MMC3203 Ethics and Problems in Mass Communications Spring 2019

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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. 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 that includes the perspectives and values of diverse stakeholders.
- Apply ethical reasoning standards across multiple mass communication disciplines.

Expectations and Assignments

Formatting, Spelling and Grammar
Each of your assignments should be written to the best of your ability. As you are acting as a professional communicator, you are expected to write using accurate grammar and spelling. Points will be deducted from assignments where the content has grammar and spelling errors.

There are several tools you can use to improve your writing ability or double-check your work. These include the following:
- Purdue Online Writing Lab to check grammar rules
- Citation Machine to assist with APA style source citing
- Grammarly to act as an additional check of your spelling and grammar

Online Discussion Participation (25%)
Your contributions to online discussions are a major part of this course. Below is the rubric for online discussions.

Category (10 pts total)	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. No major grammar or spelling issues.	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. Student posted on the last possible day of interaction.

You are expected to participate in the conversation throughout the entire time the discussion post is open. **Students who respond to classmates or post their response on the last possible day will receive a lower grade due to the lack of interaction.**

Individual 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. During the module for which your group leads the discussion, you will not be assessed on your individual response to prompts, but instead will be assessed on how your group leads and monitors the discussion (see next section).

Discussion-leading Group Project (20%)
At the end of the first week of class, 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 job is as follows.

- Connect with your group on Canvas using the "Groups" function by the end of the day on January 13. (*Groups will be randomly assigned after 5pm on Friday, January 11.*)
- Read the assigned readings for your assigned weeks as soon as you get a chance.
- 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 Friday prior to the week before your module starts.
- Monitor and lead the class discussion between Monday of the first week and Wednesday of the second week of the module. You will not be individually assessed for responses to the discussion posts during this time.
- Write and edit a synopsis (about two pages for each prompt) and email it to the instructor by on Friday of the second week of the module. Only one synopsis will be submitted by the group.
- Complete a confidential peer discussion rubric for each of your group members, and submit via survey link. Each group member will do his or her own individual peer evaluations.

Student groups will be provided a listing of deadlines for their discussion module after groups have been assigned to modules in the second week of class. Students are responsible for checking their Canvas mail for this PDF and following the deadlines posted there. If deadlines must be changed due to unforeseen circumstance, students will receive updated deadlines as early as possible from the instructor to their Canvas mail.

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.	Sunday, January 13 (*Groups will be randomly assigned after 5pm on Friday, January 11.*)
Read the chapters for your week. Choose appropriate cases/examples for discussion.	At least two weeks before your discussion
E-mail discussion question(s) to instructor.	Friday two weeks before your discussion

Moderate/lead the online discussions.	Normally Monday of first week through Wednesday of second week. (Dates are slightly adjusted on weeks with holidays – see calendar and the group deadline handout provided by the instructor to your group).
Submit synopsis to instructor.	Friday of second week
Submit completed peer discussion rubrics.	Monday the week after your module ends

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.

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 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 better than those who try to look everything up as they go. Taking each quiz must be an individual effort. For specific dates, please see Canvas.

Analysis Paper (35%)

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. I recommend thinking of your paper topic near the beginning of the semester to allow you to think through the questions and draft your paper as we review each module.

The paper must be organized in a way clearly states how you will answer the six major questions:

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.

Formatting guidelines: each section of the paper should be about 1-2 pages of actual content; you must use Calibri or Arial 12pt font or smaller; total length of the paper is 6-12 pages double-spaced; margins do not exceed 1" on all sides; and each section of the paper should be clearly labeled with the question as the heading.

Paper Topic Submission: Your paper topic will be due on Friday, March 29. You will be required to briefly describe the problem and outline your answers to the six questions. This amount of information will help you better prepare for the actual writing of the paper, and I will be able to give you accurate feedback on the content and direction of your assignment before you fully commit to your topic.

Rough draft: Draft papers are due on Friday, April 19. 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 11:59 p.m. on that day.

Your rough draft must be completely developed in order to take advantage of the feedback you will receive from your peers. If you don't make the deadline, there will be no option to submit late.

Peer review: After you submit your draft paper, you will be assigned three peer reviews to complete. Please grade these to the best of your ability. All feedback that you give to your classmate will help them submit a more polished final paper. You must have conducted your peer reviews by April 23.

Final Paper: Your final paper will be checked for plagiarism or improper attribution. The rubric for the paper is below, and you should feel free to use this to inform your decisions on how to write your paper and what information you should include. You can also see the point distribution on the assignment page in Canvas. This must be submitted through Canvas by April 26.

Criteria	Excellent	Satisfactory	Minimum
"What's your problem?"	Briefly but clearly describes the case, what makes it a moral dilemma, and the specific ethical question to be answered. Applies appropriate concepts from class. Focuses on perspective of specific individual decision-maker working in media.	Describes case. Focuses on perspective of organization or generic decision-maker working in media rather than identifiable individual. Applies concepts from class.	Case lacks adequate description, or is unclear on what makes it an ethical issue (as opposed to craft-based, professional issue).
"Why not follow the rules?"	Identifies, analyzes, and compares applicable precedents, guidelines, codes or laws. Explains if they can't resolve dilemma.	Names guidelines or codes that may apply, but light on comparison or analysis of why they do or don't apply.	Doesn't cite specific rules or guidelines, or cites a few but doesn't clearly explain why they apply or don't. Defers to authority rather than principled moral reasoning.
"Who wins, who loses?"	Identifies major stakeholders and the impact decision is likely to have on each in the short term and long term. Selects and applies key concepts such as moral development, empathy, loyalty, and diversity.	Identifies some stakeholders or individuals who will be impacted and discusses possible consequences for them. Mentions key concepts.	Names some parties that may be affected by the decision, but doesn't frame impact based on key concepts.

"What's it worth?"	Prioritizes values—both moral and non-moral—and explains which one(s) won't be compromised and why (e.g., truth, deception, privacy, persuasion).	Identifies and applies important values.	Names values, but discussion more visceral or based on tenacity than principled moral reasoning (see Ch. 1).
"Who's whispering in your ear?"	Selects schools of philosophy or sets of moral principles to consider, analyzes the options, and explains which apply best.	Names key philosophers or ethical approaches, offers some explanation of why some are more appealing than others for this particular case.	Names key philosophers or ethical approaches, but doesn't show depth of understanding or analysis.
"How's your decision going to look?"	States clear conclusion and articulates consideration of what friends and other respected people will think about decision-making. Selects and applies key concepts such as accountability, transparency, and credibility.	Discusses what friends and other respected people will think about decision-making. Mentions key concepts.	Discusses what friends and other respected people will think about decision-making, but doesn't clearly apply key concepts from class.
Grammar, spelling and coherence.	Very well written and organized, especially clear and coherent. No grammar and spelling issues.	Generally well written and organized, some spelling/grammar issues.	Unclearly written or organized or hard to follow (possibly due to spelling/grammar issues).

Meeting deadlines and quality of effort are important here to keep the course running smoothly. Sections that do not meet the page requirements will receive a lower grade. You will have points deducted from this assignment for missing or submitting late work for the deadlines mentioned in this section.

Late Policy
Unless you notify me in advance and have a documented reason for why you cannot complete an assignment in a timely way, and with the exception of factors listed at the UF link below, late submissions on homework, exams, and quizzes will not be accepted. To see exceptions to the rule stated above, please see requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work here: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Student Learning Outcomes and Grading

	Understand principles & 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	✓	✓	✓		35%
					100%

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 https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/.

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 on Canvas.

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

- helpdesk@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- https://elearning.ufl.edu/student-help-faqs/

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. They 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.

Course Timeline

	General Topics	**Notes and Deadlines**
Module 1	Introductions & syllabus Ethics & moral reasoning (Intro & Ch 1)	• Ensure access to course resources 1/11 • Module 1 discussions open Monday 1/7 to Wednesday 1/16 • Groups sign up for discussion- leading by 1/13
Module 2	Codes of ethics & justification models (Ch 2) Media traditions & the paradox of professionalism (Ch 3)	• Module 2 discussions open Tuesday 1/22 to Wednesday 1/30
Module 3	Moral development & the expansion of empathy (Ch 4) Loyalty & diversity (Ch 5)	• Module 3 discussions open Monday 2/4 to Wednesday 2/13
Module 4	Personal & professional values (Ch 6) Truth & deception (Ch 7)	• Module 4 discussions open Monday 2/18 to Wednesday 2/27
Module 5	Privacy & public life (Ch 8) Persuasion & propaganda (Ch 9)	• Module 5 discussions open Monday 3/11 to Wednesday 3/20
Module 6	Consequentialism & utility (Ch 10) Deontology & moral rules (Ch 11)	• Module 6 discussions open Monday 3/25 to Wednesday 4/3 • **Ethical analysis paper topic due 3/29**
Module 7	Virtue, justice & care (Ch 12) Accountability, transparency & credibility (Ch 13)	• Module 7 discussions open Monday 4/8 to Wednesday 4/17
Module 8	Putting it all together 5 Ws & H	• **Rough draft of ethical analysis paper due 4/19** • **Peer reviews of paper drafts due Tuesday 4/23** • **Final paper due 4/26**