

# Ethics & Problems in Mass Communications

MMC3203 (18097)  
Fall 2020

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Office Hours: by appointment

## Course Description

Much of what we learn in college and in life helps us sort right from wrong. A big part of education in advertising, journalism, public relations and telecommunication is learning right from wrong — what you're supposed to do versus what you're not supposed to do. From introductory principles courses to *Law of Mass Communication*, students learn what they should and should not do as matters of professional practice and legal responsibility. In media, as with any discipline, difficult dilemmas arise when we recognize that some issues are not matters of right versus wrong or legal versus illegal. Some of the toughest issues are right versus right! These issues raise moral questions, and we will work to answer them in this course. In this course, we will learn and practice techniques for identifying and analyzing ethical issues and problems in mass communications.

## Course Goals

Successful completion of this course will require you to:

- Demonstrate understanding of key principles and concepts of media ethics.
- Recognize the most pressing moral issues facing media professionals today.
- Develop analytical skills to resolve dilemmas through a systematic ethical reasoning process that includes the perspectives and values of diverse stakeholders.
- Apply ethical reasoning standards across multiple mass communication disciplines.
- Build a personal code of ethics with a foundation in ethical principles.
- Analyze the impact of an ethical decision on diverse stakeholders.

## Prerequisites

2JM designation

ADV 3008, JOU 1001, PUR 3000 or RTV 3001 with a minimum grade of C

## Requisite Skills for This Course

You should be prepared to:

- 1) Manage academic responsibilities and meet deadlines on the Canvas online course management system,
- 2) Employ analytical skills in the evaluation of situations and content presented in course lectures and readings,
- 3) Articulate these thoughts and ideas clearly in writing, including online forums, and
- 4) Justify/defend your own perspectives as well as argue on behalf of perspectives that potentially run counter to your position about ethics situations.

## Required Textbook

Black, J., & Roberts, C. (2011). *Doing Ethics in Media: Theories and Practical Applications*. New York: Routledge.

\* Ebook is reserved and available on Canvas.

## Grading Criteria & Scale

Discussion participation	20%
Quizzes	25%
Ethics analysis paper	40%
Peer reviews	15%

A	93.4 - 100	C	73.4 - 76.6
A-	90.0 - 93.3	C-	70.0 - 73.3
B+	86.7 - 89.9	D+	66.7 - 69.9
B	83.4 - 86.6	D	63.4 - 66.6
B-	80.0 - 83.3	D-	60.0 - 63.3
C+	76.7 - 79.9	E	0.00 - 59.9

## Course Structure

This course consists of eight modules. For each module, you need to read the assigned chapter(s) of the textbook, watch the lecture videos, take a quiz, and post a discussion on the topic related to the module. In addition, you will develop an ethics analysis paper that encompasses all the important topics and issues covered in the course. The course is designed such that you follow the modules in a sequential order. **You must complete all the requirements in a module to be able to move on to the next module.** The following is general information about the main requirements for the course. Detailed descriptions are provided in Canvas.



### Ethics Analysis Paper

You need to form a team of 2 or 3 people and develop an ethics analysis paper over the course of the semester. For a topic your team chooses, the paper should address the following six main topics that are covered in the modules. The specific instructions are provided in Canvas.

- 1) What's your problem?
- 2) Why not follow the rules?
- 3) Who wins, who loses?
- 4) What's it worth?
- 5) Who's whispering in our ear?
- 6) How's your decision going to look?



### Peer reviews

You will be asked to review and provide feedback on two ethics analysis paper written by your classmates in the middle of the semester and toward the end of the semester. Your thoughtful and constructive feedback will provide a useful perspective and help your classmates submit a more polished final paper.



## Quizzes

At the end of each module, a quiz is given to assess your comprehension and retention of the module’s assigned readings and lectures. Each quiz has a time limit and must be taken individually. Although you may use your notes, you need to have a firm understanding of the module’s contents to be able to answer questions accurately and quickly within the given time.



## Discussion Participation

Your contributions to online discussions are a major part of this course. For each module, you are asked to review and analyze an ethical situation and respond to classmates’ posts. Your initial post as well as your response to classmates’ posts are evaluated using the rubric shown below.

Category	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Comprehension and evaluation of key components of the module’s required readings and online resources	Posts demonstrate clear and analytical understanding.	Posts indicate an awareness of course resources.	Posts do not respond to course resources.
Insight and originality to help create dialogue	Posts were thoughtful and interesting.	Posts showed evidence of original thinking.	Posts echoed other points or expressed general agreement/disagreement.
Meaningful connections	Posts relevant to discussion, with meaningful connections to other course content, personal experience, current events, etc.	Posts on topic and relevant to discussion.	Posts not relevant to discussion prompts or course content.
Grammar, spelling and coherence	Very well written and organized. No major grammar or spelling issues.	Generally well written and organized, some spelling/grammar issues.	Unclearly written or organized or hard to follow (possibly due to spelling/grammar issues).
Timeliness and interaction	Posted early enough for classmates to respond and posted later in response to others.	Involved in discussion boards either early or late, but limited interaction with classmates.	Limited meaningful interaction with classmates. Student posted on the last possible day of interaction.

## **Course Format & Policy**

This is an asynchronous online course and thus gives you flexibility of when and where you “attend” the class. However, it is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that you set aside a “class time” each week to study the course materials and complete the assignments. Typically, a learning module is released on Monday and assignments, projects, exams, etc. are due by the end of the week. Students will not be excused for turning in the assignment late unless the reason is approved by the department chair or program director. Having an assignment deadline around the same time for another course is not an excusable reason for turning in an assignment late, for example. Do not wait until the day before the assignment is due to contact the instructor with questions. Keep up with the readings and lecture videos and start assignments early.

**Late Submission:** Twenty percent of the assignment’s grade will be deducted each day the assignment is turned in late.

**Formatting, Spelling, and Grammar:** All assignments must be prepared and presented professionally and proof-read thoroughly. Students must take special care to use proper words and spelling, grammatically correct sentences, and logically flowing contents. Points will be deducted from assignments where the content has formatting, spelling, and grammar errors.

## **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide constructive feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

## **Honor Code**

Students are required to abide by the University of Florida Student Honor Code. Any violation of the academic integrity expected of the student will result in a minimum academic sanction of a zero on the assignment. We take originality in writing and creative work very seriously and expect students to fully understand what is considered plagiarism. We are always available to proactively discuss any uncertainties or ambiguities before you submit an assignment. Any alleged violations of the Student Honor Code will automatically result in a referral to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at <http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

## **Accommodations**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center at (352) 392-8565 or <https://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 accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

## **Counseling and Wellness Center**

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center is available at (352) 392-1575 or <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>. Contact University Police at (352) 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.

## Course Schedule

Please use the course schedule as a reference to keep up with the readings, assignments, and deadlines. Additional readings and assignments may be added. The instructor will advise the class of any necessary changes in advance.

<b>Week 1</b>		<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Aug 31 - Sep 6</b>	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Course Overview & Syllabus Review	
		Welcome from Dr. Kelleher	
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Sept 4<sup>th</sup></b>	
		Respond to your classmates' posts by <b>Sept 6<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on the syllabus and course introduction videos by <b>Sept 5<sup>th</sup></b>		
<b>Week 2</b>		<b>Module 1: What's Your Problem?</b>	
<b>Sep 7 - Sep 13</b>	<b>Reading</b>	Introduction, Ethics & Moral Reasoning (Ch 1)	
	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Lecture on Ch 1	
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Sept 11<sup>th</sup></b>	
		Respond to your classmates' posts by <b>Sept 13<sup>th</sup></b>	
	<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on Module 1 reading and lecture (Ch 1) by <b>Sept 12<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Assignment</b>	Form your team using the People tool in Canvas and submit the topic of your Ethics Analysis Paper by <b>Sept 13<sup>th</sup></b>		
<b>Week 3</b>		<b>Module 2: Why Not Follow the Rules?</b>	
<b>Sep 14 - Sep 20</b>	<b>Reading</b>	Codes of Ethics & Justification Models (Ch 2)	
		Media Traditions & the Paradox of Professionalism (Ch 3)	
	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Lecture on Ch 2, Ch 3	
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Sept 18<sup>th</sup></b>	
		Respond to your classmates' posts by <b>Sept 20<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on Module 2 readings and lectures (Ch 2, 3) by <b>Sept 19<sup>th</sup></b>		

<b>Week 4 ~ 5</b>		<b>Module 3: Who Wins, Who Loses?</b>	
<b>Sep 21 - Oct 4</b>	<b>Reading</b>	Moral Development & the Expansion of Empathy (Ch 4)	
		Loyalty & Diversity (Ch 5)	
	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Lecture on Ch 4, Ch 5	
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Sept 25<sup>th</sup></b>	
		Respond to your classmates' posts by <b>Sept 27<sup>th</sup></b>	
	<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on Module 3 readings and lectures (Ch 4, 5) by <b>Sept 26<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Assignment</b>	Submit Draft 1 of your Ethics Analysis Paper (sections 1 to 3) by <b>Oct 4<sup>th</sup></b>		
<b>Week 6 ~ 7</b>		<b>Module 4: What's It Worth (Part 1)</b>	
<b>Oct 5 - Oct 18</b>	<b>Reading</b>	Personal and Professional Values (Ch 6)	
		Truth and Deception (Ch 7)	
	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Lecture on Ch 6, Ch 7	
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Oct 16<sup>th</sup></b>	
		Respond to your classmates' posts by <b>Oct 18<sup>th</sup></b>	
	<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on Module 4 (Part 1) readings and lectures (Ch 6, 7) by <b>Oct 17<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Assignment</b>	Submit your peer reviews of Draft 1 by <b>Oct 11<sup>th</sup></b>		
<b>Week 8</b>		<b>Module 5: What's It Worth (Part 2)</b>	
<b>Oct 19 - Oct 25</b>	<b>Reading</b>	Privacy and Public Life (Ch 8)	
		Persuasion and Propaganda (Ch 9)	
	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Lecture on Ch 8, Ch 9	
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Oct 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	
		Respond to your classmates' comments by <b>Oct 25<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on Module 5 readings and lectures (Ch 8, 9) by <b>Oct 24<sup>th</sup></b>		

<b>Week 9 ~ 10</b>	<b>Module 6: Who's Whispering in Your Ear?</b>	
<b>Oct 26 - Nov 8</b>	<b>Reading</b>	Consequentialism and Utility (Ch 10)
		Deontology and Moral Rules (Ch 11)
	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Lecture on Ch 10, Ch 11
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Oct 30<sup>th</sup></b>
		Respond to your classmates' comments by <b>Nov 1<sup>st</sup></b>
	<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on Module 6 readings and lectures (Ch 10, 11) by <b>Oct 31<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Assignment</b>	Submit Draft 2 of your Ethics Analysis Paper (all sections) by <b>Nov 8<sup>th</sup></b>	
<b>Week 11 ~ 12</b>	<b>Module 7: How's Your Decision Going to Look?</b>	
<b>Nov 9 - Nov 22</b>	<b>Reading</b>	Virtue, Justice, and Care (Ch 12)
		Accountability, Transparency, and Credibility (Ch 13)
	<b>Lecture Video</b>	Lecture on Ch 12, Ch 13
	<b>Discussion</b>	Post your comments on the discussion topic by <b>Nov 13<sup>th</sup></b>
		Respond to your classmates' comments by <b>Nov 15<sup>th</sup></b>
	<b>Quiz</b>	Take the quiz on Module 7 readings and lectures (Ch 12, 13) by <b>Nov 14<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Assignment</b>	Submit your peer reviews of Draft 2 by <b>Nov 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	
<b>Week 13 ~15</b>	<b>Module 8: Putting It All Together</b>	
<b>Nov 23 - Dec 9</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	Submit your Ethics Analysis Final Paper by <b>Dec 9<sup>th</sup></b>