

Social Advocacy & Ethical Life

SAEL 200

Spring 2015

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Course Overview

Social Advocacy & Ethical Life is addressed to the nature and relationship of ethics and oral forms of expression in a variety of socio-political contexts. Students in the course will have an opportunity to critically investigate theories of ethics and principles of spoken advocacy, and to apply their inquiry in a cumulative series of exercises and performances. Both critical and practical, the work undertaken in this course offers a chance for students to: 1) question the meaning and importance of contemporary calls for civility, engaged citizenship, and deliberation; 2) investigate the roots, power, and limits of ethical discourse and its relevance to social and political decision-making; and 3) develop a working understanding of the principles of social advocacy and the ways in which oral communication constructs, supports, and remakes the grounds of ethical interaction.

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define the idea of social advocacy, identify distinct forms of oral advocacy, and demonstrate an understanding of the respective values and limits of such communicative practices in a variety of social, political, and cultural situations;
- Define sources and functions of ethical reasoning and explain its importance in the development of individual and collective life, identify key ethical concepts and recognize the kinds of social and political issues that provoke ethical questions, and critically analyze and engage ethical controversies that shape personal and social norms of responsibility;
- Understand, perform, and critically assess the ways in which social advocacy can invent, shape, and upset personal and collective ethical commitments and the ways in which ethical frameworks enable, promote, and guide advocacy;
- Understand and explain the fundamental concepts and frameworks that enable social advocacy, including principles of argumentation, ethical forms of persuasion, theories of the rhetorical situation and audience interaction, and modes of listening;
- Apply and demonstrate the basic concepts of ethical social advocacy through the performance of speeches that address a variety of ethical issues and which engage audiences with diverse and conflicting ethical commitments;
- Critically assess the ethical responsibilities entailed in social advocacy and the conditions under which advocacy may be an ethical responsibility.

Course Materials

Course readings will be made available through Blackboard. They will be posted in folders listed by week (see “Course Schedule” section).

Course Structure and Required Assignments

In this course, we will engage in a variety of activities, including lecture, class discussion, group activities, student speeches, and written essays. Over the semester, students in this course will be asked to undertake and complete the following assignments. *Each assignment will be detailed in handouts and discussed in class.*

Speaking:

1. Imagining Advocacy: For this assignment, each member of the course will develop, compose, and deliver a 3 ½ - 4 minute speech. This speech will be addressed toward a current issue or controversy in the student’s major or professional field of interest, and the speech will focus on how ethics and advocacy are relevant to this issue or controversy. The speech an address, among others, the following questions: Why is the issue “important,” and who is it important to? What is at stake? Why is it controversial? Who are the stakeholders? What are the “sides,” and who is advocating for each “side”? The student is free to give his or her perspective or opinion on the issue, but the main goal is to introduce, describe, and explain their interest in the issue. This assignment is worth 5% of the class grade.
2. Discovering an Issue: In this second speaking assignment, each member of the class will choose and research a significant social, political, or cultural issue and then develop and deliver a 4 ½ - 5 minute speech addressed to the history, contours, and ethical importance of that issue. The goal of this assignment is not to defend a particular position but to provide an audience with a full and clear understanding of an issue’s roots and potential ethical significance. The speech requires a careful investigation and articulation of the “sides” of an issue, the ways in which issues are composed of different, if not competing, ethical perspectives. Drawing from the ethical readings in class, while not required, is encouraged. Discussing the ethical values at stake for the issue you choose, though, IS required. This assignment is worth 12.5% of the class grade.

The topic for this speech must be the same as the “Making a Case” Speech, and it must be the same as the “Reasoning About an Ethical Issue” and “Addressing Ethical Controversy” writing assignments. It also must NOT be the same topic as your “Debating for Judgment” Group Presentation speech. Students will be asked to provide their topics for these assignments via email by 2/20. No more than two students can give speeches on the same general topic, and I reserve the right to request topic changes of students if more than two people choose the same topic. Random draw will be used to determine which student(s) have to change topic.

3. Making a Case: Working with the issue taken up in the “Discovering an Issue” speech, the goal of this speech is to move from providing “background” information about the problem to making a specific claim about the appropriate resolution or solution to the ethical issue. Recognizing the existence of competing resolutions or ethical claims, the speech may contend that one perspective about an issue is rooted in a stronger argument

than its counterparts, or that the typical “sides” of the issue are limited and a new approach is needed. The speech requires the application of argumentation theory as well as a working understanding of “social argument.” This assignment is worth 15% of the class grade.

4. Debating for Judgment: The aim of this assignment is to undertake a “conference style” debate over a single issue or problem and to do so in a manner that invites an audience to undertake deliberation about the merits and implications of the issue under consideration. This is a collaborative exercise in which class members will work in a total of four groups. Each conference “panelist” will develop and present a 5-6 minute speech, providing unique, contrasting argument concerning the meaning, significance and basis for deliberation over a particular social or ethical issue. After this, the remainder of the class will provide an opportunity for the panel to answer and discuss questions from the instructor and the audience. Panelists can also comment on or ask questions of other panelists. Each panelist will be graded on both a) the strength of their speech, and b) their interaction with the other panelists and audience during the question and answer session. This assignment is worth 12.5% of the class grade.

These group presentations will occur during class throughout the semester. The general topic for each “Debating for Judgment” class session has been determined by the instructor in advance, and all students in the class will be assigned reading on the general topic. The groups, however, have wide leeway in selecting the specific focus/perspective within the wider framework; each group will discuss with the instructor beforehand their specific focus and how to approach the assignment. The presentation dates and topics are listed below. We will discuss the assignment further in depth on 1/21, and students will select their groups via email on that day as well.

- 2/16 – Drug Policy
- 3/6 – Judicial/Prison System Reform
- 4/13 – Education System and Educational Policy
- 4/27 – Reforming the American Political System

Writing:

1. Reasoning about an Ethical Issue: Each student in the course will develop and compose a five (5) page paper addressed to an ethically significant social, political, or cultural issue. Working from a clear and directed thesis, the paper should 1) detail the issue in question, 2) explain its ethical significance in light of one or more appropriate ethical theories discussed in the class readings, and 3) build a case for how the issue can be productively addressed or resolved. The issue addressed in the paper builds off Speaking Assignments #2 and #3. This assignment is worth 10% of the class grade.
2. Addressing Ethical Controversy: Each student in the course will develop and compose an eight (8) page paper that investigates specific ways in which ethical claims provoke opposition and how this opposition can be productively addressed. This paper will primarily involve a substantial revision of paper #1 (Reasoning about an Ethical Issue) based on instructor feedback. In addition, the paper will extend the claim made in paper #1 based on instructor feedback. This may be done, for example, by addressing a potential objection to the first paper’s argument, or exploring a facet or implication of the argument not explored in the first paper. This assignment is worth 15% of the class grade

3. Reflection Exercises: Throughout the semester, students are asked to do a total of seven reflection exercises through the semester. The goal of these exercises is to critically assess and evaluate the themes or arguments from one or more of the readings *prior* to discussing the reading in class. *The goal here is not to summarize the reading(s), but to offer an analysis and opinion.* Each reflection is to be at least a long paragraph (200-250 words) long; the best reflections, though, may explore the readings with a longer response. Submitted reflections will be graded on an “A, B, C” scale, based on quality and depth of the analysis offered. These grades will be used to determine your final “Reflections” grade. Any reflection below a “C” grade will be returned back to the student, where the student can either a) rewrite the reflection for a maximum grade of a “check”, or b) forgo the grade, and write another reflection on a different week. These assignments are worth 20% of the class grade.

Students can write their seven reflections on any reading, or on a theme or connection between multiple readings. The only rules are:

- *Only one reflection is allowed to be submitted per week of readings*
- *The primary focus of each reflection must be a reading we have yet to discuss in class*

Attendance:

Success in this course rests on engaged participation, and if you are not present and punctual, you cannot participate. *In accordance with the University Attendance Policy, more than four absences (excused or unexcused) are considered “excessive.” As such, I will take roll, and after four absences, each subsequent absence will result in losing 2.5% percentage points from your overall course grade.* In addition, I reserve the right to count tardiness as an absence, in the event that tardiness becomes excessive. I will consider offering “make-up” assignments for excused, but not unexcused (as defined by the University Attendance Policy) absences. If, through the semester, you would like to explore this potential option, contact me via email or during office hours.

Class Participation

The success of this class hinges on discussion; while some will be more outspoken than others, I expect everyone to make effort to participate throughout the semester. Thus, class participation in discussion comprises 10% of the overall grade. This grade will be determined through two assessments; one offered on 3/6, and one offered on 4/27. With these assessments, students start with an “A”, and, as long as they regularly make an effort to participate in class discussions, the “A” will remain. This does not necessarily mean speaking out in *every* single class; it means providing timely insight and *not* being conspicuously silent. Students that regularly abstain from class discussion will receive a lower grade (and, potentially, a “D” or “F”).

Sourcing Requirements for Assignments

For each assignment, any outside information used (in other words, any information that is NOT your own idea or thought) should be included in a works cited sheet, to be handed in with the assignment. For written assignments, in text citation is necessary, as well. While the specific style of citation (MLA, APA, etc) is up to you, it is up to you to clearly show where you got your information.

Finding and citing credible sources is key to your success in this class, as well. As such, for the “Discovering an Issue,” “Making a Case,” “Reasoning About an Ethical Issue,” and “Addressing Ethical Controversy” assignments, **you are required to use and cite at least two peer-reviewed journal articles or academic books.** You can (and probably should) use more sources – both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed (newspaper articles, interest group websites, etc.). Also, the quality/breadth of sources used will factor into the grading. But the only hard requirement is two “academic” sources. We’ll discuss sourcing and this requirement more in class.

Summary of Class Grading and Due Dates:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
“Debating for Judgment” Topic Chosen	-	1/21
Course Speeches/Assignments Topic Chosen	-	2/20
<i>Speeches</i>		
“Imagining Advocacy” Speech	5%	1/28 or 1/30
“Discovering an Issue” Speech	12.5%	3/16, 3/18, or 3/20
“Making a Case” Speech	15%	4/15, 4/17, or 4/20
“Debating for Judgment” Group Assignment	12.5%	2/16, 3/6, 4/13, or 4/27
<i>Total</i>	<i>45%</i>	
<i>Writing Assignments</i>		
“Reasoning About an Ethical Issue” Assignment	10%	4/17
“Addressing Ethical Controversy” Assignment	15%	5/3
Reflection Exercises	20%	Ongoing
<i>Total</i>	<i>45%</i>	
Class Participation	10%	Assessments on 3/6 and 4/27
Grand Total	100%	

Grading Scale:

A: 100%-90%	C: 75-70%
B+: 89-86%	D: 69-60%
B: 85-80%	F: Below 60
C+: 79-76%	

Grades

All grades will be posted on Blackboard shortly after the assignment is due (click the “My Grades” link in the “Tools” section of Blackboard). If you have a question or concern on any grade, or want deeper feedback, contact me and we can discuss.

Class Preparation

All readings should be completed by the day for which they are assigned. All students are expected to bring copies of the readings to class on the day that they are discussed. On days that you deliver or workshop a speech, all preparatory forms must be completed. Speech outlines must be submitted before speaking.

Laptops and Cell Phones: Laptops, Ipads, etc. can be used during class only for class-related purposes. I *highly* encourage you to consider printing out the reading material and forgoing electronics in the classroom. I realize, though, that, for environmental and efficiency reasons, many people prefer electronic reading, notetaking, etc. Thus, if you wish to bring a laptop to class *for these purposes*, feel free to do so. *I reserve the right to ban laptops, for an individual student or the entire class, if they become a distraction.*

Cell phones should not be used during class. Except for emergency situations, **please prepare for class by turning off and PUTTING AWAY any cell phone devices.**

Make-Up Speeches and Late Assignments

In order to complete our work and deliver a full complement of speeches, all students must be diligent in presenting their speech on the day it is assigned. Unexcused missed speeches may be performed only outside of class (i.e. office hours) and for no more than 75% credit. Students can make up their speech in class for full credit only if there is clear and authoritative documentation that attendance was prevented by: bereavement; disabling illness; accident or disabling injury; legal obligation; university authorization. Writing assignments are expected to be submitted in class on their due date. Scores for late assignments will be docked by one letter grade for each class period the assignment is late. For example, an assignment that scores a “B” (85%), but is one class late, will receive a “C” (75%).

Academic Responsibility, Integrity and Ethics

The Carolina Community holds that “It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this rule or who assists others to do so will be subject to discipline.” Dishonesty will constitute:

- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance, or attempting to give or receive such assistance, in connection with the performance of ANY academic work.
- Unauthorized use of materials or information of any type including the use of any obtained through electronic or mechanical means.
- Access to the contents of any test or examination prior to its administration.
- Unauthorized use of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of source, regardless of whether the lack of acknowledgment was unintentional.
- Intentional misrepresentation by word or action of any situation of fact, or intentional omission of fact, so as to mislead any person in connection with any academic work.

Office Hours

Office hours are listed at the beginning of this syllabus. I am happy to meet, talk, or email about the course or assignments outside of class and outside my office hours. Please schedule such appointments with me via email.

Students with Disabilities

Any person who because of a disability may need special arrangements or accommodations to meet the requirements of this course should consult with the instructor as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services may be reached at 777-6142, or at www.sa.sc.edu/sds/.

Course Schedule

Beside the date for each class session, in parenthesis, is a note of the week number of the class. For example, (1) signifies that the session is during the first week of the class. As readings will be posted by week on Blackboard, this will help in finding the correct readings for the class.

Any changes to the readings will be communicated via email or in class.

Beginning Questions

1/12 (1): Course Overview - Why are we here?

1/14 (1): What does advocacy look like?

Required Readings: Greg Smith, "Why I Am Leaving Goldman Sachs," *NY Times*
Douthat, "North Korea and the Speech Police," *NY Times*

Supplemental Reading: Barshad, "This is (Hopefully) Not the End," *Grantland*

1/16 (1): SPSA CONFERENCE – NO CLASS TODAY

1/19 (2): MLK DAY – NO CLASS TODAY

1/21 (2): Aristotle on the Art of Persuasion

Required Readings: Aristotle, selection from *Rhetoric*

****Debating for Judgment Group Assignment Groups Selected (in class)****

1/23 (2): Some "nuts and bolts" for the class, or "holy crap, I have to give a speech?"

Required Readings: NA (in-class video)

1/26 (3): Introduction to the relationship between ethics, argument and socio-political life

Required Readings: Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Chapter One
Logical Fallacies Infographic

Imaging Advocacy Speeches

1/28 (3): Delivery of speeches and discussion

Supplemental Readings: Zarefsky, *Introduction to Public Speaking*, Ch. 2, 6
Havel, "A Word About Words"

1/30 (3): Delivery of speeches and discussion

Ethical Theory: Frameworks, Concepts, and Practice

2/2 (4): The Challenge of Cultural Relativism

Required Readings: Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Chapter Two

2/4 (4): Competing Ethical Frameworks, pt. 1

Required Readings: Kant, excerpt from *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*
Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

2/6 (4): Competing Ethical Frameworks, pt. 2

Required Readings: Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Chapter 7

Supplemental Reading – Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Chapter 6

2/9 (5): Freedom, pt. 1

Required Readings: Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter One

2/11 (5): Freedom, pt. 2

Required Readings: Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter Two
Excerpt from Supreme Court Case *Schenck v. United States*

2/13 (5): Freedom, pt. 3

Required Readings: Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter Three

2/16 (6): Debating for Judgment: Drug Policy

Required Readings: Schlosser, excerpt from *Reefer Madness* (pp. 16-29)

2/18 (6): Equality, pt. 1

Required Readings: Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*

2/20 (6): Equality, pt. 2

Required Readings: Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"
Starkman, "Confessions of an Application Reader," *NY Times*

****Discovering an Issue Speech Topics Due via email****

2/23 (7): Equality and College Admissions

Required Readings: Vega, "Colorblind Notion Aside, Colleges Grapple with Racial Tension," *NY Times*
Chua and Rubenfeld, "What Drives Success," *NY Times*

2/25 (7): Happiness

Required Readings: Nozick, selection from *Anarchy, the State, and Utopia*
Gilbert, *TED Talks* video (link available on Blackboard)

2/27 (7): Justice, pt. 1

Required Readings: Plato, *Crito*

3/2 (8): Justice, pt. 2

Required Readings: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Sections 1, 5, 6, 11, 24-6

3/4 (8): Justice, pt. 3

Required Readings: Rawls (continue with selections above)

3/6 (8) Debating for Judgment – Judicial System Reform

Required Readings: Stelloh, "California's Great Prison Experiment," *The Nation*

****First Class Participation Assessment Posted on Blackboard****

3/9 – 3/13: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES

Discovering an Issue Speeches

3/16 (9): Delivery of speeches and discussion

3/18 (9): Delivery of speeches and discussion

3/20 (9): Delivery of speeches and discussion

Argument Theory

3/23 (10): The Logic of Argument

Required Readings: Brockreide and Ehninger, "Toulmin on Argument"

3/25 (10): Warrant, and Fallacious Warrant

Required Readings: Blair, "Fallacies in Everyday Argument"
Popper, excerpt from "The Problem of Induction"

3/27 (10): Social Argument

Required Readings: Klumpp, "Taking Social Argument Seriously"

3/30 (11): Productive Clash

Required Readings: Butler, "The Value of Being Disturbed"
Welch, "S.C. Senate Sides With House, Cuts Funding to Schools
Over Gay Books," *Free Times*

4/1 (11): Argument in the 21st century

Required Readings: Carr, *The Shallows*, "The Church of Google"
"Engage or Unfriend? What to Do When Facebook Gets Racist,"
The Takeaway (audio)

The Vagaries of Public Opinion

4/3 (11): Political Knowledge and Attitude Formation

Required Readings: Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Chapter Four

4/6 (12): Our Polarized (?) World

Required Readings: Bishop, *The Big Sort*, Introduction
Ball, "Five False Assumptions Political Pundits Make All the Time,"
The Atlantic

4/8 (12): Cueing, framing and the limitation of debate

Required Readings: Ames, “The Awakening,” *Harper’s Magazine*
Reed Jr., first section of “Nothing Left” (pp. 28-31) *Harper’s*

Supplemental Reading – Reed Jr. (whole article)
Levendusky, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, Ch. 2
Chong and Druckman, “Framing Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science*

4/10 (12): Social Influence

Required Readings: NA (in-class video)

4/13 (13): Debating for Judgment – Education Policy

Required Readings: *Frontline*, “The Education of Michelle Rhee” video (link available on Blackboard)
Ratvich, “School Reform: A Failing Grade,” *NY Review of Books*

Making a Case Speeches

4/15 (13): Delivery of speeches and discussion

4/17 (13): Delivery of speeches and discussion

*** “Reasoning About an Ethical Issue” Paper Due, uploaded on Blackboard ***

4/20 (14): Delivery of speeches and discussion

Deliberation and Democracy

4/22 (14): Deliberative Theory, pt. 1

Required Readings: Gutmann and Thompson, excerpt from *Democracy and Disagreement*

Supplemental Reading: Talisse, interview on *Philosophy Bites* podcast (link available on Blackboard)

4/24 (14): Deliberative Theory, pt. 2

Required Readings: Fish, “Mutual Recognition as a Device for Exclusion”

4/27 (15): Debating for Judgment – Reform of the American Political System

Required Readings: Mayer, “A State for Sale,” *The New Yorker*

****Second Class Participation Assessment Posted on Blackboard****

5/3 – “Addressing Ethical Controversy” Paper Due, uploaded to Blackboard