

Unit Two, Predraft One (P2.1)

After reading the packet of journalistic material on Internet ethics—posted under Materials on the course website—choose one of the various ethical issues (cases) raised in these articles. With this issue in mind, write one or two paragraphs, including both of these things:

(1) A description of your case, in concise, vivid, and provocative detail. This description should inform your reader about the specifics of the case you will study, citing one or more examples of the ethical dilemma at the heart of your case. It should be dramatic enough to entertain your reader, while piquing her interest, making her want to know more.

(2) A discussion of how this is a problem of ethics. Your description of the case should highlight the way in which this issue poses an ethical dilemma. Why is this an *ethical* problem (as opposed to, say, merely a practical problem)? What are the ethical principles involved in deciding how to deal with this case? What other aspects of our lives are related to this same ethical issue?

At this point in the essay writing process, you are not expected to enter into the debate about your case, only to frame its terms. You might imagine that you are a judge, introducing a case to a jury who is about to hear arguments on either side. Your job is to present to the jury the most salient details of the case, and to show them why this case deserves their attention, why it is important and why it is complicated.

As you have only two paragraphs in which to accomplish this difficult task, you must choose your words carefully. You will not have space to include every last detail, nor will you be able to provide much historical background or other contextualizing information. You can assume that your audience is already familiar with the phenomenon of the Internet and with the general field of ethical dilemmas there. That is, you don't have to explain, for example, what spam is, but you should make clear just how important it is by citing a telling statistic or a particularly dramatic event having to do with spam. While this assignment asks you to write (one or) two paragraphs, I do not imagine that they will break down into one paragraph of description and one about ethics. The description should be framed and motivated by the ethical discussion, while the discussion of ethics should be explained and filled out by the description of the case.

Please e-mail to me your two paragraphs (inline, not as an attachment, and including the usual stuff in the subject line of the e-mail) by class on Thursday, September 29. Also bring a hardcopy of your paragraphs to class that day.