

College of Journalism and Communications

Department of Media Production, Management and Technology
Department Chair: Professor David Ostroff
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RTV3432: Ethics and Problems

Spring 2022

Class # 18731

T 3-5 (9:35 AM - 12:35 PM)

Professor Michael Leslie

Use Canvas email

Office Hours: T 2-4 p.m., **by appointment**

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The study of ethics is usually taught with the goal of having you simply learn about how to apply ethical principles to the problems you will face in the exercise of your career as a mass communications professional. However, the troubled state of our news, information, advertising, public relations and entertainment industries indicates that we need to go beyond the traditional approach.

Hence, this course will not be focused solely on learning about ethical decision-making. Instead, this course will also help you think broadly about ethics and ethical problems facing society, including environmental contamination, hunger, unemployment, institutional racism, and the impact of the increasing concentration of wealth on our politics and our economics.

During this course, you will have the opportunity to expand your current worldview and your frames of reference. When you have done this, you will discover new and powerful openings for action, both in your professional and personal life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will have acquired the following abilities:

- The ability to apply critical thinking to creating messages for a diverse and inclusive society
- The ability to use an ethical reasoning model to resolve difficult ethical dilemmas in mass communication, and in your life

- The ability to broaden your perspective and create innovative solutions to persistent challenges in journalism and mass communication
- The ability to argue effectively for what you believe in and have that reflected in your work as a mass communications professional
- The ability to critically assess the credibility of the information and messages you are exposed to via mass and digital media.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

The required resources for this course are:

Media Ethics: Issues and Cases, 8th edition or later, by Patterson and Wilkins.

Ethics in Media Communications: Cases and Controversies, by Louis A. Day (any recent edition).

The Elements of Moral Philosophy, 5th edition or later, by James Rachels.

You can buy or rent these books online at www.coursesmart.com ([Links to an external site.](#)) ([Links to an external site.](#)) or from www.Amazon.com ([Links to an external site.](#)) ([Links to an external site.](#)) or borrow them from the UF library. They are also available for sale in the UF bookstore.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Gender, Race and Class in Media, 5th edition or later, Dines, Humez et al.

Society for Professional Journalists Case

Studies: <http://www.spj.org/ethicscasestudies.asp> ([Links to an external site.](#)) ([Links to an external site.](#))

Other resources to help you excel in this class will be announced in class, sent to you via the class listserv, or posted in Canvas.

COURSE COMPONENTS

The course consists of the following activities:

Lectures- I will provide a concise introduction each week to the topics we are examining and discussing that week. You are expected to read assigned materials for the week **before** we meet online and come prepared to ask questions about any part of the readings or my lecture notes that you do not fully understand.

Weekly Group Presentation- Each week, one group or team will be assigned to summarize the reading for the week and prepare a case study related to that week's topic, using the analytical format taught in this class, for review, comment and discussion, by both me and your peers.

Instructor Expectations for Presentations:

Presentations require that student team review and synthesize the various arguments and evidence related to selected topics. The purpose of these presentations is to help you and your fellow class members deepen your understanding of each topic. Before, after and sometimes during each presentation, the class will discuss various aspects of the issue presented, and possibly view and discuss related texts, videos and other media.

1. **Class Presentations:** Each student team will be assigned to make 2-3 in-class presentations. You are responsible for preparing a brief on your assigned topic and presenting that topic to the class, when your team is scheduled on the syllabus. Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes and should be supported by audio-visual materials. PowerPoint or similar presentation software is recommended. Your classmates will confidentially evaluate your presentation, and these evaluations will figure into the grade you receive by me for the presentation.
2. **Presentation Summaries:** This is a minimum 3-page, double spaced summary of your presentation. It should include an introduction, identification of the various sub-issues or perspectives, and annotated references from recent books, periodicals, journals or qualified web resources that discuss the topic. By annotation, I mean one paragraph describing the essential content of each of the books, periodicals, journals or qualified web resources you researched and reviewed on the topic. **This summary should be submitted to me by midnight THURSDAY, preceding the Monday you are scheduled to present, via E-learning mail.**

Individual Current Issue Research and Presentation: You will select a topic for ethics analysis, using the format taught in this class, for review, comment and discussion, by both me and your peers.

Individual Case Study and Peer Review- Student teams will be responsible for researching and writing up an individual case study on an assigned topic, and for reviewing a case study submitted by one of their peers, using the format taught in this class.

Reaction Papers- Most weeks, I will ask you to write a brief response to the assigned readings, videos, guest speakers or the topics we have discussed in class.

Quizzes- I will assign three or more quizzes related to the assigned readings, videos, guest speakers or to some topic we have discussed, that have been presented on by your classmates, or that I have lectured on in class.

Attendance: You are expected to attend class each week and attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Your grade will be negatively impacted if you are chronically absent or late for class sessions.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Evaluation Criteria

All assignments and presentations will be evaluated based on both form and content. Form refers to professional and timely presentation in accord with assignment instructions, as well as cogency and organization. Content refers to quality of analysis, correct application of principles, coherence in reasoning, and thoroughness of research. Your grade will reflect your success in meeting these standards.

Assignment Scoring

I will be using a base-10 grading scale, as follows:

10= Exceeds expectations for top performance in the course

9= Very good

8= Good (some minor deficiencies)

7= Average (mixed performance with some deficiencies)

6= Below average with major deficiencies

5 or less = Unsatisfactory

Assignment Weights

Individual Case Study and Peer Review 20%

Group Topic Presentation 15%

Individual Research Topic Presentation 15%

Assigned Reaction Papers	15%
Quizzes	20%
Attendance	15%

Final Grades

I will assign plus and minus grades, generally following the University of Florida grading policy. I reserve the option to curve final grades.

A (Excellent)	90-100 percent
B (Good)	80-89 percent
C (Average)	70-79 percent
D (Below Average)	60-69 percent
E (Insufficient)	<60 percent

Note: Grades will be posted in E-Learning.

COURSE SCHEDULE

ROUND 1

Week 1

Orientation to the Course

Leadership, Ethics and Moral Development (Jensen (Integrity); Day, Chapter 1)

[Video: The Social Dilemma Of Driverless Cars | Iyad Rahwan | TEDxCambridge \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (Links to an external site.)

Video:[Death By Design \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (Links to an external site.)

(\$1.99 on YouTube)

Assignment 1

Week 2

Review and Discuss Previous Week's Work and Assignments:

Ethics and Society (Day, Chapter 2)

Discussion of Main Ethical Theories

Utilitarianism, Kantian Moral Duty, Virtue Ethics, and more

(Patterson, Chapter 1)

Assignment 2

Week 3

Models of Moral Reasoning

The Case of Baby Theresa (Rachels, Chapter 1)

(Day, Chapter 3)

Application of the Model of Moral Reasoning

(Patterson, Chapter 1-A)

Quiz 1 (Friday)

Week 4

Privacy

(Patterson, Chapter 5)

(Day Chapter 5)

Group 1 Presentation and Case Study

Weeks 5

Conflicts of Interests

(Day, Chapter 7)

(Read the notes and materials in the file folder on this topic)

Group 2 Presentation and Case Study

Week 6

Economic Pressures and Social Responsibilities

(Patterson, Chapter 7)

Video: The Post

Video: The Social Dilemma

Group 3 Presentation and Case Study

Week 7

Media Practitioners and Social Justice

(Day, Chapter 12)

The Social Contract (Rachels)

Group 4 Presentation and Case Study

Video: I am not your Negro Netflix

Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement documentary (2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eloYtKOqxeU> (Links to an external site.)

Black Lives Matter: Campaigning for Racial Justice

<https://florida.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/eotp16-soc-blm/wgbh-world-channel-black-lives-matter-campaigning-for-racial-justice/> (Links to an external site.)

Internet Activism and Social Change

<https://florida.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/eotp16-soc-socialmedia/wgbh-world-channel-civil-rights-internet-activism-and-social-change/> (Links to an external site.)

ROUND 2

Week 8

Truth, Accuracy and Transparency

(Patterson hapter 2)

Group 5 Presentation and Case Study

Video: TBA

Quiz 2 (Friday)

Week 9

Confidentiality and the Public Interest

(Day, Chapter 6)

Video: Nothing but the Truth

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAFFFQan-ol> (Links to an external site.)

Group 1 Presentation and Case Study

Week 10

Morally Offensive Content

(Day, Chapters 9 and 10)

Group 2 Presentation and Case Study

Video: American Porn

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/showsporn/>

Week 11

Freedom and Responsibility

Anti-Social Content

(Day, Chapters 9 and 10)

Video of Capitol Riots

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXnHIJkZZAs> (Links to an external site.)
(Links to an external site.)

The Insurrection at the Capitol challenges how U.S. Media frame unrest

<https://theconversation.com/the-insurrection-at-the-capitol-challenged-how-us-media-frames-unrest-and-shapes-public-opinion-152805> (Links to an external site.)

The Capitol Riots Killed Both Sides Journalism

<https://newrepublic.com/article/161361/capitol-riot-killed-both-sides-journalism> (Links to an external site.)

Group 3 Presentation and Case Study

Video: TBA

Week 12

Propaganda in Media Communications

Day, Chapter 11

Group 4 Presentation and Case Study

Deadline for Selecting Final Individual Case Study: (must be related to media)

Watch: Class Dismissed 1 & 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyqXyn2O0S4> (Links to an external site.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwFSgInycko> (Links to an external site.)

Week 13

Stereotypes in Media Communications

Video: Reel Bad Arabs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2EEL3uFvPc> (Links to an external site.)

Video: Disclosure (on Netflix)

Group 5 Presentation and Case Study

Individual Project Presentations

Week 14

Individual Case Study is due on Monday, December 29, at noon.

Case Study Peer Reviews Automatically Assigned at noon on Monday, December 29.

Quiz 3 will open on Friday, December 3, at noon and close at midnight.

Week 15

Case Study Peer Reviews are due by noon, Monday, December 6, 2021

END OF COURSE

Appendix

Classroom Decorum

Please do not read newspapers, eat, drink, work on assignments for other classes, web surf, text or engage in other activities during class lectures, presentations, and group discussions.

Students with special challenges: I am committed to helping students with special challenges overcome difficulties with comprehending the subject matter, while abiding by the standards of fairness and confidentiality. In order to address your academic needs, I must be informed of your circumstances at the beginning of the semester *before* performance becomes a factor. Reasonable and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that officially recognized challenges do not become a hindrance to your ability to succeed in this course. You should provide me with an official statement from the Office of Student Services explaining the accommodation required, if you face such a challenge.

Other matters:

- I reserve the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system, assignments, schedule, or other matters pertaining to the class.
- I can always be reached via e-mail, but please be aware that I will not be able to respond immediately to your communication. As a rule, allow up to 48 hours for a response. Therefore, barring an emergency situation, it is advisable to contact me well in advance of any deadline in order to give me adequate time to respond.
- Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless arrangements have been made with me prior to class.
- Please feel free to approach me about any concerns or comments you might have about this class. I will be happy to meet with you during my office hours, or by appointment.
- You are expected to arrive promptly for class, fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings. While I understand the problems created by a large campus, it is your responsibility to arrive in class in a timely manner.
- You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet for every class.
- Any evidence of **plagiarism** or cheating will result in an "E" for the course and possible disciplinary action.
- Regarding **plagiarism**: Do not submit the same work to more than one class without prior written permission from both instructors. Do not adapt work from another class for this class without my prior written permission. Do not adapt someone else's work and submit it as your own. This course requires original work, created at this time, for this purpose.
- Spelling counts. So do grammar, punctuation and professional presentation technique.
- An assignment turned in past the deadline will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late.
- In addition to the required or recommended readings, you are encouraged to read my lecture notes posted in E-learning. You should also take notes in class because classroom sessions often reveal information that is not contained in the readings or my lecture notes.

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester and applies to you as a student in this class.

The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. **Any individual**

who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. 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 will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in doing my assignments."

Course Evaluations:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.).