

Ethics & Problems in Mass Communications

MMC3203 (7F27)
Summer 2021

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

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 to *Law of Mass Communication*, 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.

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.
- Build a personal code of ethics with a foundation in ethical principles.
- Analyze the impact of an ethical decision on diverse stakeholders.

Prerequisites

2JM designation

ADV 3008, JOU 1001, PUR 3000 or RTV 3001 with a minimum grade of C

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.

Required Textbook

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

* Ebook is reserved and available on Canvas.

Grading Criteria & Scale

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| Discussion participation | 20% |
| Quizzes | 25% |
| Ethics analysis paper | 40% |
| Peer reviews | 15% |

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|----|-------------|----|-------------|
| A | 93.4 - 100 | C | 73.4 - 76.6 |
| A- | 90.0 - 93.3 | C- | 70.0 - 73.3 |
| B+ | 86.7 - 89.9 | D+ | 66.7 - 69.9 |
| B | 83.4 - 86.6 | D | 63.4 - 66.6 |
| B- | 80.0 - 83.3 | D- | 60.0 - 63.3 |
| C+ | 76.7 - 79.9 | E | 0.00 - 59.9 |

Course Structure

This course consists of eight modules. For each module, you need to read the assigned chapter(s) of the textbook, watch the lecture videos, take a quiz, and post a discussion on the topic related to the module. In addition, you will develop an ethics analysis paper that encompasses all the important topics and issues covered in the course. The course is designed such that you follow the modules in a sequential order. **You must complete all the requirements in a module to be able to move on to the next module.** The following is general information about the main requirements for the course. Detailed descriptions are provided in Canvas.



Ethics Analysis Paper

You need to form a team of 2 or 3 people and develop an ethics analysis paper over the course of the semester. For a topic your team chooses, the paper should address the following six main topics that are covered in the modules. The specific instructions and grading rubric are provided in Canvas.

- 1) What's your problem?
- 2) Why not follow the rules?
- 3) Who wins, who loses?
- 4) What's it worth?
- 5) Who's whispering in our ear?
- 6) How's your decision going to look?

Peer reviews

You will be asked to review and provide feedback on two ethics analysis paper written by your classmates in the middle of the semester (Draft 1) and toward the end of the semester (Draft 2). Your thoughtful and constructive feedback will provide a useful perspective and help your classmates submit a more polished final paper.

Quizzes

At the end of each module, a quiz is given to assess your comprehension and retention of the module's assigned readings and lectures. Each quiz has a time limit and must be taken individually. Although you may use your notes, you need to have a firm understanding of the module's contents to be able to answer questions accurately and quickly within the given time.

Discussion Participation

Your contributions to online discussions are a major part of this course. For each module, you are asked to review and analyze an ethical situation and respond to classmates' posts. It's important that your posts reflect your in-depth understanding of the lectures and textbooks, while your responses to classmates' posts contain differing (or opposing) perspectives as well as agreeing perspectives on the classmate's opinion. The specific instructions and grading rubric are available in Canvas.

Course Format & Policy

This is an asynchronous online course and thus gives you flexibility of when and where you "attend" the class. However, it is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that you set aside a "class time" each week to study the course materials and complete the assignments. Typically, a learning module is released on Monday and assignments, projects, exams, etc. are due by the end of the week. Students will not be excused for turning in the assignment late unless the reason is approved by the department chair or program director. Having an assignment deadline around the same time for another course is not an excusable reason for turning in an assignment late, for example. Do not wait until the day before the assignment is due to contact the instructor with questions. Keep up with the readings and lecture videos and start assignments early.

Late Submission: Some assignments (e.g., discussion posts, quizzes) may be submitted after the deadline. When a late submission is allowed, students have up to **six days** after the due date to submit the assignment. **Twenty percent of the assignment's grade will be deducted each day the assignment is turned in late. In addition, students cannot access the following module until all assignments in the current module are completed.**

Formatting, Spelling, and Grammar: All assignments must be prepared and presented professionally and proof-read thoroughly. Students must take special care to use proper words and spelling, grammatically correct sentences, and logically flowing contents. Points will be deducted from assignments where the content has formatting, spelling, and grammar errors.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide constructive feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://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 results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

Honor Code

Students are required to abide by the University of Florida Student Honor Code. Any violation of the academic integrity expected of the student will result in a minimum academic sanction of a zero on the assignment. We take originality in writing and creative work very seriously and expect students to fully understand what is considered plagiarism. We are always available to proactively discuss any uncertainties or ambiguities before you submit an assignment. Any alleged violations of the Student Honor Code will automatically result in a referral to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at <http://scrc.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center at (352) 392-8565 or <https://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 accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center is available at (352) 392-1575 or <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>. Contact University Police at (352) 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.

Course Schedule

Please use the course schedule as a reference to keep up with the readings, assignments, and deadlines. Additional readings and assignments may be added. The instructor will advise the class of any necessary changes in advance.

| Week 1 | Introduction | |
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| May 10 - May 16 | Lecture Video | Course Overview & Syllabus Review |
| | | Welcome from Dr. Kelleher |
| | Discussion | Post your comments on the discussion topic by May 14 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' posts by May 16 |
| Week 2 | Module 1: What's Your Problem? | |
| May 17 - May 23 | Reading | Introduction |
| | | Ethics & Moral Reasoning (Ch 1) |
| | Lecture Video | Lecture on Ch 1 |
| | Quiz | Take the quiz on Module 1 readings and lecture (Introduction, Ch 1) by May 22 |
| | Assignment | Form your team using the People tool in Canvas and submit the topic of your Ethics Analysis Paper by May 21 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' posts by May 23 |
| Week 3 | Module 2: Why Not Follow the Rules? | |
| May 24 - May 30 | Reading | Codes of Ethics & Justification Models (Ch 2) |
| | | Media Traditions & the Paradox of Professionalism (Ch 3) |
| | Lecture Video | Lecture on Ch 2, Ch 3 |
| | Discussion | Post your comments on the discussion topic by May 28 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' posts by May 30 |
| | Quiz | Take the quiz on Module 2 readings and lectures (Ch 2, 3) by May 29 |

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| Week 4 ~ 5 | Module 3: Who Wins, Who Loses? | |
| May 31 - Jun 13 | Reading | Moral Development & the Expansion of Empathy (Ch 4) |
| | | Loyalty & Diversity (Ch 5) |
| | Lecture Video | Lecture on Ch 4, Ch 5 |
| | Discussion | Post your comments on the discussion topic by Jun 4 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' posts by Jun 6 |
| Quiz | Take the quiz on Module 3 readings and lectures (Ch 4, 5) by Jun 5 | |
| | Assignment | Submit Draft 1 of your Ethics Analysis Paper (Sections 1 to 3) by Jun 13 |
| Week 6 | Module 4: What's It Worth (Part 1) | |
| Jun 14 - Jun 20 | Reading | Personal and Professional Values (Ch 6) |
| | | Truth and Deception (Ch 7) |
| | Lecture Video | Lecture on Ch 6, Ch 7 |
| | Discussion | Post your comments on the discussion topic by Jun 18 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' posts by Jun 20 |
| Quiz | Take the quiz on Module 4 readings and lectures (Ch 6, 7) by Jun 19 | |
| Week 7 | Summer Break | |
| Week 8 ~ 9 | Module 5: What's It Worth (Part 2) | |
| Jun 28 - Jul 11 | Reading | Privacy and Public Life (Ch 8) |
| | | Persuasion and Propaganda (Ch 9) |
| | Lecture Video | Lecture on Ch 8, Ch 9 |
| | Discussion | Post your comments on the discussion topic by Jul 9 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' comments by Jul 11 |
| Quiz | Take the quiz on Module 5 readings and lectures (Ch 8, 9) by Jul 10 | |
| | Assignment | Submit your peer reviews of Draft 1 by Jul 3 |

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| Week 10 ~ 11 | Module 6: Who's Whispering in Your Ear? | |
| Jul 12 - Jul 25 | Reading | Consequentialism and Utility (Ch 10) |
| | | Deontology and Moral Rules (Ch 11) |
| | Lecture Video | Lecture on Ch 10, Ch 11 |
| | Discussion | Post your comments on the discussion topic by Jul 16 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' comments by Jul 18 |
| | Quiz Assignment | Take the quiz on Module 6 readings and lectures (Ch 10, 11) by Jul 17 |
| | | Submit Draft 2 of your Ethics Analysis Paper (all sections) by Jul 25 |
| Week 12 | Module 7: How's Your Decision Going to Look? | |
| Jul 26 - Aug 1 | Reading | Virtue, Justice, and Care (Ch 12) |
| | | Accountability, Transparency, and Credibility (Ch 13) |
| | Lecture Video | Lecture on Ch 12, Ch 13 |
| | Discussion | Post your comments on the discussion topic by Jul 30 |
| | | Respond to your classmates' comments by Aug 1 |
| | Quiz | Take the quiz on Module 7 readings and lectures (Ch 12, 13) by Jul 31 |
| | Assignment | Submit your peer reviews of Draft 2 by Aug 1 |
| Week 13 | Module 8: Putting It All Together | |
| Aug 2 - Aug 6 | Assignment | Submit your Ethics Analysis Final Paper by Aug 6 |