

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
SMS224
Social Media Ethics
Spring 2020

Room: LC 225
Class time: Tu 12:00-1:20
Format: Blended (79% online)

Professor: Dr. Urszula Pruchniewska

Office: LC 232A

Email: pruchnie@kutztown.edu

Office Phone: 3-4563

Office Hours: Tuesday 3-4:30; Wednesday (VIRTUAL HOURS*) 1-3; Thursday 12-1:30 and by appointment (*email me to set up a phone call or video chat for virtual hours)

Course Overview

Course Description

This course will explore the origins of ethical behavior and actions within the media and will look at both classical and contemporary approaches to ethical decision making and apply them to modern media practices, particularly social media. At the same time, the course will ask whether the media today are acting appropriately as regards ethical practice, and if not, why not. Not only does the course critique media practices, but it will also search for suggestions that will most positively affect both the media institutions and the public with which they interact and upon which they rely for their livelihood.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of ethics for social media content creation
2. Identify the differences and similarities between various ethical systems
3. Argue for why specific communication should be considered ethical or unethical in traditional and new media (including social media) contexts
4. Apply ethical systems to evaluate the ethical implications of contemporary cases in traditional, printed, and online situations

Required Textbooks and Course Materials

Plaisance, P.L. (2014). *Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Case studies and supplementary materials will be uploaded on D2L.

Course Format

This course is in a blended format, which means that almost **80% of the class will be conducted online through D2L**. You are expected to regularly check D2L for announcements, quizzes, worksheets, and new assigned readings. We will meet only 7 times over the semester – these class sessions will be reserved for discussion and presentations/debates. This means that the bulk of this class content is self-directed learning, with little formal “lecturing.” So, to succeed in this class, you should do the readings and watch/listen to video and audio content on your own EVERY WEEK.

Students are expected to:

1. Attend class on meeting days
2. Complete all reading/viewing assignments during the week they are assigned and prior to attending class on meeting days
3. Actively participate in class discussion and activities
4. Complete assignments, quizzes, projects, and exams on the assigned day
5. Turn in the final, professional version of each assignment on time

Assessment

Weekly Reading Quizzes/Worksheets (40%) Every week, there will be a short quiz or worksheet to complete online (on D2L) or in class (on meeting days) based on the reading/viewing/listening assigned for the week. You have until midnight Sunday each week to complete the online quizzes and worksheets. Worksheets and quizzes handed out in class must be submitted at the end of class.

Participation (20%) (online and in class) Every week, you, as a class, will have a discussion online about the readings. Each student must start a new thread **at least once** this semester – this can be sharing a related experience, a summative thought, or a link to a current ethical issue in media or social media related to the chapter, with a question posed to the class. Each student must also respond to someone else’s thread **at least twice** during the semester. You are also expected to participate fully in discussions during class meetings, particularly during presentation weeks.

Case Study Essay (25%) For your final project, you will write a 4-5 page essay outlining a specific ethical issue on social media, referencing concepts from the textbook. More information will be provided in class.

Presentation of Case Study Essay (15%) At the end of the semester, you will briefly present the main points of your final essay to the class. Your presentation should be between 3 and 5 minutes. You will then lead a brief class discussion on your topic.

Grading Scale:

93-100% = A
90-92.9% = A-
87-89.9% = B+
83-86.9% = B
80-82.9% = B-
77-79.9% = C+
70-76.9% = C
60-69.9% = D
Less than 60% = F

Course Policies

Attendance

Regular attendance in class is important for fulfilling our course objectives. You are expected to attend class on meeting days, arrive on time, and actively participate in class discussions and activities. Note that you cannot make up quizzes or worksheets that are handed out in class if you are absent without a valid excuse.

IMPORTANT: Winter Weather

Many of you commute, as do I. Bearing that in mind, if winter weather occurs on our meeting days and it is bad enough that driving is dangerous, **we will still hold class, but online.** This applies whether the University is officially closed or not. In the event of severe weather, I will decide whether class will be held online or in person at least TWO HOURS before class and will make that announcement through D2L. Therefore, it is important that you regularly check D2L for updates, and especially during periods of bad weather.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will NOT be accepted, unless there is an emergency or an unavoidable conflict, in which case you need to let me know in advance to make alternate arrangements.

Class rules

I am easy-going in class and like to have fun. However, I also take our course content seriously. I expect you to work hard, come to class prepared and on time, and actively participate in class discussions and activities. I also expect you to not use your phone or computer when it is not for class purposes. Texting or other inappropriate technology use during class time will negatively affect your participation grade.

General Writing Guidelines

All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins on all sides. A 12-point font should be used. Papers should include your name and course title in the upper right-hand corner. Please do not include a title page. ALL PAPERS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED ONLINE THROUGH D2L.

Application and assimilation of discussion and readings should be evident in all assignments. I admire and reward good writing skills. The use of introductions and summaries, good transitions between paragraphs, and logical arguments are encouraged. **Be sure to proofread your work.** Poor grammar and spelling distract from good communication and will be graded down. I am willing to help you with your writing skills during office hours. Additionally, you might request help from the Writing Center on campus.

Writing Center

The University Writing Center is a free service for students, offering advice and assistance with writing assignments from any course or subject. Tutors can assist you in improving your composing process, as well as with difficulties with development, organization, style, documentation, and mechanics. The UWC is located in Rohrbach Library 100C on the main floor. Its hours are Mon-Thurs 11-9, Fri 11-5, and Sunday 2-9. Please call 610-683-4733, email wrcenter@kutztown.edu, or come in to Rohrbach Library 100C to set up an appointment. Walk ins are welcome!

Accommodations

It is the policy of Kutztown University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any disabled student who needs accommodations (e.g., seating placement, arrangements for examinations, etc.) should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. If you have already disclosed a disability to the Disability Services Office (215 Stratton Administration Building) and are seeking accommodations, please feel free to speak with me privately so that I may assist you. If you have an injury sustained during military service including PTSD or TBI, you are also eligible for accommodations under the ADA and should contact the Disability Services Office. Students with disabilities must also contact the Office of Disabled Student Services located in the Stratton Administration building, Room 215. They can be reached at 683-4108.

Academic Dishonesty

All work should be your own. Assignments should be individual efforts. Plagiarism includes copying or paraphrasing someone else's words as your own or excessively collaborating with someone and presenting the work as yours alone. College regulations regarding academic dishonesty, as set forth in the Kutztown University student handbook and other College documents and publications, will be strictly enforced. A student caught plagiarizing on an assignment will receive an F for that assignment. A student caught cheating on a test will receive an F for the course.

University Policy on Title IX and Mandatory Reporting

In order to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and university policy, Kutztown University's faculty and staff must report incidents of sexual violence, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, including relevant details, such as the names of those involved in the incident, to the Department of Public Safety and Police Services and to Jesus Peña, Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when the previously listed offenses are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing or other creative assignment for class or as part of a university-approved research project. Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the person/entity designated in the university's protection of minors policy. Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and resources available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at: <http://www2.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/social-equity/title-ix-information.htm> and <http://www.kutztown.edu/prebuilt/apps/policyregister/policy.aspx?policy=GEN-005>.

Diversity

This course encourages different perspectives related to such factors as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and other relevant cultural identities. This course seeks to foster understanding and inclusiveness related to such diverse perspectives and ways of communicating.

Course Schedule

*****This is a tentative schedule that is subject to change. Announcements will be made in class and via email through D2L. Note that additional readings/videos/podcasts may be provided during the semester*****

Week 1

1/21 Introduction to Course
READ: Syllabus
READ: Chapter 1, Ethics Theory: An Overview

*Week 2 (NO MEETING, ONLINE ONLY)

1/28 Key Frameworks of Ethics
READ: Chapter 2, Key Frameworks

*Week 3 (NO MEETING)

2/4 Ethics and the Media
READ: Chapter 3, Ethics Theory Application to Media
READ: 8 of the Biggest Social Media Moments in 2019

Week 4

2/11 Ethics, Technology, and Social Media
READ: Chapter 4, Technology

*Week 5 (NO MEETING)

2/18 Transparency
READ: Chapter 5, Transparency

*Week 6 (NO MEETING)

2/25 Justice
READ: Chapter 6, Justice

Week 7

3/3 Harm
READ: Chapter 7, Harm

*Week 8

3/10 **SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

*Week 9 (NO MEETING)

3/17 Autonomy
READ: Chapter 8, Autonomy

*Week 10 (NO MEETING)

3/24 Privacy
READ: Chapter 9, Privacy

Week 11

3/31

Community

READ: Chapter 10, Community

Week 12

4/7

PRESENTATIONS

***Week 13 (NO MEETING)**

4/14

Use this time to work on your final project

Week 14

4/21

PRESENTATIONS

Week 15

4/28

PRESENTATIONS