COM 214: Civil Discourse
Fall 2023
Section: 0912

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.
- Maya Angelou

Instructor: William Fox
Email: wcwcfox@gmail.com

Office Hours: By appointment
Meeting Time: Tues/Thurs 10:30 – Noon
Classroom: SU1992

TA: Carlin Cornell
Email: wcwcfox@yahoo.com

Course Description

Societal trends point to a lack of civility, tolerance, and appreciation of conflicting viewpoints. This course will explore the historical significance of civil discourse through the lens of relational communication. We will explore our core values, investigate civility in our daily lives, practice respectful argumentation, and prepare students for civil discourse in a diverse workplace.

Learning Outcomes

Most instructors want students to leave their classes with more than just a heap of information: ideally the student has also been transformed in some way, has become more complex in thought and intention, understands the significance of what's been learned, and has made some progress on a larger life path.

After successful completion of this course:
- Students will be able to identify civil discourse and how to model it
- Students will articulate the values that drive their ethical decision making
- Students will have practically applied and analyzed relational communication concepts
- Students will learn how civility contributes to a more ethical society
- Students will learn what contributes to or can cause a lack of civil discourse
- Students will learn how to effectively communicate with those whose opinions differ from their own
- Students will learn the origins of civil discourse and how to apply concepts to group dynamics and the modern workplace

Class Civility

There are certain basic standards of classroom civility that should be adhered to, particularly in a communication course. Civility does not eliminate appropriate humor, enjoyment, or other features of a comfortable and pleasant classroom community. Classroom civility does, however, include the following:

- Displaying respect for all members of the classroom community, both your instructor and fellow students.
- Attentiveness to and participation in lectures, group activities, and other classroom exercises.
- Avoidance of unnecessary disruptions during class such as private conversations, texting, and doing work for other classes.
- Avoidance of racist, sexist, homophobic, or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom community.

These features of classroom civility do not comprise an exhaustive list. Rather, they represent the minimal sort of behaviors that help to make the classroom a pleasant place for all concerned.

Two core values, inquiry and civility (of course), govern our class. **Inquiry** demands that we all cultivate an open forum for exchange and substantiation of ideas. Strive to be creative, to take risks, and to challenge our conventional wisdom when you see the opportunity.

Civility supports our inquiry by demanding ultimate respect for the voice, rights, and safety of others. Threatening or disruptive conduct may result in course and/or university dismissal. Civility also presumes basic courtesy. Please be well rested, on time, and prepared for class, which includes time for a restroom stop before (not during) class and silencing all personal devices.

My perspective is that we never cease being students of this world, so I believe that attentive, reflective people always have something to learn from others. Good discussions can be energetic and passionate but are neither abusive nor offensive. Vibrant, vigorous inquiry derives from discussions that:

- Challenge, defend, and apply different ideas, theories, perspectives, and skills,
- Extend a body of knowledge into different arenas and applications, and
- Result in a synergy that compels us to seek resolution to these discussions

Course Reading Materials

Forni, P. (2003). *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct* . St.
    Martin's Griffin. ISBN: 0312302509

Porath, C. (2016). *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace.* New York: Grand Central.
    ISBN-10: 1478947896

Washington, G. (2021). *Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior In Company and Conversation.*
    Independent. ISBN:B08WZHBJ5D

Course Assignments

The course is designed to be presented in four modules over an eight-week period. Each two-week module will have its own set of materials (e.g. readings, discussion prompts, class activities, etc.).

Participation: I will model our discussions to mirror actual professional business environments. Just showing up is **not** half the battle. Civil discourse is hard to learn if you're silent. You need to participate in class to prove your understanding and testing the understanding of others with questions and dialogue. This includes being prepared to discuss readings, films, concepts, engaging yourself in classroom activities, and putting in your best effort. This course focuses on developing your process of thinking and speaking with civility more than memorizing factual content.

Discussion Board: Civil discourse is also a written skill. Your ability to write informally in order to persuade, explain, or inform is critical. Prompts of topical interest will be presented for you to develop a well thought out post that can stand up to the scrutiny of others. Not only will you need to craft an original post once per module, but it will be expected that you will respond to at least three of your peers posts.

Papers: Formal writing to explore your values, virtues, and ethics will be the theme of the two papers that will be required of you. One in each of the first and last modules. A personal narrative will be the theme of Paper #1, whereas an EOC reflection on your learning experience will complete the course for Paper #2. Papers should be no less than three typed pages (five total), double-spaced, 12 point font (Times New Roman), with a cover page, and at least three references.

Debate: Thinking on your feet and appreciating both sides of an argument is essential for civil discourse. Twelve pairs of students will be formed to engage in an in-class debate about a relevant topic of the day. A structured rubric and speaking time limits will be in place. You will need to be prepared to debate both sides of the argument. Topics and opponents will be selected at random. You will not learn which side of the argument you will support until you approach the podium to present on the day of the debate.

Group Podcast Project: Collaboration is key. The culminating project will be the creation of a Civility-minded podcast made up of four students per group. Groups will be formed by me, with deliberate effort made to create groups of students from different cultures, ability levels, and life experiences. Half of the grade earned will come from the perspective of your peers, as they measure your contribution to the group.

Modules Overview

Module 1 (week 1 & 2) - *Value, Virtues, and Our Behavior*

Read- *Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior*, G. Washington (1745) (all)

   Kekes, J. (1984). Civility and Society. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 429-434.

View- *Divided We Fall,* (2020) 56mins. https://www.dividedwefalltv.org

   Ted Talk- Canceling Cancel Culture with Compassion
   https://www.ted.com/talks/betty_hart_canceling_cancel_culture_with_compassion?utm_campaign=teds
   pread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Write- Paper #1 – Personal Narrative – Write about a true life experience that made a
                significant impact on you. Dig deep.

   Discussion Post: Understanding that *Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior* was written in
                1745, which three rules remain the most relevant for you and why?
                Conversely, which two should be immediately stricken from current
                behavior?

Discuss (in class)- 1) Cancel Culture Canceling Casual Conversation
                2) A Brief History of Civility: Aristotle, George Washington, and Will Smith
                3) Your Core Values and Virtues
                4) Dialogic Ethics & Ethical Decision Making

Module 2 (week 3 & 4) – *Choosing Civility*

Read- *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct (all)*

View- *Lost in Translation*, dir. Sophia Coppola (2003) 102mins.

   Ted Talk- *Three Ways to Practice Civility*
   https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_petrow_3_ways_to_practice_civility?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm
   _medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Write- Discussion Post: Which five of the *Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct* resonated the most with your values?

Discuss (in class)- 1) Walking in the Shoes of Your Peers: Review the Personal Narrative
2) The Lack of Civility Today; Theories and Changing Paradigms
3) Active Listening Skills, Self-Awareness, and Communication Styles
4) Non-Verbal Communication, Proxemics, and Paralinguistics

Module 3 (week 5 & 6) – *A Civil Debate*

Read- *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace, Chapters 1-3*

Unger, Clinton P. (2022) *Ethical Pluralism: The Decision-Making System of a Complex World*, The Journal of Values-Based Leadership: Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 , Article 15. Pgs 1-9
https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol15/iss2/15

View- *Purple, (2019) 21mins.* https://www.resettingthetable.org/purple

Ted Talk- How to Disagree Productively
https://www.ted.com/talks/julia_dhar_how_to_disagree_productively_and_find_common_ground?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Write- Debate Case: (Mini) Lincoln-Douglas 1:1 Debate (prepare both sides of argument)

Discussion Post: Write about a culturally relevant (potentially controversial) social issue that has significant meaning for you.

Discuss (in class)- 1) Ethical Pluralism and Civility. (Choose Debate Topics/Form Podcast Teams)
2) Cognitive Dissonance and Finding Your "Pocket"
3 & 4) Debate (two class meetings)

Module 4 (week 7 & 8) – *Civility in the Workplace*

Read- *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace, Chapters 3-5*

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. In *On the Horizon* (pp. 1-9). MCB University Press.

View- Pick a flick from the Communication multiplex.
https://thecinemaholic.com/movies-that-highlight-importance-of-communication/

Ted Talk- Being Respectful to your Coworkers is Good for Business-
[https://www.ted.com/talks/christine_porath_why_being_respectful_to_your_coworkers_is_good_f](https://www.ted.com/talks/christine_porath_why_being_respectful_to_your_coworkers_is_good_for_business?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)
[or_business?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/christine_porath_why_being_respectful_to_your_coworkers_is_good_for_business?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)

Write- Paper #2: What was the most impactful takeaway from this course? Write about how you will apply your civility learning to your everyday life.

Discussion Post: A critical analysis of your communication film choice. Where do you see civility, where is it lacking?

Discuss (in class)- 1 & 2) Podcast Presentations (two class meetings)
3) Guest Presentation: Day in the Life of a former Hollywood Exec – (Me)
4) Gender, Race, and Social Capital impacting Civility in the Workplace Q&A

Evaluation and Grading Scale

All grades will be posted on Blackboard. You are strongly encouraged to check your scores regularly. A final letter grade will be assigned based on accumulated points.

Assignment Weights	Points
Class Participation	20
Discussion Posts (4 x 5points each)	20
Paper #1	15
Debate	15
Paper #2	15
Group Project	15
Total	100

A (93-100), A- (92-90),
B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80)
C+ (79-77), C (76-73), C- (72-70)
D+ (69-67), D (66-63), D- (62-60)

Across institutions of higher learning, grades have inflated at alarming rates. In an effort to curb that trend the School of Communication has adopted the following specifications regarding letter grades and what they mean:

A and A- grades represent work whose superior quality indicates a full mastery of the subject. An A represents the work of extraordinary distinction.

B+, B, and B- grades represent work of good to very good quality but that does not merit special distinction.

C+, C, and C- grades designate an adequate command of the course material. These grades are satisfactory for undergraduate students, but unsatisfactory for graduate students.

D+, D, and D- grades indicate work that shows a deficiency in knowledge of the material. They are unsatisfactory for undergraduate and graduate students.

F is a failing grade representing work that deserves no credit.

Course Policies and Procedures

Attendance Policy

To arrange excuses for absences that can be anticipated at the start of the term, you should:
- Submit a request in writing (email is acceptable) stating the dates of the anticipated absence no later than the end of the second week of the course.
- Explain the reason for absence. In some cases, documentation may be required. Please consult the policy for additional information.
- Include any request for make-up work.

To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of the term, (e.g. legal proceedings or illness), you should, at the first opportunity, submit in writing a request stating:
- The date of absence
- The reason for absence. In some cases, documentation may be required. Please consult the policy for additional information.
- Any request for make-up work as soon as reasonably possible after you become aware of the need to be absent.

Since this course only meets two times a week for 90 minutes, you are allowed one unexcused absence. Your grade will be lowered by one letter for each unexcused absence after one unexcused absence. Classes will not be recorded.

You will want to attend each class session for several reasons: first, I do not lecture with PowerPoint, nor do I post my class notes on a Blackboard site; second, you will be responsible for all lecture and reading materials; and third, I look forward to your active participation in class. If you cannot attend class, please email Carlin ahead of time. If we do not hear from you, we will assume you are sleeping. Also, excused absences require acceptable documentation. Provide such documentation to Carlin in a timely manner. If you do not email us BEFORE an important deadline, we will not excuse late work. So, if life interferes, as it often does, we need to know about it before an assignment or activity takes place.

Your Name and Personal Pronoun Use

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender,

gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Late Work/Make-up Policy

Makeup assignments will be given without penalty if you have an excused absence. You are allowed to make up one assignment without penalty one time this semester. Review the course schedule for all assignment due dates.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

With a maximum of 25 students per class, the use of laptops and smartphones is allowed only when it is required for course assignments. Please place your laptop under your seat during class. Please take notes the old-fashioned way or with a stylus on a tablet. Cellphones should be placed on silent. Please leave the classroom if you need to take an emergency call.

E-Communication

University email addresses and the Blackboard site will be used for course communication. All email communication and information will be sent solely to the student's university email account, with the expectation that such communications will be read in a timely fashion.

Technology

Modules are located on the Blackboard site for the course. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:
- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed.
- Reliable internet access and a university email account;
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard);
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program; and
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum academic penalty of your failing the assignment and will result in additional disciplinary measures. This includes improper citation of sources, using another student's work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation.

Plagiarism

Using the words or ideas of another as if they were one's own is a serious form of academic dishonesty. If another person's complete sentence, syntax, key words, or the specific or unique ideas and information are used, one must give that person credit through proper citation.

Incomplete Grades

You may be assigned an 'I' (Incomplete) grade if you are unable to complete some portion of the assigned course work because of an unanticipated illness, accident, work-related responsibility, family hardship, or verified learning disability. An Incomplete grade is not intended to give you additional time to complete course assignments or extra credit unless there is indication that the specified circumstances prevented you from completing course assignments on time.

Diversity and Inclusion

The university is committed to a campus environment that is inclusive, safe, and respectful for all persons. To that end, all course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings. You are expected at all times to apply the highest academic standards to this course and to treat others with dignity and respect.

Accessibility, Disability, and Triggers

I am committed to ensuring course **accessibility** for all students. If you have a documented **disability** and expect reasonable accommodation to complete course requirements, *please notify me at least one week before accommodation is needed*. Likewise, if you are aware of cognitive or emotional **triggers** that could disrupt your intellectual or mental health, please let me know so that I can be aware in terms of course content.

Technical Support

If you have problems with your computer, technology, IT-related questions, support, including Blackboard, please contact the Division of Information Technology Service Desk at 867-5409 or submit an online request through the Tech Support email.

Copyright/Fair Use

I will cite and/or reference any materials that I use in this course that I do not create. You, as students, are expected to not distribute any of these materials, resources, tests, assignments, etc. (whether graded or ungraded).

Academic Success

Disability Services

The Student Disability Resource Center empowers students to manage challenges and limitations imposed by disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me to discuss the logistics of any accommodations needed to fulfill course requirements (within the first week of the semester). In order to receive reasonable accommodations from me, you must be registered with the Student Disability Resource Center.

Student Center

In partnership with the faculty, the Student Center offers a number of programs to assist you in better understanding your course material and to aid you on your path to success. Programs are facilitated by professional staff, graduate students, and trained undergraduate peer leaders who have previously excelled in their courses. Resources available to you in this course may include:

- **Peer Tutoring:** You can make a one-on-one appointment with a Peer Tutor. Drop-in Tutoring and Online Tutoring may also be available for this course. Visit their website for a full schedule of times, locations, and courses.
- **Peer Writing:** Improve your college-level writing skills by bringing writing assignments from any of your classes to a Peer Writing Tutor. Similar to Tutoring, you can visit the website to make an appointment, and to view the full schedule of available drop-in hours and locations.

University Library Resources

University Libraries has access to books, articles, subject specific resources, citation help, and more. If you are not sure where to start, please Ask a Librarian.

Remember that if you use anything that is not your own writing or media (quotes from books, articles, interviews, websites, movies – everything) you must cite the source in APA, MLA (or other appropriate and approved) format.

Counseling Services

The University offers counseling and crisis services as well as outreach services, self-help, and frequently asked questions.

Mental Health

If stress is impacting you or getting in the way of your ability to do your schoolwork, maintain relationships, eat, sleep, or enjoy yourself, please reach out to any of our mental health resources. Counseling & Psychiatry offers individual and group counseling and psychiatric services. You can schedule an appointment at (803) 867-5309. You can also call after-hours for crisis counseling. Wellness Coaching can help you improve in areas related to emotional and physical well-being, such as sleep, resiliency, balanced eating and more.

Interpersonal Violence

Interpersonal violence - including sexual harassment, relationship violence, sexual assault, and stalking - is prohibited. Faculty, staff, and administrators encourage anyone experiencing interpersonal violence to speak with someone, so they can get the necessary support and respond appropriately. As faculty, I must report all incidents of interpersonal violence and sexual misconduct, and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality.

References for Syllabus

Barnes, R. (2022). *CMN 106 Contemporary Communication Theory and Trends*. Retrieved from
    USC:https://cirreporting.usc.edu.au/CourseOutline/ViewCurrent?courseCode=CMN106
    &includeCoordinator=true

Cahill, E. (Director). (2019). *Divided We Fall* [Motion Picture].

Cherry, K. (2022). *What is Cognitive Dissonence*. Retrieved from Very Well Mind:
    https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-cognitive-dissonance-2795012#citation-7

Coppola, S. (Director). (203). *Lost in Translation* [Motion Picture].

Forni, P. (2003). *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct*. St. Martin's
    Griffin.

Houck, D. (2012). *Contemporary Human Communication*. Retrieved from Florida State
    University:https://global.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu531/files/SAP/Current%20Majors/
    Communication/SPC%203210%20Contemporary%20Human%20Communication.pdf

Kekes, J. (1984). Civility and Society. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 429-434.

Lowe, D. (2004). *COM 252: Interpersonal Communication Syllabus*. University of Kentucky.

Porath, C. (2016). *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace.* New York: Grand Central.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. In *On the Horizon* (pp. 1-9). MCB
    University Press.

Ray, A. (2020). NSC 109: Civil Discourse. University of Texas.

Sanders, G. (2014). *Finding Civil Discourse*. https://cct.biola.edu/wp-
    content/uploads/2017/12/Sanders-Syllabus-Nov.-13.pdf: Oklahoma Baptist University.

Shlossberg, P. (2021). COML 598: International and Intercultural Communication. Gonzaga
    University.

Unger, C. (2022). Ethical Pluralism: The Decision-Making System of a Complex World. *The
    Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 1-11.

University of Arizona. (2022). Retrieved from National Institute for Civil Discourse:
    https://nicd.arizona.edu

University of South Carolina. (2022). Retrieved from Center for Teaching Excellence:
    https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/index.php

Van Soest, L. (Director). (2019). *Purple* [Motion Picture].

Washington, G. (2021). *Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior In Company and Conversation*.
    Independent.