To that end, each student will choose a specific topic and assign relevant readings for the class, and lead a thoughtful discussion on that topic. The 'leading discussion' grade is worth 25% of the final grade.

## **Final project and presentation**

The final project has two components: a paper and a presentation. Students will apply ethical principles to real-life professional situations by using those principles to analyze and critique the choices of an individual or organization in a specific violation of communication ethics. The project will consist of a summary of the situation, an explanation of the ethical principles and theories relevant to the situation, and an analysis of the various choices available and the choice that was made, using the relevant ethics principles. The paper is worth 15% of the final grade and will likely be between seven and 10 pages long, while the presentation is worth 10% and will be about 15 minutes long.

## **Incomplete Grade Policy:**

Incompletes are granted only with permission of the instructor and are subject to the following guidelines:

Students must request an incomplete in writing or by e-mail from the instructor before the end of the semester.

1. The request must be signed and dated by the student (or identified by student's e-mail address), and must explain the reasons behind the request for the incomplete.
2. In order to be considered for an incomplete, there are two main conditions:
  - a. a student must complete a minimum amount of the assigned course work. Specifically, a student must complete 75 percent of the course work.
  - b. a student must have a mathematical possibility of passing the class. A passing grade is 60 percent or above for the entire course.

3. If extraordinary circumstances (e.g., family emergency, serious illness) are involved and are documented to the instructor's satisfaction, the professor/ instructor retains the discretion to grant an incomplete even if the minimum conditions outlined in item 3 above are not met.
4. If an incomplete is granted, the standard WSU policy applies (i.e., ALL work must be completed within one full year from the end of the enrollment semester at issue. Otherwise, an automatic grade of "F," or failing, will be entered on the student's transcript).

## Academic Regulations

Students enrolled in distance courses are subject to the same WSU academic regulations as on-campus students. A complete listing of the WSU academic regulations is available online ([Academic Regulations](#); select "Printable" next to "List All Academic Regulations" to view a printable list of all regulations).

## Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. DDP and the Disability Resource Center (DRC) work together to provide reasonable accommodations for students who have documented disabilities and who are registered both with DDP and the DRC. DDP's liaison to the DRC will assist you in getting started. To begin this process, contact DDP (800-222-4978 or [distance@wsu.edu](mailto:distance@wsu.edu)). We strongly recommend that you notify us as soon as possible. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center.

If you have questions, please contact the DRC at [DRC.FrontDesk@ad.wsu.edu](mailto:DRC.FrontDesk@ad.wsu.edu) or 509-335-3417. Additional information is available on the DRC website: <http://www.drc.wsu.edu>.

## Online Collaboration:

Threaded discussion posts in online course spaces are an integral part of online learning environments. In certain courses, assessment of discussion posts is included as part of the final grade.

WSU is committed to the rights of all community members to freedom of expression and academic freedom. In order to protect the rights of all participants and to preserve the educational tone of online course spaces, the following rules apply:

1. Postings must be germane to the subject matter.
2. Postings must comply with WSU's policy on appropriate use of computing resources: <http://www.wsu.edu/ElectronicPolicy.html>.
3. Illegal postings or postings that violate WSU policies, including those regarding harassment and discrimination or the Standards of Conduct for Students, are not permitted.
4. Postings that are threatening to others are not permitted.

Instructors have the authority to remove posts that violate these rules. Continued postings in violation of these rules may result in removal of access rights, course failure, and, when appropriate, referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

In addition to the netiquette guidelines for online collaboration, you will be expected to participate in the online discussions in a way that engages with the topic and with the other participants. An overview of the criteria used in this course to evaluate your participation through your original and response posts is provided in the online course space, if applicable.

## Critical Thinking

The ability to think and write critically are essential skills in many walks of life. Critical thinking skills are developed and refined through practice, self-reflection, and the critique and support of peers and instructors. Throughout this course you will have many opportunities to exercise your analytical thinking, synthesize information, and apply knowledge to real-life situations. To help facilitate your thinking and writing, the "Critical Thinking Rubric" is provided in the online course space, if applicable, to assess your own writing and that of other students. Please review it carefully before completing each activity.

## Technical Support

If you need technical assistance, please expand the **Content** folder in the Map menu on the left by clicking the plus sign (+), then select **Technical Support**.

## DDP Student Help Centers,

DDP understands that navigating the academic world may be confusing – that is why we have created the DDP [Help Centers](#), a central location where students can find information on a variety of topics. Take a moment to check out the many links available in the various help centers. Below are just a few important links to information in the help centers we would like to bring to your attention:

- Please review "Tuition & Fees" in the [Finance Center](#). Tuition is due on the first day of the semester, and WSU does not mail billing statements.
- If you are a new DDP student, information to assist you with online learning is available under "Resources and Tips" in the [New DDP Students Center](#). In this section you will find study tips, resources, and skills to give you a good head start in assuring success with your course.
- Also check out [myDDP](#), your personal DDP Web page where you can find quick links to important information, upcoming DDP events, deadlines and more. The quick link "Go to myDDP" is available from every page in the help centers, found in the upper right part of the page.

## Library Support,

All students enrolled in Washington State University distance courses can use the WSU Libraries online databases and receive reference and research assistance from the Distance Degree Library Services (DDLS). Enrolled students can also borrow books and other circulating material and receive photocopies of journal articles.

Visit the DDLS Web page ([DDLS](#)) for links to the WSU online database and library support information.

## eTutoring,

As a WSU student you have **unlimited FREE** access to eTutoring.org, a tutoring platform that enables students and tutors to collaborate in an online environment. This is not a course requirement, but simply an available resource that you may utilize as needed.

Currently, eTutoring is available for Accounting, Anatomy & Physiology, Biology, Chemistry, Math and Calculus, MS Office 2007, Spanish, Statistics, and Writing! With three ways to access a tutor you can choose the one that best fits your needs...

- Use the Online Writing Lab that allows students to submit a draft of a paper to a tutor, ask for specific feedback, and receive a tutor's response within 24-48 hours.
- Access live eTutoring via eChat that allows students to meet with a tutor in one-on-one tutoring sessions via a fully interactive, virtual online environment.
- Utilize the offline eQuestions that allow students to leave a specific question for an eTutor, who will respond within 24-48 hours.

The list of available tutoring subjects can be found on the <http://etutoring.org/login.cfm?institutionid=176> site.

For more information on accessing and setting up your eTutoring account, visit:[http://online.wsu.edu/current\\_students/as\\_eTutoring\\_start.aspx](http://online.wsu.edu/current_students/as_eTutoring_start.aspx)

## DDP Academic Calendar,

Please review the current DDP [Academic Calendar](#) to become familiar with critical deadlines.

## On Campus Safety.

Washington State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its faculty, staff, and students. Safety is the responsibility of every member of the campus community and individuals should know the appropriate actions to take when an emergency arises. In support of our commitment to the safety of the campus community the University has developed a Campus Safety Plan, <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>. It is highly recommended that you visit this web site as well as the University emergency management web site at <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> to become familiar with the information provided.

## Topics and Reading list

### Textbooks:

Richard L. Johannesen, Kathleen S. Valde and Karen E. Whedbee (2008), *Ethics in Human Communication*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (Longrove, Illinois: Waveland Press).

James Rachels and Stuart Rachels (2011), *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 7th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill).

### Week 1, Introduction and ethics definition

Rachels, ch. 1, "What is morality."

Johannesen, ch. 1: Ethical responsibility in human communication

Johannesen, ch. 7: "Some basic issues."

### Week 2, Moral Development

Rachels, ch. 11, "Feminism and the ethics of care."

Johannesen, ch. 11: "Feminist Contributions."

Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Psychology of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), ch. 2, Moral Stages and Moralizations: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach," pp. 170-205.

Gilligan, Carol, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), ch. 1, Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle, pp. 5-23.

Gilligan, Carol, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), ch. 2, "Images of Relationship," pp. 24-63.

Kelly McBride, "The ethics of justice and care in the American media: A tale of two reporters," <http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/1851/the-ethics-of-justice-and-care-in-the-american-media/>

Renita Coleman and Lee Wilkins, "The moral development of public relations practitioners: A comparison with other professions and influences on higher quality ethical reasoning," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, v21 n3 (2009 12 01): 318-340.

### Week 3, Deontology

Rachels, ch. 9, "Are there absolute moral rules."

Rachels, ch. 10, "Kant and respect for persons."

Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, Introduction, and Book 1, Chapter 1, through paragraph 80 (see Project Gutenberg),  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5683/pg5683.html>

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 3-22, 60-65, 136-142.

W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), ch 1 & 2

Michael J. Phillips, *Ethics and Manipulative Advertising* (Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1997), pp. 77-84.

### Week 4, Teleology

Rachels, ch. 5, "Ethical egoism."

Rachels, ch. 7, "The utilitarian approach."

Rachels, ch. 8, "The debate over utilitarianism."

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2, "What utilitarianism is."

Michael J. Phillips, *Ethics and Manipulative Advertising* (Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1997), ch. 2, "Utilitarian Arguments."

Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, "Introduction" and ch. 1, "The Objectivist Ethics,"  
[http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ari\\_ayn\\_rand\\_the\\_objectivist\\_ethics](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ari_ayn_rand_the_objectivist_ethics)

## Week 5, Virtue theory

Rachels, ch. 12, "Virtue ethics."

Hursthouse, Rosalind, "Virtue Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/ethics-virtue/>.

Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Nature of the Virtues," *The Hastings Center report* (1981) vol:11 iss:2 pg:27, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3561072>

Aristotle, "Virtue," in Norman E. Bowie, ed., *Making Ethical Decisions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), pp. 236-240

Michael J. Phillips, *Ethics and Manipulative Advertising* (Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1997), pp. 91-99.

## Week 6, (Interpersonal) Dialogical perspectives

Johannesen, ch. 4: "Dialogical perspectives."

Paul W. Keller, "Interpersonal dissent and the ethics of dialogue," *Communication* 6: 287-303.

Stanley Deetz, "Reclaiming the subject matter as a guide to mutual understanding: Effectiveness and ethics in interpersonal interaction," *Communication Quarterly* 38(3): 266-243

Ernest G. Bormann, (1981). "Ethical standards for interpersonal / small group communication," *Communication* 6: 267-285.

Carl Botan (1997). "Ethics in strategic communication campaigns : The case for a new approach to public relations," *Journal of Business Communication* 34(2): 188-202.

Kevin L. Stoker and Kati A. Tusinski (2006). "Reconsidering public relations' infatuation with dialogue: Why engagement and reconciliation can be more ethical than symmetry and reciprocity," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 21(2 & 3): 156-176.

## Week 7, Organizational communication and ethics codes

Johannesen, ch. 9: "Communication in organizations."

Johannesen, ch. 10, "Formal codes of ethics."

Matthew W. Seeger and Robert R. Ulmer, "Explaining Enron: Communication and Responsible Leadership," *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17 (1): 58-84

Paula Tompkins Pribble, "Making and ethical commitment: A rhetorical case study of organizational socialization," *Communication Quarterly* 38(3): 255-267

John P. Ferre, "Communication ethics and the political realism of Reinhold Niebuhr," *Communication Quarterly* 38(3): 218-225.

Greg Wood and Malcolm Rimmer (2003), "Codes of Ethics: What Are They Really and What Should They Be?" *International Journal of Value-Based Management* Volume 16, Number 2 (2003), 181-195, DOI: 10.1023/A:1024089509424

Society of Professional Journalists code, <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

Public Relations Society of America code, <http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics/CodeEnglish>

American Advertising Federation code,  
[http://www.aaf.org/images/public/aaf\\_content/images/ad%20ethics/IAE\\_Principles\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.aaf.org/images/public/aaf_content/images/ad%20ethics/IAE_Principles_Practices.pdf)

American Marketing Association code,  
<http://www.marketingpower.com/AboutAMA/Pages/Statement%20of%20Ethics.aspx>

Council of Public Relations Firms code, <http://prfirms.org/resources-page/statement-of-principles>, <http://prfirms.org/join/the-council-of-pr-firms-code-of-ethics>

National Press Photographers code,  
[http://nppa.org/professional\\_development/business\\_practices/ethics.html](http://nppa.org/professional_development/business_practices/ethics.html)

Radio Television Digital News Association code,  
[http://www.rtnda.org/pages/media\\_items/code-of-ethics-and-professional-conduct48.php](http://www.rtnda.org/pages/media_items/code-of-ethics-and-professional-conduct48.php)

Week 8, Intercultural and multicultural communication ethics

Johannesen, ch. 12, "Intercultural and multicultural communication."

Rachels, ch 2, "The challenge of cultural relativism."

Bradford J. Hall, "Culture, Ethics, and Communication," in Fred L. Casmir, ed., *Ethics in Intercultural and International Communication* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1997), pp.11-42.

Lawrence Kohlberg, "The future of liberalism as the dominant ideology of the Western world," in Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 231-242.)

Zahama, R.S., "Intercultural communication and international public relations: Exploring parallels," *Communication Quarterly*, v. 48 no1 (Winter 2000) p. 85-100.

Week 9 student-led topics

Week 10 student-led topics

Week 11 student-led topics

Week 12 student-led topics

Week 13 project presentations

Week 14 project presentations

Week 15 project presentations