

Comm 498: Communication Ethics Syllabus

This capstone course examines diverse ethical theories and perspectives pertaining to communication in contexts ranging from the local to the global. Students will have opportunities (1) to reflect on and clarify their own ethical commitments and (2) to understand these in relation to ethical theories and perspectives in the field of communication studies. A specific focus of this course will, especially, be on the relationships and antagonisms between self/other and the local/global and how these tensions are implicated in communication ethics.

Department Level Learning Objectives

1. *Writing*: Students are able to write proficiently at college level
2. *Concepts*: Students are able to apply communication concepts

Required Readings

Course readings are on the library's e-reserves and can be accessed through the **Course Reserves Module on Canvas**. You should **download and print** each of the course readings and **bring them to class with you**. *Please note that the overall printing costs, though laborious, will be significantly less than if you were to buy a printed course packet or textbook because you are not paying the copyright and licensing fees. I suggest printing out each of the readings at the beginning of the quarter.

COURSE POLICIES

❖ Grading

All assignments must be completed in order for a student to pass the course with a C grade or higher. The grading scale is as follows:

100-92.5—A 89.4-86.5—B+ 79.4-76.5—C+ 69.4-66.5—D+
92.4-89.5—A- 86.4-82.5—B 76.4-72.5—C 66.4-62.5—D
82.4-79.5—B- 72.4-69.5—C- 62.4 and below—F

A= Demonstrates a comprehensive command of the course material, exceptional ability to apply course concepts, and a superior ability to organize and express ideas.

B= Demonstrates a solid command of the course material, an ability to apply course concepts with only minor problems, and good organization and expression of ideas.

C= Demonstrates acceptable command of the course material, a basic ability to apply course concepts with some gaps and problems, and moderate skill in the organization and expression of ideas.

D= Demonstrates little command and application of the course material, minimal effort, and limited ability to organize and express ideas.

F= Demonstrates no command of the course material, unable to appropriately or consistently apply concepts, and insufficiently organizes and expresses ideas.

❖ **Late Work**

Students who turn in work within one week after the assignment is due will receive a 10 point grade deduction to their grade for that assignment. Any work turned in after one week of the assigned due date will not be accepted, no exceptions. I also do not accept assignments via email or in my mailbox, unless you have made prior arrangements with me.

❖ **Contesting a Grade**

Students who wish to contest a grade should do so within one week of when the grade was received. To contest the grade, students should come to **my office hours** prepared with warranted arguments for why they believe they deserve a better grade with specific references to the assignment in question as evidence. Grade contests cannot be made over email.

❖ **Credit Hours/Study Time**

According to WWU policy, every credit hour of coursework should entail 2 additional hours of study time outside of class each week. As this is a 5 credit class, you should expect to spend an additional 10 hours outside of class reading, studying, and completing assignments.

❖ **Classroom Conduct**

Students are expected to arrive on time, and to remain seated and fully attentive until class is dismissed. Excessive tardiness or other disruptions of the normal flow of the class (including cell phone use, texting, web surfing, snoozing, side chatter and/or leaving early) may result in grade penalties. Additionally, in order to maintain an open and democratic setting for our classroom, we must all commit to being considerate and supportive of each other. This entails, among other things: keeping up with the reading, listening to each other with an open mind, providing constructive feedback when relevant, and being respectful of diverse points of view. No discriminatory language will be tolerated in presentations or class discussions. Please be sensitive and respectful with regards to differences in gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, nationality, physical ability and sexual orientation. Remember, the ways in which we are a diverse group of people are not necessarily apparent or readily evident!

❖ **Class Participation**

As a discussion based seminar, you are expected to come prepared to class to discuss the course readings and other assignments and to participate in class activities and exercises. Please bring the readings with you to class. Also bring in your insights, questions, and examples that you have to share with the class.

❖ **Academic integrity and plagiarism**

All students' work is expected to be original and authored by the student turning in the assignment. Any suspected incidents of academic dishonesty will receive an F for the assignment, and possibly the course, and the student will be reported to the University. If you have any questions as to what constitutes academic integrity, please contact me and refer to the University policies on academic dishonesty. These are published in the Western catalog in Appendix C, *University Academic Policies* and can be accessed online at the University's *Plagiarism Policies & Guidelines* website, libguides.wvu.edu/plagiarism.

❖ Special Needs

Western Washington University provides reasonable accommodations to students who have special needs, including learning disabilities, that may affect their capacity to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students that need accommodations should arrange accommodations through Disability Resources for Students (telephone 650-3083; email drs@wwu.edu; and on the web at <http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/>) within the first week of class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

❖ Assignments

****Please note: You must complete all of the assignment in order to receive a passing grade in the class.**

Seminar Participation & Attendance (15%): As a discussion based seminar, your participation is an essential part of the learning process. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings, your research paper, relevant examples, and course concepts. Seminar participation will be evaluated in two ways. First, every student will perform a self-evaluation at the midpoint of the quarter, using the seminar self-evaluation rubric. The instructor will do the same for each student using the instructor's mid-term evaluation rubric. At the end of the quarter, the final seminar participation grade will reflect the average of the student self-evaluation and the instructor's mid-term and end-of-term evaluations, multiplied by the percentage of all classes attended by the student. Under exceptional situations, the instructor reserves the right to adjust this grade upward or downward if she feels the student's self-evaluation is unjustifiably favorable or unnecessarily harsh, or if missed classes resulted from legitimate excuses, such as medical emergencies. See Canvas for specific explanation of seminar participation expectations.

Reading Responses (30%): Reading responses give students an opportunity to engage deeply with the assigned reading texts, to synthesize and analyze concepts across readings, to evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of concepts in understanding media culture, and to be prepared for more deeply engaging seminar discussions. Therefore, each week, you will post a reading response to the assigned readings on the Canvas Discussion Page. Your response should meet the following criteria: **a) *Synthesize the breadth of the assigned readings:*** emphasize the overarching conceptualization of media culture articulated in the week's readings; note points of agreement and disagreement between authors; identify your broadly conceived takeaway from the readings as a whole in how they contribute to critical media literacy; and discuss the relevance of the week's readings for your final paper; **b) *Analyze one particular reading in depth:*** Identify the thesis of the reading and the authors main points; respond to and evaluate the author's main argument; identify a media example that helps to illustrate the main argument or a key concept in the reading (this can come from your final paper artifact if you wish); and **c) *Pose a discussion question for the class:*** Your question should focus on deepening our understanding of a particular concept or argument in the reading, and it should specifically identify an excerpt from the reading to focus on. Each reading response should be *approximately* 3 paragraphs (about 350-600 words). Reading responses are due by 8 p.m. Monday evening prior to the week's assigned readings. You may miss one

reading response week (except for the final week) without penalty. Please note that the reading responses take the place of a formal exam. If it becomes clear that students are not doing the readings adequately, I will give intermittent reading pop quizzes which will effect your reading response and participation grades.

*Final week reading response—Since there are no readings for the final week, the reading response paper should respond to the prompt. The aim for this final reading response is to ensure students understand connections between major concepts and readings such that they can adequately utilize these concepts in their research papers. Students may not miss this response.

Case Study Presentation (15%): For this assignment, students will research and present an ethical case study in the field of communication, broadly defined. For the purpose of this assignment, a case study is defined as a study in which specific ethical principles or criteria are articulated and then systematically applied to the evaluation of specific texts or communicative practices.

Final Paper (30%): For this writing assignment you will write an 8-10 page original and concise case study of some texts or communicative practices that were published, broadcast, or occurred for the first time within the time frame of this quarter. Texts can be written, audio, and/or visual (examples include an advertising campaign, a political speech, a music video, a television show, and so forth). Communicative practices can be personal or professional (examples include forms of gossip, forms of legal fine print, specific marketing strategies, specific PR practices, billboard advertising, and so forth). The case study must be implicated in questions of ethical practices that implicate relations between self/other in a global/local context.

Peer Review of Writing (10%): Students will receive peer feedback throughout the research and writing process. Early on in the quarter, students will be paired with peers to form a writing group, with whom they will exchange portions of their paper periodically. Students will provide feedback to their peers on how to improve their papers, and will complete a reflection paper on the peer review process at the end of the quarter.

Schedule:

Weeks 1-4: Ethical Theories, Frameworks, Foundations

Week 5: Case Study Presentations

Weeks 6-10: Case Studies & Applications

Readings:

Philosophy of Communication Ethics: Alterity and the Other
edited by Ronald C. Arnett, Patricia Arneson

Bone, Griffin, & Scholz

Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations of Rhetoric: Invitational Rhetoric and a Move
Toward Civility, *Western Journal of Communication*

Glenister and Arnett

Dismissiveness and Dialogic Ethics: Rush Limbaugh and Public Dialogue
Communication Ethics: Between Cosmopolitanism and Provinciality

Xiaosui Xiao and Guo-Ming Chen

Communication Competence and Moral Competence: a Confucian Perspective
Journal of Multicultural Discourses

Starosta and Shi

Alternate Perspectives on Gandhian Communication Ethics
China Media Research

Dalai Lama

Chapter 11: Universal Responsibility
Ethics for the New Millennium

Michael Ignatieff

Reimagining a Global Ethic
Ethics & International Affairs

Derrida, excerpts from *Hospitality*

Nietzsche, excerpt from *On Genealogy of Morals*

hooks, "Clarity: Give Love Words" and "Justice: Childhood Love Lessons," from *All about Love: New Visions*

Foucault, excerpts from *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure*

Zizek, "Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence"

Hardt & Negri, "The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street: The
Encampment in Lower Manhattan Speaks to a Failure of Representation,"
[http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136399/michael-hardt-and-antonio-negri/the-fight-
for-real-democracy-at-the-heart-of-occupy-wall-street](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136399/michael-hardt-and-antonio-negri/the-fight-for-real-democracy-at-the-heart-of-occupy-wall-street)

The Zapatistas's Theoretical Revolution: Its Historical, Ethical, and Political Consequences

Walter D. Mignolo

Vol. 25, No. 3, *Utopian Thinking* (2002), pp. 245-275

Hyde, M. J. (2011). Ethics, rhetoric, and discourse. In G. Cheney, S. May, and D. Munshi
(Eds.), *The handbook of*

communication ethics (pp. 31-44). New York, NY: Routledge.

Lipari, L. (2009). Listening otherwise: The voice of ethics. *The International Journal of Listening*, 23(1), 44-59. doi: 10.1080/10904010802591888

Mumby, D. K. (2011). Power and ethics. In G. Cheney, S. May, and D. Munshi (Eds.), *The handbook of communication ethics* (pp. 84-98). New York, NY: Routledge.

Calafell, B. M. (2009). "She ain't no diva!": Reflections on in/hospitable guests/hosts, reciprocity, and desire. *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, 5(5), 1-18. <<http://liminalities.net/5-4/diva.pdf>>

Chávez, K. R. (2010). Border (in)securities: Normative and differential belonging in LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourse. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 7(2), 136-155. doi: 10.1080/14791421003763291

Davis, L. J. (1999). Crips strike back: The rise of disability studies. *American Literary History*, 500-512.

Hegde, R. S. (1996). Narratives of silence: Rethinking gender, agency, and power from the communication experiences of battered women in South India. *Communication Studies*, 47(4), 303-317. doi: 10.1080/10510979609368485

Dyer Witherford, "Games of Multitude"