

SMC ETHICS

Continuing a Dialogue on What We Do and How We Do It

Welcome!

The Professional Ethics and Responsibilities Committee welcomes you to the first issue of our newsletter *SMC Ethics*! We have changed the format and name of *The Ethical Professor* to create a more engaging and multifaceted forum to discuss the ethical issues we all face as teachers and colleagues. In the same familiar fashion, each issue will continue to offer an extended exploration of one ethical matter that we believe needs to be brought to the faculty's attention. We will also include sidebar topics (like this one) along with surveys to help stimulate a continuous engagement with faculty. We genuinely hope *SMC Ethics* will generate further reflection on and dialogue about our roles and responsibilities, not only as educators and employees, but also as members of the SMC community. To ensure this, the committee is already beginning to plan a series of Brown Bag discussions that will give faculty the chance to voice their own opinions about the ethical dilemmas brought up by the newsletter. The committee usually chooses its topics from suggestions by the faculty, so be sure to send us an e-mail with any ethical questions that appear in your classroom, within your department, or at the college.



"Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham

Turning In Grades On-Time

The last couple of weeks of every semester bring about chaos for part-time and full-time faculty alike. Students become suddenly aware of missing assignments, final exams fill the air with anticipation and panic, and office hours suddenly prove to be much more...lively. But once all that dust settles, all faculty members retreat to their homes to finalize grades as students disappear from sight. It is important, however, that those students do not disappear from our minds as well.

In Spring of 2015, 54 sections had grades submitted later than the deadline, as outlined on the SMC website, impacting 1175 students. In Fall of 2014, the estimated number of students affected ranges from 1100-1500 (exact data were not available). The spring before that? 73 sections. 1532 students impacted.

Statistically speaking, this issue is not clearly attributed to one faculty group; adjunct and full-time faculty are nearly equal in their contribution to the issue. Clearly this suggests that it is an ethical issue of consideration and definition – what does the grade submission deadline mean?

Do you connect with students via social media? We want to hear from you!



It is unavoidable. With formal lines being redefined constantly, there is now an expectation by some students (and some professors!) that a connection exists outside of the classroom through social media. Worries of impropriety certainly affect each instructor's decision on how much they connect with their students, but preservation of privacy and maintaining certain standards in the classroom may influence this as well. Please take the time to respond to a (very) brief survey below to help contribute to a future piece!

[Social Media Survey](#)

As faculty members, we regularly set deadlines for our students and expect those deadlines to be met. Some instructors are perhaps more lenient about missed deadlines, but ultimately, the acceptance of late work really only affects the instructor's grading schedule. When grade deadlines aren't met, students' schedules can be impacted – for example, a student who was not passing at the midway point of the semester who then passes the class, yet is unable to enroll in the next course. This also may impact a student's transfer eligibility.

There are reasonable responses to this, of course. Do grades a day or two late keep a student from attending UCLA? Most likely not. If a student was not passing midway through the semester and the instructor showed patience and guidance, doesn't reciprocity mean a grace period when final grades are being calculated? Perhaps. Do the freeway flying adjunct faculty deserve a break in the midst of managing multiple deadlines, uncertain future schedules, and Los Angeles traffic? Many would say yes.

The question is, if there are no concrete consequences for our students, do those deadlines become arbitrary? It is an ethical question because there are no hard set consequences (to this committee's knowledge) for the faculty members missing the deadline aside from some minor to somewhat major inconveniences of filing late grades. If the faculty as a whole feels that the announced deadline is unreasonable, surely there is a better response than simply ignoring the deadline and keeping students checking for grades seven times a day until grades are posted.

Our students have expectations, some reasonable and some not, about how and when they learn their grades. It is a source of major anxiety for many, and some of that anxiety is very legitimate for F-1 students and those worried about financial aid standing. There are many responsibilities that faculty members must manage, and sometimes there are questions about those responsibilities. Timely grade submission is a reflection of how we think of our students outside the classroom. Perhaps the ethics of this expectation needs to be examined and met on behalf of our students.

CONTACTUS!

If you have any ideas or issues you would like to submit to the Professional Ethics and Responsibilities Committee for future consideration, get in touch with us through the links below.

[PERC website](#)

[email](#)