

ETHICS & COMMUNICATION
COMM 215 - 201
Spring Semester 2019
Monday 4:15 – 6:45 p.m.
School of COMM, 51 E. Pearson, Room 013

Instructor: Professor Alyssa Burns

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Course overview:

All professions, particularly in the field of communications, face ethical dilemmas on a daily basis. Controversy itself is nothing new; we've been grappling with right and wrong since the beginning of time. But the methods in which the information is imparted are not always clear cut. Today's decision makers and communicators face continuous challenges on how to gather the facts, how to determine the legitimacy of sources, and how to produce and write the stories, while making certain they are adhering to their companies' own internal rules and regulations. Sometimes reporters themselves become the story—for better or worse—and must address the ensuing consequences. Companies and organizations face the challenge of protecting themselves in crises and communicating in an honest manner, both internally and externally. The legitimacy of social media continues to have a major impact and has posed even more challenges. We will investigate the growing problem of "fake news" and its impact on both journalism and the public. The bottom line in today's world: Public vs. private no longer exists and everything is on the record.

I will be bringing in Guest Speakers throughout the semester, and will let you know who will be speaking and when.

Course purpose and learning outcomes:

Together, we will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of ethical and moral principles
- Connect those principles to personal and professional decision-making
- Develop a process for recognizing, addressing and resolving ethical challenges

Texts:

- Book: *Media Ethics at Work: True Stories from Young Professionals* by Lee Anne Peck and Guy S. Reel
- News media: Be a student of current events and stories involving media criticism
- Other readings as assigned in this syllabus

Expectations:

Attendance: Show up when the class starts; stay until we're finished. Regular attendance is critical and will affect your grade. (I will take attendance at each class, noting if you're on time, or if you're late.)

Participation: Offer your ideas, ask questions and participate in class discussions. On team assignments, be a full participant. Team members will do peer evaluations which affect each person's grade.

Work ethic: Arrive prepared, meet deadlines, participate and have fun learning.

Technology: Cell phones are to be turned off and be put away during class. You can use your laptop for notes during lectures, but not to browse email, Twitter or FB.

Spelling, grammar and writing skills: All are important and will affect your grade. Don't hesitate to use the Loyola Writing Center <http://www.luc.edu/writing/> to help improve your work. Also, look at the *AP Stylebook*.

Research and reasoning: Valid, research-based sourcing matters. We'll share opinions in class, but opinions without strong supporting data hold significantly less weight.

Trust: Respect for each other form the foundation of our robust discussions.

Grades and How They're Earned:

Your grade is determined by these assignments. Note the maximum point value for each.

- Class Attendance and Participation (individual and team) - 200 points
- "My Code of Ethics" assignment - 150 points
- Team Project - 200 points
- Bias and Fallacy Forum Presentation - 150 points
- Final Paper: Ethical Case Study - 300 points
- Total points: 1,000

The maximum number of points available is 1,000, which is an A.

Grade scale:

- 1,000-930 = A
- 929-900 = A-
- 899-870 = B+
- 869-830 = B
- 829-800 = B-
- 799-770 = C+
- 769-730 = C
- 729-700 = C-
- 699-670 = D+
- 669-630 = D
- Below 629 = F

Deadlines and Submitting Assignments:

Don't miss a deadline. It will affect your grade. Assignments are due at the beginning of class via the Sakai site, or, if instructed by me, in stapled hard copy format brought to class.

Teamwork Info:

The class will work in teams for two different responsibilities:

1. The Team Project, described in your Assignments.
2. Chapter Conversations. Each team will take a turn leading the class in a conversation about a chapter from the textbook *Media Ethics at Work*.

The Teams

Team One: Emma Boland, Sienna Cruz, Adam Klepp, Lindsay Nolden, Rachel Siegel

Team Two: Sydney Burlew, Sophia Dellapenna, Charlotte Larson, Mary Poulos, Andrew Taylor

Team Three: Isabella Buschette, Michael Garcia, Annaclaire Lonsway, Kylie Richards, Alexandra Tzougros

Team Four: Jared Capuson, Ali Gornbein, Matthew Mata, Gabriela Rojas, Gabriela Valdano

Team Five: Anthony Colon, Nisa Hussain, Lisa McAuliffe, Anna Rossa, Jaileen Villarreal

Team Six: Savanah Cruz, Danielle Kaply, Honour Mullaney, Christopher Shafer, Hallie Williams

Class Assignments

#1 – Team Chapter Conversations: *Media Ethics at Work*

Team One: February 4 – Chapter 8

Team Two: February 11 – Chapter 3

Team Three: February 18 – Chapter 17

Team Four: February 25 – Chapter 15

Team Five: April 8 – Chapter 9

Team Six: April 22– Chapter 24

Each team will take a turn leading the class in conversation about a chapter from *Media Ethics at Work*.

It is your responsibility to be aware of your Chapter Conversation assignment and to come to class prepared — as a team — to lead the conversation. Preparation will involve teamwork in advance of the class. How you meet or communicate is your choice, but preparation is essential. You are welcome to use questions from the chapter summary. However, I strongly encourage you to formulate additional questions of your own as well, and I will be looking for that initiative.

Team members will also complete a team evaluation form, in which they provide feedback on the quality of each of their teammates' participation. This evaluation will be factored into every student's grade for the assignment.

You will evaluate yourself and your teammates on these standards:

Work Ethic:

Took an active part in planning and preparing the work, offered ideas and solutions, met deadlines, kept commitments, remained in touch and accountable, did a fair share of the work.

Work Quality:

Work was accurate, reflected research and preparation, if written, was well done, if other forms (video, visuals, etc,) used, they were well crafted. Contributions needed minimal improvement.

Collaboration:

Interactions with team members were respectful, positive and helpful. When pointing out problems, offered solutions. When ideas differed, looked for common ground. Was truthful and tactful.

#2 – My Code of Ethics

Due Monday, January 28

- Submit the paper before 4:15 on Monday, January 28 via Sakai.
- Bring your "My Code of Ethics" guiding quote to class on Monday, January 28. Everyone will share his/her guiding quote with the class and explain how and why you chose it.

Read *Peck and Reel*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Think about the ethical principles put forward by classic thinkers in these chapters. Think about yourself and what you stand for. Think about how you commit to living those values, both personally today and professionally in your future career. Think about how they influence your decisions and actions.

Write your own code of ethics. Here's a framework for you to follow:

1. These are my ethical principles: You should list at least six (6) guiding principles.

These are general statements about values.

Example: I believe honesty should guide my interactions with others. I believe empathy is essential to building positive relationships. I am committed to social justice.

Later in the paper, you will list what your principles look like in action – as behaviors.

2. These ethical thinkers influenced my code of ethics: Identify at least three (3) thinkers and describe how their philosophies influence your personal code.

Example: I subscribe to Immanuel Kant's belief in the categorical imperative: that we should act as though our behaviors are universal.

3. These are my ten commitments: Note that these are behaviors. List ten (10) actions you will take in your personal, academic and professional life that demonstrate how you live your principles.

Example: I will never intentionally deceive others. I will never present the work of others as my own. I will speak up when I observe discrimination.

4. This quote will guide me. For the finish of this paper, identify a quote that inspires and guides you, citing the source. Note: There are lots of quotes floating around out there that are misattributed. Verify the authenticity and authorship of your guiding quote.

#3 – Team Project: Designing an Ethical Event on a Critical Topic: Gun Violence

Due Monday, March 25

The project scenario: You are responsible for creating a one-day educational program, the focus of which is gun violence. As the planners, you have many decisions to make – and each should be made from a strong ethical foundation. Among your challenges:

1. What will you call the event, and why?
2. What do you want the outcome of the day to be?
3. What type of sessions will you include in the event?
4. Who will you invite as speakers in each of various sessions – and why?
5. Where will you hold the event, and why?
6. Will you publicize the event in advance? Why and how?
7. How will you handle security for the event?
8. You must raise \$6,000 to cover expenses related to the event. How will you determine which donors are acceptable as partners and which aren't? What will and what won't your donors get in exchange for their generosity?
9. Will your event be open to the media? Why or why not?
10. What ethical principles will guide all of your decisions?

This Assignment requires your team to create two things:

1. THE PLAN: A written paper that answers each of the above questions in detail.

- The paper should take the form of a plan, and should be minimum of four (4) pages, which will be turned in to me in hard copy in class.
- The paper must represent the work of your full team, with everyone contributing.

2. THE PRESENTATION: A PowerPoint presentation that you will show to the class. Assume that you are visiting the class to encourage us to attend your event.

- This preview should be informational as well as promotional. Be prepared to answer questions from the class.
- The presentation must represent the work of your full team, with everyone contributing.
- Each team will be allotted 15 minutes for their presentation, including questions from the class.
- Be prepared to answer questions about the ethical decisions that went into creating your event.
- Provide a copy of your presentation to me in class – either hard copy PDF, flash drive with content, or link to site.

Teams will also complete a peer evaluation form, to provide feedback on the quality of their teammates' participation. (See page 3 for a description of this evaluation form.)

#4 – Bias and Fallacy Forum Presentation

Due Monday, April 15 for class presentation

Select one cognitive bias or logical fallacy. Become an expert on it.

- **Create a three (3) minute presentation** that teaches the rest of us how to spot a bias or fallacy (using at least one real world example). Explain why it can interfere with good ethical decision-making, and offer insight on what to do to mitigate against it in ourselves and others.
- **Use the format of your choice:** a paper, an essay, a video, a PowerPoint, a poem, a song, a rap or a skit.
- **Whatever format you choose, you must create a hard copy version of it to submit to me.** PowerPoints should be turned into PDF files for hard copies. Videos can be turned in via a flash drive or a link to the original if it is on YouTube, etc. Skits should have a script; songs or raps should have a written version.

Resources:

A good source is Business Insider: “20 Cognitive Biases That Screw Up Your Decisions,” by Samantha Lee and Shana Lebowitz: <https://www.businessinsider.com/cognitive-biases-that-affect-decisions-2015-8>

There are many others, and you are welcome to go beyond what I’ve suggested. I encourage you to do so and will reward the initiative as I grade.

#5 - Final Project Paper: Ethical Case Study

Submit your idea to me by Monday, April 1

Paper is due Monday, April 29, before 6:45pm via Sakai

Instead of a final exam, you will demonstrate what you’ve learned this semester by analyzing a real-world ethical challenge in media. The more recent the case, the better.

Your paper’s structure should be as follows:

1. Introduce your case. Title it – and describe the event or issue you are going to explore.

Example: Plagiarism at the Podium: It was to have been a key moment of the Republican National Convention. Melania Trump delivered a speech designed to provide personal insights into her life and her husband. But shortly after she delivered it, an unemployed journalist tweeted out the observation that part of the speech may have been plagiarized from Michelle Obama. What followed was an adventure in ethics.

2. After describing the situation in detail, indicate the ethical challenges involved.

Example: The story of Melania Trump’s speech raises key ethical issues: The problem of plagiarism, the veracity of the Trump communication team’s responses, the quality of the media coverage of the event and transparency as a value.

3. After listing the ethical challenges, describe each and how it was handled, for better or worse.

Cite the opinions of others who have weighed in on the situation, if they exist.

Example: Notre Dame University professor Susan Blum, an expert on plagiarism, told the Christian Science Monitor....

4. Add your own evaluation of the situation.

Example: This appeared to be a classic case of carelessness that resulted in an ethical lapse.

5. Suggest other alternatives if you are describing flawed decision-making or, if the decision-making was done effectively, outline what contributed to the effectiveness.

Example: The Trump campaign could have done several things differently. First, there should have been a stronger system in place for vetting all speeches before they were delivered....

6. Identify the key lessons for producers and consumers of content that can be learned from this case study.

Example: What are the key takeaways from this case for all of us? It would be easy to say, don't plagiarize. But it's clear that we need to do more; better note-taking, record keeping and even cross checking our own work. We've also learned that social media allows the world to crowd source and publicize our mistakes immediately.

This paper needs to be a minimum of 5 pages, double-spaced, using regular (12 point) font. Use multiple sources and cite them with footnotes. Submit it via Sakai.

Class Schedule

Here's a look at the topics we'll cover along with related assignments. Note: The class may shift focus in response to current events and the availability of guest speakers. Expect changes. *I will always let you know beforehand if the schedule changes.*

Week 1 – January 14: Who Are We and What Do We Stand For?

Our focus will be the ethical foundations of our lives and of this class. We'll look inward and at the weeks ahead. We'll start building this class as a community of learners who are committed to critical thinking and a clear process for making ethical decisions as people who consume, create and act upon information in its many forms. We will also talk about the importance of writing to your academic and professional success. You're welcome to ask me anything as we get to know each other.

Week 2 – January 21: Martin Luther King Day – No Class

Assignments for next class:

- Read Media Ethics Chapters 1 & 2.
- Write and submit your Assignment: #1 - My Code of Ethics via Sakai before 4:15pm Monday, January 28.
- Bring your selected quote to present to class on Monday, January 28.

Week 3 – January 28: The Ethics of Corporate Communication – The View from Both Sides, and, The Quotes that Guide Us

Businesses have always had an interest in getting their messages out, via advertising, marketing and corporate communications. Today, social media enhances all of those capabilities. What are the most important ethical standards for those who communicate on behalf of private industry, in good times and bad? What skills are essential and what values should guide us?

Class members will also share their Guiding Quotes with the class, with a brief explanation of their choice.

Assignments for next week:

- Read Media Ethics Chapter 8. Pay special attention to the "Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism" section.
- Read: Society of Professional Journalists on Plagiarism: <http://www.spj.org/ethics-papers-plagiarism.asp>

Week 4 – February 4: Plagiarism and Giving Credit Where It is Due

And: Chapter Conversation – Chapter 8, Led by Team One

Today, anyone can create and publish content. It can be completely original or derivative of the work of others. But when does content based on materials already developed by others cross the line into plagiarism? How can plagiarism be prevented and what should the consequences for a plagiarist and that individual's employer – or academic institution?

Chapter conversation, led by Team One: Media Ethics Chapter 8: "The Importance of Fact-Checking: The Case of the Self-Plagiarist."

Assignments for next week:

- Read: National Press Photographers Association Code of Ethics: https://nppa.org/code_of_ethics
- Read: Chapter 3, Media Ethics

Week 5 – February 11: The Ethics of Visual Imagery

And: Chapter Conversation, Chapter 3, led by Team Two

Visual images can be powerful, creative – and can also be unethical. What do professional communicators, from visual journalists to marketing pros to social media users need to know about the ethical use of images?

Chapter conversation, led by Team Two: Media Ethics Chapter 3: "Confronting Others' Violations: The Case of the Manipulated Photo."

Week 6 – February 18: The Ethics of Breaking News

And: Chapter Conversation – Chapter 17, Led by Team Three

When the story is big and happens without warning, accuracy and speed are critical. People want to know what's happening as soon as possible. They turn to whatever medium serves them best, from traditional to social – and often all of the above. Breaking news is littered with ethical land mines. And today, any one of us can broadcast an event as it happens, using social media.

Chapter conversation, led by Team Three: Media Ethics Chapter 17: "Contacting the Family of a Killer: The Case of the Sensitive Reporter."

Assignments for next week:

- Read: Emily Bell: "Facebook is Eating the World" - Columbia Journalism Review http://www.cjr.org/analysis/facebook_and_media.php
- Read: NPR Ethics Handbook: Social Media: <http://ethics.npr.org/tag/social-media/>
- Read: Chapter 15, Media Ethics

Week 7 – February 25: Ethics in a Digital World

And: Chapter Conversation, Chapter 15, Led by Team Four

Chapter conversation, led by Team Four: Media Ethics Chapter 15: "Source Remorse: The Case of the Requests to 'Unpublish.'"

Week 8 – March 4: NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

Week 9 – March 11: The Ethics of Innovation

Whatever form of communication you choose – it is changing as we speak. Formats, products, platforms, and interactions with users are all taking new forms. They must, in order to survive. Organizations engage in brainstorming to stay competitive, they engage in "empathy interviews" to find out what problems consumers want solved. And with all this comes risk, not just of failure, but also of making bad ethical decisions. This session is going to help you think like an ethical innovator.

Assignments for next week:

- Read: “Four Ways Newsrooms Can Address a Lack of Diversity” – Columbia Journalism Review: http://www.cjr.org/b-roll/4_ways_newsrooms_can_address_a_lack_of_diversity.php
- Check out the Diversity Style Guide. Make sure you’ve seen enough of it to discuss. <http://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>

Week 10 – March 18: Why Ethics and Diversity Are Inseparable

To be an effective and ethical communicator, you have to present a complete picture. But some people are left out of the picture, often because there’s no one like them in the room when decisions are made about content. It’s how advertisements, news stories, committees, panels and programs lose credibility. They don’t reflect reality – and worse, can misinform.

Assignment for next week:

- Next week is the Team Project Presentation session. Teams, complete your paper and presentations. Be ready to answer questions about the event and the ethical decisions your team made in the process of developing it. Bring the paper, the presentation, and your team member evaluations to class to turn in to me.

Week 11 – March 25: Team Project Presentations Designing an Ethical Event on a Critical Topic: Gun Violence

Teams will share their presentations with the class and engage in a question and answer session about their event and the ethical decisions involved in developing it.

Assignments for next week:

- Read: Public Relations Society of America Member Code of Ethics: <https://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/ethics/codeenglish/#.VpFpuZMrJ-U>

Week 12 – April 1: Ethics of Non-Profit and Government Communications

When your role is to represent the best interests of your organization, what ethical obligations do you have? Who are your primary stakeholders? How do you balance transparency with privacy or other values such as safety or business success?

Assignments for next week:

- Read: Chapter 9, Media Ethics.

Week 13 – April 8: The Ethics of Investigative Journalism

And: Chapter Conversation, Chapter 9, led by Team Five

Watchdog journalism is essential to an informed and free society. It is also expensive, risky and replete with ethical land mines: among them are anonymous sources, hidden cameras, leaked documents, data analysis and economic pressures. That’s why it must be practiced by journalists of highest integrity, who have a process for handling the many ethical challenges they face.

- Read: Global Investigative Journalism Network, Bruno Ingemann & Nils Mulvad, “25 Tips for Everyday Digging.” <http://gijn.org/2016/05/06/25-tips-for-everyday-digging/>

Chapter conversation, led by Team Five: Media Ethics Chapter 9: “Seeking Answers for Students: The Case of the Undercover Reporter.”

Assignments for next week:

- Complete your Bias & Fallacy presentation. Bring a hard copy to class.
- Final Paper alert: Due before 6:45pm Monday, April 29.

Week 14 – April 15: Bias and Fallacy Forum Presentations

Assignments for next week:

- Read: Chapter 24, Media Ethics.
- Additional reading to be determined.

Week 15 – April 22: Injustice in Our Daily Lives: How Leaders Respond

And: Chapter Conversation, Chapter 24, Led by Team Six

When faced with racism, sexism, harassment, bullying or other individual or systematic injustice, how do ethical individuals respond? What is our ethical responsibility to challenge the wrong, even in the face of risk?

Chapter conversation, led by Team Six: Media Ethics Chapter 24: “The Case of the Client with a Hidden Agenda.”

Week 16 –April 29: Final Exam week

Final papers due before 6:45pm today

Academic Integrity

An ethics class should be the last place any of us needs to be concerned about personal and academic integrity.

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 (e.g., 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

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY CENTER (SAC)

If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact the SAC as soon as possible. Formal arrangements must be made through the office before course adjustments can be made. Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SAC website: <https://luc.edu/sac/sacstudents/>.