

**MMC 4200 Spring 2021 Sections 17229 and 17230**  
***Law of Mass Communications***  
**Tuesday, Period 8-9 / Thursday, Period 9**  
**170 Pugh Hall (and via Zoom)**  
**Prof. Frank LoMonte**

**Instructor:** Frank LoMonte, 3208 Weimer Hall (office)  
flomonte@ufl.edu; 352-392-2273 (land line, don't text)  
Office Hours: M 2-4 p.m. on Zoom, <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/3522963952>  
or other times by appointment  
Imani Jackson, Teaching Assistant, imani.jackson@ufl.edu

### **ABOUT THE COURSE**

This is an unusual time and environment, in which students and their families have especially significant health concerns. If something is going on with your health or the health of a family member that interferes with your ability to complete coursework, please say something. I am happy to work with you.

**CLASS SESSIONS:** This course is taught via the HyFlex method, meaning that each lecture will be carried live on Zoom and also recorded and archived on Canvas. You will need to both read the assigned chapters of the textbook and attend/view the lectures to get the most out of the class.

**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*, 21st Edition, ISBN: 9781260838619 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, lectures hitting highlights from the assigned readings, and periodic assignments that will gauge how well you understand those materials. My approach is to test your reasoning and thinking skills more than your “trivia memorization” skills: Do you understand how the law works and why it works that way?

## **CLASS POLICIES**

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION:** The University of Florida’s College of Journalism and Communications embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.

I consider this class to be a place where you will be treated with respect. People of all backgrounds, beliefs and identities are welcomed, and should feel fully comfortable that their participation is valued. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

We will confront some challenging ideas in this course – you can’t study freedom of speech without encountering some rough language – and if anything in the curriculum makes you uncomfortable, please just say so. I don’t take criticism of the course personally, and I certainly don’t hold it against anyone. These courses are dynamic and can, with the benefit of your honest feedback, always be improved.

If experiences outside this class are interfering with your performance in the class, please let me know; I’d like to help connect you with appropriate resources for dealing with any such issues. And if you prefer to speak with someone outside the course, Joanna Hernandez, the College’s director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can reach her via email at [jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu).

**MISSING DEADLINES OR ASSIGNMENTS:** If you believe you have an exceptional reason for missing a deadline for an assignment, please discuss it with me as soon as the problem arises, not after-the-fact. All assignments are due at the times specified in Canvas. If you fail to turn in an assignment on time, unless you’ve arranged with me in advance for an extension, I will deduct one letter grade for each 24-hour delay.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565) with appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter to present to me, which I hope you’ll do as close to the start of the term as possible, so we can design accommodations that assist you in getting the maximum benefit out of the class.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Every student at the University of Florida is bound by the Honor Code, which demands that students do their own work, independent of unauthorized assistance. It is your responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit every time you draw on someone else's writing.

If you have any uncertainty about what constitutes academic dishonesty, consult the free Poynter NewsU course called *Avoiding Plagiarism and Fabrication* or review the guide created by Prof. Mindy McAdams at <http://www.macloo.com/cheat/index.htm>. Please refer to the UF Office of Student Judicial Affairs website for definitions of academic dishonesty at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>. It's fine to cite a reliable online source in a paper, if (1) you give proper credit and (2) you rewrite the material -- substantially -- into your own words.

Do not turn in for this class any work you previously have submitted to another instructor or that you plan to submit for any other class at UF or any other institution. The web is full of pre-written papers and assignments, and many of them are not very good, so do yourself and your GPA a favor and don't even think about cutting-and-pasting something you find on a random website.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

**OFFICE HOURS AND AVAILABILITY:** I will log into Zoom and hold "virtual office hours" every Monday afternoon from 2 to 4 during the semester for anyone who'd like to "drop by" with a question or comment, but I'm also very happy to schedule phone or Zoom chats one-on-one. Please don't be shy about asking to talk over anything you find confusing -- it's challenging material, but everyone here is capable of mastering it with a little effort.

**CURRICULUM:** Each week, you will be assigned a section of the Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver textbook, *Mass Media Law*. I will take the chapters a bit out of order toward the end of the course, so please do check the syllabus and don't waste time.

Most Thursdays during the semester, you'll be given a video conversation with a media-law expert to watch in place of our scheduled course meeting, followed by a short quiz about the topics discussed in the video. The quizzes will help make sure you're learning the key takeaways that you'll be tested on in the midterm and final exams. I will give you an advance heads-up whether the class will meet "live" each Thursday.

Graded assignments will be posted to Canvas and you'll upload responses to Canvas -- but if you have any difficulty getting Canvas to work, always use my email, [flomonte@ufl.edu](mailto:flomonte@ufl.edu), as your backup. Don't assume that "technical difficulties with Canvas" will automatically be an excuse for being late.

**Grading will be based on:**

**You can earn a total of 1,000 points over the course, to make the math easy.**

**Quizzes = 200 points (20 points per quiz x 10 quizzes)**

***Your lowest two grades out of 12 quizzes will be dropped; because of the two free drops, there will be no makeup quizzes for any reason***

**Four blog posts / responses to writing prompts = 400 points (100 points each)**

**Midterm exam = 200 points**

**Final exam = 200 points**

**Exams will all be administered online through Canvas rather than in-person, *including* for students registered to attend in-person. They will be “open book / open note” exams that test your ability to apply the concepts you’ve learned.**

**Grades will be assigned based on the customary UF letter-grade scale. Note that you need a C-minus or better to be regarded as satisfactorily completing the class to advance in the College, so a D grade is not going to cut it:**

	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

**READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS, MMC 4200, SPRING 2021**



**WEEK 1 (week of Jan. 11) INTRODUCTION TO THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 1

[No quiz Week 1, class WILL meet face-to-face both Tuesday and Thursday]

**WEEK 2 (week of Jan. 18) FIRST AMENDMENT HISTORY / PRINCIPLES**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 2

**QUIZ 1** posted Jan. 21, due Jan. 22

**WEEK 3 (week of Jan. 25) FIRST AMENDMENT IN ACTION**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 3

**QUIZ 2** posted Jan. 28, due Jan. 29

**WEEK 4 (week of Feb. 1) DEFAMATION**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapters 4 and 5

**BLOG POST 1** due Feb. 1

**QUIZ 3** posted Feb. 4, due Feb. 5

**WEEK 5 (week of Feb. 8) DEFAMATION / ONLINE SPEECH**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 6

**QUIZ 4** posted Feb. 11, due Feb. 12

**WEEK 6 (week of Feb. 15) PRIVACY / APPROPRIATION & INTRUSION**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 7

**QUIZ 5** posted Feb. 18, due Feb. 19

**WEEK 7 (week of Feb. 22) PRIVACY / FALSE LIGHT / PRIVATE FACTS**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 8

**BLOG POST 2** due Feb. 22

**MIDTERM EXAM**, Chapters 1-8 (no quiz this week), due Friday, Feb. 26

**WEEK 8 (week of Mar. 1) FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & ACCESS**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 9 and Chapter 12, p. 455-464 only

**QUIZ 6** posted Mar. 4, due Mar. 5

**WEEK 9 (week of Mar. 8) FOI & ACCESS / STATE LAW**

**Textbook readings:** No new readings, re-review Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 9

**QUIZ 7** posted Mar. 11, due Mar. 12

**WEEK 10 (week of Mar. 15) PROTECTING SOURCES**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 10

**QUIZ 8** posted Mar. 18, due Mar. 19

**WEEK 11 (week of Mar. 22) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 14

**BLOG POST 3** due Mar. 22

**QUIZ 9**, posted Mar. 25, due Mar. 26

**WEEK 12 (week of Mar. 29) COMMERCIAL SPEECH**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 15

**QUIZ 10, posted Apr. 1, due Apr. 2**

**WEEK 13 (week of Apr. 5) OBSCENITY & INDECENCY**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 13

**QUIZ 11, posted Apr. 8, due Apr. 9**

**WEEK 14 (week of Apr. 12) BROADCASTING & ONLINE**

**Textbook readings:** Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 16

**BLOG POST 4 due Apr. 12**

**QUIZ 12, posted Apr. 15, due Apr. 16**

**WEEK 15 (week of Apr. 19) REVIEW / EXAM PREP**

**FINAL EXAM, Chapters 9-16**

**Apr. 29, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM**