MMC3203 Ethics and Problems in Mass Communications
Fall 2021

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I guarantee a response within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) but will likely get back with you more quickly.

Overview
Catalog description: "A cross-disciplinary introduction to ethics-relevant situations faced by media professionals. Topics include professional standards of conduct, audience representation, and engagement and issues associated with the production, presentation, and delivery of messages that reflect the best interests of audiences, clients, and stakeholders."

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 what you're supposed to do versus what you're not supposed to do. From introductory principles courses to the course Law of Mass Communication, students learn policies and rules 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 in this course, we will work to answer them — as best an answer can be achieved.

In this class, we will learn and practice techniques for identifying and analyzing ethical issues and problems in mass communications.

Prerequisites
2JM designation and ADV 3008, JOU 1001, PUR 3000, or RTV 3001 with minimum grade of C.

Resources

Canvas
http://elearning.ufl.edu/

Required Textbook
Black, J., & Roberts, C. (2011). *Doing Ethics in Media: Theories and Practical Applications*. New York: Routledge. (The library offers this as a free e-book.)

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 and defend your own perspectives as well as argue on behalf of perspectives that potentially run counter to your position about the situations.

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.

Expectations and Assignments

Formatting, Spelling and Grammar

Each of your assignments should be written to the best of your ability. Because you are acting as a professional communicator, you are expected to write using accurate grammar and spelling. Points will be deducted from assignments where the content has grammar and spelling errors.

There are several tools you can use to improve your writing ability or double-check your work. These include the following:
- Purdue Online Writing Lab to check grammar rules.
- Citation Machine to assist with APA style source citing
- Grammarly to act as an additional check of your spelling and grammar.

Online Discussion Participation (25%)

Your contributions to online discussions are a major part of this course. Below is the rubric for online discussions.

Category (10 pts total)	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.

Individual participation assessments will be posted after each module. Participation scores for each module will be weighted evenly.

Writing Assignments (20%)

Writing Prompts: In the semester, you will complete two writing assignments in which you will provide analysis of a case study using what you learn in the course. The specific case studies, details, and rubrics are explained in Canvas.

Quizzes (20%)
Quizzes cover each module's assigned readings and lectures. Quizzes may include multiple-choice, short-answer, and/or matching questions. The idea is to motivate you to keep up with the reading and lectures. You will have only one opportunity to take each quiz.

Each quiz will have a time limit (normally 25 minutes, depending on the number and type of questions). Although there's no rule against using your notes and books, those who have mastered the material likely will perform better than those who try to look up everything as they go. Taking each quiz must be an individual effort.

Analysis Paper (35%)
For the analysis paper, you should identify a case in media ethics in which you would have acted differently than the media practitioner(s) at the center of it. The paper must be organized in a way that clearly states how you will answer the six major questions:

1. ***What's your problem?*** Briefly describe the case, spell out the moral dilemma(s) in the case, and identify the media practitioner(s) who is at the center of it (this is the person you're retrospectively acting as). Also provide a clearly stated question regarding the case's moral dilemma(s).
2. ***Why not follow the rules?*** In answering the clearly stated question from No. 1, what precedents, guidelines, codes, and/or laws you should keep in mind? Are there reasons these can't/don't provide a clear resolution to your question (dilemma)?
3. ***Who wins, who loses?*** Who are the stakeholders, and what impact is your decision likely to have on each of them in the short term and in the long term?
4. ***What's it worth?*** Prioritize your values — both moral and non-moral values — and decide which one(s) you won't compromise.
5. ***Who's whispering in your ear?*** In general — and specifically in this case — which school of philosophy or set of moral principles provides you with a moral compass?
6. ***How's your decision going to look?*** State your conclusion (answer/solution to your question/dilemma), and imagine what your friends and people you respect will think about your decision-making.

Each question (section) should be between 250 and 350 words, meaning the final, full submission should be between 1,500 and 2,100 words. Each of the six sections should open with the respective question as the heading.

Paper topic submission: In Module 2, you will write a description of the problem, an identification of the media practitioner(s) at the center of the dilemma, and your reason for choosing this topic. This amount of information will help you better prepare for the actual writing of the paper, and I will give you feedback on the content and direction of your assignment.

Rough draft (Sections 1 to 3): A draft paper of the first three sections is due with Module 4.

Rough draft (all sections): A draft of the final paper is due with Module 7. After you submit, Canvas will automatically assign you two of your classmates' papers to peer review. Essentially, your job with the Module 7 draft is to help one another through editing before submitting your final paper in Module 8, which I will edit and grade.

Your rough draft must be completely developed in order to take advantage of the feedback you will receive from your peers. If you miss the deadline, even by a few minutes, you will not be included in the peer-review process because Canvas automatically assigns peer reviewers only for those who submit by the deadline.

Peer reviews: After you submit your draft papers, you will be assigned two peer reviews to complete. Please proof these to the best of your ability. All feedback that you give to your classmate will help them submit a more polished final paper.

Final paper: Your final paper will be checked for plagiarism and improper attribution. The rubric for the paper is below, and you should use this to inform your decisions on how to write your paper and what information you should include. You can also see the point distribution on the assignment page in Canvas.

Criteria	Excellent	Satisfactory	Minimum
"What's your problem?"	Briefly but clearly describes the case, what makes it a moral dilemma, and the specific ethical question to be answered. Applies appropriate concepts from class. Focuses on perspective of specific individual decision-maker working in media.	Describes case. Focuses on perspective of organization or generic decision-maker working in media rather than identifiable individual. Applies concepts from class.	Case lacks adequate description, or is unclear on what makes it an ethical issue (as opposed to craft-based, professional issue).
"Why not follow the rules?"	Identifies, analyzes, and compares applicable precedents, guidelines, codes or laws. Explains if they can't resolve dilemma.	Names guidelines or codes that may apply, but light on comparison or analysis of why they do or don't apply.	Doesn't cite specific rules or guidelines, or cites a few but doesn't clearly explain why they apply or don't. Defers to authority rather than principled moral reasoning.
"Who wins, who loses?"	Identifies major stakeholders and the impact decision is likely to have on each in the short term and long term. Selects and applies key concepts such as moral development, empathy, loyalty, and diversity.	Identifies some stakeholders or individuals who will be impacted and discusses possible consequences for them. Mentions key concepts.	Names some parties that may be affected by the decision, but doesn't frame impact based on key concepts.
"What's it worth?"	Prioritizes values—both moral and non-moral—and explains which one(s) won't be compromised and why (e.g., truth, deception, privacy, persuasion).	Identifies and applies important values.	Names values, but discussion more visceral or based on tenacity than principled moral reasoning (see Ch. 1).
"Who's whispering in your ear?"	Selects schools of philosophy or sets of moral principles to consider, analyzes the options, and explains which apply best.	Names key philosophers or ethical approaches, offers some explanation of why some are more appealing than others for this particular case.	Names key philosophers or ethical approaches, but doesn't show depth of understanding or analysis.
"How's your decision going to look?"	States clear conclusion and articulates consideration of what friends and other respected people will think about decision-making. Selects and applies key concepts such as accountability, transparency, and credibility.	Discusses what friends and other respected people will think about decision-making. Mentions key concepts.	Discusses what friends and other respected people will think about decision-making, but doesn't clearly apply key concepts from class.

Grammar, spelling and coherence.	Very well written and organized, especially clear and coherent. No grammar and 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).

Meeting deadlines and quality of effort are important here to keep the course running smoothly. Sections that do not fall within the word requirements will receive a lower grade. You will also have points deducted from this assignment for missing or submitting late work for the deadlines mentioned in this section.

Late Policy
If you miss a deadline but still want to submit the assignment, you can do so late, but each late day comes with a 10 percent deduction. If you are going to miss a deadline because of an illness, a death in the family, etc., you must notify the instructor within 24 hours of the deadline, and you must follow the Dean of Students Office process: https://care.dso.ufl.edu/instructor-notifications/. A representative from the office will then email the instructor a letter that includes the dates you're excused from coursework, and your deadline will be extended in line with those dates.

Student Learning Outcomes and Grading

	Understand principles & concepts	Recognize moral issues	Develop analytical skills to resolve dilemmas	Apply ethical reasoning across disciplines	Build personal code of ethics	Analyze impact on diverse stakeholders	Grade weight
Quizzes	✓	✓					20%
Discussion participation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	25%
Writing Assignments	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	20%
Analysis paper	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	35%

Final grade requirements

A	90-100		C	70-76
B+	87-89		D+	67-69
B	80-86		D	60-66
C+	77-79		E	Below 60

UF Policies

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities
Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

University Policy on Academic Misconduct
Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the university community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-

student-conduct-code/.

Netiquette: Communication Courtesy
All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions, and chats. See the course netiquette guidelines on Canvas.

Getting Help
For issues with technical difficulties for e-learning in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:
- helpdesk@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP, select option 2
- https://elearning.ufl.edu/student-help-faqs/

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS 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 make-up work.

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

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

UMatter, We Care
Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The *U Matter, We Care* initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the *U Matter, We Care Team* can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The *UMatter, We Care Team* can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Online Course Evaluation
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. They 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 of results of these assessments are available to students.

Diversity
The Department of Advertising embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity from a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. The department's courses strive to foster an understanding of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

Remote Video Disclaimer
Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students to refer back to and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. Those who are unwilling to consent to having their video or profile image recorded should keep their camera off and not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. Those who are not willing to consent to having their voice recorded should keep their mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the chat feature, which allows questions and commenting live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses,

unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Course Timeline
For a full list/calendar of deadlines, visit the syllabus page on Canvas.

Schedule	Book Chapters/Module Content	Assignments
Module 1	Introductions & syllabus Ethics & moral reasoning (Intro & Ch 1)	• Module 1 discussion and responses • Quiz 1
Module 2	Codes of ethics & justification models (Ch 2) Media traditions & the paradox of professionalism (Ch 3)	• Module 2 discussion and responses • Quiz 2 • Topic for Ethical Analysis Paper
Module 3	Moral development & the expansion of empathy (Ch 4) Loyalty & diversity (Ch 5)	• Quiz 3 • Writing Assignment: Stakeholders
Module 4	Personal & professional values (Ch 6) Truth & deception (Ch 7)	• Module 4 discussion and responses • Quiz 4 • Ethical Analysis Paper (Sections 1–3)
Module 5	Privacy & public life (Ch 8) Persuasion & propaganda (Ch 9)	• Module 5 discussion and responses • Quiz 5 • Writing Assignment: Truth & Privacy
Module 6	Consequentialism & utility (Ch 10) Deontology & moral rules (Ch 11)	• Module 6 discussion and responses • Quiz 6 • Be working on Ethical Analysis Paper
Module 7	Virtue, justice & care (Ch 12) Accountability, transparency & credibility (Ch 13)	• Quiz 7 • Ethical Analysis Paper draft and peer reviews

Module 8	Putting it all together 5 Ws & H	• Ethical Analysis Paper final submission