

Strategic Communication Ethics

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:20 p.m., Allen 101, four credits

Overview

In this class, you will identify ethical issues in advertising and public relations. We will explore these issues with a consideration of moral philosophy and industry codes of ethics. In addition, we will discuss how to respond to ethical issues in the workplace, including how to express dissent effectively. We will examine how to navigate these ethical issues as an entry-level employee and strategies for creating a culture of ethics in the workplace when you are in an executive position.

Course materials

All reading, audio and video materials for this course are available on Blackboard.

You will need to purchase a subscription to TopHat, which is a classroom engagement platform. We will use TopHat for determining which discussion questions we will explore in class, participating in discussion during class (via your cell phone or other electronic device), and taking attendance. You can register at TopHat.com. The cost is \$24 for the quarter.



Course objectives and assessment

- Avoid moral myopia by recognizing ethical issues that arise in strategic communication (assessed through reading quizzes, code of ethics critique, moral decision-making worksheet and op-ed/advertisement assignment)
- Apply moral theory to navigate ethical dilemmas (assessed through the moral decision-making worksheet and op-ed/advertising/research paper assignment)
- Effectively use dissent strategies that could be used to dissuade a decision-maker from engaging in unethical behavior (assessed through the persuasive appeals essay)



Some of the topics we will explore...



Ghost blogging



Organizational culture



Native advertising

Office Hours

Office: Allen 233

Mondays: 12-1:30 p.m.

Wednesdays: 12-1:30 p.m.

We can schedule a time to meet outside of my office hours if needed.

I can also meet virtually via phone or Skype.

Phone: 541-543-0955

Email: derville@uoregon.edu

Skype: [tiffanygallicano](#)

Twitter: [@gallicano](#)

Hashtag: #UOJ496

Ideas for Twitter content:

- Links to stories about ethical lapses
- Key points from class
- Responses to the authors of the assigned reading

Feel free to also use hashtags #LifeasajStudent and #UOSOJC.

Course objectives and assessment (continued)



- ☉ Understand the steps for creating an ethically strong organizational culture (assessed through the critique of a code of ethics assignment and Top Hat class participation during our lesson about moral organizational cultures)
- ☉ Gain familiarity with well-known ethical cases that every industry executive should know (assessed through Top Hat class participation, discussion questions, and persuasive appeals essay).
- ☉ Refine writing skills (assessed through critique of code of ethics, persuasive appeals essay, moral decision-making worksheet, and op-ed/ advertisement/research paper).

Assessment

Participation	15%
Reading quizzes	20%
Code of ethics critique	20%
Persuasive appeal essay	10%
Ethics worksheet	15%
Op-ed/ad/paper	20%

J596 Requirements

If you are a graduate student, you will complete all of the work described for J496 students with the exception of the op-ed/advertising assignment.

In place of the op-ed/advertising assignment, you will write a brief research paper in an established format (such as APA style) about a strategic communication ethics topic. You can write a paper about best practices for a topic, or you can conduct research and write a paper based on the results.

Please set up a meeting with me by the end of the second week of class to discuss ideas.

Reading quizzes

I have created reading quizzes on Canvas for you to complete in place of in-class quizzes. This enables you to have plenty of time to complete them.

The quizzes are not timed, but they are due by the class period when we discuss the reading.

I use the reading quizzes as an incentive to complete the reading prior to class, which makes an important difference to the quality of our class discussion. Also, the assigned reading is a rich source of the knowledge you will learn in this class.

Code of ethics critique

In teams, you will choose an organization's code of ethics to critique based on our class discussion and the assigned readings.

Persuasive appeal essay

You will choose a hypothetical scenario in which a supervisor asks you to engage in unethical public relations or advertising, such as astroturfing. You will then write a compelling dissent response for me as your audience, which includes the following items:

- an explanation of why the practice is wrong based on moral theory
- a discussion of any principles that would be violated from an advertising or public relations industry code of ethics
- a description of potential business risks that could result from the act, including any similar cases that had poor consequences
- a proposal of an action that could be used in place of the unethical act to support the organization's goals

Participation score

Your participation score is based on the following criteria:

- Attendance (measured by Top Hat)
- On-time arrival
- Discussion questions you will submit based on the reading via Top Hat
- Participation during class (with and without Top Hat)
- Professionalism (including not texting during class)

Your score on Top Hat, our platform for class interaction, is a key part of your participation score.



Ethics worksheet

Dr. Bivins' moral decision-making worksheet is an excellent resource for making decisions in response to complex situations. You will respond to the prompts on his worksheet based on a hypothetical situation. The situation is authored by Dr. Nonnecke from the Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society. The case study was funded by the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Communication.

The situation involves how you would counsel an information communication technology company, such as Twitter, to respond to a government that has asked the company to shut down its data service to the area. The government is concerned that the service is being used to spread hate messages and organize violence.

A full description of the case will be shared during class.

Prior to the assignment, we will discuss similar real-world cases and explore the hypothetical case through a simulation in which we will act out roles as various stakeholders.

Op-ed/Ad/Paper

As your final assignment, you will write an op-ed or advertisement if you are a J496 student. You will write a research paper if you are a J596 student.

The op-ed or advertisement will take a position on a contested issue in advertising or public relations and defend it based on moral theory and any other justifications.

Absences, class announcements, incompletes, disability accommodations, and culture of embracing diversity

This class has a **mandatory attendance policy**. If you do not attend the first day of class, you could forfeit your place in the course to a student who also needs the class if our class is full.



If you are going to miss class, have an excused absence and notify me in advance to avoid a deduction from your participation points.

Valid excuses include an illness, a religious holiday and a university-excused activity. I am lenient toward major professional development opportunities that cannot be rescheduled, depending on the opportunity, timing and your ability to reschedule it.

If your absence is excused, you can send me your work via email by the start of class on our class day to avoid a late penalty and then bring a printed copy to the next class you attend. If you are too sick to complete your assignment on time and send it via email, please let me know before class begins via email.

If you are sick, be courteous to your classmates and me by not coming to class until you feel better. If you have a fever, wait to come to class until you have been well for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. You can Skype into class or get the notes from a classmate and see me if you have additional questions.

Class announcements, including the possibility of a cancellation, will be communicated via email.

You are eligible for an **incomplete** if you are passing class, if you have completed most of the work in class and if you need to miss several classes for a university-approved reason. An “I” for “incomplete” would be your temporary grade. You would be responsible for completing the remaining assignments within one year, or the “I” would be changed to an “F” or “N” on your transcript. You are responsible for contacting me within the year to schedule the remaining assignments.

If you have a **disability**, please let me know privately during office hours, regardless of whether you need accommodations, so I can see if there are ways that I can help you that are compatible with your learning style.

If you require additional accommodations, please visit Disability Services at the university (<http://ds.uoregon.edu>). Request an instructor note from Disability Services that lists possible accommodations that would assist you and see me during office hours.

The university has a **culture of embracing diversity** and stands for the well-being of all members. It is also committed to the following:

- * rejecting discrimination of any kind,
- * respecting the dignity and essential worth of all people,
- * promoting a culture of respect and diversity of opinions,
- * respecting everyone’s privacy, property and freedom, and
- * expecting personal and academic integrity.



Academic integrity

You will discuss other people's ideas in your assignments. You're still in the danger zone if you take someone else's ideas and put nearly all of it into your own words while citing the author. You need to show originality in your work. Using several sources and bringing your own analysis and reflections to your work will help you to make it your own.

Plagiarism includes the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas or data as your own work. When you submit work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate references. By placing your name on work submitted for credit, you certify the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks.

You can avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever you do any of the following:

- * quote another person's actual words or replicate all or part of another's product,
- * use another person's ideas, opinions, work, data or theories, or
- * borrow facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials - unless the information is clearly common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on homework can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, check with me or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, submitting as your own any academic exercise (e.g., written work, design work) prepared totally or in part by another is considered plagiarism.

Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor.

Fabrication is the intentional use of information that you have invented when you state or imply otherwise; it also includes the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.

Listed below are fabrication examples:

- * citing information not taken from the source indicated,
- * listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise, and
- * inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines **academic misconduct**. You are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is your obligation to clarify the question with me before committing or attempting to commit the act.

Sharing **reading quizzes and homework via websites** is strictly prohibited and would result in a severe penalty to your grade, academic standing or both.



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attribution, non-commercial use and
no derivative use.

Additional university policies

Diversity is supported and valued at the University of Oregon. We respect the dignity and essential worth of all individuals; reject bigotry, discrimination, violence, and intimidation; practice personal and academic integrity and expect it of others; and promote a diversity of ideas, opinions, and backgrounds.

The University of Oregon affirms and actively promotes the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education at this institution without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or any other extraneous consideration not directly and substantively related to effective performance. This policy implements all applicable federal, state, and local laws; regulations; and executive orders.

Direct related inquiries to the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 474 Oregon Hall, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-3123, TDD (541) 346-0852.

For **conflict resolution**, please report problems to me. If the problem is not resolved, you may contact Associate Dean Leslie Steeves. If the problem is still not resolved, you may contact Interim Dean Julianne Newton.

Outside of the School of Journalism and Communication, you may contact the University of Oregon bias response team at (541) 346-1139, Conflict Resolution Services at (541) 346-0617, or Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity at (541) 346-3123.

You may appeal decisions pertaining to certain aspects of programs, performance evaluation, and program retention and completion. See <http://aaeo.uoregon.edu/booklet.htm#student>.

Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise. Examples are listed below:

- * copying from another student's test paper, computer program, project, product or performance
- * collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work in a test situation
- * using the course packet or other material not authorized for use during a test
- * using unauthorized materials during a test, such as notes
- * resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without my knowledge and permission
- * taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you

J496: Strategic Communication Ethics Course Schedule

The assigned reading, video and audio files can be found on Blackboard in the course documents folder. Additional readings, videos and assignments will be shared during the course. Assigned quizzes can be found on Blackboard. This schedule is subject to change. Additional reading quizzes could be added.

Week one

Tuesday, March 31: The communicator's role in the ethical conscience of the organization

Course introduction and instructions for Thursday, the empowerment of the communications function, systems theory, Enron case study context

Thursday, April 2: The danger of putting performance goals first: A case study of Enron

Enron case study discussion, Fleishman-Hillard billing scam, whistleblowing, what this means for you as an executive and entry-level employee

Assigned reading

- Syllabus

- Bowen, S. A. (2010). Almost a decade later: Have we learned lessons from inside the crooked E, Enron? *Ethical Space*, 7, pp. 28-35. (All readings are available on Blackboard.)

- Silverstein, K. (2013, May 14). Enron, ethics and today's corporate values. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kensilverstein/2013/05/14/enron-ethics-and-todays-corporate-values/>

- Ackman, D. (2002, February 14). Sherron Watkins had the whistle, but blew it. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/2002/02/14/0214watkins.html>

- Solomon, D. (2004, June 6). The way we live now: Questions for Sherron Watkins; Life after whistle-blowing. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/06/magazine/way-we-live-now-6-6-04-questions-for-sherron-watkins-life-after-whistle-blowing.html?ref=topics>

- American Advertising Federation. *Principles and practices for advertising ethics*. Retrieved from <http://aaftr.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Principles-and-Practices-with-Commentary.pdf>
*Just read principle 8

- Public Relations Society of America. *Code of ethics*. Retrieved from <http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/ethics/codeenglish/#.VRgu6MaQyao>
*Just read the “Safeguarding Confidences” and “Enhancing the Profession” principles

Reading quiz

- Complete the reading quiz on Blackboard in the “Assigned Reading/Listening Quizzes” content area and submit it by today at 9 a.m. (Blackboard will not accept late submissions)

Assigned activities

- Register for TopHat access at tophat.com. You can also respond to the invitation I’ll send after class.
- Submit one to three discussion questions based on the assigned reading through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions

Week two

Tuesday, April 7: The creation of a moral organizational culture

Discussion of Edelman interview, Johnson & Johnson Credo, characteristics of organizations with strong ethics (including structural elements), controversial clients, what this means for you as an executive and entry-level employee, discussion about the code of ethics assignment (due April 14) and assignment to teams

Time pending: Begin the code of ethics assignment

Assigned listening

- Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Communication. (2010, July 14). *Oral history interview with Richard Edelman*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=13&v=eRdOvUL_tV0

Assigned reading

- Johnson & Johnson. (n. d.). Our credo. Retrieved from http://www.jnj.com/sites/default/files/pdf/jnj_ourcredo_english_us_8.5x11_cmyk.pdf
- Bivins, T. (2009). *Mixed media: Moral distinctions in advertising, public relations, and journalism*. New York: Routledge.
 - pp. 47-55, beginning with the “Codes” heading
- See the articles on Blackboard about controversial clients, which will be posted by Friday at noon
- Code of ethics assignment instructions

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions. At least one of the questions needs to pertain to the Edelman interview.

Thursday, April 9: Cover-ups, writing mechanics review and in-class team work day

Continuation of content from Tuesday as needed, reading discussion, writing mechanics review, and in-class work time for the code of ethics assignment

Assigned reading

- The code of ethics your team has selected (create notes for your analysis)

Assigned listening

- NPR. (2012, July 26). *From Enron to Penn State, how cover-ups happen*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/26/157432737/from-enron-to-penn-state-how-cover-ups-happen>

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Week three

Tuesday, April 14: Corporate social responsibility

Code of ethics team results and CSR discussion

Preparation

- Be prepared to discuss the major strengths and opportunities for improvement your team identified in the code of ethics assignment

Assigned reading

- See the articles that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Assignment due

- Code of ethics assignment

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Thursday, April 16: Ethical foundations: Consequential and non-consequential approaches

Categorical imperative and Bowen's Kantian model, egoism, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and the ethic of care, small pox vaccination case study

Assigned reading

- Bivins, T. (2009). *Mixed media: Moral distinctions in advertising, public relations, and journalism*. New York: Routledge.
 - pp. 66-83, ending with the "Can the Media Care" heading
- Curtin, P. A., & Gaither, T. K. (2006). Contested notions of issue identity in international public relations: A case study. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 18*, 67-89.
 - pp. 70-82, starting with "The Case: 'A Triumph of International Cooperation'"

Reading quiz

- Complete the reading quiz on Blackboard in the "Assigned Reading/Listening Quizzes" content area and submit it by today at 9 a.m. (Blackboard will not accept late submissions)

Assigned activities

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Week four

Tuesday, April 21: Moral Relativism: When in Rome? (Part one)

Discussion about ethical relativism and a simulation: To block or not to block: Corporate social responsibility of ICT companies during social unrest by Brandie M. Nonnecke, Ph.D.

Assigned reading

- Bivins, T. (2009). *Mixed media: Moral distinctions in advertising, public relations, and journalism*. New York: Routledge.
 - pp. 56-59, ending with the “Why We Reason the Way We Do” heading
- Weidenhamer, D. (2014, August 12). Dealing with the press in China: Be prepared to Sing! *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/12/dealing-with-the-press-in-china-be-prepared-to-sing/?_php=true&r=0
- Case study summary of how information communication technology (ICT) has been used during the 2011 Egyptian revolution and during the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya

Reading quiz

- Complete the reading quiz on Blackboard in the “Assigned Reading/Listening Quizzes” content area and submit it by today at 9 a.m. (Blackboard will not accept late submissions)

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Assignment returned

- Code of ethics assignment

Thursday, April 23: Moral Relativism: When in Rome? (Part two)

Continue with the simulation from Tuesday and discuss the checklist for moral decision making by Tom Bivins, Ph.D., and the moral decision-making worksheet instructions (due April 30)

Preparation

- Download the moral decision-making worksheet instructions and bring them to class (electronically or printed out)

Assigned reading

- Bivins, T. (2009). *Mixed media: Moral distinctions in advertising, public relations, and journalism*. New York: Routledge.
 - pp. 99-112

Week five

Tuesday, April 28: In-class team work day

You will meet in class today to complete the moral decision-making worksheet.

Optional revision due

- Code of ethics assignment (grades will be averaged)

Thursday, April 30 – Ethical complaints by Millennial agency practitioners and dissent strategies

Strategies for expressing dissent effectively and instructions for the persuasive appeals essay

Assigned reading

- Persuasive appeals essay instructions
- Gallicano, T. D., & Matthews, K. (under review). *Hope for the future: Millennial PR agency practitioners' discussion of ethical dilemmas*.
 - pp. 2-3, ending before “In this study” paragraph and pp. 11-22, ending prior to the “Motivation for training” heading

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Assignment due

- Moral decision-making worksheet

Week six

Tuesday, May 5: Brand transparency for key audiences

Guest speaker: Gini Dietrich (@ginidietrich), CEO of Arment Dietrich, author of "Spin Sucks: Communication and Reputation Management in the Digital Age," our public relations executive in residence.

Time pending: Edelman's Walmart bloggers scandal and astroturfing

Assigned reading

- See the articles that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Assignment returned

- Moral decision-making worksheet

Thursday, May 7: Online ethical issues

Ghost blogging, Wikipedia editing, removal of information from the Web

Assigned reading

- See the articles that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Assignment due

- Persuasive appeals essay

Week seven

Tuesday, May 12: Native advertising

Assigned reading

- See the articles that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Thursday, May 14: Hidden identities (part one)

VNRs, Ketchum's "No Child Left Behind" promotional scandal, word-of-mouth marketing Op-ed or advertisement assignment instructions (assignment due on May 21)

Assigned reading

- Bivins, T. (2009). *Mixed media: Moral distinctions in advertising, public relations, and journalism*. New York: Routledge.
 - pp. 211-217, starting at "Advertising and the Need for Transparency" heading
- See the articles that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Optional revision due

- Moral decision-making essay (grades will be averaged)

Assignment returned

- Persuasive appeals essay

Week eight

Tuesday, May 19: Hidden identities (part two)

Hill & Knowlton's Gulf War scandal, unbranded campaigns, Wren's "First Kiss" video

Assigned reading

- See the articles that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Reading quiz

- Complete the reading quiz on Blackboard in the "Assigned Reading/Listening Quizzes" content area and submit it by today at 9 a.m. (Blackboard will not accept late submissions)

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorites.

Optional revision due

- Persuasive appeals essay

Thursday, May 21: Ethics of advertising appeals

Assigned reading

- Bivins, T. (2009). *Mixed media: Moral distinctions in advertising, public relations, and journalism*. New York: Routledge.
 - pp. 186-205, ending at "A Reflection or Creator of Reality" heading

Reading quiz

- Complete the reading quiz on Blackboard in the "Assigned Reading/Listening Quizzes" content area and submit it by today at 9 a.m. (Blackboard will not accept late submissions)

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorites.

Assignment due

- Op-ed, advertisement or research paper assignment

There is an extra credit event today. You can attend the Payne Awards Luncheon and lecture from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Ford Alumni Center Ballroom. Lunch is included. RSVP to Erika Vogt at evogt@uoregon.edu and let her know you're in my class. I will add .5% to your final grade for attending, provided that you sign in with her at the event. I round grades up at .5%.

Week nine

Tuesday, May 26: Advertising and social construction

Assigned reading

- Bivins, T. (2009). *Mixed media: Moral distinctions in advertising, public relations, and journalism*. New York: Routledge.
 - pp. 205-211, ending at “Advertising and the Need for Transparency” heading
 - pp. 218-224

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorites.

Thursday, May 28: Deceptive messaging and an organization’s communication responsibilities

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorites.

Reading quiz

- Complete the reading quiz on Blackboard in the “Assigned Reading/Listening Quizzes” content area and submit it by today at 9 a.m. (Blackboard will not accept late submissions)

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorites.

Assignment returned

- Op-ed or advertisement assignment

Week ten

Tuesday, June 2: Privilege and power: Intern payment and industry discrimination

Reading discussion

Assigned reading

- See the articles that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Reading quiz

- Complete the reading quiz on Blackboard in the “Assigned Reading/Listening Quizzes” content area and submit it by today at 9 a.m. (Blackboard will not accept late submissions)

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.

Thursday, June 4: Girl Scouts case study

Reading discussion and class feedback

Assigned reading

- See the article that will be posted on Blackboard by Friday at noon.

Optional revision due

- Op-ed or advertisement assignment

Assigned activity

- Submit one to three discussion questions through TopHat and vote for your favorite questions.