

Communication Ethics: CST 210S

Fall 2006

Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 – 10:45 a.m. Curry Building 312

Instructor: Dr. Spoma Jovanovic
Office: Ferguson 108
Phone: 336.334.3842
Email: spomajovanovic@uncg.edu
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Communication Studies Program Mission Statement

We teach students the study of the strategic and ethical uses of communication to build relationships and communities.

Course Overview

This course is designed to assist you in critically analyzing how ethics and communication intersect in contemporary public issues. The emphasis of our discussions and your assignments will be in exploring the role of the citizen in affecting the social condition through ethical communication. Toward that end, 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. Rather, in this course, we will interrogate communication ethics as a response and responsibility in interaction, paying particular attention to the topics of service, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In so doing, we will identify the questions that ethical communication raises as a starting point for practical decision making that promotes collaboration and cooperation.

Because this class is a *speaking intensive course*, you will have multiple opportunities to hone your oral skills. We'll discuss topical issues facing society today. Class time will involve extensive discussion, exercises, and feedback forums to help you improve your public voice.

My expectation is that you will be in attendance at every class. In the event that you are absent, you are still responsible for the information and materials discussed that day, as well as for turning in all assignments due.

Course Objectives

1. **Identify ethical practices in communication** in various contexts--interpersonal, organizational, and public.
2. Reflect on and refine your bases for **evaluating and judging ethical communication**.
3. Formulate **criteria for communicative action** that can withstand scrutiny from alternative perspectives.

Required Books

Neher, W. W. and P. J. Sandin. (2007). *Communicating ethically: Character, duties, consequences, and relationships*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 0-205-39363-2.

Lama, D. (1999). *Ethics for a new millennium*. New York: Penguin Putnam. ISBN: 1-57322-883-4.

Blackboard Accessible Readings

Course Requirements & Grading

I will use the definitions from the UNCG Undergraduate Bulletin in evaluating your work. As applied to this course, to receive an A you will need to: demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the readings and discussion; be able to apply that knowledge to your assignments; address critical questions and issues related to the reading topics; and demonstrate original, creative thought in written and oral forms.

Classroom Learning

Participation in daily discussions and activities	20%
Public Issue & Service Assignments	30%
Quizzes	20%
Final Project Proposal and Paper	30%

Grade Scale

A=90-100%; B=80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=below 60%

Course Policies and Expectations

Classroom Learning

1. Part of your grade will reflect the degree to which you contribute consistently, actively, and substantively during class. Thoughtful questions and respectful commentary on another's perspective are encouraged to demonstrate excellent participation. In class discussions reflect learning, thus you need to be present in order to benefit from speaking your ideas and responding to others. Absences, after the third one, will negatively affect your grade. **If you miss more than 3 classes, your course grade will be lowered ONE FULL LETTER GRADE for each additional day you are absent.** For example, if you are absent 4 days the highest grade you can achieve is a B. If you miss 5 classes, at best, you will receive a C (assuming all your work is at an A level). If your situation is such that you may have to miss more than 3 classes, you should consider taking this course at another time when you can attend regularly.
2. If at any time you have questions or concern about the course subject matter or assignments, please contact me by phone, during office hours, or through email.
3. Writing is a process, not a one-time event. I expect that your writing will evolve through drafts prior to turning in assignments for grades. Engaging in the rewriting process enables you to polish your content as well as your style. All written work must be computer-generated and checked carefully for spelling and grammatical errors. I encourage you to visit the writing center if you need additional assistance in this area.
4. All students are expected to adhere to the University's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://saf.dept.unch.edu80/studisp/Honor.html>).
5. Be sure to keep electronic and hard copies of everything you turn in for a grade—this is a good habit to get into that will save you time and trouble.
6. If you have any special needs that require accommodation, please let me know early in the semester so that we may develop a plan to meet your learning needs. If you have a disability, you will need to provide documentation to the Disability Services Office (334-5440).
7. I do not expect that all students will agree with each other, or that you will agree with me. However, I do expect that we will listen to each other and demonstrate respect for ideas and the learning process. Our differing backgrounds offer fertile ground on which to discuss different perspectives about our society.

Public Issue Assignments

During the semester, you will select two public issues to use in analyzing the communication surrounding a contemporary issue, drawing upon class discussions and readings on ethics. Here,

you will be asked to take a stand regarding the communication (how is it ethical, or not), citing specific evidence as support, and drawing upon the current week's theoretical contributions to our learning to construct an argument. Papers should be approximately 3-5 pages, typed and double spaced. In each paper include:

- One paragraph introduction (regular font)
- Not more than one page exploring the facts of your public issue and the communication matters (*italic font*)
- Two pages "making the case" in which you detail the theoretical issues (items raised in the readings) of your public issue (**bold font**)
- Summary/analysis where you decide how to judge the communication of this public issue (**bold italic font**)

You will be choosing, in advance, the date for which you are writing and presenting and therefore no late papers will be accepted.

Service Project

In recognition that ethics is a matter of service to others, we will engage in one service project as a class. For those absolutely unable to join the class, an alternative assignment will need to be determined through consultation with me.. We will apply the concepts of the course to understand the nature of ethics as service and the ways in which we communicate that. A written assignment follows the service project, 3-5 pages, typed and double spaced. The paper needs to include:

- ___/10 One paragraph introduction (regular font)
- ___/20 One page reflecting on the experience details--what happened, what did you do, what one critical incident stands out in your mind (*regular italic font*).
- ___/30 One to two pages detailing the theoretical issues involved in the service project (**bold font**).
- ___/30 One page of summary/analysis on the role of service in communicating ethics (**bold italic font**).
- ___/10 Grammar, spelling, flow, APA citations, and other writing mechanics.

Quizzes

We will have two quizzes that consist of a series of questions in which you will need to demonstrate knowledge of the reading material and class discussions. The format for these quizzes will be short answers that require you to define terms.

Final Project

TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR--Spring 2005

Week 1: Private and public choices

August 15: Introduction to the course; Frameworks for analysis – an overview. Ethics as communicative practice: Protecting and building human relationships

Buy books and download articles.

August 17: Life as a game? Whose rules apply?

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Preface and Chapter 1

Week 2: Character/Virtue ethics

August 22: Is character habit-forming? Apples and Hammers: Aristotle and the art of discernment.

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 2

August 24: Ethics in the public sphere.

Read for today: One day of a daily newspaper dated August 20-23, 2006—read the whole thing!
In class assignment: Public issue practice.

Week 3: Duties

August 29: Universalism and Situational Ethics

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 3, pp. 36-51; ANOTHER READING ON THIS
Due today: Public issue #1, Group A

August 31: From Kant (and Aristotle) to Habermas: the communicative turn

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 3, pp. 52-58; E-reserves, by Ryfe on a) Principles of public discourse; and, b) The practice of public discourse
Due today: Public issue #1, Group B

Week 4: Consequences

September 5: Utilitarianism: when does the end justify the means? Corporate surveillance and the public good. Ethical egoists.

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 4, pp. 59-71
Due today: Public issue #1, Group C

September 7: Egalitarianism. John Rawls and the “original position”. The veil of ignorance thought experiment: What kind of society would you set up if you didn’t know which race, gender, or class you would be born into?

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 4, pp. 71-84
Due today: Public issue #1, Group D

Week 5: Relationships: Voices in dialogical ethics

September 12: Martin Buber: I and Thou; Carl Rogers: Unconditional positive regard.

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 5, pp. 85-93

September 14: The Game. Voices in dialogical ethics: Emmanuel Levinas: The Other; Paulo Freire: Ethics of empowerment.

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 5, pp. 94-103; E-reserves , TO BE DETERMINED
Due today: Public issue #1, Group E

Week 6: Postmodern and Feminist Theories

September 19: Contemporary challenges to ethics. Power, narratives

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 6, pp. 104-116; E-reserves, Tong on Nel Nodding's relational ethics

Due today: Public issue #1, Group F

September 21: Contemporary challenges to ethics, continued. Feminist perspectives, Ethics of care.

Read for today: Neher & Sandin: Chapter 6, pp. 117-132

Week 7: Quiz and Interpersonal Ethics

September 26: In class test on chapters 1-6, E-reserve readings, and class discussions

September 28: Overview of issues in public space. Propositions of fact, value, and policy revisited.

Read for today: Overview, pp. 133-135, Chapter 7.

Week 8: Freedom of Speech and the First Amendment

October 3:

Ethics and issues in diversity. Free speech contexts.

Read for today: E-reserves, Fraleigh & Tuman on An introduction to the study of freedom of Speech.

Due today: Public issue #2, Group A

October 5: Free speech for me but not for thee? Ethics and the First Amendment. Tensions between legal and ethical communication practices.

Read for today: TO BE DETERMINED

Due today: Public issue #2, Group B

Week 9: Hate Speech

October 10: Fall break, no class.

October 12: Hate Speech

Read for today: E-reserves, Fraleigh & Tuman on hate speech

Due today: Response #8 on hate speech

Week 10

October 17: Communicating ethically about disability

Read for today: Chapter 9, pp. 182-196; E-reserve by Tingus on MD telethon sends wrong message

October 19: Ethical issues in mass media

Read for today: Chapter 10, pp. 198-225

Week 11

October 24: Consumerism

Read for today: E-reserves, Juliet Schor: The newpolitics of consumption
Due today: Response #9 on Schor

October 26:
Consumerism, continued.

Due today: Ethical analysis position paper

Week 12

October 31: Overview: Perspectives on justice. Ethics and the new millennium. Foundations: Ethics and happiness.

Read for today: Dalai Lama, Ethics for the new millennium, pp. 1-47

November 2: Redefining the goal. The supreme emotion.

Read for today: Ethics for the new millennium, pp. 49-77
Due today: Response #10 on Ethics for the new millennium

Week 13

November 7: Ethics, virtue and restraint
Position papers returned today

Read for today: Ethics for the new millennium pp. 81-121
Due today: Response #11 on Ethics for the new millennium

November 9: Appeals to compassion. Connections: Aristotle, Dalai Lama, and contemporary social science.

Read for today: Ethics for the new millennium pp. 123-158

Week 14

November 14: Ethics and society. Universal responsibility. Levels of commitment: expanding the circle of concern.

Read for today: Ethics for the new millennium, pp. 161-199

November 16: Peace prospects. Role of religion in ethics.

Read for today: Ethics for the new millennium pp. 201-237

Due today: Response #12 on Ethics for the new millennium

Week 15

November 21: Concluding thoughts on an ethics for the new millennium.

Due today: Ethical Analysis: Final essay

November 23: Thanksgiving Day Observed - No class

Capstone

Week 16

November 28: The Game, revisited: Crafting a personal code of ethics. In-class written reflection.

Read for today: Neher & Sandin, Chapter 14, pp. 308-321

November 30: Concluding thoughts. Course evaluations.

Handout and discussion: Guidelines for final exam review and preparation