

College of Journalism and Communications

Department of Media Production, Management, and Technology
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RTV3432: Ethics and Problems

Spring 2023

Class # 18072

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

Professor Michael Leslie

Use Canvas email

Office Hours: T 3-4 p.m., **by appointment**

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The study of ethics is usually taught to have 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 create 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 the 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 received 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 FRIDAY, 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 the 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%
Topic Presentations	15%
Individual Research Presentation	15%
Assigned Reflection 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

Week 1

Orientation to the Course

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

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

(\$2.99 on Amazon Video)

Assignment 1

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

Come to the next session prepared to discuss.

Week 2

Review and Discuss Previous Week's Work and Assignments:

Ethics and Society (Day, Chapter 2)

Models of Moral Reasoning

Discussion of Main Ethical Theories

Utilitarianism, Kantian Moral Duty, Virtue Ethics, and more

(Patterson, Chapter 1)

Assignment 2

Week 3

Models of Moral Reasoning - Applications

The Case of Baby Theresa (Rachels, Chapter 1)

(Day, Chapter 3)

(Patterson, Chapter 1-A)

Assignment 3

Quiz 1 (Friday)

Week 4

Privacy-

(Patterson, Chapter 5)

(Day, Chapter 5)

Assignment 4

Weeks 5

Economic Pressures and Social Responsibilities-

(Patterson, Chapter 7)

Video: The Post

Video: The Social Dilemma

Assignment 6

Week 6

Conflicts of Interests-

Individual Presentation and Case Study

(Day, Chapter 7)

(Patterson, Chapter 4)

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

Assignment 5

ROUND 2

Week 7

Media Practitioners and Social Justice-

(Day, Chapter 12)

(Patterson, Chapter 9)

The Social Contract (Rachels)

Assignment 7

Video: I am not your Negro Netflix

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIoYtKOqxeU> (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.)

Week 8

Truth, Accuracy, and Transparency-

(Patterson Chapter 2)

(Day, Chapter 4)

Video: TBA

Assignment 8

Week 9

Confidentiality and the Public Interest-

Individual Presentation and Case Study-

(Day, Chapter 6)

Video: **Nothing but the Truth**

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=nothing+but+the+truth

Assignment 9

Quiz 2 (Friday)

Round 3

Week 10 (11/7)

Morally Offensive Content-

(Day, Chapters 9 and 10)

Video: American Porn

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

Assignment 10

Week 11

Freedom and Responsibility-

Individual Presentation and Case Study-

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 frames 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.)

Assignment 11

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

Select and post the title of your individual case study [here](#).

Week 12 (11/21)

Stereotypes in Media Communications-

Day, Chapter 13

Patterson, Chapter 10

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

Video: Disclosure (on Netflix)

Assignment 12

Week 13 (11/28)

Propaganda in Media Communications

Watch: Class Dismissed 1 & 2

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

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

Assignment 13

Week 14

Final Individual Case Study is due on Monday

Case Study Peer Reviews Assigned on Monday

Case Study Peer Reviews are due on Wednesday

Quiz 3 Friday

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. 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 about 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, it is advisable to contact me well in advance of any deadline to give me adequate time to respond.
- Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless arrangements have been made with me before 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 promptly.
- 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 adopt 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 professionally and respectfully 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.)