



**RTV3432: Ethics and Problems  
(Section GDAV)  
Spring 2024**

**Instructor:** Gregory Davis

**Location:** Weimer 1070

**Class Times:** Tuesdays from 6:15 – 7:05 p.m. and Thursdays from 6:15 – 8:10 p.m.

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**Appointments:** Schedule online through Canvas or Email. After class is also available.

**Course Overview:**

This course explores ethical challenges in the rapidly evolving field of communications, focusing on critical analysis and ethical decision-making. This course delves into historical and contemporary issues, addressing ethical concerns in journalism, advertising, public relations, and emerging communication technologies. Through case studies, discussions, and practical exercises, students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the ethical dimensions inherent in the practice and impact of mass communication.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Understand foundational ethical theories and principles relevant in mass communication.
2. Analyze historical ethical challenges in multiple forms of communications.
3. Explore the ethical implications of digital communication, social media, and emerging technologies.
4. Develop critical thinking skills for ethical decision-making in communication contexts.
5. Foster an awareness of cultural and global considerations in communication ethics.
6. Applying ethical frameworks to real-world communication scenarios.

**Formatting:**

In this course, you will write in several different mediums. For all your written papers, the standard for this class will be single-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font.

Your writing will also be free of grammatical and factual errors. Points will be deducted accordingly on every assignment in this class for grammatical, punctuation, capitalization, formatting, and factual errors.

**Course Professionalism:**

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school, and professional etiquette is always expected. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interactions. I will adhere to the same.

Students will conduct themselves in an honest, ethical, and courteous manner with other students and the instructor, abiding by the UF Student Conduct and Honor Codes.

Students are expected to:

- Arrive on time and remain in class for its entire duration unless the instructor allows for early departure, or the student's individual departure or absence was discussed ahead of time with the instructor.
- Not speak when another student or the instructor is speaking.
- Not use cell phones, laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices except for in-class assignments.
- Welcome and respect the diverse opinions of your peers, instructors, and guests.

Violations of these expectations may result in students being asked to leave the classroom and/or lowering their grade.

### **Attendance and Participation:**

This course is meant to mimic the standards of the professional world; thus, being late or missing class can reflect negatively on your overall job performance. Reliability is HUGE in this career field.

Due to this, attendance will be graded. Starting at 100, students will lose 10 points toward their overall attendance grade for every unexcused absence. If a situation occurs where you will not be able to attend class, please let me know ahead of time. Letting me know after the event (unless there are extreme situations) will result in your grade still being lowered. Showing up to class late on multiple occasions can also drop your attendance grade.

If you have an unexcused absence, please do not ask me to review the material I covered in class while you were out. Speak with your peers in the class and coordinate appropriately.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

### **Academic Honesty:**

The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course.

Without attribution, you must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including websites. Attribution means citing the source of your facts within the text. Ideas that come from others must be credited.

You may not submit anything you wrote for a prior class, organization, or institution. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other than the given assignment.

I will handle any incident of academic dishonesty in accordance with the University of Florida policies that address cheating and unethical academic behavior, specifically the UF Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Guidelines.

Any time you complete an assignment for this course, you will clearly attribute the source of your information. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and citing the source.

For this class, we will use the MLA in-text citation method. You must also list your sources, if any, in a bibliography.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### **Late Assignments:**

In communications, it is crucial to meet your deadlines. While I understand the stress of being a student, it is your responsibility to turn your assignments in on time. If you have a conflict, please contact me 24 hours or more before the deadline. If you have an emergency, be prepared to provide documentation.

If you ultimately forget or miss an assignment, 10 points will be deducted per day. That means if an assignment is due on Monday at 11:59 p.m. and you turn it in at midnight Tuesday morning, the highest grade you can receive on that assignment is a 90. You will receive a zero once an assignment reaches day five without being turned in.

### **Grading Scale:**

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A	90 – 100 percent
B	80 – 89 percent
C	70 – 79 percent
D	60 – 69 percent
F	0 – 59 percent

### **Attendance**

**5 Points**

Attendance will be graded and counts toward five percent of your final grade. As mentioned above, you will start with 100 points in this category and lose 10 points for every unexcused absence. For more information, read the above “Attendance and Participation” section.

### **Class Participation**

**10 Points**

Class participation counts toward 10 percent of your final grade. A student looking to maximize this category will be engaged and present while in lecture. Class participation can count as participating in classroom discussions, providing constructive feedback to your peers, and in-class assignments.

### **Ethical Decision-Making Exercises**

**20 Points**

You will be required to complete 6 ethical decision-making exercises for this course throughout the semester. After reading the scenario that will be presented to you in Canvas and discussed in class, you will prepare and submit a two-page response analyzing the situation while utilizing strategies taught in lecture. These responses will count toward 20 percent of your final grade.

**Discussion Board****15 Points**

Discussion Posts will be required weekly to reflect and share with your classmates through Canvas. Responses will require in-depth exploration and be a minimum of 150 words. Discussion posts will count toward 15 percent of your final grade.

**Quizzes****20 Points**

I will assign three quizzes that will be completed in class. The quizzes will be related to my lectures up to that point in the semester. Guest speaker lectures can also be considered testable material. Quizzes will count toward 20 percent of your final grade.

**Current Issue Research Report****30 Points**

After spring break, you will select a current, controversial topic for research and ethical analysis. This topic must be approved by your professor. Once approved, you will write a three-to-five-page in-depth analysis of the situation, the ethical dilemma, what decision was made, and how you would have problem solved the issue. This assignment will count toward 30 percent of your final grade.

**Guidelines for Grading**

I will grade all your assignments on a 100-point scale. I will award points based on your demonstrated understanding of the assignment, creativity level, and in-depth analyses of the topic. This is a problem-solving course, so you must show your work on how you got to a solution.

Students looking to receive an “A” on their assignments will produce work that is well-formatted, apply critical thinking logic, and utilize the knowledge provided in the lecture. The assignments you turn in should always be free of factual errors and have appropriate citations.

I will automatically deduct two points per error on your assignments for the following:

- Grammatical, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors
- Bad formatting

I will automatically deduct 10 points per error on your assignments for the following:

- Fact errors
- Missing citations

Assignments will receive a zero if:

- They are more than five days late
- They are plagiarized (reused materials from previous courses/jobs, copied your peers, utilize artificial intelligence, do not include appropriate citation)
- They are off task from the topic

**Course Schedule:**

The following course schedule serves as a guide for the semester, though dates and assignments are subject to change. All changes will be sent through Canvas as announcements.

- **Week 1: Introduction to Ethics in Communications**

- Introductions
- Understanding the foundations of ethics
- Applying ethical principles to communication context
  - Assignments Due:
    - Discussion Post 1
- **Week 2 & 3: Philosophy in Ethics and Code of Ethics**
  - Overview of ethical theories
  - Examining historical ethical issues in media and communication
  - Understanding the evolution of ethical standards in communication
    - Assignments Due:
      - Discussion Posts 2 & 3
      - Ethical Decision-Making Exercises 1
- **Week 4 & 5: Media and Technology Ethics**
  - Ethics in digital communication and social media
  - Privacy concerns and data ethics
  - Fake news, misinformation, and disinformation
    - Assignments Due:
      - Discussion Posts 4 & 5
      - Ethical Decision-Making Exercise 2
      - Quiz 1
- **Week 6 & 7: Ethics in Journalism**
  - Role of journalism in a democratic society
  - Objectivity, bias, and fairness in reporting
  - Whistleblowing and the ethical responsibilities of journalists
    - Assignments Due:
      - Discussion Posts 6 & 7
      - Ethical Decision-Making Exercises 3
- **Week 8 & 9: Ethics in Advertising**
  - Ethical considerations in advertising practices
  - Impact of advertising on culture and society
  - Truth in advertising and the regulation of promotional content
    - Assignments Due:
      - Discussion Posts 8 & 9
      - Ethical Decision-Making Exercises 4
      - Quiz 2
- **Week 10: Spring Break**
  - March 12 – Spring Break (No Class)
  - March 14 – Spring Break (No Class)
- **Week 11 & 12: Public Relations Ethics**
  - Building and maintaining ethical relationships with the public
  - Corporate social responsibility and ethical practices in PR
  - Crisis communication and ethical decision-making
    - Assignments Due:
      - Discussion Posts 11 & 12
      - Ethical Decision-Making Exercises 5

- **Week 13: Cultural and Global Communication Ethics**
  - Cultural relativism and ethical challenges in cross-cultural communication
  - Global media ethics and the impact of cultural differences
    - Assignments Due:
      - Discussion Post 13
      - Ethical Decision-Making Exercises 6
- **Week 14 & 15: Emerging Issues in Communication Ethics**
  - AI and ethical implications in communication
  - Virtual reality, augmented reality, and their ethical challenges
    - Assignments Due:
      - Discussion Posts 14 & 15
      - Quiz 3
      - Current Issue Research Report
- **Week 16: The Moral of the Story**
  - The future of communication ethics