



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Emergency and Disaster Management

MPDM 500: Ethics and Critical Decision Making

School of Continuing Studies | Emergency and Disaster Management Program

Course Syllabus – Spring 2017

Thursdays, 5:20pm – 7:50pm | January 9 – May 1, 2017

Instructor: Dr. Pamela Mertens

pm1054@georgetown.edu

Office Hours - By Appointment & Email Response within 48 hours

Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies, 640 Massachusetts Ave, NW

Course Description

The *Ethics and Critical Decision Making* course is a core course in all Georgetown SCS MPS programs. Students are introduced to ethical methodologies, principles, values, and frameworks as related to the processes of risk assessment, vulnerability assessment, and consequence prediction and management. Students study discipline- and field-specific codes of ethics within the profession. The course explores the ethical responsibilities all disaster management professionals have to themselves, organizations, the government, and the public. Students will apply an ethical decision-making framework and gain experience in decision-making surrounding ethical issues in disaster management with an all-hazards perspective including aspects of public health engagement. Discussions include ethical situations based on past and current real-world scenarios, including the uncertainty, probability, and consequences of risk assessment and communication, with topic discussions focusing on the ethical issues facing emergency managers.

This is a core course within the Emergency and Disaster Management program. Students must earn a grade of B or better to receive credit towards graduation. Students who receive a grade of B- or lower must repeat the course.

Learning Objectives

- Recognize key ethical principles from agency, private sector, and academic sources, including professional codes of conduct
- Describe the relationship between ethics and professional competency within specific historical and hypothetical scenarios
- Identify ethical considerations, challenges, and response options, including consequence management, in specific case studies and hypothetical scenarios, giving particular attention to vulnerable populations
- Evaluate case studies in terms of the ethics of the risk assessment and response

- Mastery of course material will enable the successful student to craft an individual approach to ethical decision making, including a personal code of ethics, and strategies for maintaining an ethical focus under stress
- Be able to apply a professional code of ethics to make defensible, ethical decisions in risk assessment, vulnerability assessment, and consequence prediction and management through exercises and simulations

Required Texts, Reading and Technology Platforms

Zack, Naomi. *Ethics for Disaster: Studies in Social, Political and Legal Philosophy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. ISBN-13:978-0742564954 - \$20+

All other readings and resources are available by hyperlink on course Canvas site. At least two classes will take place on line using Zoom. Students should ensure they can successfully log into and use both systems (including voice and video) before the first class.

Students are expected to contribute to class discussion grounded in familiarity with current events and all assigned readings. Required readings may be supplemented with timely articles, book excerpts, and multimedia throughout the semester.

Classroom Etiquette, Class Participation, and Other Guidelines

A successful and beneficial class depends on the active attention and engagement of all students. This course seeks to foster challenging and robust dialogue that is grounded in personal experience, course material, critical thought and respect for others. Students are expected to come to class prepared for participating and leading discussions and engagement with guest speakers. What is discussed in class by students, instructors and guests stay in the class unless you receive permission from the source. Recording in the classroom is not permitted. Students should use technology in order to directly support classroom activities and limited note taking only.

Specific methods of instruction include readings and lectures, individual written assignments and reflections, group discussions, individual presentations, and a final project. Two to three specified classes will meet virtually through the online videoconferencing tool Zoom.

Attendance Policy

This class relies heavily on attendance and active participation and students are expected to attend all class sessions of the course. Punctual attendance is critical and late arrivals of more than 20 minutes will count as one absence. In the case of an emergency or extenuating circumstances, discuss with the instructor as far in advance as possible with a proposal to make up the work you will miss. 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.

Late Assignment Policy

Assignments turned in late will result in a grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-) for each day that it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances, speak with the instructor as far in advance of the due date as possible. Extensions will be considered only in the case of genuine exceptional circumstances and must be requested at least 48 hours prior to deadline.

Use of SafeAssign.com

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for Textual Similarity Review to SafeAssign for detection of plagiarism and may be added solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers in the future.

Course Structure and Assignments

The course will meet once per week in person on Thursdays for 2.5 hours with 2-3 classes taking place remotely using video conferencing via Zoom. Classes will include lectures, presentations, group discussion, debate, and individual reflection. Outside of assignments, students are expected to actively engage with the study material and relevant current events. Students are expected to have completed readings and assignments in advance of class, and be prepared to actively contribute to and lead discussions.

In Class Participation & Discussion Facilitation - Engaging with this material requires study, reflection, discussion, and application. Students are encouraged and expected to participate actively and thoughtfully in class. Students will be assigned to lead portions of the class at least once during the semester to stimulate peer discussion and engage with material more deeply.

Summary of Current Ethical Issue & Discussion Question Submission – Every other week prior to class, students will submit a summary (150-200 words) and hyperlink to an example of an issue found in current events or from their professional experience which has an ethical component of emergency management or disaster preparedness, response or recovery. Students will also submit 2 discussion questions based on the week's reading with citations.

Case Briefing – Students will develop and present a briefing to a 'Leadership Team' of a major emergency with an overview of the situation, key stakeholders, structure of the response, ethical challenges, and recommendations for mitigation of said challenges.

Ethics Analysis Paper- Analyze ethics involved in a current emergency response or a relevant issue from your own work, noting the ethical issue, how the organization handled it, and defend your position on whether it was the right choice. (1,250-1,500 words)

Final Case Study Project - Paper, Summary and Presentation – Students will complete an extended written assignment and presentation, to demonstrate their ability to apply an ethical decision making framework to a case study of their choice. Students will write a paper (2,000-2,500 words), include a separate executive summary (1 page), Power Point slide deck (3-5 slides), and a class presentation with questions (15 minutes + 10 minutes for Q&A)

Assignments and Grading

Specific grading rubrics can be found on course Canvas site and the course calendar. All assignments should adhere to APA citation standards. Points awarded will be displayed in total points and percentages via Canvas (Points earned/points possible=%).

	Activity / Assignment	Submission	Points Available
1	In Class Participation & Discussion Facilitation	Weekly - In class	100/Subj.
2	Summary of Current Ethical Issue & Discussion Question Submission	Every Other Week Before Class – Hard Copy & via Canvas	100/5@20 Pts. each
3	Case Briefing & Presentation	Hard Copy & via Canvas	100
4	Ethics Analysis Paper	Hard Copy & via Canvas	100
5	Final Case Study Paper and Presentation	Hard Copy, via Canvas + In Class Pres.	100
	Total		500

A	95-100%	B-	80-82%
A-	90-94%	C	70-79%
B+	87-89%	F	0-69%
B	83-86%		

Withdrawal Policy and Calendar

Should a student voluntarily withdraw from this course, credit for tuition will be calculated by the date of the student's official notice to the Program Manager, according to periods and percentages listed below. **The last day to withdraw from this course is November 7, 2016.**

Dates	Percentage Refunded
Jan 19-24	100%
Jan 25– 7	80%
Feb 8 – 21	70%
Feb 22 – Mar 6	50%
Feb 8 – Mar 13	40%
Mar 20	Last Day to Withdraw

Academic Resources

Library Services

SCS Librarian: Jessica Vanderhoff
 202-784-7389; Jessica.vanderhoff@georgetown.edu
<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/scs>
 Emergency and Disaster Management Research Guide:
<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/EDM>

Writing Center

202-687-4246; <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>

Academic Resource Center

202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <https://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>

Students with Disabilities

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 (ARC) (202-784-7366; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>) before the start of classes to allow their office 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 University. 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. The Georgetown Honor Code pledge reads as follows:

In pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown 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.