



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS – PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS MPRR-500-03: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ETHICS: PHILOSOPHICAL, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL

Professor: Chartése (Day) Torrence

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.

NOTE: A grade of “B” or higher is needed to pass this course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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 practices 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:
 - a. Examine morally and ethically complex professional situations in order to determine the ethical course of action;

- b. Clarify, strengthen, and articulate personal values and ethical commitments; and
- c. Navigate the complex ethical issues at work before they become public relations (and/or) legal problems.

REQUIRED READINGS

Book Title: Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice
Author: Patricia Parsons
ISBN: 9780749454429
Publisher: Kogan Page
Year: 2008
Price: \$35 (new) or \$20 (used) on www.Amazon.com | \$30 Google ebook

Movie: The Insider
Source: Walt Disney Video
ASIN: B00003CWRX
Year: 1999 | DVD Release Date: April 2000
Price: \$12 (new) on www.Amazon.com or rent
*Note: You **do not** need to purchase a copy of the movie to keep, but you do need to view the film carefully prior to the specified class even if you have seen the film before.*

Course Website: All other materials will be available the course website, and materials shared in class. Students must be prepared to discuss any of those assigned readings 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 each week.

COURSE POLICIES

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 instructor know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in

Classroom Etiquette & Class Participation:

extraordinary circumstances.

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones or other communications 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 to share something beyond the class.

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.

Coursework Submissions:

All coursework should be submitted by 5:00 p.m. ET on the designated due date. To submit, students should **both** email the completed assignment to the instructor (cd926@georgetown.edu) **and** provide the instructor with a hard copy during the class on the due date. The subject line of the email should be formatted as follows: **Assignment # [Insert #]: Assignment Name – Last Name, First Name**. Late assignments will not be accepted, except in extreme circumstances and when discussed with the professor prior to the due date. Late submissions will result in a deduction of 5% per day (including weekend days). Email submissions count as received only when formatted and named in accordance with the requirements listed below and when attached in readable format.

All assignments should be submitted in:

- AP format
- Double-spaced
- Single-sided
- Times New Roman font; AND
- 12 point font; AND
- 1-inch margins

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 two weeks after the

assignment was submitted. 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 broken down as follows:

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.

Assignment #1	Personal Paper: 60 points (15% of your grade)	Due: September 15 by 5:00 p.m. (via email) and hard copy in class
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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. Submission requirements are as follows:

- File name should be **LAST Name.FIRST Name_Assignment1_Personal Paper**
- Follow requirements as noted above in Coursework Submissions

Assignment #2	In-Class Case Study and Analysis: 60 points (15% of your grade)	Completed in Class on September 29
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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.

Assignment #3	Individual Presentation: 20 points (5% of your grade)	Presentations in Class on October 6 & 20 and November 3 & 10
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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 September.

Assignment #4 **Persuasive Writing Assignment:** **Due: October 20 by 5:00 p.m.**
40 points (10% of your grade) **(via email) and hard copy in**
class

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

- File name should be **LAST Name.FIRST Name_Assignment4_Persuasive Writing**
- Follow requirements as noted above in Coursework Submissions

Assignment #5 **Final Code of Ethics:** **Due: November 17 by 5:00**
100 points (25% of your grade) **p.m. (via email) and 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 the opportunity to do peer review in class. Submission requirements are as follows:

- File name should be **LAST Name.FIRST Name_Assignment5_Final Code of Ethics**
- Follow requirements as noted above in Coursework Submissions

Assignment #6 **Final Group Challenge:** **Teams will be assigned on**
80 points (20% of your grade) **November 10**

Due: December 1 by 5:00
p.m. (via email).

Presentations to be given
during last two days of class

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.**

A	374-400	B-	320-331
A-	360-374	C	280-319

B+	348-359	F	279 and below
B	332-347		

The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a C or below for the final grade.

NOTE: A grade of "B" or higher is needed to pass this course.

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

<http://academicsupport.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; <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>) 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 www.plaigiarism.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 instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

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

WEEK	IN THIS CLASS
Class 1 September 1 <i>(Thursday)</i>	Beginning Our Conversation: Words & Idea Overview of Syllabus Honor Code & Resources Discussion: What Constitutes Ethical Public Relations Practice? Personal Exploration Exercise
<i>For Next Class</i>	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (p. 1-44) • On Course Website: Gower – Doing the Right Thing (p. 1-20) • On Course Website: A Framework for Thinking Ethically (p. 1-4)
Class 2 September 8 <i>(Thursday)</i>	Philosophical Foundations and Practical Implications of Ethics in Your Personal and Professional Life Discussion of style, professionalism, values and ethics In class exercise: time permitting
<i>For Next Class</i>	Assignment #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Paper due on September 15 by 5:00 p.m. via email to cd926@georgetown.edu AND bring hard copy to class Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapters 7-9) • Become familiar with the following codes (on class site): Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Arthur Page, American Marketing Association, etc.
Class 3 September 15 <i>(Thursday)</i>	Personal Codes, Societal Codes, Professional Codes A close examination of the PRSA and other related ethical frameworks Group Discussion on moral development
<i>For Next Class</i>	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapter 11) • “The Case Against the Media by the Media” (posted on course)

	website)
Class 4 September 22 (Thursday)	Ethics and the Media Journalism ethics Ethics and media relations
<i>For Next Class</i>	Prepare for Assignment #2: In-class Graded Case Study and Analysis
Class 5 September 29 (Thursday)	Putting It Together: Professional Practice Assignment #2: In-class Graded Case Study and Analysis
<i>For Next Class</i>	Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and bring to class 3 advertisements of impactful product and/or social marketing campaigns. Come to class prepared to present your findings. Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapter 12-13)
Class 6 October 6 (Thursday)	Advertising and the Ethics of Visual Culture Discussion of ethics in visuals and messages Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Round 1)
<i>For Next Class</i>	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuasion and Advocacy lecture materials to be posted on course website
Class 7 October 13 (Thursday)	Ethics & Writing: Persuasion and Advocacy Students will be given time in class to work on assignment #4
<i>For Next Class</i>	Assignment #4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuasive Writing Assignment due on October 20 by 5:00 p.m. via email to cd926@georgetown.edu AND bring hard copy to class Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 October 20 (Thursday)	Ethics in Digital and Social Media Dealing with Activist Publics Class Discussion and Case Study Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Group 2)
<i>For Next Class</i>	Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapter 16-17)
Class 9 October 27 (Thursday)	Ethics in Corporate Communications, Corporate Social Responsibility Campaigns and the Nonprofit Sector Class Discussion
<i>For Next Class</i>	Preparation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View <i>The Insider</i>
Class 10 November 3 (Thursday)	Your Career Path: Writing Your Own Code of Ethics Discussion of <i>The Insider</i> Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Group 3)
<i>For Next Class</i>	Assignment: Continue development of Assignment #5: Final Code of Ethics
Class 11 November 10 (Thursday)	Ethics & Public Affairs/Government Relations Class Discussion Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Group 4) Final Group Challenge Teams Assigned
<i>For Next Class</i>	Assignment #5 Final Code of Ethics due on November 17 by 5:00 p.m. via email to cd926@georgetown.edu AND bring 4 hard copy to class on November 17
Class 12	In Class Peer Review of Codes of Ethics

November 17 (Thursday)	Class Discussion of Final Codes of Ethics
<i>For Next Class</i>	MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN NEXT 3 CLASSES
Class 13* (TBD)	In-class preparation for Final Group Challenge Presentations
<i>For Next Class</i>	Assignment #6 Final Group Challenge Presentation due on December 1 by 5:00 p.m. via email to cd926@georgetown.edu AND bring hard copy to class on presentation day as assigned (December 1 or December 15) MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN CLASS 14
Class 14* December 1 (Thursday)	Final Group Challenge Presentations: Teams 1-3
<i>For Next Class</i>	MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN CLASS 15
Class 15 December 15 (Thursday)	Final Group Challenge Presentations: Teams 4-6
YOU MADE IT!	

**Class 13 will be scheduled to accommodate university closing on Thanksgiving Day (November 24) and Election Day (December 8).*