

Jour 308: Ethics in a Wired World



Spring 2017

**1:00 – 2:15 p.m. Tuesday & Thursday
330 Strong Hall**

Professor

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Office Hours

- Tues & Thurs: 11 a.m. - noon
- Tues & Thurs: 3 – 4:30 p.m.
- And by appointment

Course Description

Ethics in a Wired World is a course about integrity in our media-saturated world. In its fullest sense, integrity means an *integration* – a fusion – of values and actions. Integrity means that our values consistently come to life in our actions. Integrity means that our values drive our actions and that our actions reflect our values. In this course, we'll examine the role of ethics/integrity in media-related decisions.

We'll approach ethics in a wired (and wireless) world in three ways:

1. We'll examine challenges that we encounter as media participants, such as those that arise through engagement with social media.
2. We'll examine challenges that professionals, such as journalists and advertisers, encounter.
3. We'll examine ethics challenges as actual media content, such as the plots of movies and TV shows.

This course will not tell you what your personal values should be, but, ideally, it will help you identify those values and teach you new ways to ensure that you do your best to act on your values in the digital world –and elsewhere.

Good news: Research shows that successful ethics courses – those that truly benefit students – involve a lot of problem-solving. So we'll devote many class sessions to using critical-thinking systems and trying to find ethical answers to tough ethics challenges. That means that the final two-third of the course won't be lecture-format; it will be class discussion – even in this large class.

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We'll tackle two different kinds of ethics challenges:

- Situations in which we ask, "Is that ethical?"
- Situations in which we don't know what to do because important values are clashing.

Course Objectives for Students

1. To learn ethics theories and principles.
2. To increase sensitivity to the presence of ethics issues, problems and dilemmas in digital media ranging from Facebook to online journalism to online dating sites to the plots of TV shows and movies.
3. To increase the ability to think critically and clearly by applying formal decision-making models to case studies.
4. To prepare students to deal effectively with the ethics dilemmas they'll face in their lives and careers. Studies show the good, ethical decision-making is a key ingredient of successful leadership and personal happiness.

Required Materials

- Just a notebook for notes – and access to Blackboard. There is no textbook for this course.

Grading and Assignments

1. Online Quizzes 25 percent
Attendance is important! The information needed to answer the quizzes will be delivered in the lectures.
2. Midterm Exam 25 percent
This will involve questions about the philosophers and their theories and principles as well as questions about the decision-making models.
3. Values Essay 25 percent
This will be a brief essay (2 – 2.5 double-spaced pages), specifying the personal values that you want to guide your actions. The values essay is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date.
4. Final Exam 25 percent
This will involve the same material as the midterm and will also involve applying a decision-making model to a case study.

The grading scale for the examinations is A = 91-100; A- = 90; B+ = 89; B = 81-88; B- = 80; C+ = 79; C = 71-78; C- = 70; D+ = 69; D = 61-68; D- = 60; F = 0-59.

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Late assignments (except for the quizzes) will be accepted; all assignments must be completed to pass the course. Unless there is an acceptable explanation for the lateness, the assignment will be graded in view of its extended deadline; that is, the grading standards will be higher.

Grading Standards

The values essay will be graded on

1. **Content:** Does the assignment meet its assigned purpose?
2. **Organization:** Does organization enhance content? Does each part of the paper lead logically and gracefully to the next? Do case analyses clearly follow one of the models?
3. **Grammar:** Is the paper free, for the most part, of unintended grammatical, spelling, punctuation and style errors?
4. **Format:** Does the paper meet the assignment in terms of length, line spacing, etc.?

Each assignment includes a **professional component**. A student's failure to behave professionally in the completion of an assignment can result in the reduction of the assignment's grade. Failures of professionalism include missed deadlines and using the work of others without acknowledgment.

How This Course Works

Your success in this course depends on your

- preparing for and attending each session
- participating with meaningful contributions to group discussions and class discussions
- completing assigned readings and projects with punctuality and excellence

Approximately the first third of our course will be devoted to

1. Studying the theories and related principles of major ethics philosophers, primarily Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill and John Rawls. (We *will* be looking at contributions from non-white, non-male philosophers.)
2. Learning decision-making models such as the Potter Box and the Ginn Model. These models use the theories and principles that we've learned from the philosophers mentioned earlier.

Approximately the two-thirds of the course will involve applying the decision-making models to particular case studies. Here's how those case-study discussion sessions generally will work:

1. Often, I'll post a short, written case study on Blackboard. Sometimes, the study will be like a short story that lacks an ending. Sometimes, it will be a current news article. It will present an ethics dilemma that you'll need to solve using one of our critical-thinking decision-making models.

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2. There certainly will be variations to this. We'll have several video case studies, and, again, we'll also tackle current events that haven't yet been resolved.
3. If a case study is distributed, you'll have until the next class session to decide what your solution is. You'll make notes, showing how you used one of our decision-making models. Occasionally, I'll ask you to turn those case analyses in to me at the beginning of the next class session. (For example, if I give you the case on Tuesday, I'll need your notes and decision at the start of class on Thursday – before our class discussion.) All case analyses must be written legibly or typed on standard-sized paper.
4. In class discussion, we'll use one of our critical thinking decision-making models to choose what we think is the best course of action for the case study. In other words, what should the main character in the case study do? And, more important, why should he or she do that – what is the ethical justification? (If you want to use your notes for these group discussions, you'll occasionally need an extra copy; you'll already have turned in your notes to me.)
5. When, as a class, we've decided what course of action we should follow in the case study, I'll then tell you what the real decision-maker did (if we know) – and what the consequences were.
6. Occasionally, we'll break into groups and use class time for smaller discussions – giving you more of an opportunity to participate.

Often, there will not be one "right" answer for the case study. For you to present an acceptable answer, you should demonstrate that you clearly understand the relevant issues and that you used a decision-making model appropriately. (Basically, can you show that your decision honors important values, principles and loyalties?) Thus, it's possible for two (or more) students to choose different – yet still ethical – solutions to a dilemma. You should be able to justify your decision to yourself and to others using familiar ethics principles – something better than “Well, I can still sleep at night” or “I can still look at myself in the mirror.”

Required Reading

1. Individual case studies.

Communications

Any requests for absences, make-up assignments or other special considerations must be submitted to me via e-mail (marsh@ku.edu)

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Attendance

Attendance in the course is mandatory. Sometimes, however, an absence is unavoidable. If an explanation (in advance, if possible) is reasonable and the absence is rare, the course grade will not be affected. Three unexcused absences will lower the course grade by one letter. Five late appearances will have the same effect.

School of Journalism Statement on Attendance

No student may add a **journalism** class after the 20th day of a semester (this semester, Feb. 13 is the 20th day).

Students must attend their classes. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class.

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid.

Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.

Inclement Weather - In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials: "A delayed start or class cancellation on the Lawrence campus will be announced after 6 a.m. Check alert.ku.edu or the [KU homepage](http://kuhomepage.com); check twitter.com/KUNews; call KU's Inclement Weather Policy Line, 864-SNOW, or KU Info, 864-3506; or listen to local broadcast media."

Academic Misconduct

This class will observe the university's policy on academic misconduct -- both for students and for the instructor -- as published in the online "Student Rights and Responsibilities" (<http://www.policy.ku.edu/student-affairs/student-rights-responsibilities-code>).

In this class, and in all classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts and research. In a work setting, if a person chooses to violate professional standards, he or she will be fired. In this class, if someone chooses to violate the standards for academic integrity, he or she will fail the course and might be expelled from or denied admission to the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. (continued)

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Here is the journalism school's official policy statement on Academic Misconduct:

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification -- *Adopted May 7, 2004:*

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor of this course.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Here's some clarification of academic misconduct:

If someone uses or attempts to use any unauthorized materials during a test, or if someone gives any unauthorized materials or assistance to someone else during a test, this is cheating. Unauthorized materials include written materials, such as notes, and any forms of information sharing (written, oral or nonverbal).

Plagiarism is stealing. Someone takes someone else's ideas, thoughts, research or words and presents them as his or her own original work. This includes taking (without attribution) ideas or research from written sources, such as books, as well as from the Internet. There may be times when you want to incorporate another person's ideas, opinions and words

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into the papers you write to support a point or to provide background. If you do so, it is essential that you attribute that information—that you specify where the information came from and give credit where credit is due.

Fabrication and falsification mean that the information was made up. Fabrication includes making up an entire interview or embellishing a fact, quote or statistic to make it sound better. Don't do it.

We will discuss these matters further in class. If you have any questions, please contact your professor

Students with Individual Needs

If you have any learning disability that may affect your performance in this course, please see your professor during the first week of class.

Student Access Services, 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-4064 (achieve@ku.edu), coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted Student Access Services, please do so as soon as possible. Information about services can be found at <http://www.disability.ku.edu/>. See also <http://access.ku.edu/providing-exam-accommodations-1>. Please also contact me privately in regard to this course.

Copying or Recording of Classroom Lectures

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the university's property. Video and audio recording of lectures without instructor consent is prohibited. On request, the instructor usually will permit students to audiotape lectures, on the condition that these audiotapes are used only as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless the instructor gives written permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

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Class Schedule

The information below may change. Should that happen, I'll provide as much notice as possible.

Week 1

Tues., Jan. 17 Course Introduction
 Thurs., Jan. 19 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)

Week 2

Tues., Jan. 24 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Thurs., Jan. 26 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Sun., Jan. 29 **Online Quiz #1 due by midnight (covers Week 1)**

Week 3

Tues., Jan. 31 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Thurs., Feb. 2 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Sun., Feb. 5 **Online Quiz #2 due by midnight (covers Week 2)**

Week 4

Tues., Feb. 7 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Thurs., Feb. 9 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Sun., Feb. 12 **Online Quiz #3 due by midnight (Week 3)**

Week 5

Mon., Feb. 13 **20th Day of Classes – Must be enrolled in this course by now**
Last day to add or swap a course at KU
 Tues., Feb. 14 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Thurs., Feb. 16 Opening lecture (replaces textbook)
 Sun., Feb. 19 **Online Quiz #4 due by midnight (Week 4)**

Week 6

Tues., Feb. 21 Case study (if we're done with opening lectures)
 Thurs., Feb. 23 Case study (if we're done with opening lectures)
 Sun., Feb. 26 **Online Quiz #5 due by midnight (covers Week 5)**

Week 7

Tues., Feb. 28 Midterm review
 Thurs., Mar. 2 **Midterm exam**

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Week 8

Tues., Mar.7 Case study
Thurs., Mar. 9 Case study

Week 9

Tues., Mar. 14 Case study
Thurs., Mar. 16 Case study

SPRING BREAK

Week 10

Tues., Mar. 28 Case study
Thurs., Mar. 30 Case study

Week 11

Tues., Apr. 4 Case study
Thurs., Apr. 6 Case study

Week 12

Tues., Apr. 11 Case study
Thurs., Apr. 13 Case study
Values Essay due

Week 13

Tues., Apr. 18 Case study
Thurs., Apr 20 Case study

Week 14

Tues., Apr. 25 Case study
Thurs., Apr. 27 Case study

Week 15

Tues., May 2 Case study
Thurs., May 4 Course review

FINAL EXAM: Friday, May 12, 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.

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