



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies  
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

## **GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS – PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS MPPR-500-01: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ETHICS: PHILOSOPHICAL, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL**

**Class Meets:** Tuesdays, 5:20 PM – 7:50 PM

**Class Location:** 640 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001

**Professor:** Chartése Torrence

**Office Hours:** Arranged by appointment.

### **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](http://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](http://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 on 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 extraordinary circumstances.

**LIBRARY RESOURCES:** <http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/researchcourseguides>  
<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>

**Classroom Etiquette & Class Participation:** 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](mailto: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:

- American Psychological Association (APA) 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. The PRCC program uses American Psychological Association (APA) style for references and citations. For additional information on this citation style, visit <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/citations> for

guidance. 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.

<b>Assignment #1</b>	<b>Personal Paper: 60 points (15% of your grade)</b>	<b>Due: January 31 by 4:00 p.m. (via email) and hard copy in class</b>
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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

<b>Assignment #2</b>	<b>In-Class Case Study and Analysis: 60 points (15% of your grade)</b>	<b>Completed in Class on February 14 (bring laptop to class for submission)</b>
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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.

<b>Assignment #3</b>	<b>Individual Presentation: 20 points (5% of your grade)</b>	<b>Due February 28 @ 4:00 p.m. via email and hard copy in</b>
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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.**

<b>A</b>	372-400	<b>B-</b>	320-331
<b>A-</b>	360-371	<b>C</b>	280-319
<b>B+</b>	348-359	<b>F</b>	279 and below
<b>B</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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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.*

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>IN THIS CLASS</b>
<b>Class 1</b> January 17 <i>(Tuesday)</i>	<b>Beginning Our Conversation: Words &amp; Idea</b>  Overview of Syllabus Honor Code & Resources Discussion: What Constitutes Ethical Public Relations Practice? Personal Exploration Exercise
<i>For Next Class</i>	<b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (p. 1-44)</li> <li>• On Course Website: Gower – Doing the Right Thing (p. 1-20)</li> <li>• On Course Website: A Framework for Thinking Ethically (p. 1-4)</li> </ul>
<b>INAUGURATION DAY – NO CLASSES – JANUARY 20</b>	
<b>Class 2</b> January 24 <i>(Tuesday)</i>	<b>Philosophical Foundations and Practical Implications of Ethics in Your Personal and Professional Life</b>  Discussion of style, professionalism, values and ethics  Discussion on Assignment #1 Personal Paper
<i>For Next Class</i>	<b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapters 7-9)</li> <li>• Become familiar with the following codes (on class website): Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Arthur Page, American Marketing Association, etc.</li> </ul> <b>Assignment #1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Paper due on January 31 by 4:00 p.m. via email to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> AND bring hard copy to class</li> </ul>
<b>Class 3</b> January 31 <i>(Tuesday)</i>	<b>Personal Codes, Societal Codes, Professional Codes</b>  A close examination of the PRSA and other related ethical frameworks  Discussion on moral development  Discussion on Assignment #2: In-Class Graded Case Study & Analysis
<i>For Next Class</i>	<b>Assignment #2</b>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review course content and PRSA Code to prepare for In-class Graded Case Study and Analysis on February 14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring laptop to class to complete and submit Assignment #2</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Class 4</b> February 7 <i>(Tuesday)</i>	<b>Writing Your Own Code of Ethics</b>  Feedback on Assignment #1: Personal Paper  Discussion on Assignment #5: Personal Code of Ethics  Discussion on Assignment #3: Individual Presentations  Sign-up Distributed for Individual Presentations Topics and Dates
<i>For Next Class</i>	<b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persuasion and Advocacy lecture materials to be posted on course website</li> </ul> <b>Assignment #2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for In-class Graded Case Study and Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring laptop to class to complete and submit Assignment #2</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <b>Assignment #3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue preparations for Individual Presentations. All presentations are due electronically to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on February 28 and one hard copy should be provided to the instructor in class on the day of presentation</li> </ul>
<b>Class 5</b> February 14 <i>(Tuesday)</i>	<b>Ethics in Writing: Persuasion vs. Propaganda</b>  Discussion on Ethics of Words Used to Communicate and Motivate Action  <i>Guest Speaker: Persuasive Writing</i>  Discussion on Assignment #4: Persuasive Writing Assignment  Sign-up Distributed for Persuasive Writing Topics  Assignment #2: In-class Graded Case Study and Analysis
<i>For Next Class</i>	<b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapter 12-13)</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and bring to class 3 advertisements of impactful product and/or social marketing campaigns. Come to class prepared to present your findings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue preparations for Individual Presentations. All presentations are due electronically to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on February 28 and one hard copy should be provided to the instructor in class on the day of presentation</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin working on Persuasive Writing Assignment which is due on March 14 by 4:00 p.m.</li> </ul>
<b>PRESIDENTS' DAY – NO CLASSES – FEBRUARY 20</b>	
<p><b>Class 6</b> February 21 <i>(Tuesday)</i></p>	<p><b>Ethics of Visual Culture and Advertising</b></p> <p>Discussion of Ethics in Visuals and Messages</p>
<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapter 11)</li> <li>• Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (posted on course website)</li> <li>• “The Case Against the Media by the Media” (posted on course website)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All presentations are due electronically to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on February 28 and one hard copy should be provided to the instructor in class on the day of presentation</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue working on Persuasive Writing Assignment due on March 14 by 4:00 p.m.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Class 7</b> February 28 <i>(Tuesday)</i></p>	<p><b>Ethics and the Media</b></p> <p>Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Round 1)</p> <p>Journalism ethics</p> <p>Ethics and media relations</p>

<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word of Mouth Marketing Association Code of Ethics (posted on course website)</li> </ul> <p><b>Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuasive Writing Assignment due on March 14 by 4:00 p.m. via email to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> AND bring hard copy to class</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue development of Final Code of Ethics. Be prepared to email draft to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on March 28 in preparation for in-class peer review on April 4. Final assignment due on April 11.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SPRING BREAK – MARCH 3-12</b></p>	
<p><b>Class 8</b> March 14 <i>(Tuesday)</i></p>	<p><b>Ethics in Digital and Social Media</b> <b>Dealing with Activist Publics</b></p> <p>Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Group 2)</p> <p>Class Discussion and Case Study</p>
<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice (Chapter 16-17)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue development of Final Code of Ethics. Be prepared to email draft to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on March 28 in preparation for in-class peer review on April 4. Final assignment due on April 11.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Class 9</b> March 21 <i>(Tuesday)</i></p>	<p><b>Ethics in Corporate Communications, Corporate Social Responsibility Campaigns and the Nonprofit Sector</b></p> <p>Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Group 3)</p> <p>Class Discussion and Case Studies</p>

<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association of Government Relations Professionals Code of Ethics (on course website)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email draft Personal Code of Ethics to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on March 28 in preparation for in-class peer review on April 4. Final assignment due on April 11.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Class 10</b> March 28 (Tuesday)</p>	<p><b>Ethics &amp; Public Affairs/Government Relations</b></p> <p>Assignment #3: Individual Presentations (Group 4)</p> <p>Class Discussion and Case Studies</p> <p>Final Group Challenge Teams Assigned</p>
<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Assignment #5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue development of Final Code of Ethics. Final assignment due on April 11.</li> <li>• Review assigned peers' Final Code of Ethics and be prepared to provide feedback during in-class peer review on April 4.</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue preparations for Group Team Challenge. All presentations are due electronically to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on April 25 and one hard copy should be provided to the instructor in class on the day of presentation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Class 11</b> April 4 (Tuesday)</p>	<p><b>Public Relations Ethics in Practice</b></p> <p>Panel Discussion with various PR practitioners</p> <p>In-Class Peer Review of Personal Codes of Ethics</p>
<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Preparation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View <i>The Insider</i> and be prepared to discuss ethical implications for class discussion</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignment #5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Personal Code of Ethics due on April 11 by 4:00 p.m. via email to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> AND bring 1 hard copy to class on April 11</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Assignment #6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue preparations for Group Team Challenge. All presentations are due electronically to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on April 25 and one hard copy should be provided to the instructor in class on the day of presentation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Class 12</b> April 11 (Tuesday)</p>	<p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p>Class Discussion of Ethical Implications in <i>The Insider</i></p> <p>Course Review</p>
<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Assignment #6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue preparations for Group Team Challenge. All presentations are due electronically to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on April 25 and one hard copy should be provided to the instructor in class on the day of presentation</li> </ul>
<p><b>EASTER BREAK – APRIL 12-17</b></p>	
<p><b>Class 13</b> April 18 (Tuesday)</p>	<p><b>In-class Preparation for Final Group Challenge Presentations</b></p>
<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>Assignment #6</b></p> <p>Final Group Challenge Presentation are due electronically to <a href="mailto:cd926@georgetown.edu">cd926@georgetown.edu</a> by 4:00 p.m. on April 25 and one hard copy should be provided to the instructor in class on the day of presentation (April 25 and May 9)</p> <p><b>MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN CLASS 14</b></p>
<p><b>Class 14</b> April 25 (Tuesday)</p>	<p><b>Final Group Challenge Presentations: Teams 1 &amp; 2</b></p>
<p><i>For Next Class</i></p>	<p><b>MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IN CLASS 15</b></p>
<p><b>STUDY DAYS – NO CLASSES – MAY 2-4</b></p>	
<p><b>Class 15</b> May 9 (Tuesday)</p>	<p><b>Final Group Challenge Presentations: Teams 3 &amp; 4</b></p> <p>Complete Course Evaluations</p>
<p><b>YOU MADE IT!</b></p>	