

## **Problems and Ethics in Telecommunications (RTV 4931)**

**Fall Semester 2014**

Instructor:

Ms. Summer Best

2039-D Weimer Hall

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: [quiet@ufl.edu](mailto:quiet@ufl.edu)

Class Periods:

T: 4-5, R: 4

Matherly Hall/Room 105

*\*Please bring your syllabus to class each session in order to note changes throughout the semester.*

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

**Problems and Ethics in Telecommunication** is a senior-level course, which encourages you to think critically about media, ethics and society. This is accomplished through reading, writing, lectures, discussion, viewing of video clips, research and presentation on topics of media interest.

In this course, the objective is to develop your ability to analyze, discuss, present, and write critically about ethics, media and society. Your development of these skills is achieved through class readings, research, writing, overviews of case studies, team presentations, debates, quizzes and tests.

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### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS and MATERIALS:**

#### **TEXTBOOK**

The core subject matter for the ethics portion of this course is found in the following textbook: *The New Ethics of Journalism; Principles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, by Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel, 2013.

This textbook is available at our university bookstore, at many other bookstores, and via online sites.

Throughout the course, we will also focus on required readings from timely journal articles, historical case studies and video/audio clips relevant to ethics in telecommunication. Additional

resources to help you excel in this class will be announced in class, sent to you via the class listserv or posted in E-learning.

### **ATTENDANCE, MAKE-UP WORK, ETC.**

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

[http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalogarchive/01-02-catalog/academic\\_regulations/academic\\_regulations\\_013 .htm](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalogarchive/01-02-catalog/academic_regulations/academic_regulations_013.htm)

Class attendance is critical to your success in this course. Class time will be focused largely on lectures, interactive discussions and critiques of ethics in today's media environment. Your attendance and active participation in class will also complement this course's assigned readings and help you best succeed on important quizzes, presentations and exams.

If you have a personal emergency or extenuating circumstance that prevent you from being in class, please notify your instructor before class. Illness (with legitimate physician documentation), family emergency, jury duty and military duty may all be considered excused absences.

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### **YOUR OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE:**

You should expect this course to provide examples and motivators to analyze ethical dilemmas in journalism. Ethical dilemmas should not be considered only from the journalists' point of view, but also from the viewpoint of readers, viewers, producers and advertisers.

*As a student, you should:*

- Engage in critical thinking to identify and describe multiple responses and options to journalism ethics problems
- Apply ethical decision-making models (as outlined in the first few weeks of class, and through continued readings) and critical thinking skills to reason through journalism ethics dilemmas
- Assess and describe the ethical justifiability of possible alternative responses in terms of journalistic duty and/or the reasonable predictable consequences of those responses
- Produce responses and actions most ethically accepted in journalism
- Learn to identify, understand and apply ethical principles and standards – defined by the Society of Professional Journalists – in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity as a media professional
- Evaluate and describe historical components of ethics in journalism and society overall, with specific focus on consequential ethics and duty-based ethics

- Respectfully discuss, critique and comprehend varied viewpoints of ethical dilemmas as they are handled in media

## **CLASSROOM PROFESSIONALISM AND DECORUM**

No reading of news, eating, drinking, cell phone use, working on assignments for other classes, web surfing, texting, etc. is permitted during lectures, presentations, group discussions, or other class activities. Technology may be required for some classes, but you will be notified in advance of those class periods. Respect of, and for, your peers, guest speakers and your instructor will be expected at all times.

## **RESOURCES**

**Division of Student Affairs** (352-392-1261) – Contact this office if you need to miss class due to an on-going medical problem or family emergency. The office will send a courtesy email to your instructors about your absence. <http://www.ufsa.ufl.edu/>

**UF Counseling & Wellness Center** (352-392-1575) – The center provides scheduled and drop-in appointments with counselors to discuss a range of personal issues. <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>

**Disability Resource Center** (352-392-1261) – Students requesting class accommodations must first register with the Disability Resource Center. You will receive documentation to give to each of your instructors. You must meet with your instructor during office hours to discuss special arrangements. Please take action immediately. <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**Communication Coaching Center** (1088 Weimer Hall) – Student members of the Journalism and Communications Ambassadors staff the center. They can provide coaching on writing assignments, grammar and AP style issues. They also can assist you in applying for internships and finding sources for a story. <http://www.ufjca.org/communications-coaching-center.html>

**Computers** – Call 352-392-HELP (4357) or email [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

**Knight Division for Scholarships, Career Services and Multicultural Affairs** (1080 Weimer) -- Provides information on scholarships and internships and sets up the College Interviewing Day each semester. Mr. Charles Harris is the director. <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/knight/>

**Career Resource Center** – The CRC is located on the main floor of the Reitz Union and provides free career assessment and counseling. Check the CRC website for information about workshops, career and job fairs, or to schedule an appointment. <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>

**SNAP** – Offering pick-up and drop-off services for after-dark safety. Call 352-392-7627 or check online <http://www.police.ufl.edu/community-services/student-nighttime-auxiliary-patrol-snap/>

You can get the SNAP App for free by using either the Android Market or Apple App Store and searching for SNAP UF.

## **INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

## **COURSE ACTIVITIES:**

**Lectures and discussions** on assigned readings/topics will be the backbone of this course. Some sessions will feature guest speakers or topical videos. You will have the opportunity to discuss contemporary media content related to the objectives of the course. Some class periods will be devoted to discussion or presentations on assigned topics.

**Debate and discussion are central to this course.** You are expected to read or view assigned materials **before** class and to participate in online activities and class discussions. Please interact with courtesy with other students during these discussions, whether or not you agree with their views.

You can *expect* to be called upon in class to answer questions related to the course assignments, readings and discussions. Please come to class prepared to participate in discussions by having completed the required reading, writing, thinking or viewing assignments.

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## **ASSESSMENT TOOLS:**

### **1. Group Discussions (25%):**

You will have online and classroom group discussion assignments on selected readings, topics, case studies, videos or guest speakers. You will receive individual or group feedback on these assignments, as needed.

### **2. Group Presentations (25%):**

You will be assigned to a team responsible for discussing, presenting and debating a media-related ethical dilemma(s). These discussions, debates and presentations will allow you to critically examine controversial topics that arise during lectures, in assigned readings, from topical videos and in the mass media. You will find it useful to collect or bookmark relevant and timely materials from journals, newspapers, magazines and the Web, and to keep notes on television and radio programs you watch that have content you can use in your discussions, debates or presentations. These materials may also help you analyze case studies and complete assignments, and allow you to contribute to class discussions in an informed manner with fact-supported, compelling arguments.

Reference to books, articles, news reports, interviews, surveys, videos, audio recordings, etc., is expected in your discussions, debates, presentations and other assignments.

### **3. Midterm Exam (25%)**

Study preparation will be provided in classes prior to the midterm. The midterm exam will review materials covered during the first half of the semester.

### **4. Final Exam (25%):**

Study preparation will be provided in classes prior to the final exam. This exam will cover materials presented in the second half of the semester.

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## **COURSE ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENT SCORING**

**Final Grades** will be assigned according to the following scale:

<b>A (Excellent)</b>	<b>90-100 percent</b>
<b>B (Good)</b>	<b>80-89 percent</b>
<b>C (Average)</b>	<b>70-79 percent</b>
<b>D (Below Average)</b>	<b>60-69 percent</b>
<b>E (Failing)</b>	<b>&lt;60 percent</b>

Information on current University of Florida grading policies can be found at the following link:

[http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalogarchive/01-02-catalog/academic regulations/academic regulations 019 .htm](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalogarchive/01-02-catalog/academic%20regulations/academic%20regulations%20019.htm)

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## **COURSE POLICIES, INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS AND METHODS OF EVALUATION:**

**Submissions: Handwritten submissions, except for tests and quizzes, will not be accepted.** Retain a copy of any work before you submit it, just in case an assignment is lost or misplaced.

Proofread your assignments. You are professional communicators, and content, grammar, spelling and style are critically important. Sloppy submissions will incur a grading penalty. Late submissions also will be penalized by one letter grade, each day, following the assignment's due date.

## **GENERAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

All assignments, debates and presentations will be evaluated based on both form and content. *Form* refers to professional and timely presentation in accordance with assignment instructions, as well as cogency and organization. *Content* refers to quality of analysis, correct application of principles, coherence in reasoning, and thoroughness of research. Your grade will indicate your success in meeting these standards.

#### **OTHER MATTERS:**

Contact your instructor via email, preferably. Barring an emergency situation, it is advisable to contact me well in advance of any deadline in order to allow for adequate time to respond.

- Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless arrangements have been made with me prior to class.
- As a reminder – spelling counts. So do grammar, punctuation and professional presentation.
- In addition to the required or recommended readings, you are expected to take class notes. Classroom sessions often reveal information that is not contained in the readings.

#### **University of Florida Honor Code**

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 (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-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 me as soon as possible.

Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in an “E” for this course and reporting to Student Judicial Affairs. 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 adapt someone else's work and submit it as your own. Do not fabricate. This course requires original work, created at this time, for this purpose.

For more information about academic honesty, contact, Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261.

## Tentative Course Schedule

### Week One

- Introduction to course/teaching approaches, materials and expectations
- Ethical dilemmas in journalism – they're everywhere! A look at current journalism dilemmas captured in recent video clips.

## PART I: TRUTH

### Week Two

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 1 "Truth without Scarcity, Ethics without Force"*
- Who polices ethics in journalism? What's the gold standard for a Code of Ethics? \*Review Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics

### Week Three

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 2 "Kicking the Stone: The Search for Reliable Evidence in Journalism" **STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA PIECE\*\****
- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 3 "Storytelling in the Digital Age"*

**\*Discuss group presentation guidelines and proposals, view past examples, and assign Groups.**

### Week Four

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 4 "Fact Checking 2.0"*
- Journalism of Assertion – "Get it first, or get it right?" An overview of the fact-checking debacles in the Newtown, Conn., Sandy Hook school shooting

### Week Five

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 5 "Seeing is Not Believing: Photojournalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"*
- Overview of problematic photos and video used by media – and why they do or do not pass ethical standards set by the Society of Professional Journalists.

## PART II: TRANSPARENCY

### Week Six

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 6 “Do Private Platforms Threaten Public Journalism?”*

**Week Seven** \*In-class study session for Midterm Exam

### Midterm Exam

### Week Eight

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 7 “Networked Audiences: Attention and Data-Informed Journalism*

From Twitter to 12-second news outlets, our attention spans are shrinking. What’s the lengthiest piece of news you read or watched last week?

- **Group 1 Class Presentation**

### Week Nine

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 8 “Centers of Investigative Reporting: New Model, Old Conflicts”*

### Week Ten

- **Group 2 Class Presentation**
- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 9 “A New Pathway Toward Sourcing”*

### Week 11

- **Group 3 Class Presentation**

## PART III: COMMUNITY

- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 10 “Corrections and Ethics: Greater Accuracy Through Honesty”*

Is it OK to just say you’re sorry? A look at how media giants handle the question



## **Week 12**

- **Group 4 Presentation**
- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 11 “The (Still) Evolving Relationship Between ‘News’ and ‘Community’*

## **Week 13**

- **Group 5 Presentation**
- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 12 “The Destabilizing Force of Fear”*

Should media use intimidation as a method of gathering news?

## **Week 14**

- **Group 6 Class Presentation**
- **Thanksgiving Holiday**

## **Week 15**

- **Group 7 Class Presentation**
- *The New Ethics of Journalism, Ch. 13 “How Untold Stories Can Reflect Diversity”*

Race? Socioeconomic status? Gender? Sexual orientation? Disabilities? Guest speakers from a previous semester of RTV 4931 return to share an overview of their diversity assignment

## **Week 16**

- **Group 8 Class Presentation**

\*Complete Course Evaluations

## **Week 17**

- Final Exam Review
- Final Exam