

Ethics & Problems in Mass Communications

MMC3203 | Spring 2025

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

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 to *Law of Mass Communication*, students learn what they should and should not do as matters of professional practice and legal responsibility. 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.

Course Goals

Successful completion of this course will require students 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 that includes the perspectives and values of diverse stakeholders
- Apply ethical reasoning standards across multiple mass communication disciplines
- Build a personal code of ethics with a foundation in ethical principles
- Analyze the impact of an ethical decision on diverse stakeholders

Prerequisites

- 2JM designation
- ADV3008, MMC1009, MMC2604, PUR 3000, or RTV 3001 with a 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.

Required Textbook

Black, J., & Roberts, C. (2011). *Doing Ethics in Media: Theories and Practical Applications*. New York: Routledge.

* eBook is reserved and available on Canvas through ARES.

Grading

Quizzes	20%
Discussion participations	20%
Ethics analysis paper	35%
Peer reviews	10%
Ethics case study	15%

A	93.4 - 100	C	73.4 - 76.6
A-	90.0 - 93.3	C-	70.0 - 73.3
B+	86.7 - 89.9	D+	66.7 - 69.9
B	83.4 - 86.6	D	63.4 - 66.6
B-	80.0 - 83.3	D-	60.0 - 63.3
C+	76.7 - 79.9	E	0.00 - 59.9

Students need to earn a C or higher to pass the class.

UF's grading policies are at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Course Structure

The class consists of nine learning modules. For each module, students need to read the assigned chapters of the textbook, watch lecture videos, take a quiz, and complete the assignments. The following is general information about the main assignments of the class. Detailed descriptions will be provided on Canvas.



Quizzes: Quizzes assess students' comprehension and retention of the module's content.

Each quiz has a time limit and must be taken individually. Although students may use their notes and refer to the textbook, they need to have a firm understanding of the module's content to be able to answer questions accurately and quickly within the given time.



Discussion Participations: Students' contributions to online discussions are a major part of this class. For each module, students need to review and analyze an ethical situation and respond to classmates' posts. It's important that the posts reflect students' in-depth understanding of the lectures and readings, while responses to classmates' posts contain original and alternative perspectives on the classmate's opinion.



Ethics Analysis Paper: Students will work in a team of 2 or 3 people and develop an ethics analysis paper over the course of the semester. For a topic the team chooses, the paper should address the following six main topics that are covered in the modules.

- 1) What's your problem?
- 2) Why not follow the rules?

- 3) Who wins, who loses?
- 4) What's it worth?
- 5) Who's whispering in our ear?
- 6) How's your decision going to look?



Team member evaluation: For the success of the Ethics Analysis Paper, it's important that team members have a good working relationship and contribute equally to the paper. To assess individual students' contribution to the team project, each student will be evaluated by their team members. The team member evaluation is used to determine the student's final grade for the team project as shown below.

ex)	Team grade on Ethics Analysis Paper	=	95%	
	Team member evaluation on Ethics Analysis Paper	=	80%	
	The student's Ethics Analysis Paper grade	=	95% X 80%	= 76%



Peer Reviews: Students need to review and provide feedback on two ethics analysis papers written by their peers in the middle of the semester (Draft 1) and toward the end of the semester (Draft 2). Peer reviews are designed to provide additional perspectives and constructive feedback from peers to help students prepare a more polished final paper.



Ethics Case Study: Students need to identify an ethical issue in mass communications and develop an original case study with a set of discussion questions. They then need to respond to case studies developed by their peers.

Course Format & Policy

This is an asynchronous online course and thus gives students a flexibility of when and where you "attend" the class. However, it is **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** that you set aside a "class time" each week to study the course materials and complete the assignments. Typically, a learning module is released on Monday while assignments are due by the end of the week. Students will not be excused for turning in the assignment late unless the reason is approved by the department chair or program director. Students' personal travel schedule and conflict with another class's deadline are not excusable reasons for turning in an assignment late, for example. Do not wait until the day before the assignment is due to contact the instructor with questions. Keep up with the readings and lecture videos and start assignments early.

Module Progression: The course is designed such that students follow the modules in a sequential order. **All the requirements of the module must be completed to unlock the next module.**

Late Submission: Some assignments (e.g., discussion posts, quizzes) may be submitted after the deadline. When a late submission is allowed, students have up to **13 days** after the due date to submit the assignment. **Fifteen percent of the assignment's grade is deducted each day the assignment is turned in late. In addition, students cannot access the subsequent module until all the assignments in the module are completed.**

Formatting, Spelling, and Grammar: All assignments must be prepared and presented professionally and proof-read thoroughly. Students must take special care to use proper

words and spelling, grammatically correct sentences, and logically flowing content. Points are deducted from assignments where the content has formatting, spelling, and grammar errors.

Course Communication: It is important that students turn on Canvas notifications to receive all updates and announcements in a timely manner. Course-related questions should be communicated via email to Dr. Kim at hkim@ufl.edu. Please be aware that email is considered formal communications. Try to avoid treating emails like text messages.

Class Demeanor: Students are expected to behave in a manner that is respectful to both the instructor and their peers. Any disagreements with the instructor or other students should be communicated politely and professionally. For concerns, students are encouraged to either email the instructor or schedule a meeting to discuss the issue

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. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.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.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Honor Pledge

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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at <http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Recording of Class Lectures

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class **lecture** does not **include** lab sessions,

student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center at (352) 392-8565 or <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center is available at (352) 392-1575 or <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>. Contact University Police at (352) 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.