

College of Journalism and Communications  
Department of Telecommunication  
Department Chair: Professor David Ostroff  
2088 Weimer Hall  
Tel: 392-0463

**RTV4432: SENIOR SEMINAR**  
**Section 4545, Fall 2017**  
**Monday 8:30-11:30**  
**Weimer G30**

Office Hours:  
TW 2:30- 4:30  
and by appointment

**Professor Michael Leslie, Ph.D.**

Office: 3060 Weimer Hall  
Office Phone: 352-392-2904  
Fax: (352) 846-2899  
E-mail: [mleslie@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:mleslie@jou.ufl.edu)

**PURPOSE AND COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The study of ethics is usually taught with the goal of having you learn about ethics and how to apply ethical principles to the problems you will face in the exercise of your career as a mass communications professional. Unfortunately, experience shows that this approach has not left many communications professionals actually being ethical, and the troubled state of our news, information, advertising, public relations and entertainment media attests to this failure.

Hence, this course will not be focused solely on learning about ethical decision making. Instead, this course will also give you access to being an ethical leader in the communications profession, and the capacity to deal with those factors that limit your freedom to be ethical, that constrain and shape your perceptions, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning and actions. When you are no longer constrained or shaped by those factors, you will be free to perform ethically in your chosen profession and in all the other areas of your life.

During the course, you will have the opportunity to carefully examine your current worldview and your frames of reference. When you have done this, you will discover new and powerful openings for producing extraordinary results, both in your personal and professional life, and in your ability to work effectively with others.

**TEXTBOOKS**

The **required** textbooks for this course are:

**Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, by Patrick Lee Plaisance.

**Media Ethics: Issues and Cases**, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, by Patterson and Wilkins.

**The Elements of Moral Philosophy**, 5<sup>th</sup> edition or later, by James Rachels.

Most of my lectures and PowerPoints are drawn from:

**Ethics in Media Communications: Cases and Controversies**, by Louis A. Day

**Race/Gender/Class/Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content, and Producers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition or later**, by Rebecca Ann Lind.

I strongly recommend that you buy or rent these books online at [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com) or from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) or borrow them from the UF library.

I have identified some online resources that you may also find helpful:

[http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/ETHICS\\_TEXT/CONTENTS.htm](http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/ETHICS_TEXT/CONTENTS.htm)

Ethics: An Online Textbook.

<http://www.spj.org/ethicscasestudies.asp>

SPJ Case Studies

Additional resources to help you excel in this class will be announced in class, sent to you via the class listserv, or posted in E-learning.

## **COURSE ACTIVITIES**

Class presentations and discussions are central to this course. You are expected to read assigned materials for the week **before** the first class meeting of the week, and to actively participate in class discussions. You are also expected to show courtesy to other students during these discussions, whether or not you agree with their opinion. Part of class participation involves your bringing to class **relevant articles, videos or other materials** which relate to this course. Time will be allotted, as feasible, for discussion and viewing of these materials.

### **Class Presentations**

Student teams will be responsible for researching and presenting on selected related to our theme. These team presentations will be 10 minutes in length, or as assigned by me.

Your team presentations are intended to illustrate the ideas introduced in the assigned readings and lectures, **but must include original research**. You will find it useful to collect relevant material from newspapers, magazines and the Web, and to keep notes of television and radio programs you watch, which have content you can use for your presentation, case studies or assigned papers. Your reading and research will allow you to contribute to class discussions in an informed manner and to make an original and informative presentation. References to books, articles, news reports, interviews, surveys, videos, audio recordings, etc., may be utilized as a part of these presentations. The schedule for team presentations will be posted on the course website.

**An appropriate form of audio-visual media should support your presentation.** Past presentation teams have found it useful to employ **PowerPoint** software for these presentations. Highest grades will go to presentations which are professional in appearance, well organized, informative, and that demonstrate command of the concepts and ideas presented in the textbooks and in the classroom.

Presentations and case studies which are disorganized, superficial, that simply rehash the assigned readings and classroom lectures, or are poorly researched or exceed the assigned time limit will earn lower scores.

**Procedures for team presentations:** Each team should submit a 2-5 page summary of its presentation on the assigned topic, plus an **annotated** bibliography of at least ten (10) reference sources, **by noon Friday**, via **course** email. **Failure to do so will result in a one letter grade deduction for the presentation.**

**If you or your team are absent on the day of your assigned presentation, the class will go ahead with discussion of the assigned topic as planned, and you and/or your team will be penalized.**

**Team Performance Ratings:** Each team member will be required to confidentially rate the contributions of his/her fellow team members to the team presentation/research/debate, using a **peer evaluation rating form** which I will send out via email. This peer evaluation must be handed to me by each member of the team **immediately following the presentation.** The individual grade you receive for your team's presentation will reflect the grade I assign the presentation and the participation score you receive from your team. **You will not receive a score for the team presentation if you do not submit your peer evaluation form.**

**Quizzes/Response Papers:** I will assign brief quizzes, papers or discussion assignments related to the assigned readings, videos, guest speakers or to some topic we have discussed in class.

**Individual and Group Ethics Case Studies:** You are required to analyze an ethics case, following the format taught in this class, AND record your side of a team debate for my review and assessment. Both will be evaluated based on form and content. **Form** refers to proper format and length, in accord with assignment instructions, as well as organization. **Content** refers to quality of analysis, correct application of the moral reasoning model and principles, coherence in reasoning, and thoroughness.

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes, presentations, video showings, discussions, etc. Your active participation in group discussions, class activities, presentations, research, etc. is expected. Your grade for this course will be negatively affected if you are chronically absent. Covering news for any of the stations, no matter how significant the story, is not a valid excuse for missing quizzes, assignment due dates, failing to complete assigned reading or failure to participate in group projects.

## **COURSE POLICIES, INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS AND METHODS OF EVALUATION**

### **Evaluation Criteria**

All assignments and presentations will be evaluated based on both form and content. Form refers to professional and timely presentation in accord with assignment instructions, as well as cogency and organization. Content refers to quality of analysis, correct application of principles, coherence in reasoning, and thoroughness of research. Your grade will reflect your success in meeting these standards.

### **Assignment Weights**

Individual Case Study:	20%
Group Case Study:	20%
Attendance:	20%
Group Presentations:	20%
Quizzes/Response Papers	20%

## **Assignment Scoring**

I will be using a base-10 grading scale, as follows:

10= Exceeds expectations for top performance in the course

9= Very good

8= Good (minor deficiencies)

7= Average (mixed performance)

6= Below average with major deficiencies

5 or less = Unsatisfactory

**Final Grades** will be assigned according to the following scale, and will include plus and minus grades according to the University of Florida grading policy in effect. I reserve the option to curve final grades.

A (Excellent)            90-100 percent

B (Good)                 80-89 percent

C (Average)             70-79 percent

D (Below Average)    60-69 percent

E (Insufficient)       <60 percent

Note: Grades will be posted in E-Learning.

## **Classroom Decorum**

Please do not read newspapers, eat, drink, work on assignments for other classes, web surf, text or engage in other activities during class lectures, presentations, and group discussions.

**Students with special challenges:** I am committed to helping students with special challenges overcome difficulties with comprehending the subject matter, while abiding by the standards of fairness and confidentiality. In order to address your academic needs, I must be informed of your circumstances at the beginning of the semester *before* performance becomes a factor. Reasonable and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that officially recognized challenges do not become a hindrance to your ability to succeed in this course. You should provide me with an official statement from the Office of Student Services explaining the accommodation required, if you face such a challenge.

## **Other matters:**

- I reserve the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system, assignments, schedule, or other matters pertaining to the class.
- I can be reached preferably via e-mail, and the telephone, but please be aware that I will not be able to respond immediately to your communication. As a rule, allow up to 48 hours for a response. Therefore, barring an emergency situation, it is advisable to contact me well in advance of any deadline in order to give me adequate time to respond.
- Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless arrangements have been made with me prior to class.
- Please feel free to approach me about any concerns or comments you might have about this class. I will be happy to meet with you during my office hours, or by appointment.
- You are expected to arrive promptly for class, fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings. While I understand the problems created by a large campus, it is your responsibility to arrive in class in a timely manner.
- You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet for every class.

- Any evidence of **plagiarism** or cheating will result in an “E” for the course and possible disciplinary action.
- Regarding **plagiarism**: Do not submit the same work to more than one class without prior written permission from both instructors. Do not adapt work from another class for this class without my prior written permission. Do not adapt someone else's work and submit it as your own. This course requires original work, created at this time, for this purpose.
- Spelling counts. So do grammar, punctuation and professional presentation technique.
- An assignment turned in past the deadline will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late.
- In addition to the required or recommended readings, you are encouraged to read my lecture. You should also take notes in class because classroom sessions often reveal information that is not contained in the readings or my lecture notes.

**The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester, and applies to you as a student in this class.**

**The Honor Code reads as follows:**

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. **Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action.** A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

**The Honor Code:** We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. 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 will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in doing my assignments."**

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

**(This schedule is *tentative*: it will be modified as needed.)**

### **Week 1 and 2**

A Foundation for Being an Ethical Leader  
 Orientation to the Course: Ethics and Society  
 Introduction to Social and Ethical Issues: Baby Theresa  
 Distinguishing Ethics from Morality  
 Why Morality Does Not Depend on Religion

**Weeks 3 and 4**

The Challenge of Cultural Relativism  
The Challenge of Subjectivism  
Pitfalls of Ethical Egoism and Psychological Egoism  
Main Ethical Theories: Utilitarianism, Kantian Moral Duty, Virtue Ethics  
Models of Moral Reasoning  
The Case Study Approach to Ethical Decision Making

**Weeks 5 and 6**

Conflicts of Interests  
The Idea of the Social Contract  
Conflicts of Interest: Economic Pressures and Social Responsibility  
Media Practitioners and Social Justice  
Feminist Ethics  
Kant and Respect for Persons

**Weeks 7 and 8**

Truth, Accuracy and Transparency  
Privacy  
Confidentiality  
Kant and Respect for Persons  
The Idea of the Social Contract  
Morally Offensive/Anti-Social Content: Freedom and Responsibility  
Stereotypes in Media Communications

**Weeks 9 and 10**

Being a Leader and Exercising Leadership:  
Creating Context

**Weeks 11 and 12**

Being a Leader and Exercising Leadership:  
Dealing With Your Constraints

**Weeks 13 and 14**

Designing Your Personal Leadership Project

**END OF COURSE**