

Writing 105WE: Writing and Ethics

Prerequisites: Writing 2 or 2E or 2LK; upper-division standing.

Catalog Description: Focus on ethics in writing, rhetoric, and communication. By researching, analyzing, and composing texts related to ethics in various genres and disciplines, students explore how writing contributes to the good life for individuals and communities.

Course Description: Writing 105WE explores how writing, rhetoric, and communication contribute to the development and understanding of ethical values, choices, and actions and thus contribute to the good life for individuals and communities. The course may also explore ethical issues involved in common writing practices like conducting research, articulating a viewpoint, engaging contrary values, and communicating to different audiences. Students research, analyze, and practice writing about ethics and about the ethics of writing in assignments that may include reading journals, textual analyses, research papers, and other genres. At every stage in the writing process, students receive feedback from peers and/or the instructor designed to develop advanced writing skills applicable to upper-division courses throughout the university.

Curricular Premises: Writing 105WE offers upper-division students from all majors an opportunity to consider the roles of writing in ethical decision making, in the creation and negotiation of ethical norms, and in ethical communication practices, among other areas. The course fulfills two of the requirements for the certified public accountant (CPA) track in the economics and accounting major, so it typically attracts CPA students. Writing 105WE emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of ethical thought and debate, and it fulfills one aspect of the core mission of undergraduate education in directing students' attention to the importance of the careful use of writing and composition in pursuit of ethical modes of social life and work. In addition, Writing 105WE underscores the importance of writing as a form of civic engagement in which students' diverse rhetorical and narrative choices can have lasting effects.

Writing 105WE shares an interdisciplinary approach with other Writing 105 courses, while examining in particular the relationships between writing and ethics. Like other courses that satisfy the second part of Area A in the General Education program, Writing 105WE focuses on developing advanced writing skills, which include adapting structure and style to particular genres, modes of communication, and rhetorical contexts; integrating and citing appropriate sources; and refining grammatical, mechanical, and stylistic abilities. Course content in Writing 105WE may revolve around a broad theme (e.g., environmental ethics, the ethics of activism, or the morality of money), introduce ethical issues and debates via case studies (e.g., considering whistleblower Edward Snowden to open discussion about the ethics of civil disobedience, surveillance, and privacy), or approach material in other ways that are appropriate for achieving the course outcomes.

Course Requirements:

Texts: Instructors may also integrate texts from a variety of modes and genres of cultural production (e.g., documentary films, short stories, open letters, codes of ethics). Texts are drawn from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, and they may include sources created in public and other contexts.

Assignments: Writing 105WE assignments are designed to provide instruction and practice in critical thinking and effective communication. Potential writing assignments include short papers, such as reading responses, personal narratives, and magazine articles; longer pieces, such as research essays and position statements; and collaborative projects, such as codes of ethics. Students participate in small group and whole class discussions, and students may present to the class individually or collaboratively. In-class writing, freewriting, and drafting discussion questions may be used to scaffold class discussion. Peer review and editing sessions, writing workshops, and conferences may be scheduled throughout the course to provide students with guided opportunities to draft, review, and revise their writing.

Outcomes:

- recognize the intrinsically social and contested nature of ethical norms and principles
- exhibit, through class discussion and written analysis, an understanding of the multiple ways in which writing strategies and choices can influence the development and dissemination of ethical norms
- integrate personal experience with evidence drawn from primary and secondary sources to develop ethical stances
- reflect on the relationships between ethical choices and ethical norms and other issues within a community, such as legislative and policy debates; cultural traditions; or social, economic, racial, and other inequalities
- develop and practice ethical approaches to writing, research, communication, and debate
- defend a position on an ethical issue by articulating the reasons and evidence supporting that position
- tailor writing, including citation, to meet the conventions of various genres and the expectations of academic, professional, and other audiences