Instructor: Michael Stone
Office hours: Before or after class, or by appointment
Contact: MichaelStone428@gmail.com or @Michael_Stone (two underscores) on Twitter. I guarantee a response within 48 hours but will likely get back with you more quickly.

Catalog description
“A cross-disciplinary introduction to ethics-relevant situations faced by media professionals. Topics include professional standards of conduct, audience representation and engagement and issues associated with the production, presentation and delivery of messages that reflect the best interests of audiences, clients and stakeholders.”

Course description and student objectives
In other words, this course will introduce you to some of the more common ethical issues and dilemmas mass communicators encounter and explore possibilities for how to respond. It’s meant to equip you with tools for and practice in thinking about how to identify and resolve the kinds of ethical problems you may face as a professional.

Upon successful completion of this course, you’ll be able to:
1. Identify ethical dilemmas within mass communication, including determining how to anticipate and consider different stakeholders’ perspectives on those dilemmas.
2. Identify and describe a variety of alternative responses to ethical problems.
3. Use your past ethical considerations to reason through such problems.
4. Make and justify decisions about which responses are ethically sound.

Required text and readings

You’re expected to complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them in class. The readings come from the Doing Ethics in Media textbook and case studies I’ll upload to Canvas. Completing these in line with the schedule at the end of the syllabus will be crucial to successfully completing the course.
Coursework

1. Participation and attendance. The topic of ethics lends itself to discussion, so we’ll be doing that quite a bit in class. Participating in discussions is required, thus making preparation (doing the readings) and attendance required, as will be explained more in the section on class policies. During the discussions, you should demonstrate that you’re thinking about the issues by asking questions, offering your own opinions and justifying these opinions. (Please remember to be respectful of those who may hold a position different from yours.)

Getting all five participation points means you participate in discussions almost every class, four means you spoke regularly, three occasionally, two maybe once or twice, and none means you said nothing all semester.

2. Response papers. These papers are one- to two-page write-ups that give you practice in applying ethical reasoning to situations you might encounter professionally. They will also help prepare you for our two exams and the group project.

2. Exams. The two exams, a midterm and a final, cover roughly half the course each. Expect multiple-choice questions and some short essays. The essays will be scored based on a rubric, which emphasizes clearly demonstrating your understanding of the issues, your ability to apply ethical reasoning to those issues, and your skill in clearly expressing and defending your position. More specific details about the exams will be provided closer to exam time.

3. Group projects. Near the end of the semester, you’ll be divided into groups, and each group will explore a different, real-world ethical dilemma mass communicators have faced. Similar to the exams’ essay questions, these projects will assess your abilities in demonstrating a clear understanding of the issue, applying ethical reasoning to that issue, and articulating and defending how your group would handle the situation. A rubric will be provided here, too. Groups will present their respective issues to their classmates and lead a classroom discussion.

Grading totals

- Participation points (15 total)
  - In-class participation: 5 points
  - Attendance: 10 points
- Response papers (10 total): 10 points
- Exams (50 total)
  - Midterm: 25 points
  - Final: 25 points
- Group project (25 total): 25 points

Total: 100 points
Grade scale (scores ending in .5 or higher are rounded up to next whole number)

A     = 90–100
B+    = 87–89
B     = 80–86
C+    = 77–79
C     = 70–76
D     = 60–66
D+    = 67–69

Class policies

1. Attendance and tardiness. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class. You are permitted to miss one class without documentation or penalty; each unexcused absence after that means losing one point from your 10 attendance points. Arriving late without letting the instructor know a reason beforehand counts as half an absence; leaving early without letting the instructor know a reason beforehand counts as half an absence. With proper documentation, you are allowed miss class because of an illness; family emergency; athletic, legal or military obligation; etc. — but you have to let me know at least 24 hours in advance and have to provide the documentation. And if your excused absence falls on a class by which something is due, you’ll be expected to submit it by a new deadline given to you by the instructor.

2. Classroom demeanor. The discussions are what should make this class energetic and fun, but that will happen only if everyone fully participates. As already noted, each student is expected to participate in discussions and complete the readings prior to class; those who don’t will lose participation points.

3. Deadlines. Due dates are strict, and assignments should be handed in when collected by the instructor in class on the date they’re due. Each late day — including the day of class if the paper isn’t turned in when the instructor attempts to collect it — means a 10-point deduction.

4. Cell phones and other devices. Research shows that students who multitask in class end up learning less and thus receive lower grades. Therefore, cell phones (except to take pictures of slides) and laptops are not permitted. I realize communications is a technology-driven field and that a few of you might use your devices responsibly, but unfortunately, the majority of your classmates flock to social media and other sites rather than paying attention. More importantly, devices and a discussion-based course like this don’t mix. So if you’re seen using a phone (except to take pictures of slides) or laptop, you’ll be asked to turn it off and put it up, and you’ll lose participation points. For taking notes, use your phone’s camera, a pen and paper, and/or an audio recorder.

5. Academic integrity. University of Florida students live by an honor code that prohibits academic dishonesty, such as, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of sources or information from sources, reusing a paper from another class, writing a similar paper for two classes, drawing too heavily on another’s work for your own, and having someone else complete your work for you. If you’re unsure of whether something constitutes a violation of academic integrity, ask me before you do it to avoid the possibility of being reported to the university’s Office of
Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. If you already haven’t, you should also review UF’s full guidelines: www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code. Spotting academic dishonesty is easier than you might think from a teacher’s perspective, and committing it means failing the assignment, possibly failing the entire course, and opening yourself to possible discipline for the university. Ignorance is not an excuse.

6. Disability assistance. Students with disabilities may seek reasonable accommodations by first registering with UF’s Disability Resource Center (Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc). The center will provide you with documentation, which must then be given to me within the first two weeks of class. Failure to do so within this timeframe will likely limit the possibilities for accommodations.

7. Seeking help. A terrific, free resource that helps students manage stress and life is the UF Counseling and Wellness Center at 3190 Radio Road on campus. The center is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, call 352-392-1575 or visit www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc.

8. Course evaluations. At the end of the course, students are asked to give an evaluation at http://www.evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester.

Course schedule
Please note that this schedule is tentative and may change, especially concerning guest speakers, who might be added once I’ve made final confirmations or removed because of last-minute conflicts. I will inform you of any such changes as far in advance as possible.

Items that you should have completed prior to their respective class are marked in bold: Read or Due. All other items simply make up the tentative schedule for that day.

Jan. 11  Introduction to the course, syllabus and ethics
Read: Class 1 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page

Jan. 18  Introduction to the SPJ Code of Ethics
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
Read: “What’s Your Problem?” and Chapter 1 in Doing Ethics in Media
Read: Class 2 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page

Jan. 25  Continue with the SPJ Code of Ethics
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
Read: “Why Not Follow the Rules?” and Chapter 2 in Doing Ethics in Media
Read: Class 3 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page
Due: Response paper

Feb. 1
Continue with the SPJ Code of Ethics
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
Guest speaker: Dianna Hoyt on how the media can help but especially hurt victims and their families when reporting on tragic events
Read: Chapter 3 in Doing Ethics in Media
Read: Class 4 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page

Feb. 8
Continue with the SPJ Code of Ethics
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
Read: “Who Wins, Who Loses?” and Chapter 4 in Doing Ethics in Media
Read: Class 5 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page
Due: Response paper

Feb. 15
Introduction to the RTDNA Code of Ethics
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
Read: Chapter 5 in Doing Ethics in Media
Read: Class 6 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page

Feb. 22
MIDTERM EXAM (same room and time)
Review will be posted to Canvas

March 1
Continue with the RTDNA Code of Ethics
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
Read: “What’s It Worth?” and Chapter 6 in Doing Ethics in Media
Read: Class 8 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page

March 8
NO CLASS (Spring Break)

March 15
Continue with the RTDNA Code of Ethics
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
Guest speaker: tentative and TBA
Read: Chapter 7 in Doing Ethics in Media
Read: Class 9 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page
March 22  Introduction to the Standards of Practice of the American Association of Advertising Agencies
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
**Read:** Chapter 8 in *Doing Ethics in Media*
**Read:** Class 10 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page

March 29  Continue with the Standards of Practice of the American Association of Advertising Agencies
Lecture and textbook discussion
Case study discussion
**Read:** Chapter 9 in *Doing Ethics in Media*
**Read:** Class 11 documents in the Files tab on our Canvas page
**Due:** Response paper

April 5  **Presentations:** Groups 1, 2 and 3
**Read:** “Who’s Whispering in Your Ear?” and Chapters 10 and 11 in *Doing Ethics in Media* (because of group presentations, we won’t have time to go over the readings in class, but material from them could appear on the final exam)

April 12  **Presentations:** Groups 4, 5 and 6
**Read:** Chapter 12, “How’s Your Decision Going to Looks?” and Chapter 13 in *Doing Ethics in Media* (because of group presentations, we won’t have time to go over the readings in class, but material from them could appear on the final exam)

April 19  **FINAL EXAM (same room and time)**
Review will be posted to Canvas