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"Nothing terrible will happen to you as long as you really are a good and moral person, training yourself in the exercise of virtue."

— Socrates

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**CST 210-01: Communication Ethics**  
**Spring 2008**  
**Curry 237**  
**MW 2:00-3:15 p.m.**

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**Professor:** Dr. Christopher Poulos

**Office:** Ferguson Building #107

**Office Hours:** Thursday 4:00-5:20 and by appointment

**Contact:** cnpoulos@uncg.edu; 336.686.2514 (office); 336.316.1010 (home)

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**Communication Studies Department Mission**

We research, teach, and practice communication to cultivate the ethical voices of people that speak in critical, constructive, and transformative ways to identities, relationships, and communities.

Philosophy of Scholarship: We believe that communication is formative and foundational to human identities, relationships, and communities--and that ethical and strategically effective communication can be the means of critiquing, constructing, and transforming identities, relationships, and communities. We engage in communication scholarship in the form of research, teaching, and service that:

- Integrates dialogue and other approaches to communication as the foundation for scholarly inquiry and application to the world
- Cultivates diversity and respect for differences
- Promotes change that leads to more democratic, just, and peaceful relationships and communities
- Engages creative partnerships of faculty, students, and other stakeholders in addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities for improving communication

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**Course Description**

This course is designed to help students identify, understand, and address the ethical dimensions of strategic, persuasive, relational, and dialogic communication patterns in public, professional, interpersonal, and family life contexts. The course is designed to assist you in critically analyzing how ethics and communication intersect in everyday life. The emphasis of our discussions and your assignments will be in exploring your role as a functioning human in society and your responsibility for affecting the social condition through ethical communication. We will read a variety of perspectives upon which ethical communication standards may be based. The required texts do not suggest

universal answers or standards, nor do they advocate a relativistic notion of ethics. In this course, we will interrogate communication ethics as a response and responsibility in interaction, paying particular attention to the topics of compassion, conscience, service, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We will identify the questions that ethical communication raises as a starting point for practical decision-making that promotes collaboration and cooperation.

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### Course Purpose

The purpose of this 200-level course is to help you build, analyze, interpret, and respond to ethical challenges as they are presented in everyday private and public life, to help you to become a fully functioning citizen in this multicultural society, and to develop your skills as an ethical communicator.

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### Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, you will have acquired useful knowledge about the significant intersections between the strategic, relational, and ethical uses of communication patterns that seek to engage, inform, and persuade. From this knowledge, you will be able to:

1. Identify the potential ethical dimensions and practices within several communication contexts: interpersonal, organizational, and public;
2. Reflect on and refine your own bases for evaluating and judging the ethical dimensions of communication in a personal code of communication ethics;
3. Formulate criteria for communicative action that can withstand scrutiny from alternative perspectives;
4. Develop speaking skills that are sensitive to relevant audience dispositions, beliefs, and alternative perspectives on topics related to communal life;
5. Build and maintain your own ethical voice; and
6. Write, speak, respond, and decide critically and creatively when facing ethical challenges.

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### Course Requirements

- **READING/PREPARATION:** Reading is an **essential** component of this course. **YOU MUST READ IN ORDER TO SUCCEED!** The readings will form the springboard for our class dialogues. All reading **MUST** be completed prior to the day for which it is assigned on the syllabus. Your reading comprehension will be tested in class via directed questioning, and through quizzes, which will be administered at random. **READ AND YOU WILL SUCCEED!**
- **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:**
  - **PARTICIPATION PAYOFFS:** Notice that **20% (200 Points)** of your grade total is for participation. We must all participate actively in class discussions in order to engage in genuine dialogue about communication ethics. Offer your insights, interpretations, ideas, conjectures, critical evaluations, responses to questions, and so on, as

we engage in discussion. Offer relevant examples from daily life, the media, the arts, etc., to spark dialogue; think and respond actively and creatively. By attending class regularly and actively participating, you will not only be better prepared for your writing assignments and for successful completion of this course, you will also help make this course a more valuable and enriching experience for us all!

- **ATTENDANCE PENALTIES**: Since classroom learning is an integral component of this course, **ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY**. You may miss no more than **TWO** class sessions before penalties accrue (your "free skip" days). Each missed class session beyond these two will earn you a penalty of **50 points**. If you do the math, you will realize that this penalty, when combined with missed participation points and missed quizzes, will result in a substantial "ding" to your grade. Do the math before you ditch. The only exceptions to this policy are University-sanctioned "excused absences" (death in the family, fire, flood, famine, pestilence, enrollment in the witness protection program, illness, etc.). You should contact me in advance — or as soon as you know — if you will miss class due to one of these reasons.
- **TARDINESS**: Class begins at 2:00. Arrive on time. To do otherwise is disrespectful and disruptive.
- **IN-CLASS BEHAVIOR**: This is a dialogue-intensive class. Focus is required; distractions disrupt the possibility of full engagement. Please, no cell phones, text messaging, laptop computers, or side conversations, newspapers, lunches or dinners in class. Water bottles with lids are acceptable. **Please arrive on time**, and do not leave the classroom except during our regular breaks. On the first day of class, we will have a discussion about further parameters of in-class conduct.
- **PRESENTATIONS**: *See course schedule for due dates. Be aware that these projects can be time consuming and should be begun early and carefully planned!*
  - Individual Presentation ("My ethical vision"): This is a **five-minute** speech outlining your ethical vision for your future, based on your learning in this course. In this speech, you will offer your own code (credo) of ethics, and outline how you will practice ethics in your life, using a case example to illustrate application of your code. One minute of the allotted five can be used for questions and answers, if desired.
  - Group Presentation (Issues Forum): Your team's task will be to develop a deep and broad-ranging conversation relating ethical concerns to the theme under examination (see course schedule for themes). You must choose two case examples to deal with in the conversation. The first will be from the public sphere (i.e., the wide world of culture/society). Your team will analyze the communication surrounding the case, and develop a sense of the ethical dimensions of the situation, drawing upon class

discussions and readings on ethics. Use reputable news sources from print, internet, television, or radio to explore and develop your sense and understanding of the issue. The second case will be drawn from your own interpersonal experience. Here you will tell the story and then attempt to thoughtfully and creatively apply the principles of communication ethics to the situation at hand. Then, you will engage in a group forum in which you take a stand regarding the communication in the situations under study (i.e., how the communication is ethical, or not, and so on), citing specific evidence as support, and drawing upon the current week's theoretical contributions to our learning to construct an argument. After the forum, your team will facilitate a follow up discussion with the larger class.

- **Essays (Note: All essays should conform to APA guidelines for citations and references, and should be typewritten, carefully proofread/spell-checked, and have normal margins and font):**
  - Essay #1: This is a 4-5 page essay dealing directly either with the reading on acknowledgement (Hyde) or with the readings on dialogic ethics (Makau & Marty; Neher & Sandin). You will: a) Develop a thesis statement regarding the chosen subject matter; b) demonstrate your understanding of the major points of the reading; c) apply the key principles of acknowledgement or dialogic ethics to a specific case from your life; and d) draw conclusions from your understanding and application.
  - Essay # 2: This is a 4-5 page essay dealing directly with one of the following subject areas: 1) our readings and dialogues on religious perspectives on ethics; 2) our readings and dialogues on peace; or 3) our readings and dialogues on another topic of your choice (clear with me first). You will: a) Develop a thesis statement regarding the chosen subject matter; b) demonstrate your understanding of the major points of the reading; c) apply the key principles of the reading to a specific case from your life; and d) draw conclusions from your understanding and application.
  - Essay # 3: This process proceeds in two stages. Stage 1 involves a media fast (i.e., full withdrawal from media influence). Set aside 5 hours in which you will “unplug” from all media influences. This means: No cell or land telephone calls, no computer, no television, no radio, no electronically recorded music, no newspaper or magazines, no reading. You can engage in face-to-face conversation with significant others, but you must spend at least half of this time alone, contemplating communication ethics in your life. No naps; you must be awake during this process! In stage 2, you will craft a 5-page essay exploring the role of self, other, and communication ethics in our

(post)modern world. Your essay should include a reflection on the experience of your “media fast” and demonstrate an understanding of how ethical communication may work to build relationships and communities. Your paper should also be grounded in a major theme developed or discussed during the semester that resonates in your life.

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**Academic Integrity** <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/#one>

Matters of academic integrity are blindingly pertinent in a course on communication ethics! Note: “Academic integrity is founded upon and encompasses the following five values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Supporting and affirming these values is essential to promoting and maintaining a high level of academic integrity. Each member of the academic community must stand accountable for his or her actions. As a result, a community develops in which students learn the responsibilities of citizenship and how to contribute honorably to their professions.”

There is more! Read and acquaint yourself with the student code of conduct and the university’s academic integrity policy. It is your responsibility to know and abide by the academic integrity policy of this university. **You may also be interested in reading this Buddhist Parable on Cheating:** [http://www.buddhanet.net/bt\\_51.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/bt_51.htm)

**Disability** If you have a disability or special need that requires accommodation, please see me privately during office hours, or make an appointment.

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**Important guidelines to remember:**

1. **Show up! Attendance and participation are central to learning in this class!**
2. **Be prepared. The readings are designed to engage your attention and passion. They are important and accessible.**
3. **Do NOT email me your papers. If I printed every paper from every student in every class, I would spend over 3000 minutes per semester just printing them, not to mention paying for ink and paper, and all the glitches that can occur in cyberspace. Bring them when due in hard (paper) copy form!**

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**Your notes:**

**Grading**

Active participation	200 points
Quizzes	100 points
Presentation: My ethical vision	100 points
Issues Forum	100 points
Essay #1	150 points
Essay #2	150 points
Essay #3	200 points
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

**930-1000 points (93%+) = A**

**900-929 (90-92%) = A-**

**870-899 (87-89%) = B+**

**830-869 (83-86%) = B**

**800-829 (80-82%) = B-**

**770-799 (77-79%) = C+**

**730-769 (73-76%) = C**

**700-729 (70-72%) = C-**

**670-699 (67-69%) = D+**

**630-669 (63-66%) = D**

**600-639 (60-62%) = D-**

**Course Materials/Reading**

Neher, W. W. & Sandin, P. J. (2007). *Communicating ethically: Character, duties, consequences, and relationships*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Lama, D. (1999). *Ethics for a new millennium*. New York: Penguin Putnam.

Wiesenthal, S. (1998) *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. NY: Schocken Books.

Various readings on e-reserves

**Your notes:**

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### **Monday, January 14**

*Communication: Strategies, Ethics, Relationships, and Communities*

Activities:

- Introductions and course overview
- Definitions: Communication, ethics, virtue, and happiness...
- The communication diamond

Assignment: Buy course texts; download/print syllabus and e-reserve readings

### **Wednesday, January 16**

Virtue and the Pursuit of Happiness

Read: The Dalai Lama, Preface and Chapter 1 + Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream!" speech: <http://www.uncg.edu/~cnpoulos/cnplkspch.html>

### **Monday, January 21**

NO CLASS...MLK DAY!

### **Wednesday, January 23**

Life as a game? What kind of game? Whose rules apply?

Read: Neher & Sandin, Preface and Chapter 1 + Englehardt, *Introduction to Ethics in Interpersonal Communication* (e-reserves)

### **Monday, January 28**

Is character habit-forming?

Read: Neher & Sandin, Chapter 2

### **Wednesday, January 30**

Universalism and Situational Ethics...

Read: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 3 + Greensboro News & Record: *You look great! Poll finds we frown on lying—but still do it...* (e-reserves)

Issues forum #1: Honesty, dishonesty, and deceit

### **Monday, February 4**

Utilitarianism and Egalitarianism...

Read: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 4

### **Wednesday February 6**

Acknowledgement

Read: Hyde, *Acknowledgement* (Selections on e-reserves)

Dialogue Circle: Acknowledgement

**Monday, February 11**

Dialogic Ethics

Read: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 5 + Makau & Marty, *Ethical and Effective Dialogue* (e-reserves)

**Wednesday, February 13**

Interruption and Story...

Read: Poulos, *Disruption, Silence, and Creation: The Search for Dialogic Civility in the Age of Anxiety* (e-reserves) + The Parable of the Good Samaritan:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+10%3A25-37> + TBA

Dialogue Circle: Interruption and conscience

**Due: Essay #1**

**Monday, February 18**

Contemporary challenges to ethics

Read: Neher & Sandin, Chapter 6

Issues Forum #2: Ethical challenges in today's world

**Wednesday, February 20**

Ethical issues in the public sphere

Read: Neher & Sandin, pp. 133-135 and Chapter 7

**Monday, February 25**

Human rights (universals)

Read: UN Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

Issues Forum #3: Rights and responsibilities

**Wednesday, February 27**

Ethics in postmodernity + A feminist/feminine ethics (challenges revisited)

Read: Bauman, *Moral Responsibilities, Ethical Rules* (e-reserves) + Tong, *Nel Noddings' Relational Ethics* (e-reserves)

**Monday, March 3**

Diversity and intercultural ethics

Read: Neher & Sandin, Chapter 8

Issues Forum #4: Communication ethics in a diverse world

**Wednesday, March 5**

Hate speech...

Read: Fraleigh & Tuman, *Hate Speech* (e-reserves)

Issues Forum #5: The freedom to hate?

**March 10-14, 2008: SPRING BREAK!!!**

**Monday, March 17**

Communicating ethically about disability  
 Read: Neher & Sandin, Chapter 9

**Wednesday, March 19**

Free speech...  
 Read: Fraleigh & Tuman, *An Introduction to the Study of Freedom of Speech* (e-reserves)  
 Dialogue Circle: Free speech?

**EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT: ATTEND AT LEAST ONE HELS EVENT, AND WRITE A REFLECTION ESSAY ON IT (WORTH 25 POINTS)! SEE BOX BELOW!**

<p><b>The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Presents:</b>  <b>THE HARRIET ELLIOTT LECTURE SERIES</b>  <b><i>Why Do You Say That?!#: Challenging Communication to Transform Public Life</i></b>  <b>MARCH 19-20, 2008</b></p>
<p><b>Speakers</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Brenda Allen, Professor and Chair, Department of Communication, University of Colorado at Denver</li> <li>o Thomas K. Nakayama, Professor, Arizona State University</li> <li>o W. Barnett Pearce, Public Dialogue Consortium &amp; Professor, Fielding Graduate University</li> <li>o David Zarefsky, Owen L. Coon Professor of Communication Studies, Northwestern University</li> </ul> <p>Wednesday, March 19 (evening)                  7:00-8:30 pm, Science lecture hall                  David Zarefsky: "Arguing About Values" (Lecture followed by Q&amp;A)</p> <p>March 20, Thursday, all lectures in EUC Auditorium                  9:30-10:45                  Brenda Allen: "Communicating Difference Matters" (Interactive lecture)</p> <p>11:00-12:15                  Tom Nakayama: "Public Deliberation on Race and the Challenges to Transforming Public Life"</p> <p>12:30-1:45                  Lunch break</p> <p>2:00-3:15                  Barnett Pearce: "Transforming Communication about Values, Identity, and Race" (Lecture/workshop format)</p>

**Monday, March 24**

Ethical issues in mass media  
Read: Neher & Sandin, Chapter 10  
Issues Forum #6: Ethics and the media

**Wednesday, March 26**

Peace  
Read: Hanh, *Working for Peace* (from *Being Peace*) + *Quaker Faith and Practice* (e-reserves selections)  
Guest: David Bills from New Garden Friends Meeting: The Quaker Peace Testimony...

**Monday, March 31**

Religious perspectives on ethics  
Read:

- Judaism: The Ten Commandments  
<http://www.crystalinks.com/tencommandments.html>
- Christianity: The Sermon on the Mount  
<http://www.uncg.edu/~cnpoulos/cnp305sermononmount.html>
- Buddhism: The Eightfold Path  
<http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/eightfoldpath.html>
- Islam: Truth, Beauty, and Virtue  
<http://www.islaam.com/Article.aspx?id=565>
- Hinduism: Core Concepts <http://hinduism.iskcon.com/concepts/202.htm>

Activity: Dialogue circle on Ethics, religion, spirit, dialogue

**Wednesday, April 2**

**NO CLASS: READING/WRITING DAY!**

**Monday, April 7**

Ethics in Friendship  
Read: Hardwig, *In Search of an Ethics of Personal Relationships* (e-reserves)  
Activity: Crafting a personal code of ethics  
**Due: Essay #2**

**Wednesday, April 9**

Ethics and happiness (revisited)  
Read: Lama, preface and Chapters 1-5

**Monday, April 14**

Ethics, virtue and restraint  
Read: Lama, Chapters 6-10

**Wednesday, April 16**

Responsibility and commitment  
Levinas on the Other (revisited)

Read: Lama, Chapters 11-16

**Monday, April 21**

Forgiveness

Read: Wiesenthal, pp. 1-54

**Wednesday, April 23**

Forgiveness (again)

Read: Wiesenthal, pp. 54-98

**Monday, April 28**

Presentations: "My ethical vision"

**Wednesday, April 30**

Presentations: "My ethical vision"

**Monday, May 5**

Presentations: "My ethical vision"

+ Hopes and dreams, openings and closures, evaluation, etc.

**Monday, May 12: Your final reflective essay (Essay #3) is due. Turn in to Department of Communication Studies administrative assistant in Ferguson #103 by 4:00 p.m.**