

**College of Journalism and Communications**

**Department of Media Production, Management, and Technology**

**Department Chair: Professor Roxane Coche**

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**RTV3432: Ethics and Problems**

**Fall 2023**

**Class # 17275**

**Section 4545**

**Asynchronous in Canvas**

**Professor Michael Leslie**

**Contact Info: Use Canvas email**

**Office Hours: 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 ethics in 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, persistent hunger, structural 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 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 (the most 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](http://www.coursesmart.com) or from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) 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>**

**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 components:**

**Weekly Lecture Notes-** I will provide a concise introduction to the topics we are examining and discussing each week. You are expected to read assigned materials and interact with it in the assignments and discussions.

**Weekly Team Case Study Presentation and Summary-** Each week, one team will be assigned to present a case study on the week's topic, using the analytical format taught in this class. You will upload your presentation to the shared course drive and send the link to me and the rest of the class, following the instructions below.

These presentations require that you and your teammate(s) do original research on your assigned topic(s) and not simply reproduce my lecture notes. The purpose of these presentations is to help you and your teammate(s) deepen your understanding of controversies and debates surrounding your topic so that you fully understand the ethical dilemma.

You and your team will make a least two (2) presentations during the term. You are responsible for posting a link to your case study presentation and uploading it on the Discussion board on the **Friday preceding the week your topic is scheduled for discussion on the syllabus**. Your presentations should not exceed 5 minutes and should be supported by illustrative graphics.

PowerPoint or similar presentation software is recommended. The idea is to convey your argument powerfully and efficiently.

**Written Summary:** This is a minimum 2-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 uploaded by midnight FRIDAY, preceding the Monday your topic is scheduled for discussion on the syllabus. Upload it to Team Presentations, **along with the link to your presentation**, in **ASSIGNMENTS**.

**Individual Current Issue Research Report-** You will select a controversial topic for research and ethical analysis, using the format taught in this class. There will be an announcement providing details about doing this assignment after Homecoming.

**Final Individual Case Study and Peer Review-** Each of you 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. The format for doing your peer review will be made available to you with the assignment.

**Weekly Reflection Papers-** Each week you will write a brief response to the assigned readings, videos, guest speakers, or the topics assigned for that week. These are due on **Friday** of the same week.

**Weekly Discussion Board-** You are **required** to participate in the Discussion assigned each week. You are expected to make a thoughtful contribution to the on the topic an not simply agree or disagree with what someone else has posted.

**Periodic Quizzes-** I will assign three quizzes related to my lecture notes, the assigned readings, videos, guest speakers, a topic we have discussed, or a presentation uploaded and shared by one of your classmates.

**Weekly Course Attendance-**This is measured by your having completed all the assignments and activities for each week, including the Discussions, by

midnight Friday of each week. Your grade will be negatively impacted if you fail to complete the weekly assignments on time.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

### **Evaluation Criteria**

All assignments and presentations are evaluated based on both form and content. Form refers to error free and timely submissions, in accord with assignment instructions, as well as cogent and rational organization. Content refers to the 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

9= Very good

8= Good (some minor deficiencies)

7= Average (mixed performance with significant deficiencies)

6= Below average with major deficiencies

5 or less = Unsatisfactory

## **ASSIGNMENT WEIGHTS**

**Individual Case Study and Peer Review**  
**20%**

**Assigned Reflection Papers**  
**20%**

**Team Case Study Presentation and Summary**  
**15%**

**Discussion**  
**15%**

**Quizzes**  
**10%**

**Attendance**  
**10%**

**Individual Research Paper**  
**10%**

### **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**

**BE SURE TO MONITOR CANVAS ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR COURSE SCHEDULE UPDATES AND ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS!**

**Module 1, Week 1 August 28**

**Orientation to the Course**

**Leadership, Ethics and Moral Development (Jensen on Integrity)**

**Day, Chapter 1)**

**Watch: Death By Design**

**(Read the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Complete Assignment 1**

**TEAM ASSIGNMENTS**

**Module 2, Week 2 September 4**

**Ethics and Society (Day, Chapter 2)**

**Models of Moral Reasoning**

**Main Ethical Theories**

**Utilitarianism, Kantian Moral Duty, Virtue Ethics, and more**

**(Patterson, Chapter 1)**

**(Read the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Watch: The Social Dilemma Of Driverless Cars | Iyad Rahwan | TEDxCambridge**

**Complete Assignment 2**

**Week 3 September 11**

**Models of Moral Reasoning**

**Group 1 Presentation and Case Study**

**The Case of Baby Theresa (Rachels, Chapter 1)**

**(Day, Chapter 3)**

**(Patterson, Chapter 1-A)**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Complete Assignment 3**

**Syllabus Test**

### **Team Presentations Round 1**

**Week 4 September 18**

**Privacy (Team 1 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Patterson, Chapter 5)**

**(Day, Chapter 5)**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 4**

**Quiz 1 (Friday, September 22)**



## **Weeks 5 September 25**

**Economic Pressures and Social Responsibilities (Team 2 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Patterson, Chapter 7)**

**Video: The Post**

**Video: The Social Dilemma**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 5**

## **Week 6 October 2**

**Conflicts of Interests (Team 3 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Day, Chapter 7)**

**(Patterson, Chapter 4)**

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

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 6**

**Week 7 October 9**

**Media Practitioners and Social Justice (Team 4 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Day,Chapter 12)**

**(Patterson, Chapter 9)**

**The Social Contract (Rachels)**

**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/>**

**Internet Activism and Social Change**

**<https://florida.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/eotp16-soc-socialmedia/wgbh-world-channel-civil-rights-internet-activism-and-social-change/>**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 7**

## **Week 8 October 16**

**Truth, Accuracy, and Transparency (Team 5 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Patterson Chapter 2)**

**(Day, Chapter 4)**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Watch: "Why the Media Censors the Truth about Ukraine."**

<https://youtu.be/N0H7PIJcEP0>

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 8**

## **Team Presentations Round 2**

## **Week 9 October 23**

**Confidentiality and the Public Interest (Team 1 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Day, Chapter 6)**

**Video: Nothing But The Truth**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 9**

**Quiz 2 (Friday, October 27)**

## **Week 10 October 30**

**Morally Offensive Content (Team 2 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Day, Chapters 9 and 10)**

**Video: American Porn**

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

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 10**

## **Week 11 November 6**

**Freedom and Responsibility (Team 3 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Day, Chapters 9 and 10)**

**Video of Capitol Riots**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXnHIJkZZAs>**

**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>**

**The Capitol Riots Killed Both Sides Journalism**

**<https://newrepublic.com/article/161361/capitol-riot-killed-both-sides-journalism>**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

## **Discussion**

### **Complete Assignment 11**

**Friday is the deadline for selecting your Final Individual Case Study (must be related to media)**

### **Week 12 November 13**

**Stereotypes in Media Communications (Team 4 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**Day, Chapter 13**

**Patterson, Chapter 10**

**Video: Reel Bad Arabs:**

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

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

## **Discussion**

### **Complete Assignment 12**

### **Week 13 November 20**

**Propaganda in Media Communications (Team 5 Case Study Presentation and Summary)**

**(Read/watch the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

## **Discussion**

### **Complete Assignment 13**

**Week 14 November 27**

**Watch: Class Dismissed 1 & 2**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyqXyn2O0S4>**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwFSglnycko>**

**(Read/view the notes and materials in the file folder for this week)**

**Discussion**

**Complete Assignment 14**

**Quiz 3 (December 1, 2023)**

**Week 15 December 4**

**Final Individual Case Study is due on Monday**

**Case Study Peer Review Assigned on Monday**

**Case Study Peer Review is due on Wednesday**

**Individual Research Report is due on Wednesday**

**END OF COURSE**

**APPENDIX I**

**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.**

## **APPENDIX II**

**I reserve the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system, assignments, schedule, or other matters regarding the course.**

**I can always be reached via course 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.**

**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.**

**Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating may result in an “E” for assignment, 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 make your own study 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.ua.ufl.edu/students/> 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/> Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>**