

College of Journalism and Communications, Department of Telecommunication  
Department Chair: Professor David Ostroff, 2088 Weimer Hall, Tel: 392-0463

**RTV4931: SENIOR SEMINAR**

Section 4545

Fall 2014

G30 Weimer Hall

Mondays 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> periods

Professor Michael Leslie, Ph.D.

**Contact Information for Professor Leslie**

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**PURPOSE OF COURSE:**

**RTV 4931** is a senior level course, which encourages you to think critically about media, ethics and society. This is accomplished through reading, writing, lecture, discussion, viewing of video clips, research and presentation on topics of interest.

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

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

You are **required** to have a **Gatorlink** user name, to register yourself in the course on the E-Learning site for this class and to receive mail via the course listserv.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

The core subject matter for the ethics portion of this course is found in the following textbooks: **The Elements of Moral Philosophy**, 5<sup>th</sup> edition by James Rachels; **Race/Gender/Class/Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content, and Producers**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, by Rebecca Ann Lind; and **Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice**, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, by Patrick Lee Plaisance. You can rent the first two books online at [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com).

You can also buy inexpensive used or new copies of these books on Amazon.com or Half.com.

Most of my lectures and online PowerPoints are drawn from **Ethics in Media Communications: Cases and Controversies** by Louis A. Day. While you are not required to purchase this book, you will find it useful to do so.

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.

### **COURSE ACTIVITIES:**

**Lecture and discussion** on the assigned readings/topics is 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.

### **Assessment Tools**

#### **1. Attendance and Online Participation (25%):**

You will have online and classroom group discussion assignments on selected readings, topics, case studies, videos or guest speakers.

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

You will be assigned to a team responsible for discussing, presenting and debating a topic(s). These discussions, debates and presentations will allow you to critically examine controversial topics that arise in my lectures, in assigned readings, from topical videos and in the mass media. You will find it useful to collect or bookmark relevant materials from journals, newspapers, magazines and the Web, and to keep notes on television and radio programs you watch which 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 Test (25%)**

**This may take the form of an essay, short answer, multiple choice, or a combination of all three.**

#### **4. Individual Case Study (25%):**

You will be required to prepare an individual, 3-page ethics case study analysis, following the approved format for this class. Your case study will be evaluated based on both form and content. Form refers to proper appearance and length, in accord with assignment instructions, as well as cogency and organization. Content refers to quality of analysis, correct application of the moral reasoning model and principles, coherence in reasoning, and thoroughness.

## COURSE ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENT SCORING

I employ a base-10 grading scale, as follows:

**10= Above my expectations for top performance in the course**

**9= Very good**

**8= Above average (minor deficiencies)**

**7= Average (mixed performance)**

**6= Below average with major deficiencies**

**5 or less = Unsatisfactory**

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

**Minus and plus grades will be awarded according to current University of Florida grading policies.**

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

**Submissions: Handwritten submissions, except for tests and quizzes, will not be accepted. I suggest you make a copy of any written work before you submit it, just in case an assignment is lost or misplaced. Most of your assignments will be posted in and submitted electronically.** Please *proofread* your assignment before you turn it in and make sure your spelling is accurate and the content is coherent. Submissions that do not meet these standards will incur a grading penalty. Late submissions will also be penalized.

### 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.

### Attendance/Online Participation

You are **expected** to attend all classes, presentations/debates, video showings, discussions, and other class activities. **Your grade for this course will be negatively affected if you do not participate online and/or are frequently absent from class.** Covering news for any of the stations, no matter how significant the story, is not a valid excuse for missing quizzes, assignment due dates, failing to complete assigned reading/viewings, or failing to participate in group projects.

### Classroom Decorum

No reading of newspapers, eating, drinking, loud talking, work on assignments for other classes, web surfing, texting, etc. is permitted during lectures, presentations, group discussions, or other class activities. If you are discovered engaging in these activities, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

**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. In order 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.

**Other matters:**

- I reserve the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system, assignments, schedule, or other matters pertaining to the class.
- I can be reached preferably via e-mail, and the telephone, 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 situation, it is advisable to contact me well in advance of any deadline in order to give me adequate time to respond.
- Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless arrangements have been made with me prior to class.
- 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.
- You are expected to arrive promptly for class, fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings. While I understand the problems created by a large campus, it is your responsibility to arrive in class in a timely manner.
- You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet every class.
- Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in an “E” for 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 adapt 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 take class notes because classroom sessions often reveal information that is not contained in the readings.

**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 will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in doing my assignments."**

For more information about academic honesty, contact, Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261. You can review UF's academic honesty guidelines in detail at:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>

## **RTV4931 Fall 2014 Tentative Schedule**

### **Week One, August 25**

Introduction to the course (teaching approach, materials and expectations)  
What is Morality? Rachels, Chapter 1  
Does Morality Depend on Religion? Rachels, Chapter 4  
**Video: bell hooks on Critical Thinking**

### **Week Two, September 1**

**No Class (Memorial Day)**

### **Week Three, September 8**

Ethics and Moral Development, Ethics in Media Communications, Chapter 1  
Ethics and Society, Ethics in Media Communications, Chapter 2  
**Video or Speaker: TBA**

### **Week Four, September 15**

The Role of the Journalist  
The Challenge of Cultural Relativism, Rachels, Chapter 2  
Subjectivism in Ethics, Rachels, Chapter 3  
**Video or Speaker: TBA**

### **Week Five, September 22**

Media and Society Topic, Group 1  
Making Ethical Decisions  
The Utilitarian Approach, Rachels, Chapter 7  
The Debate Over Utilitarianism, Rachels, Chapter 8  
**Video or Speaker: TBA**

### **Week Six, September 29**

Media and Society Topic, Group 2  
Accuracy and Fairness  
Are There Absolute Moral Rules? Rachels, Chapter 9  
**Video or Speaker: TBA**

### **Week Seven, October 6**

Media and Society Topic, Group 3  
Conflicts of Interest  
**Video or Speaker TBA**

### **Week Eight, October 13**

Media and Society Topic, Group 4  
Deception  
Psychological and Ethical Egoism, Rachels, Chapter 5  
**Video or Speaker TBA**

**Week Nine, October 20**

Diversity

Media and Society Topic, Group 5

**Video or Speaker TBA**

**Week Ten, October 27**

Media and Society Topic, Group 6

Plagiarism

The Idea of the Social Contract, Rachels, Chapter 6

**Video or Guest Speaker: TBA**

**Week Eleven, November 3**

Media and Society Topic, Group 7

Privacy

Kant and Respect for Persons, Rachels, Chapter 10

**Week Twelve, November 10**

Source/Reporter Relationships

Media and Society Topic, Group 8

Confidentiality

Feminism and the Ethics of Care, Rachels, Chapter 11

**Week Thirteen, November 17**

**Video or Guest Speaker: TBA**

**Week Fourteen, November 24**

Media and Society Topic, Group 9

The Ethics of Virtue, Rachels, Chapter 12

*What Would Be a Satisfactory Moral System?* Rachels, Chapter 13

**Video or Guest Speaker: TBA**

**Week Fifteen, December 1**

Individual Case Study Due

Complete Course Evaluations

**Week Sixteen, December 8**

**TBA**

**End of Course**