SYLLABUS – RTV 4930/0204 Digital Media Ethics JOU

(From Angela Long, RTV 4930, UFL, 30/11/15)

Welcome to Digital Media Ethics, for spring 2016. You are on the cutting edge!

The aim of this module is to raise awareness about the most effective and moral ways to convey information on online platforms. Both images and text are covered.

We look at the differences between different platforms - for example, an app as opposed to a blog, a twitter account as opposed to a company website. And varying degrees of digital awareness are needed.

As your instructor, what I aim for can be separated into two broad goals:

1, to make you more morally conscious in your approach to online content

2, to educate you in this topic to a level where you will have an advantage in your professional life.

We do this through a mixture of reading, viewing, THINKING!!! and discussion. There are two minor and one major assignment to complete, and discussions in which you are expected to take part. More details about those in the Assignments and Chat sections of this module.

You have been given the titles of recommended books - the main text is Plaisance, but the more contemporary Silverman makes some very good points about social media.

I will post a short video and other links every week in a session folder in the Files part of this Canvas module.

If you have any questions, email me, or if you want to talk, my Skype name is alongcomm. I am in Ireland, mostly, so that is five hours ahead of Florida timewise.

Now here's a quick runthrough of the themes proposed for our 12 weeks of classes. Sometimes these might be rearranged or modified in reaction to topical news, but if you are confused, again, get in touch with me.

Week 1:

Foundation themese. The **structure of cyberspace** – comparison with 'non-virtual' world in terms of personal interaction, collective intelligence, social mores. Reminder that some people still are more comfortable with 'offline' scenarios and encounters. The rapid evolution of a digital world, and its implications for personal interactions.

Week 2:

Some examination of ethical traditions - doing the right thing - how it has been understood and formulated.

Week 3:

Common Problems for all who are 'broadcasting' over the internet: privacy, accuracy, free speech, respect for grief, commercial sensitivity, transparency, plagiarism.

Week 4:

The written word, digitally: Texts, SMS, email etiquette, the pen - or the fingers - are mightier than the sword.

Week 5:

Ethics for journalists: practical considerations, two-way street with the audience, loss of gatekeeper status (or have they?) Fact v. comment. **Public image** of media professionals. Has the internet changed these, by making conversation more two way? Websites of organizations that 'watch' media and PR - debunkers. Examination of major codes for professionals (eg, SPJ) and discussion on how they should or could be revised to take account of online situation.

Week 6:

Ethics for **public relations and marketing** officers: trust and credibility – how can this be established in cyberspace? Openness, honesty, loyalty. Potted history of public relations ethics from Ivy Lee at start of 20th century. Crisis-management – what happens when your product turns out to be poisonous? How much engagement with the customer is valuable?

ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE Friday February 5 2016

Week 7:

The problem of privacy. The online world is ubiquitous, on all the time, everywhere. With the perhaps inadvertent connivance of commercial interests and public authorities, many details on all of us are held online. And then there's our social media. How does the modern communications professional view individual privacy?

Week 8:

Free speech: everyone has a platform – everyone can broadcast. How should we be wary of this power, and while respecting the First Amendment, not doing harm to innocent or vulnerable people by allowing extremist opinions to circulate? **Twitter** and texting – can 'the rules' apply? Free speech? The brevity with which messages are conveyed is a good discipline, but can lead to misunderstanding and inappropriate truncation. Unconsidered commentary is a bad thing, but is it our right?

Week 9:

Facebook and other social media: Oversharing? The triumph of trivia? How have they been used for work and play? What is legitimate use of such networks for both news-gathering and marketing? How can we avoid using 'private' material on Faceboom and other social media, if our peers and competitors are?

Week 10:

Blogging and its limitations/opportunities, as opposed to the conventional website. Chatrooms, 'flaming' and 'trolling' - how to deal with. Plagiarism.

[ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE Friday March 4 2016]

Week 11:

Picture power: some of the niceties of ethical image use. How close is too close? Children and their depiction is a topic which has evolved rapidly, with much more respect for their rights.

Who controls the digital world, anyway? Perhaps one of the great digital illusions is power. We consider the roles of ICANN, the ISPs, government. We look at what is happening in other countries. Is it a 'global village'? And what about your employer - if you disagree with their use of digital platforms, what is the right way to react?

There will be three assignments, and a number of compulsory discussions, plus two voluntary quizzes.

ends