



# RTV 4432 Ethics and Problems in Telecommunication Fall 2015

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Lectures: Tuesday Periods 4-5 (10:40-12:35) & Thursday Period 4 (10:40-11:30)  
Lecture Location: Weimer 1094

## **Course Objective:**

The purpose of this course is to help prepare you for a career in media whether it is as a reporter, in management, working in the field of production, or as a social media professional, by making you think critically about your ethical reasoning.

This is really a course in how to make decisions. It is not a test of whether you are an ethical person; after all, how many of us aspire to be *unethical*? Likewise, this is not a course that lectures you on the evils of plagiarism or altering people's words and ideas to create a better story. Instead, this course is about resolving dilemmas, and choosing between two good or viable options.

## **What You Will Learn in this Class:**

- Ethical theories as they relate to the media.
- Perspective on media controversies and issues.
- Strategies for making ethical decisions as media professionals.
- Insight into how ethical issues are addressed by media professionals.
- Ability to evaluate claims and assertions using critical-thinking skills.

## **Resources:**

While there is no "text" for this class, there will be articles and videos each week that you will need to read/watch before class. Links to these articles and videos can be found in the syllabus. In addition, you will need to read the Decision Memo guide which provides detailed instructions on how to write the Decision Memos for this course.

**Course Format:**

The format of the course is one 115-minute class and one 50-minute class per week. Often one class will build on the next. For a majority of the semester, the discussions from the Tuesday class will be used to help you produce work for the Thursday class.

**Participation:**

Ethics students often say half the benefit of a class like this is hearing each other's perspectives. This class is built on participation. So come and speak your mind. To help facilitate an open atmosphere, your grade cannot be penalized for your opinion as long as it is respectful to those in the room. You can challenge each other or me and not be penalized.

**Attendance:**

Your attendance and participation are important to making this class a success. This is a discussion class, not a take-notes-furiously class. Being absent prevents you from being able to participate in discussions. If you are not present then you cannot participate and if you do not participate then you cannot succeed.

It is the responsibility of the student to keep up-to-date of all material, deadlines, and assignments missed, and will be his/her responsibility to meet all deadlines for assignments for ANY ABSENCE, excused or otherwise.

**Late Work:**

You will not be permitted to makeup assignments missed due to an unexcused absence. For excused absences, provide documentation to your instructor for the reason you missed class within 24-hours of the time of the missed class. For any missed work due to an excused absence, you will have until the following week of the missed class to submit your work. Failure to make-up work missed by the next class for excused absences will result in a zero for the assignment.

**Courtesy:**

If you arrive late, settle in with the minimum amount of disturbance. Put cell phones on vibrate.

**University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:**

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565.

University counseling services and mental health services:

Counseling and Wellness resources

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

352-392-1575

**Course Evaluation:**

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>

**University Policy on Academic Misconduct:**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. 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 have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."  
For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others' ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others.

**Cheating:**

Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one's own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

## Grading

50%	Decision Memos (7 total with the lowest 2 grades dropped)
20%	Class Discussion
15%	Class Presentation
10%	Reading Presentation
5%	Decision Memo Guide Test

Your grades will be posted to Canvas at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>

### **Decision Memos (50%):**

The bulk of your grade will come from Decision Memos. These are completed decision memos according to the formula and examples in the Decision Memo Guide. They will be scored according to the rubric in the guide. You can submit SEVEN but the best FIVE will count. Starting in Week SEVEN we will discuss the Decision Memo assignment for that week in the Tuesday class. You will have until the Thursday class to complete the Decision Memo and submit it at the start of the Thursday class.

In the Thursday class, you will work with a partner to review and grade each other's Decision Memos. Based on the feedback you receive from your partner, as well as the instructor, you will be allowed to resubmit your Decision Memo for that week by Friday at 5:00 PM for your graded Memo.

You will submit a Decision Memo for that week at the start of the Thursday class regardless of whether you decide to make changes. You may decide to not make changes based on feedback. If you do not make changes, the Decision Memo submitted at the beginning of class on Thursday will be graded.

**NOTE:** While you may resubmit your Decision Memo after receiving feedback from your partner and the instructor, this does not mean you may not submit a completed Decision Memo by the start of the Thursday class, AND it does not mean you may simply submit a poorly worded or poorly articulated Memo. Not submitting a Memo by the start of the Thursday class or submitting a Memo that shows little thought or effort will be graded as such either with a Zero or with a grade deserving of the effort.

You may also submit a Decision Memo early. But, the due dates and times are firm.

### **Class Discussion (20%):**

You are expected to attend every class. We will hold frequent discussions in class. In groups and individually, you will be expected to discuss readings or videos on ethical issues provided in the syllabus and engage in class discussions about the readings or videos. Some classes may also have thought-questions that will be discussed that may not specifically relate to the class reading but be important to the overall course discussion. We will also have discussions based on questions posed to the class from the Reading Presentation Assignments.

For readings from the NPR Ethics Handbook, Check the box that indicates "Show case studies".

There is no set point deduction for lack of participation, but everyone will be called on to participate to ensure group engagement and participation by each member of the class.

**NOTE:** Point deductions for a lack of participation or preparedness are at the discretion of the instructor.

**Reading Presentation (10%):**

Each student will be assigned one reading during the semester to present to the class. You will need to deliver a 5-10 minute presentation on your assigned reading. You will not be summarizing the reading, but offering your analysis on the topic(s) discussed in the reading, offering personal insights, and presenting additional material and information related to the reading topic.

You will also need to pose at least two questions to the class related to the topic discussed in the reading. Questions will demonstrate you have a thorough understanding of the topic as well as how you believe the topic could have been expanded or where you believe the reading did not fully cover a given issue. These questions will be used to facilitate a class discussion on the topic that will be part of each student's Class Discussion grade.

**NOTE:** Just because someone will be presenting the assigned readings does not mean you do not have to read them. The presentations will not cover everything in the readings and none of the videos will be presented. If you do not do the assigned readings, you will not be able to participate in the Class Discussions.

**Class Presentation (15%):**

In a group, you will be expected to present both sides of an ethical dilemma related to entertainment media rather than the news media. You will be given a topic and examples as well as some general information. It will be your group's responsibility to find additional material.

You will need to come to a conclusion on the issue, as well as present both sides and provide rational and valid arguments for both sides.

This is not an opportunity to let emotions dictate your presentation, although some topics may involve emotional issues. The topics will be on Canvas.

You will need to select a group and topic. If you do not select a group or topic, one will be selected for you.

You will need to make a 20-25-minute presentation using appropriate handouts and a PowerPoint. The PowerPoint may include video, but should only be used as examples and not be the majority of your presentation.

Your group members will also evaluate your overall participation in the presentation which will be a portion of your grade.

**Decision Memo Guide Test (5%):**

This multiple choice test on the Decision Memo Guide is one more incentive to read (not skim) the guide and apply it to new situations. The Test will be sometime during the semester. No specific date has been determined.

**Grading Scale:**

A	(93-100)
A-	(90-92)
B+	(87-89)
B	(83-86)
B-	(80-82)
C+	(77-79)
C	(73-76)
C-	(70-72)
D+	(67-69)
D	(63-66)
D-	(60-62)

**Course Calendar**

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: schedule subject to changed based on guest availabilities and other factors.**

**Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup>**

Questions:

- Why are ethics important for people in the media?
- Why are ethics important for the audience?
- Why are ethics important for all of us?

**Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

In covering a speech earlier, the mayor makes several references to the city needing to raise tax revenue. Would you edit the mayor's comments to make one longer sound bite?

Read:

- [UF student fired from internship for plagiarism](#)
- [Plagiarism Equals Expulsion for Once Mighty Mac Arthur](#)
- [The worst journalism of 2014](#)

**Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>**

Question:

Reporters will sometimes not include a location in their sign-off. Often this is because the reporter is not where the action is. Should reporters sign-off from the location where they actually are?

Read:

- [Times Reporter Who Resigned Leaves Long Trail of Deception](#)
- [Jayson Blair: Offering His Views On Making Up News](#)

Watch:

[Investigating Investigative Journalism](#)

**Thursday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Questions:

Sometimes the people being interviewed want to know the questions a reporter will ask. Should you send a list a questions in advance? What difference would it make? Does it matter who you are interviewing?

Read:

[The IOC's Moderation Guidelines](#)

[Freedom of the Press 2014: Media Freedom Hits Decade Low](#)

**Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>**

Questions:

If your station has been covering a story all day, how much new information do you need to have to call an update “breaking news”? What is the problem with calling too many stories breaking news?

Read:

[Attack on ‘Charlie Hebdo’ is Serious Assault on Press Freedom](#)

[Everything We Know About the UVA Rape Case \[Updated\]](#)

[What Is Russia Today?](#)

**Thursday September 10<sup>th</sup>**

Questions:

Should broadcasters, print journalists, and online journalists have different Codes of Ethics? What about news reporters, sports reporters, entertainment reporters, and weather people?

Read:

RTDNA's 2015 updated Code of Ethics (in Canvas)

RTDNA's Code of Ethics adopted in 2000 (in Canvas)

**Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup>**

Questions:

Who do you trust on social media, on any platform or combination of platforms? Focus on media outlets rather than individuals. Reference some of their social media content. Why do you trust them?

Watch:

[MyCJC Speakers Series - Social Media and Ethics](#)

Read:

[How Social Media is Radically Changing the Newsroom](#)

**Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

Instagram makes it easy to manipulate photos. Are there any problems with a station using filters for photos on their Instagram account?

Read:

[The New Formula for Social Media Trust](#)  
[8 Key Takeaways about Social Media and News](#)

**Tuesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Questions:

Who do you trust on social media, on any platform or combination of platforms? Focus on individuals rather than media outlets. Reference some of their social media content. Why do you trust them?

Read:

[Verifying Tweets when news breaks: Q&A with the NYT's Jennifer Preston](#)  
[Verifying images: why seeing is not always believing](#)  
[Maps of Vitriolic Twitter Controversies Are Surprisingly Beautiful](#)  
[Facebook's political 'echo chamber' is your fault, not theirs](#)

**Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

Live blogging can allow users to follow a story and contribute to it. What are the downsides to live blogging? What about live blogging and using content posted by the audience?

Read:

[6 ways social media can ruin your life](#)  
[ESPN's Keith Olbermann taken off the air after fighting with Penn State fans on Twitter](#)  
[8 Journalists Who Were Fired for Tweeting, Part 1](#)  
[8 Journalists Who Were Fired for Tweeting, Part 2](#)

**Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

Should journalists covering a disaster story become involved in the relief efforts or simply cover the story?

Read:

[CNN physician-journalist poses ethical dilemma after treating Nepal victims](#)  
[Stephanopoulos Caught in Clinton Cash Trap](#)  
[Here's What NBC Can and Can't Do with Brian Williams](#)

**Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>**

Read:

[Why the Most Ethical and Trustworthy Journalism Was by Fictional Newsman Jon Stewart](#)

[Why BuzzFeed's ethics guide is an incoherent mess](#)

**Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

Using your smart phone, it is possible to record video without people knowing.

Do journalists have a responsibility to let people know they are recording and the video may be used?

Read:

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Transparency](#)

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Honesty](#)

**Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup>**

Decision Memo One due: Orangeburg Massacre

**Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

If you missed your opportunity to get the b-roll you need for a story, is it ever permissible to ask someone to do something or do it a second time so you can get the shot?

Read:

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Attribution](#)

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Completeness](#)

**Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>**

Decision Memo Two due: New Year's Baby

**Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

Social media generally has a more informal style so as to be more engaging and drive traffic. Should stations use emoticons or memes?

Read:

[In NBC Interview, a Failure to Note Network Ties](#)

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Impartiality](#)

**Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Decision Memo Three due: The Sassy Judge

**Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>**

Question:

In 2009, the US military reversed an 18-year-old policy that had prevented the media to photograph flag-draped coffins of America's war dead as their bodies were being returned to the United States – if the families of the dead agreed. Do you agree with the 1991 ban? The 2009 reversal? Leaving it up to families to decide?

Read:

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Accountability](#)

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Respect](#)

**Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>**

Decision Memo Four due: Airing disturbing material

**Tuesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Questions:

Should news organizations have a target audience? Should reporters be encouraged to do stories that will impact that targeted audience?

Read:

[CBS Ousts 4 For Bush Guard Story](#)

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Independence](#)

**Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup>**

Decision Memo Five due: The soldier's dad

**Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>**

Questions:

Audience analytics allows us to know more about what motivates and interests our audience. But will this lead to extremes where we simply give the audience what they want and don't cover the stories that don't bring a lot of traffic to our website? Is this a concern? Do you have more confidence in the audience than for them to only be attracted to entertainment?

Read:

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Fairness](#)

[When is it OK for the media to name rape victims?](#)

**Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>**

Decision Memo Six due: Online arrest mugs

**Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>**

Questions:

News organizations pay freelance journalists for the stories they cover. Should news organizations pay their audience for user-generated content? What is the difference?

Read:

[NPR Ethics Handbook: Accuracy](#)

[Ads masquerading as journalism, the slippery slope of branded content](#)

**Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>**

Decision Memo Seven due: Branded Content

**Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup>**

Work on your group presentations individually

I will be available in my office to answer any questions

**Thursday, November 26<sup>th</sup>**

No class - Thanksgiving

**Tuesday, December 1<sup>st</sup>**

Read:

[Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work](#)

[Fox News site embeds unedited Isis video showing brutal murder of Jordanian pilot](#)

[Dealing with graphic content is a moral minefield for journalists](#)

Class Presentations:

Revisionism

Cultivation and Violence

**Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Watch:

[Time Lapse Video Shows Model's Photoshop Transformation](#)

[Fox News Makeup For Women Anchors: Why So Much?](#)

[Univision host fired for first lady comment says White House complained](#)

[Cleveland news anchor who made racial slur while discussing Lady Gaga makes casual return to the airwaves](#)

Class Presentations

Respect for Culture

**Tuesday, December 8<sup>th</sup>**

Read:

['I'm embarrassed... social media is tricky': Hollywood star James Franco admits 'bad judgment' after trying to seduce Scottish teenager on Instagram](#)

[9 Celebrities Behaving Badly on Social Media](#)

[How Media Censorship Affects the News](#)

Class Presentations  
Censorship  
News or Entertainment  
Celebrity Obsession

**Disclaimer:**

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.