# COMMUNICATIONS ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY IN DIGITAL ENVIRONTMENTS TEACHING GUIDE 2025-26

## GENERAL DETAILS

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| **Course Title:** | Communications Ethics and Responsibility in Digital Environments |
| **Code:** | 801873 |
| **Academic year:** | 2025-2026 |
| **Degree title:** | Master's Degree in Communication of Technology and Innovation |
| **Number of credits (ECTS):** | 5 |
| **Place in the scheme of studies:** | 1st Semester |
| **Date of last revision:** | June 2025 |
| **Professor Responsible:** | Prof. Cristina Gómez Morell |

## 1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The course "Communications Ethics and Responsibility in Digital Environments" aims to introduce students to the ethical foundations applicable to communication in technological and digital contexts. Through the analysis of contemporary dilemmas, it provides tools to interpret the social impacts of technology and make responsible communication decisions in complex and constantly evolving scenarios.

This approach offers students a critical perspective on the role of communication in the digital era, enhancing their capacity to integrate ethical principles into strategic planning, content management, and the adoption of new technologies. It trains professionals who can anticipate risks, assess the consequences, and act responsibly in the construction of more equitable and sustainable digital environments.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

- Analyze ethical principles applicable to digital communication in technological contexts, interpreting their impact on privacy, equity, sustainability, and the right to truthful information, while developing a critical and responsible attitude toward current ethical challenges.
- Develop criteria for identifying ethical risks in digital environments and comparing possible solutions, fostering autonomous and informed decision-making, teamwork, and active participation in debates and collaborative projects.
- Integrate ethics as a cross-cutting axis in the planning and execution of digital communication strategies, applying knowledge about innovation and entrepreneurship from a critical, creative, and problem-solving perspective.

# 3 LEARNING RESULTS

<u>Knowledge</u>

**K1.2**
Define the ways in which communication in innovation- and technology-driven companies should be guided by ethical principles to responsibly address the dissemination of content in digital environments.

<u>Skills</u>

**S01**
Communicate effectively—verbally, in writing, and visually—with others about learning processes, thought development, and decision-making, and participate in debates using interpersonal skills such as active listening and empathy, which foster teamwork.

**S02**
Develop the ability to contribute to innovation in new or existing business and institutional organizations through participation in creative projects, and apply skills and knowledge related to entrepreneurship, organization, and technology-based business development.

**S03**
Understand advanced digital technologies in order to apply them critically across various contexts—academic, professional, social, or personal.

**S7.2**
Interpret the ethical impact of technological trends, considering possible implications for privacy, equity, and other relevant ethical aspects.

**S8.1**
Compare and contrast different approaches and potential solutions to minimize ethical risks associated with communication in digital and technological environments.

<u>Competence</u>

**C01**
Integrate the values of sustainability, understanding the complexity of systems, in order to initiate or promote actions that restore and maintain ecosystem health and improve justice, thereby generating visions for sustainable futures.

**C02**
Identify and analyze problems that require autonomous, informed, and well-reasoned decision-making to act with social responsibility, guided by ethical values and principles.

**C03**

Develop the ability to assess inequalities based on sex and gender in order to design appropriate solutions.

**C7.2**
Interpret the intersections between ethics, communicative responsibility, and technological trends, with the aim of understanding and addressing ethical challenges in digital communication.

**C8.2**
Integrate ethics as an essential component in the planning and execution of digital communication strategies.

**C9.2**
Lead the implementation of emerging technologies with consideration for ethical values and social responsibility.

**C10.2**
Manage the different dimensions of crises by examining their effects on ethics and communicative responsibility in digital environments.

## 4 CONTENTS

### TOPIC 1. FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICS IN TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

**Learning Outcomes**
Students should be able to:
- Understand the foundations of ethics as applied to communication in digital and technological innovation environments, and their implications.
- Recognize the role of values and standards in communicative decision-making.
- Distinguish the main ethical traditions and frameworks and apply them to real-world communication situations.
- Identify the positive and negative effects of acting ethically or unethically in digital environments.

**Contents**
1.1. Individual, collective and organizational motivations.
1.2. Ethical consequences in communication: trust, reputation, and legitimacy.
1.3. Introduction to major ethical traditions and frameworks.
1.4. Initial examples and ethical dilemmas in digital communication contexts.

## TOPIC 2. ETHICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:
- Understand how ethics and values influence organizational culture and outcomes.
- Analyze the role of organizational purpose and ethical leadership in communicative coherence.
- Generate strategies and identify good practices in internal communication that foster cultural change and the responsible adoption of technologies.

**Contents**

2.1. What internal communication is and how it works within organizations.
2.2. Organizational culture, ethics, and purpose: concepts and examples.
2.3. Internal communication as a driver of change and innovation.
2.4. Coherence, ethical leadership, and organizational trust.

## TOPIC 3. ETHICS AND REPUTATION

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:
- Understand the ethical dimension of external communication and its impact on reputation, credibility, and public trust.
- Analyze the relationship between brand narrative, purpose, and perception, and its implications in digital and technological contexts.
- Evaluate reputational risks and propose coherent, inclusive, and responsible external communication strategies.

**Contents**

3.1. Ethics in external communication: foundations and expectations. Reputation, credibility, and public trust.
3.2. Brand narratives and purpose: ethical alignment between communicative discourse and organizational practices.
3.3. Reality vs. perception: building reputation in digital environments.
3.4. Audiences, inclusion, accessibility, and diversity in external communication.

## TOPIC 4. DISINFORMATION, TRUTHFULNESS AND RESPONSIBILITY

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:
- Understand the ethical and social impact of disinformation on organizations, society, and especially digital environments.

- Analyze the role of communication professionals in relation to truthfulness and information manipulation.
- Design communication strategies oriented toward transparency, informational responsibility, and trust-building.

**Contents**

4.1. Disinformation, information overload, and post-truth: concepts, causes, and consequences.

4.2. Truthfulness, fact-checking, and professional responsibility in the digital era.

4.3. Platforms, algorithms, and the role of communication in amplifying or curbing disinformation.

4.4. Ethical communication strategies to counter disinformation: transparency, traceability, and public education.


## TOPIC 5. EMERGING ETHICAL CHALLENGES

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:
- Identify key ethical challenges related to new technologies such as artificial intelligence, the metaverse, biometrics, AR/VR, etc.
- Analyze the risks associated with automated decision-making, algorithmic bias, and lack of transparency.
- Critically evaluate the communicator's role in the ethical implementation and oversight of emerging technologies.

**Contents**

5.1. Disruptive and emerging technologies: current and potential uses and their implications for communication.

5.2. Ethical risks: bias, opacity, depersonalization, and discrimination.

5.3. Accountability and responsibility in automated systems.

5.4. Criteria and principles for the ethical implementation of emerging technologies.


## TOPIC 6. ETHICS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:
- Understand key legal frameworks regulating digital communication and their connection to ethical principles.
- Identify legal and ethical risks related to privacy, surveillance, intellectual property, transparency, and more.
- Apply ethical and legal critèria to evaluate communication strategies and actions in digital environments.

**Contents**

6.1. Legal framework: data protection, consumer rights, competition, digital rights, intellectual property, transparency, freedom of expression.
6.2. Regulation of digital advertising and commercial communications.
6.3. Management of communities and digital platforms.
6.4. Ethical and legal responsibility of organizations and communication professionals.


## TOPIC 7. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:
- Understand the role of communication within CSR and design related strategies.
- Analyze how communication contributes to business legitimacy, sustainability, and alignment with corporate purpose.
- Critically assess the risks of greenwashing or purpose-washing and propose ethical, credible communication approaches.


**Contents**

7.1. CSR foundations: evolution, dimensions, and relation to ethics.
7.2. The strategic role of communication in sustainability and responsibility.
7.3. Corporate purpose, social legitimacy, and trust-building.
7.4. Greenwashing, social-washing, and other ethical distortions in corporate storytelling.
7.5. Best practices and criteria for responsible communication aligned with real commitments.


## TOPIC 8. COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND DECISION-MAKING

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:
- Integrate ethical learning into the design and execution of responsible communication strategies.
- Analyze communicative dilemmas—both internal and external—with ethical and professional judgment.
- Justify communication decisions from an ethical standpoint, aligned with values, purpose, and social impact.


**Contents**

8.1. Communicative responsibility as synthesis: from values to impact.
8.2. Application of ethical principles to communication strategy planning and execution.
8.3. Critical review of real and simulated communication decisions.
8.4. Criteria for evaluating coherence between discourse, action, and purpose.

8.5. The role of communication professionals as ethical agents in digital environments.


## 5  TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODOLOGY

The course is based on participative lectures supported by prior reading of materials, including at least one book. Classroom activities will promote reflection and the practical application of content through exercises, debates, and case studies. Individual and group work will be combined to consolidate key concepts and skills.

The main activities that will be carried out are:

- Problem-solving, debates, and case resolution.
- Practical exercises involving real or hypothetical communication situations.
- Group work with professor guidance.
- Case and dilemma analysis based on real-world communication challenges.
- Structured debates on controversial or current issues.
- Applied exercises on communication scenarios.
- Supervised individual and group work with presentations.
- Research on emerging technologies and their ethical implications.
- AI is permitted if used as an assistant (e.g., ChatGPT), but under no circumstances should it be used to achieve the learning objectives of the course.


## 6  EVALUATION

According to the Bologna Process, the model rewards the constant and continuous effort of students. 60% of the final grade is obtained from continuous assessment of directed activities, and the remaining 40% from the final in-person exam. The final exam has two sittings.

The final grade for the subject (FG) will be calculated using the following formula:

**FG = Final Exam Grade x 40% + Continuous Assessment Grade x 60%**

The minimum grade for the final exam to calculate the FG will be 40 points out of 100.
The subject is passed with a final grade equal to or greater than 50 points out of 100.

| Activity type | Description | % Continuous assessment | |
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| **Course work:** | | | 50 % |
| Case study | Individual task | 20% | |

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| Team exercise | Class presentation | 30% | | |
| **Test:** | | | | 10% |
| Test | Test in class | 100% | | |
| **Final exam:** | | | | 40 % |
| | Final exam | 100% | | |

# 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Han, Byung-Chul (2018). *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today*. Polity Press.

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- Machiavelli, Niccolo (2003). *The Prince.* Penguin Classics.

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- Postman, Neil (2005). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Penguin Books.

- Suárez Villegas, Juan Carlos (2021). *Ética de la comunicación en la sociedad digital*. Editorial UOC.