

# MMC 4200 LAW OF MASS COMMUNICATION

FALL 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

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*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](mailto: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, 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. \*Note: page numbers are based on the 20<sup>th</sup> edition

**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 (15% each x 2 = 30% of your total grade)
- (2) Five “case briefs” (10% each x 5 = 50% of your total grade)
- (3) A final paper analyzing a legal issue raised by the course (20% of your total grade)

I will make grading rubrics available on the course website showing the expectations for each written assignment.

#### (1) Quizzes

You will take a short quiz during the first and second halves of the course, and you’ll submit responses online. Each quiz is multiple choice, 10 questions, and timed (2 hours). I suggest you have your book and notes handy when you take each quiz. Some questions are based on vocabulary while others are application/analysis.

#### (2) Case briefs

You’ll be asked to submit a “case brief” showing that you read, understood and analyzed a key court case pertaining to our subject matter five times throughout the semester. You’ll be given “go-by” tips as to what a case brief should look like; see Week 1 of the syllabus. Case briefs should be one single-spaced page and follow the format of the given example.

#### (3) 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 (if used), 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.

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

## **UF AND DEPARTMENTAL 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](http://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.

**STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY:** The University of Florida’s College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

### 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)	30% (15% each)
Case Briefs (5)	50% (10% each)
Final Paper	20%
TOTAL:	100%



## COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week	Date	Assignment	Turn In
1	Aug. 31- Sept 4	Module 1 Introduction to the Legal System	
2	Sept 8-11 Labor Day	Module 2 The First Amendment	Case Brief 1 Due Sunday, Sept 13 11:59 pm
3	Sept 14-18	Module 3 The First Amendment in Action	
4	Sept 21-25	Modules 4 and 5 Establishing a Libel Case Libel Defenses & Damages	Quiz 1 Due Sunday, Sept 27 11:59 pm
5	Sept 28-Oct 1 Homecoming	Module 6 Privacy Appropriation and Intrusion	Case Brief 2 due Sunday, Oct 3 11:59 pm
6	Oct 5-9	Module 7 Privacy – False Light & Private Facts	Final paper topic due Sunday, Oct 11 11:59 pm

7	Oct 12-16	Module 8 Freedom of Information	Case brief 3 due Sunday, Oct 18 11:59 pm
8	Oct 19-23	Module 9 FOI State Law	
9	Oct 26-30	Module 10 Protecting Source	Case brief 4 due Sunday, Nov 1 11:59 pm
10	Nov 2-6	Module 11 Copyright & Intellectual Property	Quiz 2 due Sunday, Nov 8 11:59 pm
11	Nov 9-13 Veterans Day	Module 12 Commercial Speech	
12	Nov 16-20	Module 13 Obscenity & Indecency	Case brief 5 due Sunday, Nov 22 11:59 pm
13	Nov. 22-23 Thanksgiving	BREAK Work on final paper	
	Nov. 30-Dec 4	Module 14 Broadcast & Online Speech	
	Dec 7-11	Work on final paper	

	Dec. 15	FINAL PAPER DUE	At 11:59 pm
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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.