Syllabus Draft for COMM6240

“Communication, Ethics, and the Workplace” (Spring semester even years)

Course Objectives:
Communication and ethics set the perimeters for interaction in the workplace. Yet, most people seldom contemplate either process. Communication is the process of exchanging messages either verbally or nonverbally. Ethics is the process of taking action (values) to actuate abstract principles of right and wrong (morals). Communication and ethics challenge philosophers and students. This course will analyze the intersection of universal moral standards and professional conduct in the workplace. Students will consider cases drawn from advertising, broadcast journalism, film, photojournalism, print journalism, public relations, television, corporations, government agencies, education, the arts, and the World Wide Web. They will confront potential ethical issues that they might face while dealing with customers, clients, or sources. Communication professionals build their careers around serving the public and, therein, earning credibility. They discover that upholding ethical standards engenders pride and personal accomplishment as well as a sense of belonging to the community.

Course Requirements:
This seminar will incorporate brief lectures with discussion and student presentations. Each student will do extensive research and, then, present a page review. The final project will involve writing a 20-page report exploring an ethical issue that relates to their career. (They must choose a different case from the one featured in the oral presentation). Students will interview professionals face-to-face and via e-mail or phone. They may prepare a poster presentation of their final project if appropriate facilities exist on campus.

Preliminary Reading List:


Bond, Kenneth M. Bibliography of Business Ethics and Business Moral Values. 4th ed., April, 1992. Published by Humbolt State University, Arcata, CA and also distributed by the Center for Business Ethics, Bentley College, Waltham, MA.


Elliott, Deni (ed.). Responsible Journalism (Sage: 1986).


1. What are the three most significant facts of the case? What facts would you feature in a headline or first paragraph? Explain why these specific facts are the most important.

2. What are three facts you would like to know about the case? What is missing from the case that you think would help explain the actions of those involved? If working with an actual case, use library and Web resources to try to discover the answers to these questions.

3. Who are the moral agents and/or stakeholders and what are their specific job or role-related activities? A moral agent is anyone who can be held responsible for his or her actions. A stakeholder is anyone affected by the decision in a case. Try to be as specific as possible when listing their job or role-related activities.

1. What are the values of the moral agents and/or stakeholders? Values are general concepts (truthfulness, fairness, diversity, and so on) that correspond with the job or role-related activities of those involved. With almost all ethical dilemmas, there are conflicts between the values deemed most important by those involved.
6. What are the loyalties of the moral agents and/or stakeholders? Loyalties are alliances based on promises to oneself or to others that come from reasonable expectations of job or role-related activities. Someone involved with a case might have loyalties to him or herself, to family members, to sources or clients, to an organization, or to a profession. As with values, conflicting loyalties between those involved are often at the root of ethical dilemmas.

7. What moral philosophies can you apply and why? Depending on the case and the actions of those involved, one or two moral philosophies might be more salient than others; nevertheless, consider at least six in the analysis. And as with values and loyalties, identify conflicts between moral philosophies by those involved are often important when considering a case.

8. What creative and/or credible alternatives could resolve the issue? Think of at least four different choices those involved with the case might consider. Two of your alternatives could be creative and far-fetched while the other two should be more realistic.

9. What would you do? Pretend that you are one of the moral agents and/or stakeholders involved with the case. What action should you take and why?

10. Chicago style endnotes and bibliography [Always cite your sources of information in an appropriate and complete manner.]

Possible Assignment:

Write a ten-page analysis of an ethical dilemma for a case you find outside the book that relates to your current or future profession. Use the SMA criteria, and document your evidence with Chicago-style endnotes and bibliography.

Poster

The purpose of a poster is to communicate information visually with an opportunity to generate discussion between audience and author(s). The structure of a poster should be logical according to development of the topic. The structure of a poster that communicates research is similar to that of a published paper, though layout will differ.

Topic:

The poster will focus on the final paper.

The panel on which your poster will be displayed:

Traditionally, posters are presented on a 4 feet x 6 feet solid fiber panel and attached with thumb tacks.

Grade:

Students will earn points for the quality of preparation of the poster, clarity, and appropriateness for a broad, well-educated audience, and verbal responses to questions (discussion).