

MMC 4200 Fall 2020 Section 18234
Law of Mass Communications
Prof. Frank LoMonte

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ABOUT THE COURSE

This is an unusual time and environment, in which students and their families have especially significant health concerns. If something is going on with your health or the health of a family member that interferes with your ability to complete coursework, please say something. I am happy to work with you.

CLASS SESSIONS: This course is taught “asynchronously” online, meaning that lessons will be released on Canvas for your review on your own schedule. You’ll be expected to keep pace with the readings and viewings to complete periodic assignments (more details below). You will need to both read the assigned chapters of the textbook and view the lecture videos to get the most out of the class.

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS: Please use either the Mail tool within Canvas or my direct email for any questions relating to the curriculum or course mechanics – if the question has broader usefulness, I’ll post an update for everyone in Canvas.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: *Mass Media Law*, 21st Edition, ISBN: 9781260838619 by Clay Calvert, Dan V. Kozlowski and Derigan Silver. (If you have any difficulty locating the 21st edition, a used copy of the 20th edition will do.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: 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.

COURSE GOALS AND/OR OBJECTIVES: By the end of this course, students will be able to spot opportunities, and anticipate problems, in which the law may affect the ability to gather and share information, in all forms and across all mediums.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS: This course is taught through a combination of assigned textbook readings, lectures hitting highlights from the assigned readings, and periodic

assignments that will gauge how well you understand those materials. My approach is to test your reasoning and thinking skills more than your “trivia memorization” skills: Do you understand how the law works and why it works that way?

CLASS POLICIES

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: The University of Florida’s College of Journalism and Communications 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 courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.

If experiences outside this class are interfering with your performance in the class, please let me know; I’d like to help connect you with appropriate resources for dealing with any such issues. And if you prefer to speak with someone outside the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC’s director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can reach her via email at jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu.

MISSING DEADLINES OR ASSIGNMENTS: If you believe you have an exceptional reason for missing a deadline for an assignment, please discuss it with me as soon as the problem arises, not after-the-fact. All assignments are due at the times specified in Canvas. If you fail to turn in an assignment on time, unless you’ve arranged with me in advance for an extension, I will deduct one letter grade for each 24-hour delay.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565) with appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter to present to me, which I hope you’ll do as close to the start of the term as possible, so we can design accommodations that assist you in getting the maximum benefit out of the class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Every student at the University of Florida is bound by the Honor Code, which demands that students do their own work, independent of unauthorized assistance. It is your responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit every time you draw on someone else’s writing. If you have any uncertainty about what constitutes academic dishonesty, consult the free Poynter NewsU course called *Avoiding Plagiarism and Fabrication* or review the guide created by Prof. Mindy McAdams at <http://www.macloo.com/cheat/index.htm>. Please refer to the UF Office of Student Judicial Affairs website for definitions of academic dishonesty at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>. It’s fine to cite a

reliable online source in a paper, if (1) you give proper credit and (2) you rewrite the material -- substantially -- into your own words.

Do not turn in for this class any work you previously have submitted to another instructor or that you plan to submit for any other class at UF or any other institution. The web is full of pre-written papers and assignments, and many of them are not very good, so do yourself and your GPA a favor and don't even think about cutting-and-pasting something you find on a random website.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

OFFICE HOURS AND AVAILABILITY: I will pick at least two hours each week to log into Zoom and hold "virtual office hours" for anyone who'd like to "drop by" with a question or comment (check Canvas for announcements) but I'm also very happy to schedule phone or Zoom chats one-on-one. Please don't be shy about asking to talk over anything you find confusing -- it's challenging material, but everyone here is capable of mastering it with a little effort.

CURRICULUM: Each week, you will be assigned a section of the Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver textbook, *Mass Media Law*. I will take the chapters a bit out of order toward the end of the course, so please do check the syllabus and don't waste your time.

For each week's assigned readings, you'll watch a series of my lecture videos hitting the high points of the chapter. I will "release" these for viewing in waves over the course of the semester (no binge-watching -- you know you want to!) and once released, they'll remain viewable over the entire term so you can refer back to them. From time to time, I will include additional material to supplement the book, such as videos to watch or news stories to read. If there are any significant changes, I will use your UF email address, through Canvas, to update you.

Graded assignments will be posted to Canvas and you'll upload responses to Canvas -- but if you have any difficulty getting Canvas to work, always use my email, flomonte@ufl.edu, as your backup. Don't assume that "technical difficulties with Canvas" will automatically be an excuse for being late.

Grading will be based on:

- (1) Four short quizzes that test your mastery of key concepts, 10 percent each = 40% of your total grade
- (2) Three blog posts that you'll write about current-events news articles that illustrate the concepts we're studying in class = 30% of your total grade
- (3) A final essay paper addressing one of a menu of topics I'll offer = 30% of your total grade

Grades will be assigned based on the customary UF letter-grade scale. Note that you need a C-minus or better to be regarded as satisfactorily completing the class to advance in the College, so a D grade is not going to cut it:

	SCORE		SCORE		SCORE		SCORE
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

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS, MMC 4200, FALL 2020



WEEK 1 (week of Aug. 31) INTRODUCTION TO THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 1

WEEK 2 (week of Sept. 7) FIRST AMENDMENT HISTORY / PRINCIPLES

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 2

WEEK 3 (week of Sept. 14) FIRST AMENDMENT IN ACTION

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 3

QUIZ 1 posted online, due 12 noon, Friday, Sept. 18

WEEK 4 (week of Sept. 21) DEFAMATION

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapters 4 and 5

BLOG POST 1, due 12 noon, Friday, Sept. 25

WEEK 5 (week of Sept. 28) DEFAMATION / ONLINE

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 6

WEEK 6 (week of Oct. 5) PRIVACY / APPROPRIATION & INTRUSION

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 7

WEEK 7 (week of Oct. 12) PRIVACY / FALSE LIGHT/PRIVATE FACTS

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 8

QUIZ 2 posted online, due 12 noon Friday, Oct. 16

WEEK 8 (week of Oct. 19) FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & ACCESS

Textbook readings:

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 9 and Chapter 12, p. 455-464 only

WEEK 9 (week of Oct. 26) FOI & ACCESS / STATE LAW

Textbook readings:

No new readings, re-review Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 9

BLOG POST 2, due 12 noon, Friday, Oct. 23

WEEK 10 (week of Nov. 2) PROTECTING SOURCES

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 10

QUIZ 3 posted online, due Friday, Nov. 6

WEEK 11 (week of Nov. 9) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 14

WEEK 12 (week of Nov. 16) COMMERCIAL SPEECH

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 15

BLOG POST 3, due 12 noon, Friday, Nov. 20

WEEK 13 (week of Nov. 23) OBSCENITY & INDECENCY

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 13

WEEK 14 (week of Nov. 30) BROADCASTING & ONLINE

Calvert/Kozlowski/Silver, Chapter 16

QUIZ 4 posted online, due Friday, Dec. 4

WEEK 15 (week of Dec. 7) REVIEW

No new material, instructor will be available for appointments to talk about final papers

FINAL PAPER DUE: MONDAY, DEC. 14, 11:59 p.m. Eastern