MMC 3203, Ethics and Problems in Mass Communications
Fall 2016

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Overview
Catalog description: *A cross-disciplinary introduction to ethics-relevant situations faced by media professionals. Topics include professional standards of conduct, audience representation and engagement and issues associated with the production, presentation and delivery of messages that reflect the best interests of audiences, clients and stakeholders.*

Much of what we learn in college and in life helps us sort right from wrong. A big part of education in advertising, journalism, public relations and telecommunication is learning right from wrong—what you're supposed to do versus what you're not supposed to do. From introductory principles courses (e.g., ADV 3008, JOU 1001, PUR 3000, RTV 3007) to *Law of Mass Communication* (MMC 4200), students learn what they should and should not do as matters of professional practice and legal responsibility. But in media, as with any discipline, difficult dilemmas arise when we recognize that some issues are not matters of right versus wrong or legal versus illegal. Some of the toughest issues are *right versus right*! These issues raise moral questions, and we will work to answer them in this course.

In this course we will learn and practice techniques for identifying and analyzing ethical issues and problems in mass communications.

Prerequisites
2JM designation and ADV 3008, JOU 1001, PUR 3000 or RTV 3007 with minimum grade of C.

Resources

Canvas
http://elearning.ufl.edu/

Required Textbook
Black, J., & Roberts, C. (2011). *Doing Ethics in Media: Theories and Practical Applications*. New York: Routledge.

Requisite Skills for this Course
You should be prepared to 1) manage academic responsibilities and meet deadlines on the Canvas online course management system, 2) employ analytical skills in the evaluation of situations and content presented in course lectures and readings, 3) articulate these thoughts and ideas clearly in writing, including online forums, and 4) justify/defend your own perspectives, as well as argue on behalf of perspectives that potentially run counter to your position about ethics situations.

Course Goals

Successful completion of this course will require you to:

- Demonstrate understanding of key principles and concepts of media ethics.
- Recognize the most pressing moral issues facing media professionals today.
- Develop analytical skills to resolve dilemmas through a systematic ethical reasoning process.
- Apply ethical reasoning standards across multiple mass communication disciplines.

Expectations and Assignments

Online Discussion Participation (25%)

Your contributions to online discussions are a major part of this course. Below is the rubric for online discussions.

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
Comprehension and evaluation of key components of the module's required readings and online resources	Posts demonstrate clear and analytical understanding.	Posts indicate an awareness of course resources.	Posts do not respond to course resources.
Insight and originality to help create dialogue	Posts were thoughtful and interesting.	Posts showed evidence of original thinking.	Posts echoed other points or expressed general agreement/disagreement.
Meaningful connections	Posts relevant to discussion, with meaningful connections to other course content, personal experience, current events, etc.	Posts on topic and relevant to discussion.	Posts not relevant to discussion prompts or course content.
Grammar, spelling and coherence	Very well written and organized.	Generally well written and organized, some spelling/grammar issues.	Unclearly written or organized or hard to follow (possibly due to spelling/grammar issues).
Timeliness and interaction	Posted early enough for classmates to respond and posted later in response to others.	Involved in discussion boards either early or late, but limited interaction with classmates.	Limited meaningful interaction with classmates.

Participation assessments will be posted after each module. Participation scores for each module will be weighted evenly. Combined they will account for 25% of your course grade.

Discussion-leading Group Project (20%)
You will be randomly assigned to a group of students who will lead the class discussion for one of the two-week modules during the semester. Your group's job is as follows.

- Connect with your group on Canvas using the "Groups" function. Groups will be assigned at the end of drop-add.
- Sign up for a module to lead on the "Module Sign-up" page in Module 1.
- Read the assigned readings for your assigned weeks as soon as you get a chance.
- Collaborate with your group to develop two discussion prompts (one for each chapter) and provide related case articles or videos that you find to use as springboards for discussion.
- E-mail your group's two prompts to the instructor by Thursday prior to the week your module starts. Monitor and lead the class discussion between Monday of the first week and Wednesday of the second week.
- Collaborate with your group to write and edit a synopsis (about two pages for each prompt) and email it to the instructor by 5 p.m. on Friday of the second week. One synopsis will be submitted by the group.
- Complete a confidential peer discussion rubric for each of your group members, and submit your evaluations document directly to the assignment page. Each group member will do his or her own individual peer evaluations.

Task	Due Date
Sign up for a week to host discussion using the "Module Sign-up" page link in the Module 1 section of Canvas.	August 29
Read the chapters for your week. Choose appropriate cases/examples for discussion.	At least one week before your discussion
E-mail discussion question(s) to instructor.	Thursday of the week before your discussion
Moderate/lead the online discussions.	Normally Monday of first week through Wednesday of second week. Discussion closes at 5 p.m. on second Wednesday so you can start writing synopses and conducting peer evals. (Dates are slightly adjusted on weeks with holidays – see calendar.)
Submit synopsis to instructor (instructor will edit if needed and post the following week).	5 p.m. Friday of second week *(extensions can be granted on weeks affected by holidays)*
Submit completed peer discussion rubrics.	5 p.m. Monday the week after your module ends *(extensions can be granted on weeks affected by holidays)*

Quizzes (20%)
Quizzes will cover each module's assigned readings and lectures. Quizzes may include multiple-choice, short-answer and matching questions. The idea is to motivate you to keep up with the reading and lectures. You will have only one opportunity to take each quiz during the specified module time period. Please see the timeline below and the schedule on Canvas.

Each quiz will have a time limit (normally 25 minutes, depending on the number and type of questions). You can take the quiz any time between the opening of the module on Monday of the first week and 5 p.m. on Friday of the second week of the module, but you will have only the specified amount of time to complete the quiz once you start. The idea behind the time limit is for you to prepare by organizing your knowledge of the course material in such a way that you can confidently answer questions quickly and accurately. Although there's no rule against using your notes and books, those who have mastered the material likely will perform MUCH better than those who try to look everything up as they go.

Taking each quiz must be an individual effort.

Quiz Schedule

Quiz 1	Open Aug 22 to **Sep 2 at 5 p.m.**
Quiz 2	Open Sep 5 to **Sep 16 at 5 p.m.**
Quiz 3	Open Sep 19 to **Sep 30 at 5 p.m.**
Quiz 4	Open Oct 3 to **Oct 14 at 5 p.m.***
Quiz 5	Open Oct 17 to **Oct 28th at 5 p.m.**
Quiz 6	Open Oct 31 to **Nov 11 at 5 p.m.***
Quiz 7	Open Nov 14 to **Nov 25 at 5 p.m.***

Please note holidays. Although quizzes will remain open through the times listed, we encourage you to plan to complete them before the breaks so that you can enjoy the time off!

Analysis Paper (30%)
For the analysis paper, your assignment will be to identify a case in media ethics in which you would have acted differently than the media practitioner(s) at the center of it. The paper should be organized in a way that makes clear how you will answer the six major questions from *Doing Ethics in Media*:

1. ***What's your problem?*** Briefly describe the case. (You may attach a published blog, article, case study, or news story as a link or as an appendix for background.) Spell out what makes this situation a moral dilemma. Leave yourself with a clearly stated question to be answered.
2. ***Why not follow the rules?*** Are there some precedents, guidelines, codes, or laws you should keep in mind? If so, are there reasons your dilemma can't be resolved by them?

3. ***Who wins, who loses?*** Who are the stakeholders, and what impact is your decision likely to have on each of them in the short term and in the long term?
4. ***What's it worth?*** Prioritize your values—both moral and non-moral values—and decide which one(s) you won't compromise.
5. ***Who's whispering in your ear?*** In general—and specifically in this case—which school of philosophy or set of moral principles provides you with a moral compass?
6. ***How's your decision going to look?*** State your conclusion, and imagine what your friends and people you respect will think about your decision-making.

As a guideline for length, each section of the paper should be about 1-2 pages, for a total length of about 6-12 pages. I recommend thinking of your paper topic near the beginning of the semester so that you can think through the questions as they come up for discussion during the semester. You might then be able to draft sections of the paper as we go.

Rough draft and peer review: After you submit your draft paper, you will be assigned three peer reviews to complete. Draft papers are due at Friday, December 2 at 5:00 p.m. At that time, Canvas will automatically assign each paper three peer reviewers (and each reviewer will be assigned three papers). If you miss the deadline, even by a few minutes, you will not be included in that process since the number of papers reviewed and the number of reviewers is exactly equal to the number of papers submitted at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 2.

Of course, the more developed your draft is on that Friday, the better, but I strongly recommend you submit whatever draft you have at that time in any case. If you don't make the 5:00 p.m. deadline, there will be no option to submit late. Submission of your draft paper will count toward your Other Participation grade.

Please see the paper assignment on Canvas for the full grading rubric. Your final paper will be submitted through *Turnitin* to check for plagiarism or improper attribution.

Other Participation (5%)
This includes assignments that will be tracked as complete/incomplete/late. Meeting deadlines and quality of effort are important here to keep the course running smoothly.

- Update Canvas profile by 8/25
- Ethical analysis paper topic due 11/22
- Rough draft of ethical analysis paper due Friday 12/2 at 5:00 p.m.
- Peer reviews of paper drafts due Wednesday 12/7 at 5:00 p.m.

Student Learning Outcomes and Grading

	Understand principles and concepts	Recognize moral issues	Develop analytical skills to resolve dilemmas	Apply ethical reasoning across disciplines	Grade weight
Quizzes	✔	✔			20%
Online discussion participation	✔	✔	✔	✔	25%
Discussion-leading	✔	✔	✔	✔	20%
Analysis paper	✔	✔	✔		30%
Other deadlines & participation					5%
					100%

Extra Credit for Participation in Research Studies

A maximum of two (2) extra credit points (equivalent of 2%) will be offered for research participation through CJC's SONA research system (https://ufl-cjc.sona-systems.com).

Please register a SONA account and choose studies to participate in to receive extra credit for this class. Check SONA regularly to see what studies have become available. Typically, studies won't become available until around about the third week of the semester. You should NOT wait until the last minute to sign up for participation because research opportunities may be limited by the end of the semester. In fact, it is probably wise to participate early in the semester when your course loads are the lightest. Please see this video on how to set up your SONA account: https://youtu.be/_1OnT2ZU6QQ.

If you have any questions, please contact the CJC SONA administrator through this email: uf-cjc-sonasystems@jou.ufl.edu.

Final grade requirements

A	90-100		C	70-76
B+	87-89		D+	67-69
B	80-86		D	60-66
C+	77-79		E	Below 60

UF Policies

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities
Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

University Policy on Academic Misconduct
Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php.

Netiquette: Communication Courtesy
All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. See the course netiquette guidelines at https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/319319/pages/netiquette.

Getting Help
For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml

** Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request make-up work.

Other resources are available at http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints to submit a complaint.

UMatter, We Care
Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The *U Matter, We Care* initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the *U Matter, We Care Team* can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The *UMatter, We Care Team* can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Online Course Evaluation
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at http://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary of results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

Tentative Course Timeline

	General Topics	**Notes and Deadlines**
Module 1	Introductions and syllabus Ethics and moral reasoning	• Ensure access to course resources by 8/23 • Update Canvas profile by 8/25 • Module 1 discussions open Monday 8/22-Wednesday 8/31 • Groups sign up for discussion-leading by 8/29
Module 2	Codes of ethics and justification models Media traditions and the paradox of professionalism	• Module 2 discussions open Tuesday 9/6* - Wednesday 9/14 *(Monday 9/5 is Labor Day)*
Module 3	Moral development and the expansion of empathy Loyalty and diversity	• Module 3 discussions open Monday 9/19 - Wednesday 9/28
Module 4	Personal and professional values Truth and deception	• Module 4 discussions open Monday 10/3 - Wednesday 10/12
Module 5	Privacy and public life Persuasion and propaganda	• Module 5 discussions open Monday 10/17 - Wednesday 10/26
Module 6	Consequentialism and utility Deontology and moral rules	• Module 6 discussions open Monday 10/31 - Wednesday 11/9
Module 7	Virtue, justice and care Accountability, transparency and credibility	• Module 7 discussions open Monday 11/14 – Tuesday 11/22 *(Wednesday 11/23-Friday 11/25 are Thanksgiving Holidays)* • Ethical analysis paper topic due 11/22
Module 8	Putting it all together 5 Ws and H	• Rough draft of ethical analysis paper due Friday 12/2 at 5p.m. • Peer reviews of paper drafts due Wednesday 12/7 • **Final paper due Friday 12/9 at 5 p.m.**