

Loyola University of Chicago School of Communication

COMM 215 - 203

Ethics & Communications, Spring 2024

MWF 1:40-2:30 Room 010 School of Communication

Instructor: Michael Mertz mmertz@luc.edu 773 230 0158

Office Hours: I am an Adjunct Instructor and do not have regular office hours. I am happy to meet with anyone by appointment and am always available via email.

Course Description

This course will closely investigate and consider the role ethics play in personal and professional lives with an emphasis on issues having to do with media (both traditional and modern). Among other things, we will obtain knowledge of ethical frameworks and apply them to real-world situations in group discussions, presentations and assignments. The unique challenges and dilemmas found within 21st century media communication technologies, such as social media will be explored in theory and in practice.

Learning Objectives

During this course, students will be expected to:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of ethical and moral principles
2. Connect those principles to personal and professional ethical decision-making
3. Develop a process and set of principles for recognizing, addressing, and resolving ethical challenges
4. Understand the history and application of ethics as it pertains to contemporary communication
5. Develop research and presentation skills

In this course, we will be addressing issues including but not limited to the following ...

- Ethics & Lies: "Situational" Ethics; Is there such a thing as a "white" lie? Do white lies matter?; The George Santos Saga; The One & Only Donald Trump
- Ethics in Art & Ethics regarding the creative process
- Ethics in Politics: January 6, 2021; Gov't "security" & secrecy; The US Supreme Court & ethics; The use of CCTV; The use of facial recognition technology; political advertising in the media
- Ethics in Marketing & Advertising:
- Ethics & Social Media (both corporate & personal ethics): Unfounded accusations; Alex Jones & X (formerly Twitter); Issues of Free Speech
- Ethics in AI: What constitutes plagiarism now?
- Ethics & Visual Media: Sensationalism in photo journalism; Restrictions on photo journalists; Ethics & Television (broadcast TV, Streaming services, TV Newscasts, etc.)

REQUIRED READING

Media Ethics Issues & Cases 8th Edition by Philip Patterson & Lee Wilkins ISBN # 978 0 07 3526249

In addition to our textbook, I will assign additional readings – mostly newspaper articles - throughout the course. In terms of the book, there will be times where you won't have to read the entire chapter but just excerpts. I'll keep you up to date on this, obviously!

ALL READING must be done before the first class session of each week! In addition, while I am not formally assigning this, you should also have questions and takeaways from all our readings to help facilitate class discussion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

ATTITUDE/ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION: In this class I am using a teaching method which includes traditional lecturing, but stresses interactive question and answer discussion during class time. All students are expected to attend each class session and to be prepared to actively participate in the discussions and activities after reading the required material. The big part of the **Attitude/Participation** grade is based on student's class attendance and active contribution to the class's activities and discussions.

MISSED CLASSES: Again, you really need to be here. However, if you miss a session it's your responsibility to get notes from a fellow student. If you know in advance that you will miss a class you need to contact me and let me know as soon as you know. The same goes if and when you know that you'll need to leave a class early for any reason.

Also, please be on time for class! Three or more late arrivals (excepting of course issues having to do with the shuttle or public transportation problems) will affect your grade.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: Attendance is taken at the beginning of the class. If you join the meeting after attendance has been taken it is **your responsibility** to check with the instructor after the class to be sure to get the attendance credit.

TECH POLICY: I do not allow phones or laptops in my class unless student accommodations require them. You will have to take notes with pen and paper. The only exception is for class sessions where students need phones or laptops for academic reasons.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Any student who needs special accommodations during exams or class periods will certainly get them. However, students should provide documentation from the Student Accessibility Center confidentially to me to confirm the need. I will accommodate students' needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

We'll discuss all of the assignments in detail well before they are due. All will be posted on Sakai and should be submitted on Sakai.

A NOTE ON LATE WORK: Assignments should be turned in on time. If you need an extension for any reason please talk with me. There is a place for late work under Assignments in Sakai, but – again – you need to talk to me before submitting any late work.

- DISCUSSION THREADS

Over the semester we will have three discussion threads on Sakai. Each will require each student to ask a question or bring up a topic related to readings and/or lectures, and to respond to other postings. Each is due before the first class of the week. Each assignment is worth 100 points, for a total of 300.

- INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

Each of you will be assigned 2 case studies of topics to be determined, which you will conduct on your own and write a paper on. Each of these will be worth 100 points for a total of 200.

- GROUP CASE STUDY & PRESENTATION

There will be one group project this semester, which will require a presentation to the class. This is worth 200 points. Students will work in 7 small groups to complete a case study of a topic to be determined and will present their findings to the class. In addition, all students will need to submit Questions and Takeaways regarding their classmates' presentations. These will be worth 10 points apiece for a total of 60 points (10 pts. x 6 groups = 60).

- EXAMS

There is no Midterm in this course. The Final Exam will take the form of a paper, which you can write at home and submit on Sakai. This means we won't have to actually meet for the Final. This paper will be worth 125 points.

- PERSONAL STATEMENT OF ETHICS

Each of you will write a short statement setting forth your personal code of ethics. This will be worth 15 points and is our first assignment.

- PARTICIPATION/ATTITUDE

This is worth 100 points and has to do with your attendance, your engagement, your sense of responsibility, your contributions to class discussions and your general attitude towards this course and your work.

POINT BREAKDOWN

Group Case Study & Presentation	200 points
Presentation ?s & Takeaways (6 @ 10 each)	60 points
Discussion Threads (3 @ 100 each)	300 points
Personal Case Studies (2 @ 100 each)	200 points
Final Paper (Exam)	125 points
Attitude (Attendance, Engagement, etc.)	100 points
Personal Ethical Statement	15 points
Grand Total	1000 points

GRADING SCALE

A (EXCELLENT) 950-1000

A-minus 925-949

B+ 875-924;

B (GOOD) 850-874

B-minus 800-849

C+ 775-799

C (AVERAGE) 725-774

C-minus 700-724

D (FAIR) 650-699

F (POOR) Anything below 650

COURSE CALENDAR

This calendar represents the course PLAN but is open to change. You will be informed of any changes as the semester progresses.

STATEMENT OF INTENT: By remaining in this course, students are agreeing to accept this syllabus as a contract and to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document.

For add/drop, withdraw, and other dates, see the LUC academic calendar.

Week 1

Mon. 1/15 – **MLK Day NO CLASS**

Weds. 1/17/24– Course Introduction, Syllabus Review, Defining “ethics”

Friday 1/19/24 – **Personal Statement of Ethics due**

Week 2

Mon. 1/22 – **Read the Preface & Chapter 1 (An Introduction to Ethical Decision Making) from our textbook.**

Weds 1/24 –

Fri. 1/26

Week 3

Mon. 1/29 – **Read Chapter 6: Mass Media in A Democratic Society**

Weds. 1/31

Fri. 2/2

Week 4

Mon. 2/5 – **Discussion Thread #1 due**

Weds. 2/7

Fri. 2/9

Week 5

Mon. 2/12 – **Read Chapter 5: Privacy AND Chapter 9: New Media Individual Case Study #1 due**

Weds. 2/14

Fri 2/16

Week 6

Mon. 2/19

Weds. 2/21

Fri. 2/23

Week 7

Mon. 2/26 – **Read Chapter 10: Ethical Dimensions of Art & Entertainment**

Weds. 2/28

Fri. 3/1

Week 8 - SPRING BREAK

Week 9

Mon. 3/11 - **Discussion Thread #2 due**

Weds. 3/13

Fri. 3/15

Week 10

Mon. 3/18 – **Read Chapter 8: Picture This: Ethics of Visual Journalism Individual Case Study #2 due**

Weds. 3/20

Fri. 3/22

Week 11

Mon. 3/25 – **Read Chapter 4: Loyalty**

Weds. 3/27

Fri. 3/29 **NO CLASS (Good Friday)**

Week 12

Mon. 4/1 **NO CLASS (Easter Monday)**

Weds. 4/3 – **Discussion Thread #3 due**

Fri. 4/5

Week 13

Mon. 4/8 – **Case Study Presentation Group 1**

Weds. 4/10 - **Case Study Presentation Group 2 Questions & Takeaways from presentation due**

Fri. 4/12 - **Case Study Presentation Group 3 Questions & Takeaways from presentation due**

Week 14

Mon. 4/15 - **Case Study Presentation Group 4 Questions & Takeaways from presentation due**

Weds. 4/17 - **Case Study Presentation Group 5 Questions & Takeaways from presentation due**

Fri. 4/19 - **Case Study Presentation Group 6 Questions & Takeaways from presentation due**

Week 15

Mon. 4/22 - **Case Study Presentation Group 7**

Weds. 4/24 **Questions & Takeaways from presentation due**

Fri. 4/26 - Course Wrap Up (Last Class Session)

The Final Exam date is still to be announced. Again, we will not have a Final Exam session. (In other words, you won't have to be at school for the Final.) However, your Final Paper, which amounts to a take-home exam, will be due on that day. I'll let you know the day as soon as it's determined.

COVID ISSUES

The health and safety of students and staff are of the utmost importance and priority. Below are links where you can find information about the LUC guidelines and assistance you may need regarding Covid19. Please know situations can change with updated information which LUC will pass along to you

<https://www.luc.edu/returntocampus/healthandsafety/requiredpersonalsafetypractices.shtml>
<https://www.luc.edu/returntocampus/campusscenarios/>

USEFUL INFO HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH COVID

E-MAIL: I will often be using e-mail to communicate things you need to know to the whole class. You should check it every day.

SAKAI (<https://sakai.luc.edu>) is an online learning tool that allow us to communicate and collaborate with each other during the semester. You will find on it the course syllabus, e-mail addresses of all course participants, announcements, online assignments, online gradebook, etc.

LOCUS (<https://locus.luc.edu>) is Loyola's information portal for a wide variety of tasks. The instructor posts on Locus the midterm academic alerts and the final grades.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY CENTER (SAC): If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact SAC as soon as possible. Formal arrangements must be made through the office before course adjustments can be made. Additional information about the services available at: <https://luc.edu/sac/sacstudents/>

MANAGING LIFE CRISES AND FINDING SUPPORT: Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (<https://www.luc.edu/csaa/>) for yourself or a peer in need of support. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: <https://www.luc.edu/dos/> or [LUC.edu/csaa](https://www.luc.edu/csaa/); 773-508-8840; deanofstudents@luc.edu.

This is very, very important. Loyola has really excellent resources when students need help for any number of things. You should take advantage of these if you need to.

Also, PLEASE reach out to me personally if you are experiencing any emotional or medical issues that you may need help with. I am always more than willing to help in any way I can. Don't be shy to ask for help. We all need it at times.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

Office of Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs: <https://www.luc.edu/diversity/> Phone: 708.820.2160
Email: diversity@luc.edu
Hours: Monday thru Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

You are also encouraged to contact the instructor directly if you wish to discuss or share your concerns about any incidents, including incidents that may be caused unintentionally by the instructor or by your classmates.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Academic cheating is a serious violation of academic integrity. **Cheating** includes, but is not limited to, obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher; providing information to another student during examination; obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination; using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor; attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted; unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom; falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines or any other action that, by omission or commission, compromise the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty; it is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, 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 taking and use of specific words and ideas of other without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited, to submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD- ROM, audio, video, etc.; submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material; allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit, or purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper. The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://www.luc.edu/english/aboutthewritingprogram/theuseandmisuseofsourcematerials/#d.en.23> 8783

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. A student who submits the same work for credit in two or more classes will be judged guilty of academic dishonesty and will be subject to sanctions described below. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard. Plagiarism or any act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the Office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

The Office of the Dean of the School of Communication 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 on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SoC. If the student is not a member of the SoC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision 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 or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to a similar organization.