Ethics & Problems
IN MASS COMMUNICATIONS

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.

OVERVIEW

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 (e.g., ADV 3008, JOU 1001, PUR 3000, RTV 3007) to Law of Mass Communication (MMC 4200), students learn what they should and should not do as matters of professional practice and legal responsibility. But 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.**

PREREQUISITES

2JM designation and ADV 3008, JOU 1001, PUR 3000 or RTV 3007 with 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.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Megan E. Mallicoat
mmallicoat@ufl.edu

I prefer for you to message me through the Canvas system (doing so helps me stay organized and immediately identifies which class you're enrolled in). However, if you do want to use traditional email to reach me, please be sure to include our course number (MMC 3203) in the subject of your message.

OFFICE HOURS

I don't live in Gainesville, so I don't have an office on campus. I'm happy to meet by phone, email or video chat, though. Message me and arrange a time.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Black, J., & Roberts, C. (2021). *Doing Ethics in Media: Theories and Practical Applications, 2nd ed.* New York: Routledge.

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.
- Apply ethical reasoning standards across multiple mass communication disciplines.

TO ACCESS THE COURSE, LOG IN TO CANVAS ON E-LEARNING
http://elearning.ufl.edu

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ONLINE DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION (25%)

Your contributions to online discussions are a major part of this course. Excellent discussion posts will be thoughtful, relevant, and interesting. They will demonstrate a clear and analytical understanding of the topic, and will make meaningful connections to other course content, personal experience, current events, etc. They will be very well written and organized, and you'll post them early enough for your classmates to respond. You'll also go back and post at least two replies to your classmates' posts. These replies should be equally thoughtful and interesting. (In other words, replying back with "You're right, Albert!" or "I agree, Alberta!" won't cut it.)

DISCUSSION-LEADING GROUP PROJECT (20%)

When drop/add is over, I will randomly assign you to a group of about five students, and I will assign each group one chapter from our readings. (Look for a message from me shortly after drop/add ends.) Make contact with your group immediately, and plan how you will complete this project. You can use the collaboration tools in Canvas, or you can use any other tool you wish.

Your group should collaborate to write a prompt to encourage discussion of your assigned chapter, then moderate the board as the class discusses your prompt. (You should also personally post a response to your discussion questions and respond to your classmates as usual, too.) When the discussion window is over, write up a two-page reaction to the discussion as a group and submit peer evaluations by yourself.

Our discussions usually run from Mondays through the following Wednesdays (about 10 days). You'll have three things to submit to me through Canvas, plus you'll need to actively moderate your discussion board while it's open.

- Your group's prompt is due to me on the Thursday before the Monday your discussion is scheduled to start.
- Your group's discussion will then run from Monday though the next Wednesday (usually...unless holidays interrupt, so check the dates in Canvas on your specific discussion).
- Your group's reaction and your personal peer evaluations are due on Monday following your discussion (so, five days after the discussion board closes).

QUIZZES (20%)

Quizzes will cover each module's assigned readings and lectures. Quizzes may include multiple-choice, short-answer and 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 during the specified module time period. Please see the deadlines posted on Canvas.

Each quiz will have a time limit (normally 25 minutes, depending on the number and type of questions). You can take the quiz any time between the opening of the module on Monday of the first week and 5 p.m. on Friday of the second week of the module, but you will have only the specified amount of time to complete the quiz once you start. The idea behind the time limit is for you to prepare by organizing your knowledge of the course material in such a way that you can confidently answer questions quickly and accurately. Although there's no rule against using your notes and books, those who have mastered the material likely will perform MUCH better than those who try to look everything up as they go.

Taking each quiz must be an individual effort.

ANALYSIS PAPER (30%)

For the analysis paper, your assignment will be to 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 should be organized in a way that makes clear how you will answer the six major questions from *Doing Ethics in Media*:

1. What's your problem? Briefly describe the case. (You may attach a published blog, article, case study, or news story as a link or as an appendix for background.) Spell out what makes this situation a moral dilemma. Leave yourself with a clearly stated question to be answered.

2. Why not follow the rules? Are there some precedents, guidelines, codes, or laws you should keep in mind? If so, are there reasons your dilemma can't be resolved by them?

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, and imagine what your friends and people you respect will think about your decision-making.

As a guideline for length, each section of the paper should be about 1-2 pages, for a total length of about 6-12 pages. I recommend thinking of your paper topic near the beginning of the semester so that you can think through the questions as they come up for discussion during the semester. You might then be able to draft sections of the paper as we go.

OTHER PARTICIPATION (5%)

This includes assignments that will be tracked as complete/incomplete/late. Meeting deadlines and quality of effort are important here to keep the course running smoothly. This category includes the items below (see Canvas for deadlines):

- Ethical analysis paper topic
- Rough draft of ethical analysis paper
- Peer reviews of paper drafts

EXTRA CREDIT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDIES

A maximum of two extra credit points (equivalent of 2%) will be offered for research participation through CJC's SONA research system (https://ufl-cjc.sona-systems.com).

Please register a SONA account and choose studies to participate in to receive extra credit for this class. Check SONA regularly to see what studies have become available. Typically, studies won't become available until around the third week of the semester. Do NOT wait until the last minute to sign up, because research opportunities may be limited by the end of the semester. In fact, it is probably wise to participate early in the semester when your course loads are the lightest. Please see this video on how to set up your SONA account: https://youtu.be/_1OnT2ZU6QQ. Questions? Contact the CJC SONA administrator: uf-cjc-sonasystems@jou.ufl.edu.

A	B+	B	C+	C	D+	D	E

100   90 89   87 86   80 79 77 76   70 69 67 66   60 59   0
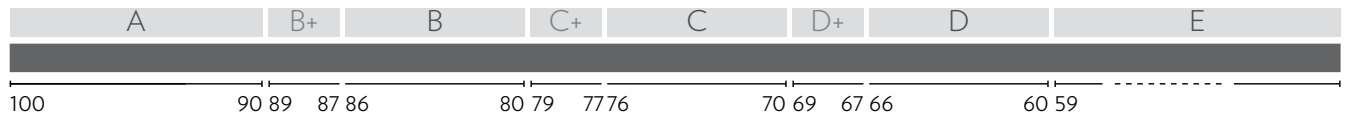
For more information on current UF grading policies, visit https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

THE FINE PRINT

COURSE STRUCTURE
This is an asynchronous online course. In other words, we have no scheduled meeting time. This can be convenient for you, but it also means that it is absolutely essential for you to be an organized, motivated student. The course will be managed through Canvas in eLearning, and is structured in a series of topic-based units. Do not let yourself fall behind! You are expected to submit all assignments on time. Deadlines are given in Eastern time. If you are in a different time zone, adjust your Canvas settings accordingly. **Late work — if accepted — will be heavily penalized.** (I will consider making exceptions for documented extreme circumstances, however, so you should discuss them with me.)

COURSE TECHNOLOGY + TECH SUPPORT
This goes without saying in an online course, but I'll say it anyway: ***You will need reliable Internet access and a reliable computer.*** You will also need word processing software that can generate a .doc or .docx file. You don't have to use Microsoft Word to create your documents, but you will have to upload them to eLearning in that format. **For issues with technical difficulties in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk.**

** 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.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, 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.

COURSE EVALUATION
Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. 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 ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.

DIVERSITY
You *will* encounter ideas and thoughts you do not agree with, but understand that this is one of the central purposes of this course. Sometimes, we need to feel uncomfortable in order to step outside of our worlds and enter the realities of others. We seek to be challenged! That said, please know that my intent is that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit.

It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
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 honor 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 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 in this class.

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. When you use information (including images) from any source, you should cite it appropriately. I am more than happy to help you understand plagiarism. Just ask. ***All work submitted for this class must be your original work. You may not reuse assignments created for other purposes, including other courses.*** Academic integrity violations will result in a failing grade for the course, without exception.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

HEALTH + WELLNESS RESOURCES

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

Online Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.