

# LAW OF MASS COMMUNICATION

## MMC 4200

SECTION 2G41 / (CLASS NUMBER 19984)

FALL 2019 / 3 CREDIT HOURS (ONLINE)

**INSTRUCTOR:** Prof. Frank LoMonte  
3208 Weimer Hall  
flomonte@ufl.edu  
(352) 392-2273

**OFFICE HOURS:** Official office hours are **Tuesdays 2-4 p.m.** and **Wednesdays 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**, but I'm in the office (almost) every weekday and flexible about scheduling in-person or online consults, including after-hours or weekends.

**COURSE T.A.:** Rachael Jones  
3208 Weimer Hall  
rachjones@ufl.edu

**COURSE WEBSITE:** Access via <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

**COURSE COMMUNICATIONS:** Please use either the Mail tool within Canvas or my direct email for any questions relating to the curriculum or course mechanics – if the question has broader usefulness, I'll post an update for everyone in Canvas.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:** *Mass Media Law*, 20th Edition, ISBN: 9781259913907, by Clay Calvert, Dan V. Kozlowski and Derigan Silver.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The law influences many of the choices that go into the media you read, hear and see. This course will make you a more educated creator and consumer of information. You will learn the full range of legal concepts relating to how news is gathered and distributed across all platforms, from the First Amendment to the reporter's privilege to freedom-of-information laws to FCC regulation of broadcasting. The most important takeaway from the course is not to memorize legal trivia but to understand how, and why, legal concepts are applied to modern-day situations that you'll encounter in any profession that involves creating or distributing content.

**COURSE GOALS AND/OR OBJECTIVES:** By the end of this course, students will be able to spot opportunities, and anticipate problems, in which the law may affect the ability to gather and share information, in all forms and across all mediums.

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:** This course is taught through a combination of assigned textbook readings, video lectures hitting highlights from the assigned readings, and periodic assignments that will gauge how well you understand those materials. My approach to the course is “open book, open notes, open everything.” It’s not a memorization class, and what I test on is comprehension: Can you diagnose a legal issue, anticipate how it might get resolved, and explain why it matters?

## COURSE POLICIES

**COURSE TECHNOLOGY:** All of the course materials you need – video lectures, assignments, supplemental readings – will be available on Canvas. If you have any difficulty with Canvas, especially with submitting your assignments, please contact UF’s IT Helpdesk:

- <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- Walk-in: HUB 132

If you experience any trouble getting an assignment to upload to Canvas, always use email as your fallback, [flomonte@ufl.edu](mailto:flomonte@ufl.edu), and don’t just assume “technical difficulties” will excuse lateness.

**ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION:** Your feedback helps make this a better course (and I really do read it and care about it). Toward the end of the term, you’ll be asked to complete an evaluation at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

## UF POLICIES

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc) ) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT:** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold

ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

## GETTING HELP

A variety of 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.

If there is anything interfering with your ability to get the most out of your UF experience, I want to know about it and help make it right. If I'm not the person to help, resources are available through the *U Matter, We Care* program that you should never be shy about using. You can ask for confidential help by emailing [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), by calling 352- 294-2273 or by visiting the Care Area on the third floor of Peabody Hall. There are crisis counselors available, even on nights and weekends, at **352-392-1575**.

## GRADING

Grading will be based on:

- (1) Three online quizzes** (10% each x 3 = 30% of your total grade)
- (2) Three blog posts** to the class discussion forum (10% each x 3 = 30% of your total grade)
- (3) Two "case briefs"** (10% each x 2 = 20% of your total grade)

**(4) A final paper** analyzing a legal issue raised by the course (20% of your total grade)

I will make grading rubrics available on the course website showing the expectations for each writing assignment and what will constitute an A, B or C-quality response.

**(1) Quizzes** will be posted to Canvas for time-limited checkout. The questions will be in true/false or multiple-choice format. It's fine to refer to your book, lecture notes, or other course materials.

**(2) Discussion posts** will be responses to news articles that I'll share on Canvas relating to legal issues we're studying. I'm interested in your analysis and reactions – not just “yes, I agree,” but *how* does the article relate to the legal issues we've been discussing, and what is your takeaway from it? Shoot for about 5 paragraphs, the length of a short blog post. (Posts are for class viewing only and not public.)

**(3) Case briefs** are summaries of key legal cases that I'll ask you to summarize: Who are the parties, what are the legal issues, how the court rule, and how did the judges reach their conclusion? (You'll get go-by examples of what a case brief looks like.)

**(4) Final paper** is a reflection essay in place of a final exam, about 1,500 words (5 pages if you use 1-inch margins, 12-point font and double-spaced lines). I will give more detailed instructions about the paper over the course of the class, including specifications on formatting. The paper is meant to test your comprehension of one of the legal issues we've dealt with (I will give you several to choose from) and it can be a neutral analysis of the issue or an advocacy piece that argues for an outcome. For each 24-hour period you are late turning in the paper, you'll lose a full letter grade. If your paper is not turned in within 48 hours (2 days) of the deadline, it won't be accepted and that grade will be a zero.

Because this is a self-paced, online course and the work is portable, I'm going to be pretty rigid on the assignment deadlines. Getting overcommitted to extracurricular activities will not get you an extension of time, so please don't ask. If you truly have a medical or family emergency, come talk to me about it. Your health and your family's always come first.

**GRADING SCALE:**

	SCORE		SCORE		SCORE		SCORE
A	100-94	B	86-83	C	74-70	D	63-60

A-	93-90	B-	82-80	C-	69-67	D-	50-55
B+	89-87	C+	79-75	D+	66-63	F	Below 55

## ATTENDANCE

Since this is a purely online course, there is no “attendance policy.” Your successful completion of the assignments will demonstrate that you’re keeping up. Fair warning: As instructor, I can see whether you’re regularly logging into and remaining on the site, and if I see that you’re not, you can expect to get a “hey, what’s up?” from me, because I don’t want anyone falling hopelessly behind and banking on a miracle 9th-inning rally. Learning law doesn’t work that way. It’s like building fitness; you can’t make up for skipping your daily 5-mile run by running 500 miles all at once. Do yourself a favor and don’t procrastinate.

Because we can’t replicate the experience of having three hours of in-person interaction every week, your careful reading of the textbook becomes more important. I will make every effort in my recorded lectures and assignments to hit the “must-know” high points, but watching the lectures is not a substitute for doing the reading. You won’t do well in the course unless you do both: Watch the lectures and read the assigned sections of the book.

The week-by-week assignment syllabus follows. I intend to stick closely to it, but news events may cause some readings to fall onto, or off of, our list, so please do keep checking your email and the Canvas page regularly for any updates.

**SYLLABUS FOR MMC 4200, FALL 2019**  
**SECTION 2G41 / PROF. LoMONTE**

**WEEK 1 (Aug. 20)**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 1

**Outside readings (for reference in case-briefing assignments):**

How to brief a case, John Jay Library (CUNY)

<https://www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/how-to/brief-a-case>

How to brief a case, LexisNexis

<https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/lawschool/pre-law/how-to-brief-a-case.page>

**WEEK 2 (Aug. 26) FIRST AMENDMENT HISTORY / PRINCIPLES**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 2

**WEEK 3 (Sept. 3) FIRST AMENDMENT IN ACTION**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 3, stop at p. 136, skip p. 137-144

**GRADED ASSIGNMENT: BLOG POST 1, DUE SEPT. 6**

**WEEK 4 (Sept. 9) DEFAMATION PRINCIPLES**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapters 4 and Chapter 5, stop at p. 208, skip p. 209-212

**WEEK 5 (Sept. 16) DEFAMATION / DEFENSES & DAMAGES**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 6

**GRADED ASSIGNMENT: QUIZ 1, DUE SEPT. 20**

**WEEK 6 (Sept. 23) PRIVACY-APPROPRIATION & INTRUSION**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 7

**GRADED ASSIGNMENT: CASE BRIEF 1, DUE SEPT. 27**

**WEEK 7 (Sept. 30) PRIVACY-FALSE LIGHT/PRIVATE FACTS**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 8

**WEEK 8 (Oct. 7) FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & ACCESS**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 9 (only p. 325-368 will be covered this week)

**GRADED ASSIGNMENT: BLOG POST 2, DUE OCT. 11**

**WEEK 9 (Oct. 14) FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & ACCESS (continued)**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 9, p. 368-385 (state laws and privacy laws)

**WEEK 10 (Oct. 21) PROTECTING SOURCES**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 10

**GRADED ASSIGNMENT: CASE BRIEF 2, DUE OCT. 25**

**WEEK 11 (Oct. 28) ACCESS TO COURTS**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapters 11 and 12

**GRADED ASSIGNMENT: QUIZ 2, DUE NOV. 1**

**WEEK 12 (Nov. 4) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 14

**WEEK 13 (Nov. 12) COMMERCIAL SPEECH**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 15

**ASSIGNMENT: BLOG POST 3, DUE NOV. 15**

**WEEK 14 (Nov. 18) BROADCASTING / ONLINE**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 16

**WEEK 15 (Nov. 25) OBSCENITY AND INDECENCY [SHORT WEEK]**

**Textbook readings:**

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 13

**WEEK 16 (Dec. 2) COURSE WRAP-UP [SHORT WEEK]**

No new reading assignment, finish any unread portion of Ch. 13

**GRADED ASSIGNMENT: QUIZ 3, DUE DEC. 4**

**FINAL PAPER DUE: WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11, 5:00 P.M. EASTERN**