

University of Florida
College of Journalism and Communications, Department of Telecommunication
RTV4931: Ethics/Problems in Telecommunications
Section 0628

Fall 2013
1070 Weimer Hall
Monday: Periods 9-10
Wednesday: Period 9

Instructor: Summer Best
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352.875.4428
Office: G034 Weimer Hall
Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

RTV 4931 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 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:

TEXTBOOKS

The core subject matter for the ethics portion of this course is found in the following textbooks: **The Elements of Moral Philosophy**, 5th edition by James Rachels; **Race/Gender/Class/Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content, and Producers**, 3rd edition, by Rebecca Ann Lind; and **Doing Ethics in Journalism: A Handbook with Case Studies**, by Jay Black, Bob Steele and Ralph Barney. You may rent the first two books online at www.coursesmart.com. You may also buy inexpensive used or new copies of these books on Amazon.com, Half.com, and various other sites.

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)

COURSE ACTIVITIES:

Lectures and discussions on the 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.

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 topic(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%)

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, five-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

Final Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

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

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)

COURSE POLICIES, INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS AND METHODS OF EVALUATION:

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

Please consider the obvious and *proofread* your assignments. You are professional communicators, and grammar, spelling, style and content are critically important. Sloppy submissions 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.

Classroom Decorum

No reading of newspapers, eating, drinking, loud talking, cell phone use, work on assignments for other classes, web surfing, texting, etc. is permitted during lectures, presentations, group discussions, or other class activities.

Students with Special Challenges

Students requesting classroom accommodation should register with the Dean of Students Office.

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>.

Other Matters:

- Your instructor reserves the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system, assignments, schedule, syllabus, or other matters pertaining to the class.
- I can be reached preferably via e-mail, and the telephone. 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 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.
- Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in an “E” for the course and possible disciplinary action. 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.
- As a reminder – spelling counts. So do grammar, punctuation and professional presentation.
- In addition to the required or recommended readings, you are encouraged 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 the instructor in this class.

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

RTV4931 Fall 2013 Tentative Schedule

Week One – Aug. 21

Introduction to the course (teaching approach, materials and expectations)
Assign readings for Week Two.

Week Two – Aug. 26, 28

Read: Doing Ethics (Introduction and Chapter 1: Beyond Codes of Ethics
What is Morality? Rachels, Chapter 1
Does Morality Depend on Religion? Rachels, Chapter 4

Week Three – Sept. 2, 4

Doing Ethics 1, Beyond Codes of Ethics
What is Morality? Rachels, Chapter 1
Does Morality Depend on Religion? Rachels, Chapter 4
Video or Speaker: TBA

Week Four – Sept. 9, 11

Doing Ethics 2, The Role of the Journalist
Media and Society Topic, Group 1
The Challenge of Cultural Relativism, Rachels, Chapter 2
Subjectivism in Ethics, Rachels, Chapter 3
Video or Speaker: TBA

Week Five -- Sept. 16, 18

Media and Society Topic, Group 2
Doing Ethics 3, Making Ethical Decisions
The Utilitarian Approach, Rachels, Chapter 7
The Debate Over Utilitarianism, Rachels, Chapter 8
Video or Speaker: TBA

Week Six – Sept. 23, 25

Media and Society Topic, Group 3
Doing Ethics 4, Accuracy and Fairness
Are There Absolute Moral Rules? Rachels, Chapter 9
Video or Speaker: TBA

Week Seven – Sept. 30, Oct. 2

Media and Society Topic, Group 4
Doing Ethics 5, Conflicts of Interest
Video or Speaker TBA

Week Eight – Oct. 7,9

Media and Society Topic, Group 5

Doing Ethics 6, Deception

Psychological and Ethical Egoism, Rachels, Chapter 5

Video or Speaker TBA

Week Nine – Oct. 14, 16

Doing Ethics 7, Diversity

Media and Society Topic, Group 6

Video or Speaker TBA

Week Ten – Oct. 21, 23

Media and Society Topic, Group 7

Doing Ethics 9, Plagiarism

The Idea of the Social Contract, Rachels, Chapter 6

Video or Guest Speaker: TBA

Week Eleven – Oct. 28, 30

Media and Society Topic, Group 8

Doing Ethics 10, Privacy

Kant and Respect for Persons, Rachels, Chapter 10

Mid-Term Exam

Week Twelve – Nov. 4,6

TBA

Week Thirteen – Nov. 11, 13

Doing Ethics 11, Source/Reporter Relationships

Media and Society Topic, Group 9

Confidentiality

Feminism and the Ethics of Care, Rachels, Chapter 11

Video or Guest Speaker: TBA

Week Fourteen – Nov. 18, 20

Media and Society Topic, Group 10

The Ethics of Virtue, Rachels, Chapter 12

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

Video or Guest Speaker: TBA

Weeks Fifteen & Sixteen – Nov. 25, 27; Dec. 2, 4

Individual Case Study Due

Complete Course Evaluations

End of Course