



Georgetown University, MPS PR/CC | Fall 2016

## **MPPR-500-01: Conversations About Ethics: Philosophical, Professional and Personal**

**Class Meets:** Thursdays, 5:20 – 7:50 pm

**Class Location:** 640 Mass Ave Washington, DC 20001

**Professor:** Patty Long

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this class, you will understand basic principles of ethics and learn how to apply them practically in the communications field. Our class will review ethical philosophies, evaluate ethical situations in different areas of communications, and examine case studies and real-life situations. You will leave the course with an increased knowledge of and hands-on familiarity with the practical applications of ethics in the communications field, and you will develop your personal code of ethics to guide your practice. You will consider how to live by your ethical code as a communications professional, notably: Can you advocate effectively for ethical practices? Are your values manifested by your public relations tactics every day? Will you be a trusted leader who helps your organization/business navigate complex ethical issues before they become public relations (or legal) problems? This course will be a good start; and as you complete your degree, you will continue to hone this essential part of your professional and personal identity.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** At the end of this class, students will:

1. Be familiar with the language of ethics, and secular and moral theory that provides a framework for ethical decision making.
2. Understand the potential ethical challenges in the practice of communications from historical and contemporary perspectives, and understand the standards and codes currently used to encourage best practices.
3. Develop critical thinking skills to:
  - Examine morally and ethically complex professional situations in order to determine the ethical course of action;
  - Clarify, strengthen, and articulate personal values and ethical commitments; and
  - Navigate the complex ethical issues at work before they become public relations (and/or legal) problems.



**ATTENDANCE:** As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). **Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade.** If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

Punctual attendance is critical. If you have to miss a class – family emergency, medical emergency or other act of God – you must let the instructors know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

**WORK SUBMITTED:** All work should be submitted in Times New Roman 12 pt font, 1 inch margins. They should be **both** emailed to the professor [pattylong472@gmail.com](mailto:pattylong472@gmail.com) by 5 pm on the day they are due **AND** a hard copy brought to class. Late assignments will not be accepted except in extreme circumstances and when discussed with the professor prior to the due date.

**COURSE POLICIES:** A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones or other communication devices while in class. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. What happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something.

You are responsible for classroom information and instructions, whether you are present in class or not. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain class notes. I encourage you to ask questions during class. Use each question as an opportunity to apply what we are learning about critical thinking and presentation skills.

#### **REQUIRED READINGS:**

**Book Title:** Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice  
**Author(s):** Patricia Parsons  
**ISBN:** ISBN-10: 9780749453329  
**Publisher:** Kogan Page  
**Year:** 2008  
**Price:** \$ 35 new, or \$20 used on Amazon; \$30 Google ebook.

**Movie:** *The Insider*. (1999, Walt Disney Video) Al Pacino/Russell Crowe; DVD Release Date: April 2000; ASIN: B00003CWRX. The DVD is \$12 new from Amazon or for rent. Please **DO NOT WAIT** until the last minute to source this video as streaming options vary. You do **not** need to purchase a copy to keep, but you do need to view the film carefully prior to our specified class.

**Course Website:** All other materials will be readings available on our class website and materials shared in class.

**Other:** You should also have access to newspapers or major news sites from which to find interesting public relations ethics topics to bring to class attention weekly.

#### **LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR MPPR-505**



<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/researchcourseguides>

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:** You are expected to submit work on time and of high quality. Please refer to the course schedule and plan your timetable for completing assignments in advance. I encourage you to actively ask questions prior to submitting any assignment. As long as you submit your assignments for review (with a specific question in mind) at least three business days before the assignment is due, I would be happy to review your specific question and discuss it with you. Feedback on all final assignments will be provided in a timely manner; no more than 2 weeks after the assignment was turned in. All grading criteria, including page length and essential content, will be distributed in advance and discussed in class. The grading scale is based on a total possible 400 points.

### **In Class Preparation and Discussion: 40 points (10% of your grade)**

This class is a collaborative, interactive, fast-paced format. You are expected to be present, prepared and participatory, having read all assigned materials and contributing constructively to discussions. You will also be tasked with submitting articles, ads and other items as instructed to spur class discussions. Your participation is judged by the way in which you contribute to positive, thoughtful class discussions. We will together create a supportive forum for intellectual deliberation with class discussions that are respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions.

### **Personal Paper: 60 points (15%)**

Assignment #1 – Sept 15. Submit with the file name *[Your Last Name] Personal* via email by 5 p.m. In this assignment, you will identify and discuss influences that have shaped your personal ethics to date. Your five-page paper will analyze and discuss these influences in relation to one or more classical ethics philosophies and Georgetown's Ethos. This analysis will likely form the introduction to your Final Code of Ethics.

### **In-Class Case Study and Analysis: 60 points (15%)**

Assignment #2 – Completed in class on Sept 29.

You will be presented with a case study in class for which you will need to develop a written response with an argument and suggested course of action well supported by evidence from our readings and discussions and a solid understanding of the PRSA Code of Ethics.

### **Individual Presentation: 20 points (5%)**

Assignment #3 – Presentations in class (Oct 6, Oct 20, Nov 3, Nov 10)

Each student will deliver a three- to five-minute presentation to the class on a topic of interest relating to PR ethics as arranged with the instructor in advance. These short, informal presentations will be discussed in the class and are intended both to showcase the perspectives of individual class members and to help prepare for the team presentations. A schedule to sign up for a specific date will be distributed in class in late Sept.

### **Persuasive Writing Assignment: 40 points (10%)**

Assignment #4 – Due Oct 20, via hard copy in class and email to Patty Long by 5 p.m.

Guided by the in-class discussions, your work on this 650- to 900-word essay will demonstrate your understanding of the principles and practice of ethical writing. Submission requirements are as follows:



### **Final Code of Ethics: 100 points (25%)**

Assignment #5 – Due Nov 17. Submit with file name *[Your Last Name] Final Code* via email by 5 p.m., and via hard copy in class.

The final written assignment consists of a 9-10 page paper outlining your personal code of ethics. It should be written in the format of a formal ethics code. This code will become the cornerstone of your personal ethos and will be used in your Capstone course. We will discuss your creation of this code extensively throughout the course, and you will have an opportunity to do peer review in class.

### **Final Group Challenge: 80 (20%)**

Assignment #6 – teams will be assigned on Nov 10 with presentations to be given on the last two days of classes (Dec 1 and Dec 15). Teams will be presented with an ethical communication challenge. Each team will develop a response that outlines the teams' course of action in response to the challenge. Teams will be defending their chosen course of action in class.

## **GRADING**

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

The instructors will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

### **Grading Metrics:**

Students will have the opportunity to earn a **total of 400 points** this semester. Please reference the below grading scale and assignments:

<b>A</b>	<b>93-100 = 374-400</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>90-92.9 = 360-374</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>87-89.9 = 348-359</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>83-86.9 = 332-347</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>80-82.9 = 320-331</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>70-79.9 = 280-319</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>69.9 AND BELOW = 279 OR BELOW</b>

## **UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program – **Schedule in advance**  
202-687-4246  
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center  
202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)  
<http://lds.georgetown.edu/>



- Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
202-687-6985  
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>
- Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action (IDEAA)  
(202) 687-4798  
<https://ideaa.georgetown.edu/>

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY**

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

### **GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM**

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

### **PLAGIARISM**

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

### **SYLLABUS MODIFICATION**

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructors will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**



Note: Additional readings and case studies may be assigned throughout the course. Readings beyond the required texts will be posted on our Ning class site or distributed in class.

WEEK	IN THIS CLASS
Class 1 Thursday, Sept. 1	<b>Beginning Our Conversation: Words &amp; Ideas</b>  Overview of Syllabus Honor Code & Resources Discussion: What Constitutes Ethical Public Relations Practice? Personal Exploration Exercise
For Next Class	<b>Reading:</b> Parsons p. 1-44 On website: Gower – Doing the Right Thing pdf – Pages 1-20 A Framework for Thinking Ethically – Pages 1-4
Class 2 Thursday, Sept. 8	<b>Philosophical Foundations and Practical Implications of Ethics in Your Personal and Professional Life</b>  Discussion of style, professionalism, values and ethics  In class exercise: time permitting
For Next Class	<b>Complete Assignment #1 due via email in both hard copy and electronically to <a href="mailto:pattylong472@gmail.com">pattylong472@gmail.com</a></b>  <b>Reading:</b> Parsons Chapters 7, 8, 9  Become familiar with the following codes (on class site): Public Relations Society of America, Arthur Page, American Marketing Assn and others.
Class 3 Thursday, Sept 15	<b>Personal Codes, Societal Codes, Professional Codes</b>  A close examination of the PRSA and other related frameworks  Group Discussion on moral development
For Next Class	<b>Readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parsons Chapter 11</li><li>• “The Case Against the Media by the Media” – article posted</li></ul>



	on class website.
Class 4 Thursday, Sept 22	<b>Ethics and the Media</b>  Class Discussion on Journalism ethics Ethics and media relations  Review for In-class graded case study
For Next Class	Prepare for In-class graded case study
Class 5 Thursday, Sept. 29	<b>Putting it Together: Professional Practice</b>  Assignment #2 In-class, graded case study analysis
For Next Class	<b>Read:</b> Parsons 12 and 13  Submit advertising samples as discussed in class. Come prepared to present on these.
Class 6 Thursday, Oct 6	<b>Advertising and the Ethics of Visual Culture</b>  Discussion of ethics in visuals and messages  Individual Presentations
For Next Class	Readings related to Persuasion and Advocacy lecture posted on class website.
Class 7 Thursday, Oct 13 (via webinar)	<b>Ethics &amp; Writing: Persuasion and Advocacy</b>  Students will be given time in class to work on assignment #4
For Next Class	Finalize persuasive essay (assignment #4) – due next class.  Research social media policies from at least 3 different organizations. Come prepared to discuss the pros and cons of each and whether they are helpful.
Class 8 Thursday, Oct 20	<b>Ethics in Digital and Social Media</b> <b>Dealing with Activist Publics</b>



	Class Discussion and Case Study  Individual Presentations
For Next Class	<b>Read:</b> Parsons, 16 and 17 Complete assignment #4
Class 9 Thursday, Oct 27	<b>Ethics in Corporate Communications, Corporate Social Responsibility Campaigns and the Nonprofit Sector</b>  Assignment #4 due in class Class Discussion
For Next Class	Watch: <i>The Insider</i>
Class 10 Thursday, Nov 3	<b>Your Career Path: Writing Your Own Code of Ethics</b>  Discussion of <i>The Insider</i>  Individual Presentations
For Next Class	Work on codes
Class 11 Thursday, Nov 10	<b>Ethics &amp; Public Affairs/Government Relations</b>  Final challenge teams assigned  Individual Presentations
For Next Class	<b>Professional Codes Due via email (<a href="mailto:pattylong472@gmail.com">pattylong472@gmail.com</a>) and hard copy.</b>
Class 12 Thursday, Nov 17	<b>In Class Peer Review of Codes</b>  <b>Final Group Challenge Teams assigned</b>  <b>Guest Lecturer on Cultural Ethics:</b> Michael Taylor
For Next Class	<b>MANDATORY PARTICIPATION FOR NEXT 3 CLASSES</b>
Class 13 Class date: mutually agreeable time.	<b>In-class preparation for Final Class Presentation and Codes</b>





For Next Class	<b>MANDATORY PARTICIPATION</b>
Class 14 Thursday, Dec 1	<b>Final Class Presentations: Teams 1-3</b>
For Next Class	<b>MANDATORY PARTICIPATION</b>
Class 15 Thursday, Dec 15	<b>Final Class Presentations: Teams 4-6</b>