



## Comm 3513: Communication Ethics (3 credit hours)

Dr. Robert Fortner, Professor

Office: 205 Pembroke Hall

Office Telephone: (561) 803-2614

Mobile: (616) 634-2462

Email: [Robert.Fortner@pba.edu](mailto:Robert.Fortner@pba.edu)

### Office Hours:

W, F 9:00 am—12:00 & 1:00—2:00 pm

T Th 11:00 am—noon and by appointment

**You do not need an appointment to see me during stated hours.**

Please come to my office hours to discuss issues in the course or to seek assistance in completing assignments successfully. You do not need to make an appointment during these stated hours.

### Presence:

**PLEASE BRING A CELL PHONE OR TABLET TO CLASS EACH DAY.** Attendance is required in this course. It will be taken electronically approximately five minutes into each day's class. If you do not sign in via your electronic device at that time, you will be absent. Quizzes will be given using these devices as well. Other uses are prohibited: if you spend time on your mobile phone, tablet, or laptop texting, communing with friends, or browsing websites that have nothing to do with what we are talking about, you are not present. In other words, not only your body is required to be here, but your presence as well. You can't learn anything if you are not present: mind, soul, and body all together and engaged in our conversations.

## Course Description:

Using texts from classic and modern literature, theatre, and film, this course will survey and analyze moral philosophy as it pertains to effective, ethical communication in personal life and the public sphere.

“Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what’s a heaven for?” –Robert Browning

Pre-requisites: COM 1033, COM 1113, Upper Division standing

## Readings:

Berry, Wendell: *Jayber Crow*

Feinberg, Kenneth: *What is Life Worth?*

Hill, Chad: *Covert Propaganda and the Molding the Mass Mind*

Leonhard, Gerd. *Technology vs. Humanity*

Sandel, Michael: *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?*

And many others....

You must also have a contract with TopHat to register your attendance and to take the quizzes in this course.

## Program Outcomes:

1. Developing competent communication skills (oral, written, and nonverbal)
2. Critically analyze communication contexts.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking skills.
4. Identify ethical communication practices in various cultural contexts.

Outcomes 1 & 2 are minor concerns in this course. Outcomes 3 & 4 are emphasized as major concerns in this course.

## Learning outcomes:

- 1: Grasp of key philosophers of language and ethics that may include, but are not limited to, Aristotle, Kant, Wittgenstein, Burke, Augustine, Aquinas, Ellul, etc.
- 2: Develop and articulate a personal view of basic ethical issues, including deception, intentional ambiguity, the standard of rationality, ethical responsibilities of listeners, and civil communication.
- 3: Identify possible solutions to ethical quandaries that Christians encounter through personal, performance, professional, and scholarly pursuits.
- 4: Interpret scriptures that deal with the challenges of the Christian communicator.
- 5: Define worldview challenges which Christians encounter as a part of wider society
- 6: Differentiate universal and situational approaches to ethics.

## Measures of outcomes:

Outcome #1 Discussion & written papers

Outcome #2 Role-playing exercises/case study discussions

Outcome #3 Performance of speeches, vignettes and/or debates

Outcome #4 Dialogic Learning in the classroom

Outcome #5 Essay which analyzes the ethics of a speaker in the public eye

Outcome #6 Application of ethical models to specific examples of communication in politics, advertising, journalism, radio, television, stage, or screen in final project.

## Plagiarism & cheating:

I assume all students know what constitutes dishonest behavior in an academic setting. If you have any questions about this issue, please ask me. All established cases of academic dishonesty are a violation of the University's position on academic integrity. I will handle all cases according to the university standard. You should familiarize yourself with it on line or in your printed catalog if you are not familiar with it.

## Disability Accommodation:

Palm Beach Atlantic University complies with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) of 1990, as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, by providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities. Students who have questions about their entitlement to benefits or who have grievances under these statutes should contact Michele Diller, Disability Services Coordinator at (561) 803-2062 or [michele\\_diller@pba.edu](mailto:michele_diller@pba.edu). The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in the Lassiter Student Center, Room 231. Accommodations will only be provided after the student has officially registered with ODS. It is the responsibility of the student to make the request and to provide each course instructor a copy of the approved accommodations plan, immediately after receiving them. **Accommodations are not retroactive**

## Course requirements:

This is a discussion-based course, using a large dose of Socratic method. It is therefore imperative that you have prepared carefully for each day's class. This means reading everything assigned, watching videos as indicated, taking notes on what you have read, and being able to articulate the arguments encountered, the logic and evidence used to support those arguments, the truth or falsity of the arguments made as you see it, objections that could be raised to the arguments, and how the position taken by the theorist accords with the moral structure of Christianity. How does the position help us achieve a more robust "moral imagination" or align with a more defensible "moral compass?" How does it contribute to a realistic and powerful vision of society, or assist in establishing a sustainable society? Such issues will be the basis of each day's class discussion.

This course allows students to determine how much work you will put into it. You should look over the requirements for different grades and decide how much effort you intend to put into the

course, and then select the appropriate grade. Your grade is based on both quantitative and qualitative evaluations. On the quantitative side, the question is: did you produce what you intended to? On the qualitative side, the question is: how well did you complete your work? You know what you are capable of and how much time you expect to devote to this class. Plan accordingly. My discretion in the matter of grading is simple: I will reduce your grade 1/3 letter (from a B to B-, for instance) if you miss more classes than you have agreed to, if you can't get to class on time or leave early, if you're not engaged in the class sessions, if any of your papers violate the minimum standard for the grade you sought, if you turn in any work late, and so on. Two such violations would reduce your grade by 2/3rds and three violations would reduce your grade by a full letter. If you contract to do four projects, but only complete three, your grade would drop to the next level down (from a B to a C, for instance). So make your contract realistic: how important is this class to you? How does it fit in with other courses you are taking this semester? What other commitments do you have – to work, volunteering, student organizations, athletics, etc. Commit realistically.

Each student will begin the semester with three virtual tokens. These tokens may be used for a variety of purposes. These include:

1. Missing a class beyond the maximum allowed by each grade (3 for an A, 4 for a B and 5 for a C). Any class missed for any reason other than a university-sponsored event for which I have received prior notice counts against the total allowed.
2. Having a one-class extension beyond the deadline provided for each assignment. Tokens may not be combined to have a longer extension. One-class only.
3. Rewriting a project that does not meet the minimum requirements of the desired grade.

Once your tokens are used, they will not be replenished.

## Themes:

We will be examining eight basic themes in this course. These are as follows:

1. The necessity of truth – and the acid of propaganda
2. The need for human dignity, including treatment of the “other” and the role of equality
3. The value of non-violence
4. The meaning and maintenance of community
5. The meaning and value of life
6. The role of faith, principle, and ideology in the construction of communal life
7. The problem of power
8. The need for justice (fairness)

## Paper grading criteria/rubric:

I will read your paper with both mechanics and content in mind. **Mechanics** includes the following: length (3 pages/ +/-), format (double-spaced, 12 pt. serif font (such as Times Roman) with normal Word margins, indented first lines of paragraphs, paginated and stapled, including your name on the first page), spelling, punctuation, usage (noun-verb agreement, noun-pronoun agreement, verb tenses, consistent point of view – 3<sup>rd</sup> person), syntax (sentence construction,

meaning) and promptness – your papers are due on the dates specified in the day grid. **Content** includes the following: *is there a clear thesis statement? Is the thesis supported by logical arguments? Is evidence presented to demonstrate the truth of the arguments? Are facts accurate? Are the arguments clearly stated and clearly supported? If quotations or paraphrases are used, are the sources properly cited? Are obvious counter-arguments acknowledged? Are these counter-arguments adequately addressed? Is it clear why the position taken, and argued, is better than the alternatives? Are assumptions addressed? Are the assumptions made relevant to the situation under examination? Are the cultural, religious, and political realities addressed adequately in the arguments made?* If you need assistance with mechanics or argumentative essay writing, please schedule time to meet with me at least 3 days before the paper is due. Make use of the University’s writing assistance. Proofread. Have someone else read and comment. Check the course website and correct errors before turning it in. Your paper must be submitted on the day indicated in the date grid. This paper will provide up to 200 points toward your course total. It should use APA style and must include both in-text citations and a reference list.

Writing a college-level research paper requires more than merely reporting what other people say. It incorporates analysis of what they say and application and critique in the context of the thesis of your own work. To that end I will expect that you follow Stephen Toulmin’s model of argument. See the explanation of Toulmin’s model on the course website.

### **Assignments:**

There will be pop quizzes in this course. This is to assure that basic claims and concepts of different authors are understood to facilitate conversation. You will need to READ all assignments prior to class or your grade will be substantially reduced by these quizzes. These quizzes will contribute between 100 points toward your final grade. There will also be in-class problems/exercises to solve that will be based on the information that you read and that will be addressed by the quizzes. To this end, each student will be assigned to a group to tackle these problems/exercises. These problems will also affect your grade substantially if you are not ready to address them in class. These problems/exercises will also provide 100 points toward your final grade. Each member of a team of students that deals with these problems/exercises will receive the same number of points. However, any student absent for any reason other than a university-sponsored event (approved in advance) will not receive points for that problem/exercise.

### **Quizzes and Exams**

Quizzes and exams will be taken electronically using your cell phone, tablet or laptop. Quizzes may be given at any time, based on the reading for the day. There will be two exams. Each exam will be worth 100 points.

### **Absences:**

You will lose points from your total depending on your absences. You will lose two points for each day missed except for those in which you are participating in a university-sponsored activity. All such absences must be approved in advance, however, not after the fact. You may earn up to 100 points for “presence” and class participation.

## Grading:

Under contract grading, students will complete a set of projects. Students contracting for a C will complete four projects, a B five projects, and an A six projects. **For each level there are two required projects. One is the major case study and the other is the final exam.** The remainder are for students to select from as they so choose. (See the explanation and list of projects on the website.)

## Course Outline:

Date	Reading	Topics
January 11	None	Introduction to course: ethics vs. morality
January 16	Begin reading <i>Jayber Crow</i> . Continue until it is complete. READ <a href="http://humanorigins.si.edu/human-characteristics">http://humanorigins.si.edu/human-characteristics</a> <a href="https://www.brainpickings.org/2011/12/09/what-it-means-to-be-human-joanna-bourke/">https://www.brainpickings.org/2011/12/09/what-it-means-to-be-human-joanna-bourke/</a> <a href="http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4867060">http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4867060</a>	Is it human to be ethical?
January 18	Emanuel Kant; Clifford G. Christians READ Kant: <a href="http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/5i.htm#cimp">http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/5i.htm#cimp</a> & Christians: <a href="http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/communication-ethics-and-universal-values-clifford-g-christians/1100512382?ean=9780761905851">http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/communication-ethics-and-universal-values-clifford-g-christians/1100512382?ean=9780761905851</a> . Click on “Read Sample,” go to Chapter 1 by Christians.	Moral requirements: Universals.
January 23	READ <a href="http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2017/12/08/the-unsexy-truth-about-harassment/">http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2017/12/08/the-unsexy-truth-about-harassment/</a> WATCH <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16Cr82mLhkw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16Cr82mLhkw</a>	How should we view the other?
January 25	Emanuel Levinas: <a href="http://www.pietisten.org/summer02/facetoface.html">http://www.pietisten.org/summer02/facetoface.html</a> <i>Ethics and Infinity</i> , “The Face”	How should we value the other? <b>Debate #1</b>
January 30	READ Kenneth Feinberg, <i>What is Life Worth?</i> , Introduction and Chapters 1—3.	Valuing the “other”
February 1	READ Kenneth Feinberg, <i>What is Life Worth?</i> , Chapters 4—7.	Differences in the other <b>Debate #2</b>
February 6	<i>Jayber Crow</i> should be complete by now. DISCUSSION of the book, part 1	Looking for community
February 8	<i>Jayber Crow</i> , part 2	Finding & participating in community <b>Role-playing 1: inclusion v exclusion</b>
February 13	READ Michael Sandel, <i>Justice</i> , Chapters 1 & 2	Utilitarianism

February 15	READ Michael Sandel, <i>Justice</i> , Chapters 3 & 4	Libertarianism Community Assessment Project Due
February 20	READ Michael Sandel, <i>Justice</i> , Chapters 5 & 6	Deontology & Social Contract
February 22	READ Michael Sandel, <i>Justice</i> , Chapters 7 & 8	Virtue Role-playing 2: developing virtue
February 27	READ Michael Sandel, <i>Justice</i> , Chapters 9 & 10	Loyalty & Justice
March 1	Themes 1—4: Discussion of student conclusions	Analytical Paper Project Due
March 5—9	<b>Spring Break: No Class</b>	.
March 13	READ Jane Jacobs, <i>The Death &amp; Life of Great American Cities</i> , Chapter 15 on date grid READ Matthew Desmond, <i>Evicted</i> , “Prologue” and Chapter 1 on date grid.	The reality of others in poverty Imagine Project Due; Debate #3
March 15	Language, knowledge, ethics (Susan Langer, Ernst Cassirer, Kenneth Burke, Ludwig Wittgenstein) – Lecture/discussion READ <a href="https://maryvican.wordpress.com/2008/04/17/kenneth-burkes-defintion-of-humans-and-use-of-symbols/">https://maryvican.wordpress.com/2008/04/17/kenneth-burkes-defintion-of-humans-and-use-of-symbols/</a> and <a href="http://rickontheater.blogspot.com/2010/01/susanne-langer-art-beauty-theater-part.html">http://rickontheater.blogspot.com/2010/01/susanne-langer-art-beauty-theater-part.html</a>	Philosophy & language Debate #4
March 20	READ Sissela Bok: <a href="http://infed.org/mobi/sissela-bok-on-lying-and-moral-choice-in-private-and-public-life-an-amplification/">http://infed.org/mobi/sissela-bok-on-lying-and-moral-choice-in-private-and-public-life-an-amplification/</a>	Truth & power Symbolic Systems Assessment Project Due
March 22	READ Chad Hill, <i>Covert Propaganda</i> ....., Chapters 1—3	Propaganda
March 27	<b>Speech Analysis Due</b> READ Chad Hill, <i>Covert Propaganda</i> ....., Chapters 4—6	Propaganda Speech Analysis Project Due
March 29	READ Chad Hill, <i>Covert Propaganda</i> ....., Chapters 7—8, & 10	Propaganda
April 3	READ Chad Hill, <i>Covert Propaganda</i> ....., Chapters 11, 16—18	Propaganda Major Case Study Project Due
April 5	Karl Jaspers: <a href="http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/question-of-german-guilt-karl-jaspers/1100311086?ean=9780823220694">http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/question-of-german-guilt-karl-jaspers/1100311086?ean=9780823220694</a> . Click on “Read Sample” and then the first listed “Introduction”	Collective Guilt Debate 5

	to see Jaspers categorization of guilt & “Justice on the Slaughter-Bench on date grid.	
April 10	READ Gerd Leonhard, <i>Technology vs. Humanity</i> , Chapters 1—2	Technology
April 12	READ Gerd Leonhard, <i>Technology vs. Humanity</i> , Chapters 3—4	Technology
April 17	READ Gerd Leonhard, <i>Technology vs. Humanity</i> , Chapters 5—7	Role-playing 3: Avoiding technological impulses
April 19	<b>READ Gerd Leonhard</b> , <i>Technology vs. Humanity</i> , Chapters 8—9	Technology
April 24	READ Gerd Leonhard, <i>Technology vs. Humanity</i> , Chapters 10 & 12	Technology Video Project Due
April 26	Themes 5—8. Summary & Review of the course	

**Final exam on Registrar’s Schedule.**