**COM 438** **Communication Ethics** **Fall 2014**

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**Required Texts:**

* Carson, Rachel. Silent Spring Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 2002.

Ethics in Human Communication. Ed. Richard L Johannesen, Kathleen S. Valde,

Karen Whedbee. Long Grove: Wavelend Press, Inc. 2008.

* Kant, Immanuel. Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns. 3rd ed. Trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, Inc. 1981.
* West, Cornel. Hope on a Tightrope:Words and Wisdom. Carlsbad: SmileyBooks. 2008.

**General Course Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Appreciate the importance of ethics in human communication.

2. Describe and differentiate three perspectives on communication ethics: deontological. consequentialist, and virtue-based. Describe specific theories and theorists within these three areas.

3. Articulate a personal view on basic ethical issues, including untruthful communication, intentional ambiguity, the standard of rationality, ethical responsibilities for listeners, etc.

4. Differentiate universal and situational approaches to ethics.

5. Apply the ethical models learned in class to specific examples of communication in politics, advertising, and other areas.

6. Improve in written communication; specifically, in forming cogent arguments based on the use of criteria, evidence, and reasoning to a logical conclusion. Demonstrate clarity of language, conventions of technical writing, care in proofreading, appropriate use of grammatical and syntactical features of language.

This course is part of GVSU’s General Education Program.

The goal of the program is to prepare you for intelligent participation in public dialogues that consider the issues of humane living and responsible action in local, national, and global communities.

The program is designed to increase your knowledge and skills in the following areas:

Knowledge Goals:

1. The major areas of human investigation and accomplishment — the arts, the humanities, the mathematical sciences, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.

2. An understanding of one’s own culture and the culture of others.

3. An understanding of how academic study connects to issues in the world.

Skills Goals:

1. Collaboration is the process of working together and sharing the workload equitably to progress toward shared objectives, learned through structured activities that occur over a significant period of time.

2. Critical and creative thinking uses systematic reasoning to examine and evaluate ideas, leading to new ways of thinking or doing.

3. Ethical reasoning is a decision-making process based on defining systems of value.

4. Information literacy is the process of locating, evaluating, and using multiple forms of information.

5. Integration is the process of synthesizing and applying existing knowledge, past experiences, and other perspectives to new, complex situations.

6. Oral communication is the practice of effectively communicating verbally with a public audience across a variety of contexts.

7. Problem solving is the process of designing and evaluating strategies to answer open-ended questions or achieve desired goals.

8. Quantitative literacy is a competency and comfort in working with numbers.

9. Written communication is the practice of creating and refining messages that educated readers will value.

Ensuring that undergraduate students receive a broad general education has been a primary goal of colleges and universities since their inception. In this era of increasing specialization and growing demand for professional expertise, it is vital that we continue to emphasize the value of general learning.

GVSU maintains that a complete education involves more than preparation for a particular career. A career occurs in the context of a life, and a sound general education helps one “make a life” as well as “make a living.” The university is committed to assuring that all undergraduate students, regardless of academic major, receive a broad education rooted in the arts and sciences.

Teaching in the liberal tradition is at the heart of Grand Valley's identity, and this focus is critical in our General Education Program. Liberal education transcends the acquisition of information; it goes beyond the factual to ask important evaluative and philosophical questions. Liberal learning holds the fundamental principles and suppositions of a body of knowledge up to inquiry, question, and discussion. It helps a person recognize the assumptions under which he or she operates and encourages the examination and questioning of those assumptions. Liberal learning begins in the General Education Program and continues through the more specialized studies comprising each student's major and minor areas of study.

**Course Policies:**

Plagiarism—passing off someone else’s idea as your own—is subject to University procedures and carries serious penalties, ranging from a grade of zero on the assignment to failure for the course. If you are worried about whether you’re attributing information to your sources correctly, ask!

GVSU STUDENT CODE: PLAGIARISM (SECTION 223.01)

*Any ideas or material taken from another source for either written or oral presentation must be fully acknowledged. Offering the work of someone else as one's own is plagiarism. The language or ideas taken from another may range from isolated formulas, sentences, or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, speeches or the writings of other students. The offering of materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment also is considered plagiarism. Any student who fails to give credit in written or oral work for the ideas or materials that have been taken from another is guilty of plagiarism.*

**Attendance/Participation:** Your success in this class depends on your participation in class work.  While a significant amount of your grade is based on exam work, a portion is also tied to your participation in the class.  Thus, I expect you to be in class without fail.  Participation for this class will be evaluated based on contributions to class discussions and impromptu activities.  I am aware, however, that situations arise that may prevent you from attending class. Therefore, I allow each student 2 absences. Do what you will with these absences. There is no need to report any reason for why you missed class whatsoever, I don’t wish to be in a position to judge whether your reason for missing class is valid or not. However, whenever possible I ask that you tell me, of such absencesin advance so we can address the material you will miss or any assignments that will be due.  If you did not notify me in advance of your absence, be sure to check the course website for my class notes or ask a classmate for theirs.

I will take attendance regularly and note your participation. If you are not there, it will be hard to earn a good participation grade. Each additional absence will reduce your final letter grade by one percent.

**Tardiness:**  When individuals arrive late to class they disrupt learning and show disrespect to their classmates.  If you arrive more than 10 minutes late you will be considered absent for that class period. The lesson here is to be on time, every time.

**Late work:** Assignments are due on the day they are due**.**  Late written work will not be accepted. Technical problems such as power outages, erased/lost disks, system difficulties, or malfunctioning printers, are not legitimate excuses for late or missing work.  Always make a backup copy of your work and carry it with you on the due date. Furthermore, give yourself ample time to complete assignments.

**Assignments and grading criteria**

**Reflections 25 points (1 point each)** These cannot be made up if you miss class. Each Reflection is to include a typed, double spaced, and printed two-page essay outlining: (1) A question you have about the reading (something that is unclear to you or something you want to challenge); (2) A comment about how the readings can be applied to your personal or professional experience. The key here is to demonstrate you have connected to the readings by linking your experience to some portion of the reading; (3) A thought-provoking issue related to the readings assigned. Here is your chance to connect the readings to a larger social issue or trend. Think about the readings from a macro perspective.  
  
\* Formal citations are not necessary but quotes that help the reader identify the text you are referencing are expected.  
\* A printed copy of each essay should be turned in to me at the end of each class meeting without fail.  
\* Late or emailed copies of said essays will not be accepted.https://ssl.gstatic.com/ui/v1/icons/mail/images/cleardot.gif

**1 Midterm 30 points** 30 questions at 1 point per question

**1 Final Exam 30 points** 30 questions at 1 point per question

**Attendance 5 points** (You are permitted two absences. Use these at your discretion and without explanation.)

**Participation 5 points** (Indeed, participation is of utmost importance in this class. You must show up and speak up on a regular basis in order to earn the highest grade in the course. In order to earn these points fully you must participate meaningfully and exhibit preparation at each class meeting)

* **Class debate**  **5 Points** For this class activity, you will not earn a letter grade but five participations points are at stake as agreed upon.

Extra Credit Options:

Earnest and helpful contributions are welcome in this class! You may earn up to five points of extra credit by any combination of the following:

* Share with the class a helpful or interesting term/word that you encountered in any of our readings or class activities. You will earn 1 point of extra credit and you will enrich our collective vocabulary.
* Attend the **4th Annual James W. Carey Memorial Lecture featuring: Dr. Sheldon Solomon, Skidmore College** for 2 points of extra credit. I will be at the event with a sign up sheet.

The *Communication Studies Major Program*, *PSI CHI Psychology Honors Society*, the *Psychology Department,* the *School of Communications*, the *Institute of General Semantics*, the *College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*, and the *Provost’s Office* proudly present an evening of thought-provoking inquiry:

**When**: Wednesday, September 17, 2014. 7:00

**Where**: Loosemore Auditorium (GVSU Downtown Campus)

According to cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker, the uniquely human fear of death has a pervasive effect on human beings' thoughts, feelings, and behavior.  Humans manage the terror of death by adhering to culturally constructed beliefs about reality that provide a sense that one is a person of value in a world of meaning, and thus eligible for either literal or symbolic immortality.  The quest for immortality underlies some of humankind’s most noble achievements.  However, it also engenders some of our most ignominious affectations, including: hostility and disdain for people with different beliefs; indifference to, or contempt for, the natural environment; and, the mindless pursuit of material possessions—which, if unchecked, may render humans the first form of life responsible for their own extinction.  Dr. Solomon will provide an overview of Becker's ideas and empirical work, and conclude by pondering the implications of these ideas for individual and social behavior. Questions and answers with the audience will follow.

**Technology:** My policy here is simple.  Turn off all cell phones, PDA’s, and MP3 players before class starts..  I also discourage the use of laptop computers during class.

**Email:**  While I encourage you to email me with questions or requests for meetings, don’t let email replace good communication between us.  I encourage you to visit my office hours or arrange to meet with me in person.  If you do email me, please be aware that generally I will respond within 24 hours.

**Format of Assignments:** All work must be typed and double-spaced unless otherwise noted. Papers should follow MLA style, have one-inch margins, and use a standard Times New Roman, 12 pt font.  Please proofread your work carefully for spelling or grammatical errors. Don’t just rely on Microsoft to correct your mistakes.  It is often incomplete and even incorrect. You will lose points for distracting grammatical or spelling errors.

**Classroom Environment:** The effectiveness of this course is dependent upon the creation of an encouraging and safe classroom environment.  Exclusionary, offensive, or harmful speech will not be tolerated and in some cases are subject to the GVSU harassment procedures.  We are all responsible for creating a positive and safe environment that allows all students equal respect and comfort.  Three essential components of this atmosphere are: (1) your unfailing attendance to class, (2) your frequent and thoughtful contributions to class discussions, and (3) your consistent outwardly expression of interest in other people’s participation in the class. I want to emphasize the importance of the last point, since an intrinsic part of being a good communicator is being an ideal audience member; one who takes notes, sits upright, maintains eye contact with speakers, and is mindful of the messages they are sending any given speaker from their seats. I expect each of you to help establish and maintain an environment where you and your peers can contribute without fear of ridicule or intolerant or offensive language.  You are all guaranteed an equal opportunity in the class and no student is denied educational access.  If you need assistance or ever feel uncomfortable please see me right away.

\*\*\*Please note: Policies and schedules are subject to change. I will make you aware immediately if any changes are made. \*\*\*

**Tentative Course Outline** COM 438 Fall 2014

**August**

Thurs 28- EIHC- Chapter 1

**September**

Thurs 4-Logic and Argumentation Primer (Handout)

Tue 9- Logic and Argumentation Primer (Handout)

Thurs 11- EIHC- Chapter 3

Tue 16- GFTMM- Preface

Thurs 18- GFTMM- First Section

Tue 23- GFTMM- Second Section

Thurs 25- GFTMM- Supplement

Tue 13- EIHC- Chapter 5, Chapter 6 (pp.87-88)

Tue 2- SP- Chapters 1+ 2

**October**

Thurs 2- SP- Chapters 6+7

Tue 7- SP- Chapters 12+ 13

Thurs 9 - SP- Chapters 15+ 17

Tue 14 **–** Midterm Prep Day

Thurs 16- \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***MIDTERM**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Tue 21- EIHC- Chapter 4

Thurs 23- EIHC- Chapter 12

Tue 28- Debate Prep Day

Thurs 30- - Debate

**November**

Tue 4- Debate

Thurs 6- Field Trip Day

Tue 11- HOATR- Chapters 1+ 2

Thurs 13- HOATR- Chapter 3

Tue 18- HOATR- Chapters 4 + 7

Thurs 20- \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* NO CLASS \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Tues 25- HOATR- Chapter 8 + 9

**December**

Tue 2- HOATR- Chapter 11 + 12

Thurs 4- Final Exam Prep Day

**FINAL EXAM - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10TH (NOON-1:50 PM/ LSH 225)**