

CMST 301: Ethics in Human Communication
Spring 2015
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Textbook:

Tompkins, P.S. (2010). *Practicing Communication Ethics: Development Discernment and Decision Making*. NY: Routledge.

Course Purpose and Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this course is to develop your knowledge and skills involved in recognizing and thinking about the ethical dimension of communication. This involves 1) developing your ability to recognize and identify ethical issues and tensions in communication situations (Skills of moral sensitivity and moral imagination), 2) exploring different approaches to thinking about ethics in human communication (Moral imagination, skills of moral reasoning and judgment), 3) clarifying the ethical tensions found in a variety of communication acts in a reasoned and systematic fashion as part of the process for deciding when, how, and what to communicate (Skills of moral reasoning and judgment) and 4) clarifying your personal ethical standard for human communication (Moral development). By completion of this course you should be able to

1. Identify ethical issues in communication situations.
2. Articulate a variety of ethical perspectives.
3. Defend ethical judgments in a reasoned and systematic manner.
4. Conduct ethical analyses of various forms of communication, including interpersonal and public communication.
5. Clarify your personal ethical standard for communication.
6. Recognize the ethical dimensions of the choices people make when they communicate.

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Discussion of Cases**—Discussing cases is an important method for developing skills needed to recognize and think about ethical issues. Throughout the semester will be all-class discussions and small group discussions of cases. You are expected to be prepared to discuss cases listed on the daily schedule. Impromptu cases may be distributed in class. 50 points participation.
- 2) **Two Essay Exams**—Midterm and Final. 100 points each.
- 3) **Writing Assignments**
 - a) **Formal Writing**—These are assignments where you are expected thoughtfully develop ideas and arguments. All formal writing should be revised at least one time before submission

- i) Personal Statement of Ethics.** This is a short, 2-3 page essay that articulates your personal ethical commitments. 30 points.
 - ii) Ethical Nearsightedness and Tentativeness Paper.** 3-5 pages. This paper is based upon reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of your ethical communication. This reflection is based upon writing assignments from chapters 1-3 of the textbook. 80 points.

 - (1) Preparation—.** Complete the following individual writing assignments. Chapter 1: individual writing 2, 5, & 6; Chapter 2: individual writing 1; Chapter 3: Individual writing 1, 2, & 4.
 - (2) Content--** ***You DO NOT hand in your preparation for this paper.*** This paper is a reflection on your responses to the assigned exercises from Chapters 1-3, as well as the application of concepts discussed thus far.

 - (a)** Based upon your responses to the assigned individual writing activities, identify and discuss your strengths and weaknesses in recognizing ethical issues and responding to them.
 - (b)** Using ideas from Chapter 2, describe your moral development as it relates to what you identified as your strengths and weaknesses in recognizing ethical issues and responding to them.
 - iii) Historical Moment Paper.** A major theme in the text and class is that ethical communication is critical at this moment in human history. This paper consists of 2 parts. 200 points.

 - (1)** In Part 1 of this paper you are to 1) research and describe an issue or problem that you consider of major important at this historical moment. This should include a discussion of key communication factors of this issue or problem. Apply concepts and theories from the communication courses you have completed or are currently taking. ***You have the option of turning Part I in for feedback, before completing the final paper, or you may choose to complete the entire paper without my feedback on your writing.***
 - (2)** Part 2 builds upon Part 1. You add the following: 1) an analysis of the ethical issue(s) of this problem and 3) a discussion how **you** plan to address this issue or problem, guided by your personal ethical commitments.
- b) Informal Writing**
- i) Documentary Reflections—**There will be 4 documentaries that explore issues of communication ethics. You are to submit a reflection for each documentary answering a set of questions posted online. These reflections are **not** reactions to the documentary, but ask you to reflect on key ideas or themes as they relate to your personal experience or observations of communication. 10 points each

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE: For class meetings with assigned readings from the text, at the beginning of class you will be asked to answer a question over the reading.

Week/ Day	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1/	Why Study Ethics?	Why study communication ethics? Chap. 1 Case 1	Where do ethics come from? Chap. 2 Personal Statement of Ethics Due
2/	Ethics and Emerging Adulthood.	Video: “Weapons of the Spirit”	Video: “Weapons of the Spirit”
3/	Ethical Reasoning Chap. 3	Moral Imagination Chap. 2 Case 1	Moral Imagination cont’d Case 3 from Chap. 3
4/	Chap. 4: 5 Values of Communication—“Truth” pp. 68-74—Bring I.W. #2 to class for discussion.	“Justice” pp. 74-80 Bring I.W. #3 to class for discussion.	“Freedom” pp. 80-83 Individual Wrtg #5—Bring to Class for Discussion
5/	“Care” & “Integrity” pp. 83-87	Class Discussion--Chapter 4 Cases 1 & 2	Video: Healing the Wounds
6	Ethical Values—Making them your own. Class Activity—2 p. 91 Ethical Nearsightedness Paper Due	Applying Ethical Values & Principles—Absolutism, Relativism & Casuistry Chap. 5, pp. 95-109. Read Sacks, “Multiculturalism or Tolerance” (d2l)	Historical Moment Paper— explanation of assignment
7/	Midterm Exam	Part II & Chap. 6—Tradl Theories of Ethics: “Virtue” pp. 117-121 Class Discussion Question : Are there communication virtues?	Moral Rights” pp. 121-126 Class Discussion question— “Are there moral rights of communication?”
8/	“Utilitarianism” pp. 126-130 Case 3	Video: Bonhoeffer	Video: Bonhoeffer
9/	Chap. 7 “Nontradl Theories of Ethics” pp. 136-140 Modernism & Postmodernism Due Date—Optional Draft of Historical Moment	De-centered self” pp. 140-142 Question: Is communication ethically possible?	Post-modern truth and power pp. 142-9 Question: Why Communicate?

	Paper. No Grade.		
10	Dialogue pp. 149-156	Dialogue Case 2	Ethical Care Case 1 &3
11	Ethical Care CASE 1 & 2	No Class Prof at Convention-Work on your HM Paper	No Class Prof at Convention-Work on your HM Paper
12	Begin Communication Ethics & Community Chap. 8 pp. 173-182	Metaphors of Community pp. 182-90 Case 2	Case 3
13	Communication Ethics and Intercultural Communication Chap. 9 Historical Moment Paper Due	Minimalist Values Case 1	case 3
14	Video—"I Am"	Video—"I Am"	Communication Ethics & Digital Communication chap. 10
15	Case 2	Surveillance & Privacy Case 3	Communication Ethics at this Historical Moment
16	Final Exam		