

College of Journalism and Communications
Department of Telecommunication
Department Chair: Professor David Ostroff
2088 Weimer Hall
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RTV4931: SENIOR SEMINAR
Section 0987, Summer 2013
Monday, 1st period
Tuesday and Wednesday 1-2
Florida Gym 210

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PURPOSE OF COURSE

RTV 4931 is a senior level seminar, which invites you to think about social problems and ethical issues for professional communicators. This is accomplished through reading, writing, lecture, discussion, viewing of videotapes related to our purpose, and group research presentation and debate on topics of interest. There will be a couple of short quizzes to provide me with feedback on how well you are learning what I am teaching in the course.

In this course, the emphasis is placed on developing your ability to **critically read, write, think, discuss and make decisions**. Your development of these skills is evaluated through, class discussions, writing and research, analysis of case studies, team presentations, and weekly quizzes or response papers.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

The core subject matter for the ethics portion of this course is found in the following textbooks: **Media Ethics: Issues and Cases, 8th edition**, by Phillip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

The Elements of Moral Philosophy, 5th edition or later, by James Rachels and
Race/Gender/Class/Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content, and Producers, 2nd edition or later, by Rebecca Ann Lind.

You can rent these two books online at www.coursesmart.com. You can also buy inexpensive used copies of these books on Amazon.com or Half.com.

Many of my lectures and Sakai 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 may find it useful to secure a copy.

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

Class presentations and discussions are central to this course. You are expected to read assigned materials for the week **before** the first class meeting and to actively participate in class discussions. You are also expected to show courtesy to other students during these discussions, whether or not you agree with their opinion. Part of class participation also involves your bringing to class **relevant articles, videos or other materials** which relate to this course. Time will be allotted, as feasible, for discussion and viewing of these materials.

Class Presentations

Student teams will be responsible for researching and presenting selected topics from the textbooks. These team presentations will be 30 minutes in length, or as assigned by me.

Your team presentations are intended to apply the concepts and examine the ideas introduced in the assigned readings and lectures, **but must include original research**. You will find it useful to collect relevant material from newspapers, magazines and the Web, and to keep notes of television and radio programs you watch, which have content you can use for your presentation, case studies or assigned papers. Your reading and research will allow you to contribute to class discussions in an informed manner and to make original and compelling presentations.

References to books, articles, news reports, interviews, surveys, videos, audio recordings, etc., may be utilized as a part of these presentations. The schedule for team presentations will be posted on the course website.

An appropriate form of audio-visual media should support your presentation. Past presentation teams have found it useful to employ **PowerPoint** software for these presentations. Highest grades will go to presentations which are professional in appearance, well organized, informative, and that demonstrate command of the concepts and ideas presented in the textbooks and in the classroom. Presentations and case studies which are disorganized, superficial, plagiarized, that simply rehash the assigned readings and classroom lectures, are poorly researched or exceed the assigned time limit will earn lower scores.

Procedures for team presentations: Each team should submit a 2-page summary of its **independent** research on its assigned topic, along with an annotated bibliography of at least 10 references/sources, 48-hours **before** its presentation, via Sakai email. **Failure to do so will result in a one letter grade deduction for the debate/presentation.**

If you or your team are absent on the day of your assigned presentation, the class will go ahead with discussion of the assigned topic as planned, and you and your team will be penalized.

Team Composition and Performance Ratings: Each team member will be required to confidentially rate the contributions of his/her fellow team members to the team presentation/research/debate, using a rating form which I will send out via email. This peer evaluation must be sent to me by each member of the team **following the presentation**. The individual grade you receive for your team's presentation will reflect the grade I assign the presentation and the participation score you receive from your team. **You will not receive a score for the team presentation if you do not submit your peer evaluation form.**

Quizzes/Response Papers: I will assign brief weekly quizzes or response papers to readings, videos, guest speakers or to some topic we have discussed in class.

Individual Ethics Case Study: You are required to prepare an individual, 3-page, ethics case study analysis, following the format taught in 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.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes, presentations, video showings, discussions, etc. Your active participation in group discussions, class activities, presentations, research, etc. is expected. Your grade for this course will be negatively affected if you are chronically absent. 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 or failure to participate in group projects.

COURSE POLICIES, INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS AND METHODS OF EVALUATION

Evaluation Criteria

All assignments and presentations will be evaluated based on both form and content. Form refers to professional and timely presentation in accord 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 reflect your success in meeting these standards.

Assignment Weights

Individual Case Study:	25%
Attendance:	25%
Team Presentations:	25%
Quizzes/Response Papers:	25%

Assignment Scoring

I will be using a base-10 grading scale, as follows:

10= Exceeds 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, and will include plus and minus grades according to the University of Florida grading policy in effect. 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

Note: Grades will be posted in WebCT.

Classroom Decorum

Please do not read newspapers, eat, drink, work on assignments for other classes, web surf, text or engage in other activities during class lectures, presentations, and group discussions.

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 for 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 read my lecture. You should also take notes in class because classroom sessions often reveal information that is not contained in the readings or my lecture notes.

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester, and applies to you as a student in this class.

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."

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One, May 13-15

Orientation to the Course
Introduction to Social and Ethical Issues: Baby Theresa
Lecture: Ethics and Society
Distinguishing Ethics from Morality
The Challenge of Cultural Relativism
The Challenge of Subjectivism
Read Patterson 1-2

Week Two, May 20-22

Models of Moral Reasoning
Utilitarianism, Kantian Moral Duty, etc.
Truth
Ethics Video/Discussion
Presentations 1-2
Read Patterson 3-4

Week 3, May 28-29

Ethics Video/Discussion
Why Morality Does Not Depend on Religion
Pitfalls of Ethical Egoism and Psychological Egoism
Privacy
Confidentiality
Presentations 3-4
Read Patterson 5-6

Week 4, June 3-5

Ethics Video/Discussion
Morally Offensive Content: Freedom and Responsibility, EMC, Chapter 10
Media Practitioners and Social Justice, EMC, Chapter 11
Stereotypes in the Media, EMC, Chapter 12
Presentations 5-6
Read Patterson 7-8

Week 5, June 11-12

INDIVIDUAL ETHICS CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Ethics Video/Discussion

Conflicts of Interest

Economic Pressures and Social Responsibility

Media and Antisocial Behavior

Presentations 7-8

Read Patterson 9-10

Week 6, June 17-19

Ethics Video/Discussion

The Idea of the Social Contract

Feminism and the Ethics of Care

What would be the elements of your own ethical decision-making system?

Presentations 9-10

Read Patterson 11

END OF COURSE