

MMC 4200 LAW OF MASS COMMUNICATION

SPRING 2020

ONLINE COURSE

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.

INSTRUCTOR: Michaela Devyn Mullis, MA

Email: mullis.md@ufl.edu

Office: Weimer Hall

OFFICE HOURS: PLEASE EMAIL ME TO SCHEDULE A MEETING TIME.

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS: Please contact me via my UF email (mullis.md@ufl.edu). Do not email me through Canvas if you want a prompt response. I will try to respond to all emails within 24 hours. I will not respond to emails that are unprofessional or disrespectful.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: Mass Media Law, 20th Edition, by Clay Calvert, Dan V. Kozlowski and Derigan Silver, ISBN: 9781259913907

Check the syllabus and modules for corresponding chapters. Not every chapter is covered in this course.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS: You are expected to check the Canvas course site regularly to engage with the course content: Viewing the lectures, contributing to the discussions, and so on. Each Module will have its own Page on the Canvas site, and the Page will include:

1. Links to online lecture videos hitting the high points of the chapter. These are done by Professor Frank LoMonte who is another instructor of this course. He is also the director of the Brechner Center for Freedom of Information in the College of Journalism and Communications.
2. Supplemental readings / viewings in addition to the textbook.

3. Graded assignments and instructions for completing them.

COURSE OUTLINE

Grading and class expectations

Grading will be based on:

- (1) Two online quizzes (10% each x 2 = 20% of your total grade)
- (2) Three blog posts to the class discussion forum (10% each x 3 = 30% of your total grade)
- (3) Two “case briefs” (10% each x 2 = 20% of your total grade)
- (4) A final paper analyzing a legal issue raised by the course (30% of your total grade)

Basically, everything you turn in to me is worth 10% of your grade, except for your final paper which is 30%. I will make grading rubrics available on the course website showing the expectations for each assignment and what will constitute an A, B or C-quality response.

(1) Quizzes

I will post a short quiz during the first and second halves of the course, and you'll submit responses online. The quizzes will be timed so that you can check them in and out during the week, but once checked out, you'll only have a limited time to respond.

(2) Discussion posts

I'll post news articles on the class website on which I'll seek your analysis and reactions. You'll need to write three blog posts over the course of the semester to get full credit. An “analysis” means just that: Analysis, not “yes, I agree.” Each blog post should be at least 5 paragraphs long. (Posts are for class viewing only and not public.)

(3) Case briefs

You'll be asked twice, once during the first half of the course and once during the second half, to submit a “case brief” showing that you read, understood and analyzed a key court case pertaining to our subject matter. You'll be given “go-by” tips as to what a case brief should look like; see Week 1 of the syllabus below.

(4) Final paper

You will write a research paper on a legal topic of your choosing raised by the course. It may be about any of the subjects we've covered, but it needs to reflect

research beyond just reading the textbook. It can be a neutral explanatory survey of the issue or it can be an advocacy paper taking sides on an issue, but whichever approach you choose, you need to cite at least five different sources (which may be five court opinions, or a mixture of court opinions and published articles). If you choose to use articles as sources, make sure they are from recognized reliable publications (not “some guy’s Tumblr I found through Google”). You should shoot to write about 2,000 words, including footnotes/endnotes, which is about seven typewritten pages if you use 1-inch margins, 12-point font and double-spaced lines.

You will have plenty of time for the final paper, so nobody should need to be late. For each 24-hour period you are late turning in the paper, you’ll lose a full letter grade. If your paper is not turned in within 48 hours (2 days) of the deadline, it won’t be accepted and that grade will be a zero.

NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED

Outside Research for Assignments

For the “case briefing” assignments, the court opinions will be easily findable on Google Scholar or on the Cornell Legal Information Institute website:

<https://scholar.google.com/>

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/>

For the final paper, it will be helpful to have access to LexisAcademic, which is free for UF students (and is a great thing to know how to use as a journalist or lawyer). You can access LexisAcademic here:

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>?

You can see a tutorial for LexisAcademic here:

http://www.lexisnexis.com/tutorial/global/globaltutorial_frameset.asp?sPage=overview&adaptation=academic&lbu=US&locale=en_us

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION:

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

UF POLICIES:

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, 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 accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. 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 have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

CLASS DEMEANOR OR NETIQUETTE: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats.

GETTING HELP:

For issues with technical difficulties for Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>
- (352) 392-HELP (4357)
- Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues **MUST** be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You **MUST** e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources

- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

(Required) Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints> to submit a complaint.

GRADING POLICIES:

GRADING SCALE:

	PERCENT		PERCENT		PERCENT		PERCENT
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

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN:

Assignment	Points or percentage
Quizzes (2)	20%
Blog Posts (3)	30%
Case Briefs	20%
Final Paper	30%
TOTAL:	100%

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week	Date	Assignment	Turn In
1	Jan 6-10	Module 1 Introduction to the Legal System	
2	Jan 13-17	Module 2 The First Amendment	
3	Jan 21-24	Module 3 The First Amendment in Action	Blog Post 1 Due Sunday, Jan 26 11:59 pm
4	Jan 27-31	Module 4 Establishing a Libel Case	
5	Feb 3-7	Model 5 Libel Defenses & Damages	Quiz 1 Due Sunday, Feb 9 11:59 pm
6	Feb 10-14	Module 6 Privacy Appropriation and Intrusion	Case Brief 1 due Sunday, Feb 16 11:59 pm
7	Feb 17-21	Module 7 Privacy – False Light & Private	Final Paper topic due

		Facts	
8	Feb 24-28	Module 8 FOI & Access	Blog post 2 due Sunday, March 1 11:59 pm
9	March 2-6	Model 9 State Law	
10	March 9-13	Module 10 Protecting Sources	Case brief 2 due Sunday, March 15 11:59 pm
11	March 16-20	SPRING BREAK	
12	March 23-27	Module 11 Copyright & Intellectual Property	Quiz 2 due Sunday, March 29 11:59 pm
13	March 30- April 3	Module 12 Commercial Speech	
14	April 6-10	Module 13 Obscenity and Indecency	Blog Post 3 due Sunday, April 12 11:59 pm
15	April 13-17	Module 14 Broadcast & Online Speech	Final Paper Due Sunday, April 26 11:59 pm

Disclaimer: This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.