

COMM 215 - 201 Ethics & Communication

Bastiaan Vanacker

CLC 421

Mon: 4:15-6:45 p.m.

Office Hours: Monday: 3:00-4:00 p.m. - Tuesday: 10:00-12:00 p.m.

Email: bvanacker@luc.edu

Cell Phone: 312-560-4392

Twitter: @bas_vanacker

Class hashtag: #com282

Text

Book: *Media Ethics at Work: True Stories from Young Professionals – 2nd Edition* by Lee Anne Peck and Guy S. Reel (**Make certain you get the 2nd edition.**)

Other readings will be made available under the “lessons” tab of our Sakai site.

Objectives of the course

This course explores various approaches to ethical decision-making and applies that process to diverse aspects of every day communication in a professional and non-professional setting. This class not only seeks to prepare future media professionals, but also tries to increase media literacy and critical awareness with students who might not pursue a career in media. Students learn to discern a wide variety of ethical issues concerning communication behavior, apply systematic ethical analysis to various communication situations, and clearly explain their analyses.

In order to this, the course text is designed to accomplish five objectives with students.

1. Recognizing moral issues
2. Developing analytical skills
3. Tolerating and resisting disagreement and ambiguity
4. Stimulating moral imagination
5. Eliciting a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility

While recognizing the importance of consistently applying abstract principles to specific cases in applied ethics (deductive approach), I also am a strong believer in a bottom-up (inductive approach) in developing one’s ethical decision making skills. This class will therefore also make ample use of the method of casuistry, a case-based approach to ethics in which ethical principles and values are not only applied to specific cases, but are generated by them. Contrasting and comparing one’s ethical thinking in similar cases is instrumental in this endeavor.

This class is not about learning what is wrong and right in the communicative setting, but developing skills to figure this out by yourself. Therefore, lecture in this class will be limited to introducing concepts and factual information about the topics we study. The success of this class therefore largely depends on students' input. Students should come to class prepared and expect to contribute.

Expectations

Attendance

Show up when the class starts; stay until we're finished. Regular attendance is critical and will affect your participation. One unexcused absence won't move the needle much, but you can expect your participation grade to drop by a grade for every unexcused absence after that. You also will not be able to make missed assignments.

Excused Absences

Only in cases of a **documented** illness, family emergency, involvement with an official Loyola activity (such as a sport game) or other extenuating circumstances will a student be excused from attending class without repercussions. It is the student's obligation to provide me with documentation that shows (s)he was unable to attend class. If you will miss class because of one of the above reasons, please notify me in advance. If you think that you have another important obligation that should excuse you from coming to class not covered under this policy, contact me **BEFOREHAND** and see if you can be excused from class. Otherwise, your absence will be unexcused (see above in "attendance" for my policy on unexcused absences)

Top Hat

This class will use Top Hat, the class response software adopted by Loyola Chicago. You are responsible for signing up for the service and come to class with a tablet, smart phone, or laptop. I recommend you download the Top Hat app on these devices. This software's prime purpose is to increase the interactivity of the class and enable everyone to contribute. Though at times, graded questions will also be administered through Top Hat. Top Hat will also be used to take attendance. If you are in class but do not have access to a connected device, let me know beforehand.

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

Technology: Bring your digital devices to class – but use them only for assigned work during the class time. Save the personal use for breaks or emergencies.

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.

Readings: You need to do your readings before coming to class. Not doing so will result in low participation and quiz grades.

Deadlines: In the interest of reducing printing costs and the environment, you can turn in papers electronically. Papers turned in fewer than 24 hours late will incur a 20% penalty. After that, I will no longer accept papers.

Students with disabilities

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course contents and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Loyola's Policy on Academic Dishonesty

The basic commitment of a university is to search for and to communicate the truth as it is honestly perceived. The university could not accomplish its purpose in the absence of this demanding standard. To the extent that this standard is respected, a genuine learning community can exist. Students of this university are called upon to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Plagiarism is a serious form of violation of this standard. Plagiarism is the appropriation for gain of ideas, language, or work of another without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the deliberate taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources.

The faculty and administration of Loyola University Chicago wish to make it clear that the following acts are regarded as serious violations of personal honesty and the academic ideal that binds the university into a learning community:

Submitting as one's own:

1. Material copied from a published source: print, internet, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.
2. Another person's unpublished work or examination material.
3. Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit.
4. Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The critical issue is to give proper recognition to other sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty.

Plagiarism on the part of a student in academic work or dishonest examination behavior will result minimally in the instructor assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. In addition, all instances of academic dishonesty must be reported to the chairperson of the department involved. The chairperson may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending upon the seriousness of the misconduct.

Academic cheating is another serious act that violates academic integrity. Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher; providing information to or obtaining information from another student during the examination; attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted; and falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences all are violations of the integrity and honesty standards of the examination process.

In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty across departments, the academic dean of the student's college may convene a hearing board. Students retain the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the academic dean of the college in which they are registered. The decision of the dean is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean

Graded Activities

Final exam: 20%

A week after the final class, we will have a final exam. This exam will consist of two portions:

1. Closed book portion in which your factual knowledge of course concepts, readings and discussions will be tested. (50%)
2. Take home portion in which you will be asked to analyze an ethical dilemma applying insights you gathered over the semester. (50%)

Students have the options to forego the closed-book part of the exam and apply their in-class assignments and quizzes grade to this part of the exam.

Philosophy test: 5 %

It is important in this class that you are familiar with the main philosophical orientations towards ethics. On September 17, there will be a small test on the ethical theories covered thus far.

Case discussion: 10 %

For eight weeks during the semester, the last 30 minutes of class will be devoted to further exploring a case from the textbook. Each week, one group will lead this discussion.

Group 8: September 17– Chapter 3 “The Manipulated Photo.”

Group 7: September 24 – Chapter 23 “The Web Analytics’ Influence.”

Group 6: October 1–Chapter 16 “Sins of Omission.”

Group 5: October 15- Chapter 9 “Seeking Answers for Students.”

Group 4: October 22 – Chapter 26 “Telling the Story of the Other.”

Group 3: October 29 – Chapter 4 “Political Espionage or politics as usual?”

Group 2: November 5 – Chapter 18 “Source Remorse.”

Group 1: November 12 – Chapter 11 “The Case of the Disagreeing Sources.”

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 should 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.

Ethics bulletin: 10 %

Once in this semester, your group will be responsible for presenting an ethics bulletin to the class.

Ethics debate: 15%

Towards the end of the semester, you and your group will debate another group on a communication ethics topic. You will also write a group paper.

Personal ethical dilemma paper: 10%

By the second class, you will be required to write a personal ethical dilemma paper.

Participation: 15%

Offer your ideas, question and challenge. Demonstrate your attention to each week’s concepts via the required “5 Key Takeaways” report you turn in before leaving each class. On team assignments, be a full participant. Team members will do peer evaluations which affect each person’s grade. Other factors that can affect your grade positively:

- Asking relevant questions, offering insights, contributing to class discussions, bringing in examples, being an active listener and participant, applying course concepts to discussion...
- Participate in a thoughtful manner with questions asked over Top Hat

Factors that will affect your grade negatively

- Not being able to answer a basic question about the readings
- Not respecting another person's opinion or viewpoint
- Falling asleep during class time
- "Heels in the sand" approach
- Repeatedly arriving late
- Leave early without previously informing me
- Not answering questions asked via Top Hat

Quizzes and in-class assignments: 15 %

Throughout the semester, you will be taking in class quizzes on the readings and do in-class assignments applying course concepts. Do not blow these off. They are an important part of your grade and can be applied to (part of) your final exam grade.

Grading scale

A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, F, WF are assigned the following credit points for purposes of grade point average (GPA) calculations: A = 4.0; A- = 3.67; B+ = 3.33; B = 3.00; B- = 2.67; C+ = 2.33; C = 2.00; C- = 1.67; D+ = 1.33; D = 1.00; F = 0; WF = 0.

100 - 93%	A
93 - 90%	A-
90 - 88%	B+
88 - 83%	B
83 - 80%	B-
80 - 78%	C+
78 - 73%	C
73 - 70%	C-
70 - 68%	D+
68 - 63%	D
63 - 60%	D-
below 60%	F

Date	Reading	Tests assignments	Ethics bulletin	Case discussion	Ethics debate
August 27 Introduction					
Sept. 3 NO CLASS					
Sept. 10 Foundation	Chapters 1 and 2, 27 and 20	Ethical dilemma paper			
Sept. 17 Visual Ethics	Case 17 and 3. Online readings	Philosophy test	Group 1	Group 8	
Sept. 24 Big Data, algorithms and digital ethics	Case 23. Online readings.		Group 2	Group 7	
Oct. 1 Deception in advertising and PR	Case 6 and 16. Online readings.		Group 3	Group 6	
Oct. 8 NO CLASS					
Oct. 15 Deception in journalism and documentary	Case 9. Online readings.		Group 4	Group 5	
Oct. 22 Dealing with vulnerable populations	Case 12, 13, 15, and 26.		Group 5	Group 4	
Oct 29 : Ethical issues in advocacy	Case 4 and 5. Online readings.		Group 6	Group 3	
Nov. 5 Privacy and the right to be forgotten	Case 14, 18, and 25. Online readings.		Group 7	Group 2	
Nov. 12 Fake news and accuracy	Case 8 and 11. Online readings.		Group 8	Group 1	
Nov. 19 The limits of free speech	Case 10. Online readings.				Group 4 v. 5

November 26. Ethics in an age of division	Online readings.				Group 1 v. 8
Dec. 3: Justice and fairness	Case 7, 19, 21, 24.				Group 2 . v. 7 and group 3 v. 6
December 10		Final exam			