

COMM 3355 Communication Ethics
 Fall 2016, Section 1 (Bayou 1133) TTh 1:00-2:20
 Dr. Brent Kice
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Office hours: MWF 11:00-12:00, TTh 10:00-11:30, or by appointment
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 Department of Communication and Studio Arts

Textbook: Neher, William, and Paul Sandin. *Communicating Ethically*. Boston: Pearson, 2007.

Articles: Debord, Guy. "Chapter One." *Society of the Spectacle*.

Habermas, Jurgen. "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article." *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 49-55.

Locke, John. "Of the Beginning of Political Societies; Of the Ends of Political Society and Government; Of the Forms of a Commonwealth." The Second Treatise of Government.

Rawls, John. "The Veil of ignorance." A Theory of Justice. Harvard U P: Cambridge, MA, 1999.118-23.

(3 credits) Examination of a range of ethical principles and case studies with the ultimate goal of helping students work out their own professional standards and commit to them.

Course Objectives:

The design of this course is to provide students with a theoretical and practical base regarding students' ethical responsibilities as communicators. By the conclusion of the course, students will 1) enhance their understandings of moral approaches regarding communication in order to develop their own moral codes and 2) study social concepts such as the Spectacle, the Public Sphere, Ideology, and the Social Contract as they relate to the development of their moral characters within society. Students will reach these goals through exams, case studies and a term paper. In turn, students will be able to 3) apply concepts of morality to issues of professional communication.

Grading:

- 150 pts. Ethics Exam 1
- 150 pts. Ethics Exam 2
- 150 pts. Ethics Exam 3
- 150 pts. Moral Reasoning Position Paper
- 250 pts. Case Study Paper
- 100 pts. Participation
- 50 pts. Attendance
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- 1000 pts. Total

A	920-1000	C	720-799
A-	900-919	C-	700-719
B+	880-899	D+	680-699
B	820-879	D	620-679
B-	800-819	D-	600-619
C+	780-799	F	0-599

Moral Reasoning Position Paper:

All students will face potential ethical dilemmas in their specific communication careers. To prepare them for this, students will write a 3-5 page paper arguing for or against a specific moral reasoning strategy. For example, Students will select deontology, virtue ethics, teleology, or a sub-component of these (such as utilitarianism, social contract, veil of ignorance, etc.) and present a case why their selected reasoning method is superior or inferior as a guide to assist them in resolving ethical dilemmas specific to their future communication careers. Students will be graded on their abilities to support their claims and apply their arguments to their specific future communication careers. All papers must be typed, stapled or paper-clipped, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins, with all sources cited using APA guidelines. **Late papers will not be accepted.**

Case Study Paper (7-10 pages):

Students will select a current social topic/dilemma that pertains to communication and ethics. These topics will be selected in consultation with the professor. For example, students might examine the Sheriff B.J. Roberts's 2009 firing of a deputy over a Facebook like of another candidate for Sheriff, the controversial Westboro Baptist Church protests, NPR's firing of Juan Williams, 1989 Disney threats to remove Disney characters from Florida daycare center walls, U.S. anti-terrorism laws (Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project), Ricky Gervais insults at the 2010 Golden Globes, Axe advertising campaigns, 2016 U.S. presidential campaign issues, etc. Next, students will consider the vantage point that they will be arguing from, such as a communication practitioner, legislator, protestor, onlooker, etc. (this vantage point should represent a specific person unique to the dilemma) and determine the specific dilemma that must be resolved.

Then, students will write a **7-10 page paper** that argues their personal moral approach toward this specified current dilemma. This moral approach will take a firm stand by applying moral reasoning to reach a decisive action to resolve the dilemma. The paper will provide in-depth analysis from an ethical perspective in order to support the student's line of thought. All papers must be typed, stapled or paper-clipped, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins, with all sources cited using APA guidelines. **Late papers will not be accepted.**

Participation:

Students are expected to come to class prepared. Students are also expected to have read and be willing to discuss in detail the assigned case studies and articles. Physical presence does not constitute participation.

- 100 pts.** Students voicing quality ideas during every class discussion, thorough engagement in case studies, and coming to class late a maximum of one time
- 80-90 pts.** (depending on the voicing of ideas) Students voicing quality ideas at least once per week, thorough engagement in case studies, and coming to class late a maximum of one time
- 70 pts.** Students voicing ideas at least once per week, mediocre engagement in case studies, and coming to class late a maximum of two times
- 60 pts.** Students voicing ideas at least once every two weeks, mediocre engagement in case studies, and coming to class late a maximum of two times
- 0-50 pts.** (depending on severity of lack of ideas and lateness) Students rarely voicing ideas, poor engagement in case studies, and coming to class late more than two times

Attendance:

Attendance in class is essential to acquiring the prerequisites for both the oral and written assignments of the course, for serving as an audience for fellow students, and sharpening your discrimination as a listener. Roll will be taken regularly. Students are to be in their seats when roll is taken to be marked present. Please provide valid documentation for an excused absence, to be determined by the instructor.

0-2 Absences	50 pts
3 Absences	40 pts
4 Absences	35 pts
5 Absences	25 pts
6 Absences	15 pts
7 or more	0 pts

Respect:

The nature of the class demands that all students respect each other. Students will be expected to allow their fellow classmates to speak without interruption. On that same note, no student should dominate discussion, rather students should create an atmosphere that invites all students to participate. The intended atmosphere of the class is one where all students should feel comfortable. Naturally, students will have differing opinions, and many will not be easily swayed, but this difference creates learning. It is completely acceptable to have an opinion that differs from others. With this being said, all discussion will be geared toward the logical arguments themselves, not at the speakers. Verbal attacks will not be tolerated, this includes bullying another student who has knowingly become flustered during the process of discussion.

Late Work and Make-ups:

Make-up exams are **only** given for extreme cases, such as hospitalization. If you are a member of a university-sponsored organization, please present the professor with a valid letter identifying all dates that you will miss at the beginning of the semester. **No late papers will be accepted.** All papers must be turned in as hard copies to the professor, no emails of papers will be accepted.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act of 1973:

If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, contact Disability Services at 281-283-2648 or disability@uhcl.edu as soon as possible and complete the registration process. To ensure your accommodations are in place for the entire semester, please request your accommodation letters from Disability Services and provide them to me **at the beginning of the semester.** The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of

1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, each University within the System strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them.

Email:

Students are expected to compose professional emails if contacting the instructor. Please allow at least two business days for a professional response from your instructor.

Academic Honesty

All UHCL students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UHCL catalog and the Student Life Handbook for the University Academic Honesty Policy. Plagiarism, that is, using research without citations, or a created product without crediting the source, will result in a grade penalty or failure of the course.

Faculty Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation used by the University to monitor the quality of the instruction. You should take this evaluation seriously and answer each item to the best of your ability since the cumulative results are important to the University and to me. The confidentiality of your responses is protected: you submit your evaluation anonymously and I will receive the summary of the evaluations only after your final grades for the course have been submitted.

Fall 2016 ***Schedule subject to change***

8/30 T- Syllabus

9/1 Th- The Branches of Ethics and the Need for Responsibility, read (Neher) 15-30, (Neher) 36-56

9/6 T- cont'd, read (Neher) 59-79

9/8 Th- Moral Reasoning, read (Neher) 190-192

9/13 T- The Social Contract, read **Locke article**, read **Rawls article**

9/15 Th- cont'd

9/20 T- Privacy, confidentiality, and repercussions, read (Neher) 149-153 and (Neher) 268-270 and (Neher) 290-300

9/22 Th- cont'd, **case study #1**

9/27 T- review

9/29 Th- **Ethics Exam 1**

10/4 T- Conflict of interest

10/6 Th- **case study #2**

10/11 T- Open Forums and the Public Sphere, read **Habermas article**

10/13 Th- Social Media and Participation Fetishism in a Digital Age

10/18 T- cont'd, **case study #3**

10/20 Th- Communication and children

10/25 T- cont'd, **case study #4**

10/27 Th- Explicit material, art, and religious structure

11/1 T- cont'd, **case study #5**

11/3 Th- review

11/8 T- **Ethics Exam 2**

11/10 Th- Ideology and the use of truth when appealing to the masses (Neher) 198-208 and (Neher) 211-217

11/15 T- cont'd, **case study #6**

11/17 Th- The Ethics of advertising and exploitation, read (Neher) 217-219 and **Debord article**

11/22 T- cont'd

11/24 Th- *No Class, Thanksgiving*

11/29 T- cont'd, **case study #7**

12/1 Th- Stereotypes and communication, read (Neher) 209-211

12/6 T- cont'd

12/8 Th- review, **Case Study Paper due**

Ethics Exam 3: Th 12/15