The Ethics of Writing

Katherine Mack
Department of English

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Katherine Mack
Department of English
Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative Fellow
kmack@uccs.edu
What is Rhetoric?

What we do to language, and what language does to us.”

(Krista Ratcliffe)
What Does Ethics Have to Do with Writing?

“[In writing,] we invite an exchange between others and ourselves” (Duffy 116).

“Writing involves ethical choices” (Duffy 11)

John Duffy’s **Provocations of Virtue: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing** (2022)
Principles

Integrity
Act with honesty in all situations

Trust
Build trust in all stakeholder relationships

Accountability
Accept responsibility for all decisions

Transparency
Maintain open and truthful communications

Fairness
Engage in fair competition and create equitable and just relationships

Respect
Honor the rights, freedoms, views, and property of others

Rule of Law
Comply with the spirit and intent of laws and regulations

Viability
Create long-term value for all relevant stakeholders
Virtue Ethics

“The virtuous speaker and writer is not guided by codes or rules but knows which virtues to enact, in which settings, for which reasons” (323)

(Some) Virtue Ethics

- *Phronesis* (practical wisdom)
- Open-mindedness
- Intellectual Humility
- Nuance
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“The virtues offer as well, should we choose to speak and write it, a language we might share with our students.” (323)

• What kinds of writing happen in your disciplinary or professional context?

• What ethical conundrums related to writing emerge in your context?

• What additional questions or nuancing of the DFEI principles does your context require?
The Ethical Inclusion of the Personal

Does attending to the personal reinforce and cultivate DFEI principles and virtue ethics?
ENGL 4880: The Rhetoricity of the Personal

- Epistemological
- Rhetorical
- Ethical
“highly personal and deeply empathetic perspective” — Publisher’s Weekly

“memoir-infused reported essays” — New York Times Book Review

“A welcome addition to the literature on immigration told by an author who understands the issue like few others.” — Kirkus Reviews
In what ways is the following statement a statement of fact? In what ways is it shaped by Villavicencio’s overtly personal perspective?

“They have all experienced racist abuse and wage theft at the hand of their employers, are all owed thousands of dollars by white men who made them work for days, promised payment, then simply disappeared” (10).
In what ways is Villavicencio’s perspective narrowed/constrained and deepened/expanded by her overtly biased approach to the subjects (undocumented immigrants) of her writing?

“I see my father’s face in their every one, and I know that this astigmatism will always be with me; the light will always fall this way” (13).
Your Turn!

Attending to the personal would enhance, undermine, or X the practice of ethical writing in my disciplinary or professional context.