

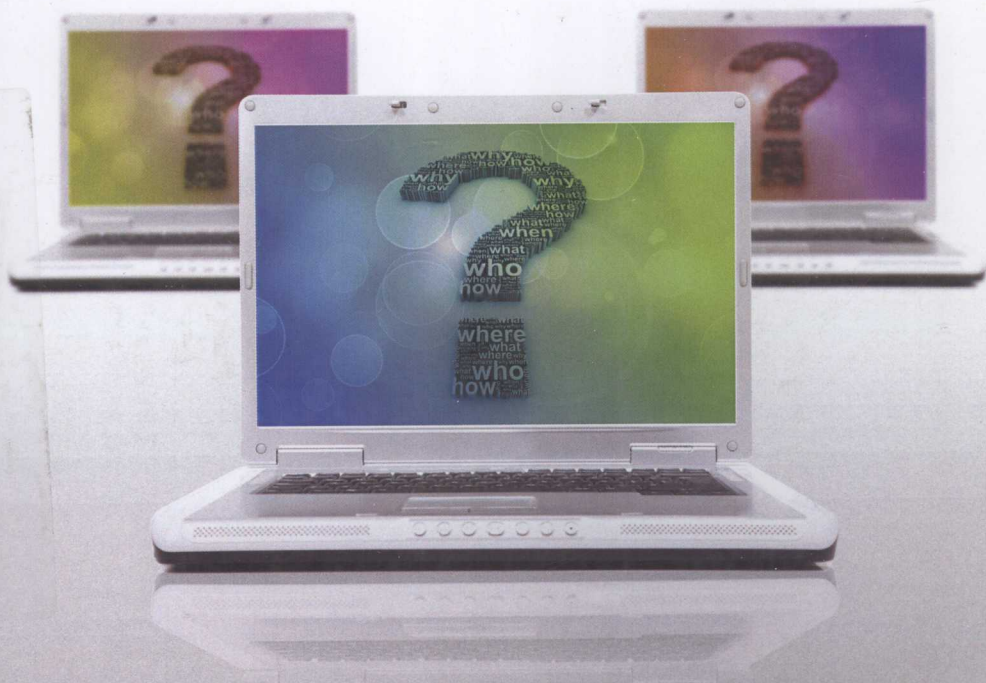
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# Ethical Behaviour in the E-Classroom

What the online student  
needs to know

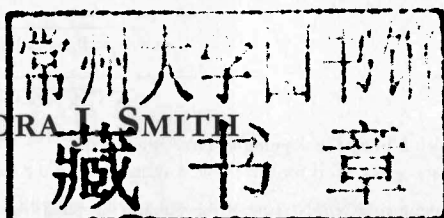
Cassandra J. Smith



# Ethical Behaviour in the E-Classroom

*What the online student needs  
to know*

CASSANDRA J. SMITH



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## Ethical Behaviour in the E-Classroom

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The purpose of this article is to explore the ethical behavior of teachers in the E-classroom. The study was conducted in a large, urban, public school district in the United States. The study was a qualitative study that used interviews and focus groups to explore the ethical behavior of teachers in the E-classroom. The study found that teachers in the E-classroom face a variety of ethical challenges, including issues related to privacy, security, and the use of technology. The study also found that teachers in the E-classroom are often faced with the challenge of balancing the needs of their students with the needs of the school district. The study concludes that teachers in the E-classroom need to be aware of the ethical challenges they face and to develop strategies to address these challenges.

**Keywords:** ethical behavior, E-classroom, teachers, privacy, security, technology

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In loving memory of my grandmother Margaret Goldsby

Thank you God for creating me  
Thank you Jesus for not leaving me  
Thank you Holy Spirit for guiding me

To my family, friends, and students: thank you for your  
unyielding love and educational challenges.

Education implodes the walls of ignorance  
C. Smith

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I am especially grateful to my publishers, Chandos. It takes a leader in any discipline to have vision and be unique. The staff and editors at Chandos are visionaries and they realize that as technology changes, so must the content and instruction. With their unique books and products, they are a leader in the industry to those who will soon follow.

I am sincerely grateful to my husband. He is my motivation, consistently reminding me of my true self and my limitless possibilities. I would also like to acknowledge my parents, siblings and other family members. A writer can imagine and construct, but is sometimes challenged – that is when family reminds her of her special gifts; you did that for me.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my students. You have improved my leadership, communication, and perceptive skills. You taught me as well.

---

## About the author

**Cassandra J. Smith, M.Ed.**, has been writing for more than 20 years. She started as a journalist for a CBS affiliate in the United States of America and has now written general education courses for distance education programs in higher education. She studied adult learning theories in graduate school and is currently an online instructor. Smith has experience working with novice and experienced adult learners.

Smith has added to the body of literature of online pedagogy. In 2008, she wrote a book called *Who Let this Disaster in My Classroom?* The book contains best practices for worldwide faculty teaching at a distance. Facilitating virtual teams and engaging in discussions in the online environment are some of the highlights of her book. Smith has also trained online faculty on how to facilitate a successful online class.

She has interacted with diverse adult learners, using asynchronous and synchronous types of communication, in her years of online teaching experience.

Smith holds a Bachelor of Science in Communication from the University of Mobile, and a Master of Arts in Education with an emphasis on Adult Education and Distance Learning from the University of Phoenix. Smith is a doctoral PhD candidate in the Postsecondary and Adult Education discipline.

Faculty staff are encouraged to contact the author at [cassiesmith41@gmail.com](mailto:cassiesmith41@gmail.com) for further information, notes and resources.



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## **Introduction to ethical behaviour in the e-classroom**

It's late Sunday night. You are alone in your room. You have been running errands all day. You had an argument with your significant other. Your roommate is asking for your share of the rent money, and your check was short two hundred dollars. You have a paper due tomorrow. You are in no mood to write an essay this late. Your planning is out of kilter. You search the Internet and retrieve the results of an essay about your topic. You have a sudden strange feeling as you skim through the essay, thinking to yourself that this is good. It will make for a great paper. But, you know that it is wrong, and only entertain the thought for a split second before writing your own paper. Rewind for a second. You skim through the essay, thinking to yourself that this is good. It will make for a great paper. You say to yourself, "I can change a few words and no one would be the wiser." Rewind for another second. You skim through the essay, thinking to yourself that this is good. It will make for a great paper. You say to yourself, "I can use it, but what if I get caught? The instructor might discover that I didn't write the paper. Is it worth the chance of getting caught?"

Your mind goes round in circles as you wonder if you should use the paper. You comment to yourself, “Should I or should I not go down this dubious path? What shall I do?” The choice of good or bad reverberates in your mind. For some of you, it is not a dilemma of right or wrong. You know that it is not right and will submit your essay by doing the hard work or accept the late points that could be applied if you do not make the deadline. Some of you also know right from wrong, but choose the opposite, which is to cheat with trepidation. Some of you will use the paper with no remorse. Doubtful, decisive, remorseful, noncommittal, resolute, or questionable could all describe parts of the ethical or unethical choices in this scenario or any given ethical scenario. This textbook explains what it means to be ethical in online classes – in higher education. This will be accomplished by addressing ethical and unethical choices and patterns of good and poor behaviour online.

Fortunately, distance education has made it possible for working adults, or adults who desire to continue their education, to obtain their degrees online. Attending classes online means that you have a computer that is Internet ready and connected. You log in on your computer, at a time convenient to you, to your school’s electronic software to complete class work and meet assignment deadlines. Your instructor is not aware of who is behind the computer, just like you are not aware of your instructor. You do not know each other’s personal traits, profiles, appearances – unless there is a picture of your instructor on the school’s website – learning styles, and/or behaviours. You start this task with an attitude of blind trust, hoping to work with an ethical instructor, and the instructor hopes that students will submit their work and make ethical choices. You also do not know who is actually grading your work. The instructor does not



know who is submitting the work. Yes, as the student, you are enrolled in the course. Yes, as the instructor, the person is hired to complete a job. But, who is the real you behind the computer? Who is actually doing the work as the student enrolled in the degree program? Is it you or the Internet? Is it family members, peers, a hired person, or chat rooms?

Therein is the dilemma of ethics online. Although some instructors make unethical choices as well, this book will address concerns of students' ethics or lack of ethics in the online classroom. You will read about several true cases of unethical student behaviour in online classes. You will learn what is considered a violation of the code of ethics when pursuing your online degree. You will learn how to avoid issues that will place you in the position of victim or offender while being an online student by reviewing topics such as plagiarism, critical thinking, and communication methods.

This is a book of reflection and examination. It is real, current, and not figurative. Therefore, some of the statements are crude. You will reflect on times when you made good or poor decisions and the results of both. You will examine others' choices and actions and then review the repercussions. You will have the opportunity to decide on your possible course of action for some of the dilemmas presented in this book. You can decide where you are with your moral make-up. If there are any misconceptions or poor thinking patterns that have plagued your life and thought processes, you can develop an ethical plan to be a successful online student. If you are good and feel strong about your convictions, you can still grow and ensure your success as an online student. Throughout this book, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your private thoughts and really self-assess your actions. The first of these is located in Figure I.1.