Course Syllabus Digital Media Ethics 2020
University of Florida JOU

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This course examines digital life, and behavior, in the 21st century. Our aim is to have a toolkit of right, wrong, and what to do as mass communicators wishing to be trusted. We review how the internet has changed human interaction, and what is good and bad about this. The course involves case studies, discussion, and deliberation, as well as reading and listening to fundamentals of ethical thought. Current affairs play a big part. Moral philosophy is a basis for the exploration of issues, but also important are developed and developing cultural norms. We'll also consider how different standards can apply in different societies or communities.

Throughout this unit, students will:

☐ Examine how people behave on the internet, and contrast this with traditional views of good ethical standards, or " doing the right thing"

☐ Consider problems in mass communications with vast audiences and lack of regulation on the internet

☐ Discuss and try to formulate appropriate action when an online ethical problem arises

☐ Consider the responsibilities of those who have access to vast amounts of information about individuals, which those individuals do not always realize are available from online use.

☐ Make and justify decisions about ethical dilemmas

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By the end of the semester, students will be expected to have:

▪critical understanding of ethics and their application to journalism and other communications professions

▪appreciation of differences between communication in the online and offline environments

▪knowledge and analysis of regulation of journalism/PR/video industries

▪awareness of current codes of behavior for media professionals, and how these fit in the online environment

PROGRAMME – **SESSION by SESSION**

1. Introduction: How did we get here? Reason we study this is we have come, as a race, poorly prepared for the influx of information and interaction that is common in 2020. Today let's just think how quickly what we will simply call "the internet" has spread …. Compared to, for example, how long it took radio to reach millions of homes.

2. Social media: 'The Internet is a Sewer" getting straight to it, the major ethical and behavioural challenge exists in what is supposed to be a positive all-embracing communication space.. This year I am scarcely even saying: what is the right answer to problems on twitter/Facebook/Instagram? Just BEWARE of the environment we live in. Look at reach of social media, listen to "Screaming Into the Void" from the Hidden Brain podcast series of National Public Radio.

FIRST DISCUSSION opens – two weeks to contribute

3. Roll back – we look at how ethical behaviour was understand, principally in western societies, with a look at the eastern and Muslim traditions too.

4. Contemporary thought on ethics, and how to behave online. John Perry Barlow, Silverman, others. What they say and write about good online behaviour. The big issues: trust, privacy and free speech.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE Feb 7 2020

5. Follow Your Star: adopt someone with a vast Twitter following, such as the President, Rihanna, or a big sports star who has millions of followers. You are to be their remote mentor and monitor, and one of your assignments [more details later] will be an initial assessment of how ethical their tweets are, and advice to them on how they could improve their tweets. Appreciate the challenges that Facebook, Instagram, twitter and even Linked-In pose to our ethical professional life. Appreciate the challenges that the online behavior of powerful people can create.

6. Privacy: We'll talk about this topic a lot, as it has proved to be one of the key ethical challenges of life – and commerce, and politics – online. Since Mark Zuckerberg declared that 'privacy is dead', a once-sacred part of our life has become 'old-fashioned'. This week we look at our understanding of privacy, its importance and its neglect. Note that in Plaisance, if you are using that text, privacy as a topic is covered in the chapter on Autonomy. Also we should be examining the First and Fourth Amendments to the Constitution, and how they are relevant to protection of privacy.

7. Free Speech: the great liberation of the internet has led to hate speech, cruelty, vulgarity. Some communicators of these lurk in the Dark Net, but others are above the ground. Does anything go? Relate it back to the celebrity you have adopted, and if their tweets respect their right to free speech, or exploit and abuse it.

8.Data protection and data mining: what does it all mean? The Max Schrems story – include Cambridge Analytica and Facebook. Data leakage: why it matters, and how often, and badly it happens. Commercial and political actors seem to have been at fault. The Internet of Things gives so many more opportunities for this data to abound and be misused.

9. Online abuse of women. This is often more than "unethical", but we will study it as an example of how the digital world has gone rogue, and examine the problem for female politicians in particular.

SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE March 13 2020

10. Who runs the internet, anyway? Should it be controlled? How is this being done? the great liberation of the internet has led to hate speech, cruelty, vulgarity. Some communicators of these lurk in the Dark Net, but others are above the ground. Does anything go?

SECOND DISCUSSION opens – two weeks to contribute

11. Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, and ethics relating to use of data acquired by home assistants, digital monitors and devices which know everything about us.

12. Image issues, with Public Relations and Commercial Considerations:

13. Sporting talk: a brief look at some of the mishaps which have befallen sporting personalities on social media. Issues to consider in this arena.

14. Children: the internet is a perilous place for children, so how can this large segment of the population be treated ethically? Bullying and treatment of children online.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE April 17 2020