

COM 438: Communication Ethics
Winter 2015
Dr. Melba Hoffer
Grand Valley State University

TEXTBOOK:

- Carson, R. (2002). *Silent spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Johannesen, R. L., Valde, K.S., & Whedbee, K. (2008). *Ethics in human communication*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Kant, I. (1981). *Grounding for the metaphysics of morals: On a supposed right to lie Because of philanthropic concerns* (3rd ed.). Trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- West, C. (2008). *Hope on a tightrope: Words and wisdom*. Carlsbad: SmileyBooks.

COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This course is designed to help students gain an appreciation of the benefits and difficulties associated with practicing ethics in human communication. Students will be introduced to multiple views of rightness and wrongness ranging from universal and individual perspectives, and including the classical traditions of deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics.

1. Students will be expected to describe and differentiate these perspectives on communication ethics as well as the theorists within these three areas;
2. Students will be expected to articulate a personal view on basic ethical issues, including dishonesty, intentional ambiguity, the standard of rationality, and ethical responsibilities for listeners;
3. Students will be expected to bring their individual expertise as we apply the ethical models learned in class to specific examples of communication in politics, journalism, advertising, and other areas;
4. Since this is a General Education Issues course, instruction and opportunities for development will be provided in the areas of written communication, collaboration, integration, critical and creative thinking and logic and oral communication.
 - a. Skills emphasized in the course:
 - i. Oral Communication Goal - To present ideas and information to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors
 - ii. Collaboration Goal - To collaborate in defining the plan for the team, contribute during team meetings, facilitate the contributions of team members, complete a proportional share of the work outside of team meetings, foster a constructive team climate, and help manage and resolve conflict.
 - iii. Integration Goal - To correlate and synthesize facts, basic concepts, and disparate knowledge for application within and beyond the campus; make sense of a variety of data and

experiences and address issues in a more effective way than can be accomplished from one field of study or perspective.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

18 Reflections (2 points each)	36
Class Debate (14 points)	14
Midterm Exam (20 questions)	20
Final Exam (20 questions)	20
Attendance	5
Participation	5

(In order to earn these points fully you must participate meaningfully and exhibit preparation at each class meeting)

Extra Credit Options:

Earnest and helpful contributions are welcome in this class! You may earn up to five points of extra credit by any combination of the following:

- A short (5-min) performance on a topic related or illustrative of class content and issues. 5 points.
- Teach us the meaning of one word found in class readings materials and earn yourself one glorious point.

Show us a video, audio, or image that connects or illustrates content covered in class and earn 3 points

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Week	Assignment	Topic	Reading
1		Introductions	
		Logic and Argumentation Primer	Handout
2		Logic and Argumentation Primer	Handout
		Logic and Argumentation Primer	Handout
3		Introduction to Universal Ethics	EHC- Chapter 1
		Introduction to Deontology	EHC- Chapter 3
4		Deontology	GMM- First Section
		Deontology	GMM- First Section

5		Deontology	GMM- Second Section
		Deontology	GMM- Supplement
6		Deontology	Case Study
	MIDTERM EXAM		
7		Introduction to Consequentialism	EHC- Chapter 5, Chapter 6 (pp.87-88)
		Consequentialism	SP- Chapters 1+ 2
8		Consequentialism	SP- Chapters 6+7
		Consequentialism	SP- Chapters 12+ 13
9		Consequentialism	SP- Chapters 15+ 17
		Consequentialism	Case Study
10		Introduction to Virtue Ethics	EHC- Chapter 12
		Virtue Ethics	HTR- Chapters 1+ 2
11		Virtue Ethics	HTR- Chapter 3
		Virtue Ethics	HTR- Chapters 4 + 7
12		Virtue Ethics	HTR- Chapter 8 + 12
		Virtue Ethics	Case Study
13		Debate Prep Day	
	CLASS DEBATES		
14	CLASS DEBATES		
	CLASS DEBATES		
15	FINAL EXAM		