**Amazeen BRIDGE Project Posting**

1. Identify class level, specify whether core, elective, or major requirement, any other pertinent information on class demographics.

The course I selected for the BRIDGE Workshop is ADV 200: Advertising Principles (formerly ADV 300). This is the introduction to advertising course in the College of Business Administration (CBA). It is the gateway course for the advertising major. It is also an elective that many Marketing and other CBA students take. There are also students majoring in Public Relations, Journalism, English and other communication-related fields who take the course as well as Biology and Psychology majors. The prerequisite for this course is MKT 200: Marketing Principles. Prior to the 2013-2014 academic year, students had to have junior standing to enroll. Beginning in the Fall 2013 semester, the CBA waived that requirement and opened up ADV 200 to sophomores who had completed MKT 200. Since this change, all of the students in the Fall 2013 semester (approximately 40 students across two sections) were still junior standing or higher. In the Spring 2014 semester, I had a handful of second-semester sophomores among the approximate 60 enrolled students (across two sections) with the rest being junior/seniors. Demographically, roughly 20% of students are minorities.

2. What problems or questions about my students’ learning and my teaching strategies did I address?

The ADV 200 course is designed to provide students with foundational knowledge about the theoretical roles and functional applications of advertising. However, I wanted to provide students with an appreciation of something in which they often receive little formal instruction: how ethics relate to advertising. Research has shown that while nearly 2/3 of *journalism* programs offer ethics instruction, few *advertising* programs do (Stuhlfaut and Farrell, 2009). Furthermore, some have argued that the moral development of advertising students actually decreases after graduation (Marino, 2008). While Rider’s CBA offers a course that addresses legal and ethical issues in business, many students will not have taken it by the time they are in my class as it is a 300-level course. Some students outside the CBA may not get any exposure to ethics in their curriculum. Thus, my challenge was how to adequately and systematically integrate ethics into ADV 200 so that students are able to recognize ethical complexities in advertising and are prepared with an array of potential alternative responses.

The textbook I had been using addressed ethics and social responsibility briefly in one chapter near the beginning of the book. While ethical issues were raised in most ensuing chapters, they were marginalized off in a box toward the back of each chapter. I believed this was consistent with most introductory advertising course texts, but I had not conducted a thorough study. I wanted the course to be grounded in an ethical framework of what advertising should/should not do with all ensuing learning reflecting back upon whether practices are ethically sound.

I had previously tried to engage in class discussions that touched on ethical dilemmas in advertising. But I had always found that the discussions were superficial and that there was a line that students were not comfortable crossing…or I did not know how to navigate them across the line. Frequently, students would fall back on responses such as “but the ad is funny,” or “the people who are offended aren’t in the target market.”

**3. Did I rethink my course goals? (Explain.)**

Assessing the impact of advertising on society has always been one goal of the course. What I have done is added clarity to what that means and modified my teaching approach. As one of several key learning objectives, previous syllabi had indicated that “Social and ethical issues relevant to advertising will be addressed in this course.” I changed the objective so it is less vague and now reads, “You will learn to recognize ethical and social responsibility issues relevant to advertising as well as generate and evaluate multiple ways to address these issues.”

To facilitate student recognition of ethical issues, I knew I had to offer students a framework within which to consider advertising ethics early on in the semester. Fortunately, I came across the Institute for Advertising Ethics’ Principles and Practices for Advertising Ethics. This framework was developed collaboratively between the American Advertising Federation (an industry group) and the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri’s Missouri School of Journalism. These eight principles are now introduced early on in the semester so that all ensuing conversations about advertising ethics are linked back to this framework.

4. What methods did I use to gain information? [Specify any CATs here, including changes in assignments and assessments, if relevant.]

Several instruments were used to evaluate students’ progress toward the learning objective. Because I was teaching two sections of the same class during the same semester, I was able to use one section as a control group, keeping the same instruction approach as in the past, while the other section was my treatment group where I more systematically integrated ethics instruction. Methods included each of the following:

a) An anonymous in-class survey was administered to ADV 200 students across six sections during three semesters of instruction. The survey was adapted from Fullerton, Kendrick and McKinnon (2013) and Keith, Pettijohn and Burnett (2008) using many of the same ethical scenarios. My objective was to measure whether students’ ethical perceptions and perceived likelihood of engagement in unethical activities differed depending upon the level of classroom ethics instruction. As a baseline reading, I was able to administer the survey at the end of the Spring 2013 semester to two of my ADV 200 sections. In the Fall 2013 semester, I continued to teach two sections of ADV 200 with superficial attention to advertising ethics and administered the survey at the beginning of the semester and again at the end. In the Spring of 2014, one section of ADV 200 served as my control group receiving superficial attention to advertising ethics. The second section of this course was my treatment group in which I systematically integrated advertising ethics instruction throughout the semester. In both sections during Spring 2014, the survey was administered on a pre/post semester basis.

b) An ethical scenario activity used in previous semesters was modified based upon CAT 31. In both class sections during the Spring 2014 semester, the same case study was administered both before and after presentation of the Institute for Advertising Ethics’ Principles and Practices for Advertising Ethics. In this activity, students were asked to identify at least one ethical problem, explain why that aspect of the ad or scenario was problematic in relation to the industry ethical standards, envision at least two ways the problem could be ameliorated, and articulate the pros and cons of the alternatives. It was expected that students would be better prepared to address the questions after learning about the industry ethical standards. A similar ethical scenario was administered as an essay question on the midterm exam in both classes.

c) Ad Scavenger Hunt assignment. For this homework assignment, students were instructed to find three advertisements (in any media) that display different functions of advertising. In the treatment section (Spring 2014), students also had to identify at least one ad that some may find socially or ethically problematic and support their observations based upon industry standards. Students in the control section did not have to make this additional identification.

d) Individual Advertising presentations: Across the 13 week semester, each student in the control class had to give a 5-10 minute presentation about any aspect of advertising (share an interesting ad campaign, ad execution, ad agency, etc.). Students in the treatment class had to give a 5-10 minute presentation on some aspect of advertising that is considered ethically challenging and address each of the following:

i)  What are the potentially problematic issues?

ii)  Which of the Principles and Practices for Advertising Ethics may be in violation?

iii)  What are two or three possible alternative ways the situation could have been handled?

iv)  What are the pros and cons (at least 2 for each) for each alternate action?

v)  Engage class in discussion about strength or plausibility of alternatives.

e) Business memo: All students had to write a memo as part of their final exams. The memo was administered as a take-home portion of the exam. The memo was to be from a fictitious worker at an ad agency written to his/her client. Based upon the provided scenario, the student had to articulate the ethical issue(s), alternative courses of actions and their related pros/cons, as well as the worker’s recommended action with justification.

**5. What examples or evidence of student performance can I offer to illustrate how I drew conclusions? [If possible, please include samples to illustrate effects of your interventions. Emphasis may be on qualitative or quantitative data. ]**

It was expected that students in the treatment course who received systematically integrated ethics instruction would be more likely to identify ethically dubious situations, less likely to expect to participate in ethically dubious behavior, and more likely to anticipate ethically compromising situations compared to students who only received superficial ethics instruction. While full data analysis has not yet been completed, preliminary analysis of the survey administered in class does offer some insights.

Compared to students in the control group, students who received systematic ethics training:

1. agreed more strongly with the statement that it’s important to work for a company or agency with high ethical standards.
2. were more likely to believe that the advertising industry is ethical.
3. were also more likely to believe that most people would rate the ad industry as ethical.
4. were more likely to believe that a lot of companies that run advertising about how socially responsible they are, really aren’t that socially responsible.
5. indicated a greater willingness to work 60-80 hour work weeks in the advertising business if that’s what it takes.

When evaluating the 20 ethical scenarios provided in the survey, there were few differences between classes that were of statistical significance. Directionally, students who received ethics instruction rated seven out of 20 scenarios as more ethically dubious than control group students. However, only one of these cases was statistically different, and in 17 of the 20 cases, there was no statistical difference between the two classes. There was a similar situation in perceived likelihood to participate in unethical behavior. While, directionally speaking, students who received ethics instruction were less likely to expect to participate in ethically-challenging behavior in 9 out of the 20 scenarios, differences were statistically significant in only one case. There was no difference between classes in 15 cases. The most robust finding appears to be the relationship between ethics instruction and the expectation of facing a similar situation. Students who received ethics instruction were more likely to believe they could face a similar ethical challenge in the future in 17 of the 20 scenarios. Eight of these cases were statistically significant; in 12 cases, there was no difference between classes.

Thus, it appears that systematic ethics instruction prepares students to expect that they will face ethically challenging situations in the field of advertising. Furthermore, it seems to address some of the negative perceptions surrounding advertising and makes students more receptive to working in the industry.

Another assessment of the efficacy of my interventions in the treatment class is based upon performance on the final exam business memo. While the average score on the memo was 85% in both classes, performance varied on certain aspects. With respect to being able to correctly identify violations of appropriate industry ethical principles and generate alternative actions with corresponding pros/cons, students who received integrated ethics instruction averaged 82% compared to control group students who averaged only 75%. Thus, it is again demonstrated that students in the treatment course have a greater likelihood of recognizing violations of industry ethical standards and application of alternatives.

A comparative analysis of responses for a microblogging assignment may also yield relevant data for evaluation. Students in both classes were required to post Tweets related to advertising to our Twitter account throughout the semester. The quality of Tweets and their association with ethical situations could be assessed to detect differences between the two classes. This is an effort yet to be completed.

6. What theories or debates about learning frame or illuminate my inquiry? [Please refer here to specific readings and theories or debates from books distributed and articles handed out.]

Two theories about learning provide the primary framework for my inquiry. According to Perry’s (1970) scheme of intellectual and ethical maturation, students progress through different stages with respect to their attitudes toward knowledge. In his model, students begin at a simplistic understanding of a concept where they believe that right and wrong answers exist. As they develop, students increasingly recognize that knowledge can be subjective in nature depending upon a multiplicity of perspectives that may result in conflicting answers. Similarly, Colomb (1988) argues that students’ knowledge, writing and thinking are socially constructed. Therefore, we need to facilitate socialization of students into their discipline. In both perspectives, it is important to make clear to students what are sometimes tacit understandings. While introduction to disciplinary codes of ethics can provide general guidelines to students and may be useful as a framework, they typically are not situation specific (Fullerton, Kendrick & McKinnon, 2013). The integration of ethically challenging scenarios has been argued as an effective means in the development of students’ ethical decision making (Fullerton et al., 2013; Keith et al., 2008; Patterson & Wilkins, 2011). As practices in the field of advertising become increasingly blurred with marketing and journalism (a la native advertising), a systematic integration of advertising ethics may be a superior way to encourage student consideration and understanding of what advertising ought to be.

7. What have I learned (or what new hypotheses have I developed) so far?

I think that students are aware of the negative effects of advertising, even tacitly. As these inconvenient aspects of advertising are made clearer in class, some students may be less receptive to approaching advertising as a career. Why would one want to enter a profession that routinely stereotypes, exaggerates and promotes consumerism? However it appears that systematic ethics instruction perhaps helps students confront some of the cognitive dissonance they may experience and may allow them to be more receptive to working in the industry. Advertising is a powerful tool that can be used to accomplish good (creating awareness for products that can save lives) just as easily as it can be used for less good ends (creating desire for unhealthy products like cigarettes or soft drinks). Systematic ethics instruction seems to prepare students to expect that they may very well face ethically challenging situations in the field of advertising. At the same time, hopefully they are better prepared to make appropriate choices.

8. Where will I go from here?

I am scheduled to be on a panel at the Marketing Management Association’s Fall Educator Conference. The panel is entitled, “Marketing Ethics: Independent Course or Curriculum Integration?” I will be able to talk about the results of this project.

I have also been encouraged to write up this study and submit to the *Journal of Advertising Education* which is published by the Advertising Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.