

SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS  
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY  
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INTRODUCTION

The Society of Christian Ethics states its purpose as “to promote scholarly work in the field of Christian ethics and in the relation of Christian ethics to other traditions of ethics and to social, economic, political, and cultural problems; to encourage and improve the teaching of these fields in colleges, universities and theological schools; and to provide a community of discourse and debate for those engaged professionally within these general fields.”

Social media provides a means for fulfilling this multifaceted purpose by amplifying messages through multiple networks of communication and inviting interactive public engagement. Like any ethical endeavor, however, such communication may be done well—or it may be done poorly. Thoughtful deliberation and intentionality are required to ensure that the SCE’s use of social media fulfill its stated purpose. This policy is an attempt to perform such deliberation and intentionality.

Given the time and effort involved in thoughtful deliberation and intentional action, however, this policy should not unduly delay the use of social media. This initial policy (August 2018) should be implemented as soon as possible, and revised as often as necessary, in order to expedite and optimize the use of social media in pursuit of the SCE’s stated purpose.

## DEFINITIONS

**Communications** refers to unidirectional postings of SCE materials, such as the various documents provided on the SCE website ([www.scethics.org](http://www.scethics.org)) and email blasts to members. Further guidelines regarding such communications are included in the SCE's Web Access Policy (January 2015). At this time the website is managed by Talley Management.

**Publications** refers primarily to the *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, published twice yearly, under the direction of the editorial team and national editorial board.

**Social Media (SM)** refers to web-based interactive social networking services in which users share content for public or limited engagement: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and so on. Due to the ever-changing speed of social media, this policy applies to all new social media platforms, whether they are mentioned or not. All social media platforms are relevant and included.

**Communication and Records Committee (CRC)** refers to the entity authorized to implement and, when necessary, update this policy. This committee is appointed by the SCE president (By-Laws VII.3), and populated by a selection of members of the Board of Directors.

**Digital Content Producer (DCP)** refers to the staff member hired by the SCE to produce its digital content and manage its social media. The DCP's work will be completed with the cooperation of the Presidential Cabinet, the CRC, the JSCE co-editors, and any other relevant staff members (e.g., Talley Management). Any other committees (e.g., program committee, international scholarly relations committee, etc.) desiring to employ social media are invited to coordinate with the DCP.

## OBJECTIVES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This Social Media Policy has, as its primary objective, the fulfillment of the purpose of the SCE (see introduction above). In pursuit of this objective, therefore, the SCE shall utilize social media to (1) communicate information about and encourage participation in the organization, its programming, and its publications; (2) promote the scholarly work of its members; (3) provide pedagogical tools and teaching materials; and (4) provide platforms for SCE and public engagement on issues related to the field of Christian ethics.

## STATEMENT OF ONLINE CONDUCT

All social media communication of the SCE shall follow the approved Standards of Professional Conduct, exercising respect for difference, respect for personal integrity, and respect for intellectual integrity. In particular, social media shall not be used to "intimidate, ridicule or otherwise inhibit without cause others from a full and genuine expression of their ideas" (SPC 2.C.).

## PERSONAL PRIVACY

The SCE respects the privacy of its members and will, therefore, refrain from posting photos and/or video of individuals or identifying those individuals on social media without their consent. (In the case of minors, parental consent shall be obtained.)

In addition, social media postings should never disclose sensitive or confidential information (job offers, income level, sexual orientation, etc.), unless consent to share such information is obtained from the relevant person(s) and institution(s). This includes, but is not limited to, personal, financial, and/or medical information.

It is expected that content posted by other parties will likewise respect matters of personal privacy. When sharing content from other websites and social media accounts, the SCE shall presume that such permission has already been obtained, and the DCP will delete from the SCE's social media accounts any violations that come to light.

## CONFIDENTIALITY & SECURITY

The DCP, CRC, and other staff members (e.g., Talley Management) will ensure that only proper personnel have access to relevant passwords for various social media accounts. All those with knowledge of passwords shall refrain from sharing that information. In the event of a suspected security breach, all social media passwords shall be changed by the DCP or staff members immediately. Otherwise, all passwords shall be changed by staff on an annual basis.

The DCP, CRC, and other staff members may set up various groups/chatrooms within SCE social media accounts, determine appropriate access (e.g., whether a Facebook group should be public, closed, or secret), and subsequently monitor their content and membership/access. This is particularly important for safeguarding personal privacy (see above) and the integrity of those groups.

## PRACTICAL USE AND SCOPE

This policy applies to all social media accounts set up by and for the SCE. Groups within the SCE wishing to manage their own social media (e.g., Women's Caucus) may do so, but coordination with the DCP and CRC is encouraged. Such groups are expected to respect personal privacy (above) and follow the Statement of Online Conduct (above) and the Standards of Professional Conduct.

## DISCLAIMERS

Only the DCP, CRC, and other staff members may use SCE social media accounts in an official capacity without providing a disclaimer.

Any use of SCE social media that constitutes a clear conflict of interest shall be avoided or, at the very least, must include a disclaimer for full transparency.

## LEGAL MATTERS

Content shared through SCE social media will honor copyright and fair use. No content that violates copyright shall be shared (e.g., images of book pages with more than 300 words), and the SCE will conduct due diligence in securing permissions and quality files from those who hold copyright (e.g., book publishers). Appropriate licenses for content will be sought and purchased when necessary, but the SCE will avoid such expenditures as much as possible.

The SCE shall not use social media for financial disclosures.

## EMERGENCY USE

In the event of an emergency, this policy may be temporarily suspended in order to communicate quickly and safely.

In the event of crisis communications involving an official or staff member of the SCE, that person's access to SCE social media accounts shall be revoked immediately. Such access shall only resume with the approval of the CRC.

## GENERAL CONTENT GUIDELINES

### ***Where***

The primary outlets for SCE social media shall be Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. (Adding networks to this list does not require amending this policy, but revisions of this policy should reflect current SCE social media usage.)

Unless there is a compelling reason not to cross-post across all social media accounts, all non-platform-specific content will be cross-posted to optimize engagement. Some content, however, may be specific to certain platforms, but whenever possible it should be promoted through other platforms (e.g., using Facebook to announce an upcoming tweet chat).

### ***Who***

The DCP is primarily responsible for posting social media content. The CRC and other staff members (e.g., Talley Management) are also authorized to post content, in coordination with the DCP.

### ***When***

The frequency of social media posts will be determined by the reasonable time required of (and stipend allotted to) the DCP. Tools such as Hootsuite may be utilized to minimize this time (and thereby increase the number of posts). Post frequency will vary from two or three posts per week (in general) to multiple posts per day (e.g., live tweeting a conference plenary).

## **What**

In general, content will follow the popular social media “Rule of Thirds”: (1) one-third promotions (membership/dues reminders, publicity for SCE programming/publications, calls for papers); (2) one-third sharing of content from other sources (including members); and (3) one-third branding and engagement.

Branding and engagement, the most frequently misunderstood content category, encompasses a variety of content types: commenting on posts by other sources; replying to comments and retweets; and original content that supports the SCE purpose but may not directly promote the organization itself (e.g., pedagogical memes for “Teaching Tuesday”).

## MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

At the beginning of a DCP’s term, there shall be an initial probationary period in which all potential social media content shall be reviewed by the CRC prior to posting. It is recommended that the DCP share posts two weeks in advance to provide the CRC sufficient time for review.

- If the CRC does not express any reservations about material during that time, the DCP may post it.
- If the CRC does express any reluctance about a particular post, however, the DCP shall not post that content until concerns have been addressed and alleviated.

Once the CRC and/or the presidential cabinet are comfortable with the kinds of posts created by the DCP, they may authorize an end to this period of review, and the DCP may then post content without prior approval (while maintaining appropriate discretion). While there is no fixed probationary period, the CRC and presidential cabinet shall after two months consider whether a sufficient track record has been established in order to bring it to conclusion.

The DCP will monitor all SCE social media accounts on a regular basis. Comments and engagement will be unmoderated—that is, comments do not require approval prior to appearing online—but content that is obviously spam or clearly inconsistent with the Statement of Online Conduct (above) shall be deleted. The CRC may also determine whether any specific comments or engagement warrant deletion.

Comments policies (below) will be shared on relevant social media pages.

Depending upon the nature of the comments/engagement, the DCP may respond directly or may defer (and immediately communicate such deference) to the CRC.

## COMMENTS POLICY (to be posted to relevant social media pages)

The Society of Christian Ethics welcomes contributions to conversations that promote scholarly work in the field of Christian ethics and links to related content. Comments are

unmoderated, so your comment will be posted, but we *do* review all comments. Any content that runs counter to our Standards of Professional Conduct—that is, anything failing to exercise respect for difference, respect for personal integrity, and/or respect for intellectual integrity—shall be deleted. In particular, social media shall not be used to “intimidate, ridicule or otherwise inhibit without cause others from a full and genuine expression of their ideas” (SPC 2.C.).

#### AUDITING AND ANALYTICS

In cooperation with the CRC and other staff members (e.g., Talley Management), the DCP shall periodically audit the SCE’s social media accounts. In addition to clarifying and revising strategy, goals, tactics, guidelines, and policies, this may involve using various free and/or paid tools (e.g. Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics) to analyze and optimize the SCE’s use of social media.

Along these lines, the SCE may also create and distribute surveys to its members (possibly utilizing social media to do so). Such surveys need not adhere to the Policy Regarding Research Involving Human Subjects. Informal surveys as social media content/engagement (e.g., “What is your favorite foundational text in theological ethics?”) are also exempt from the IRB policy.

#### EXPENDITURES

Any expenditures related to social media (other than the DCP’s stipend) require the prior approval of the CRC.

Possible expenditures include, but are not limited to, boosting posts on Facebook and subscribing to social media management (SMM) services, such as Hootsuite, or content creation tools, such as Canva.

Talley Management is responsible for these expenditures. If, for any reason, the DCP or other personnel must make approved expenditures, then the SCE will reimburse those expenses in a prompt manner.