



# Ethics & Problems in Telecommunications Australia, Summer 2013

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## **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, or working in the field of production, 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 broadcast 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 is important information you will need to read on Sakai before we leave for Australia, including:

- The Decision Memo guide (which includes three of your assignments)
- Radio Television Digital News Association's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics
- PowerPoints
  - Think of Causes
  - Your Decision Memo
  - Ethical Issues and Social Media

You should already be routinely keeping up with news about the U.S. media and ethical issues in film and entertainment, as well as staying informed about issues going on both here and around the world, especially Australia as part of our trip.

Resources include:

- CNN's *Reliable Sources*, airs at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays
- National Public Radio's *On The Media* website at <http://www.onthemedial.org/>
- The BBC News website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

- *Broadcasting & Cable* at <http://www.broadcastingcable.com/>
- The Radio-Television Digital News Association's website at <http://www.rtnda.org/>
- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation at <http://www.abc.net.au/>

### **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 and attendance is required for every session. We will only meet a limited number of times in Australia. **If you miss class a letter grade will be deducted off your final grade.** No exceptions! If you are late to class, a half a letter grade will be deducted off your final grade. No exceptions!

This is a discussion class, not a take-notes-furiously class. Any PowerPoints will be posted on Sakai so that you can focus on the discussion.

### **Missing Deadlines or Assignments:**

In the communication field, completing assignments while on deadline is vital. The same holds true in this class. A missed deadline will be counted as a missed assignment and therefore a zero for that assignment.

Turn in assignments via email since printing will be limited.

### **University Honor Code**

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, 392-1261.

There are six specific types of violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines: cheating, plagiarism, bribery, misrepresentation, conspiracy and fabrication. Naturally, plagiarism and any form of cheating are unacceptable. If I find you've cheated – on any assignment – you will be dismissed from the course. Take this commitment to academic honesty and integrity seriously.

### **Addendums and Changes**

During this course, I reserve the right to amend and change the syllabus and assignments. If I change a date and you miss the announcement because you were absent you may not make up that assignment.

### **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>

### **Disability Awareness**

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

### **Grading:**

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

Participation	15%
Class Presentation	15%
Decision Memos	45% (3 total with each worth 15%)
Final Paper	25%

**Participation (15%):** You are expected to attend every class. We will hold frequent discussions in class. In groups and individually, you will be expected to discuss case studies on ethical issues presented in class and engage in class discussions about the cases viewed. You will be called on during class to participate in our class discussions. There is no set point deduction for lack of participation, but everyone will be called on to participate in class to ensure group engagement and participation by each member of the class.

**Class Presentation (15%):** In groups of one, two or three, you will be expected to present one side of an ethical issue that involves issues related to entertainment media rather than 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 to present to the class. Another group will present the opposing side to the issue. Your grade on this presentation will be decided by which

group presents the better rationale for their side. In essence, you will be attempting to present the more credible and rationale argument. This is not an opportunity to let emotions dictate your presentation, although some topics may involve emotional issues. The topics will be on Sakai. You will need to select a group, topic, and side. If you do not select a group, topic, or side, one will be selected for you. For the presentation, each side will make a five to seven minute opening statement, and then be allowed to ask the other group ONE question, followed by as many as four questions for either group from the class. Afterward, each group will have three minutes to present their closing arguments before the class votes.

**Decision Memos (45%):** The bulk of your grade will come from decision memos that you do on your own time and that have specific due dates. You are welcome to turn in your decision memo early (even before we leave for Australia), but late assignments will not be accepted and will be counted as a ZERO. For more information on the Decision Memos, a full guide of what is expected as well as the individual assignments is on Sakai. You will be allowed to submit one Decision Memo before we leave for Australia as a “rough draft.” But, completing the Decision Memo may prove difficult without our discussions in Australia.

**Ethical Paper (25%):** You will need to complete a **comparative decision memo paper** which will require you to identify a common ethical issue faced by the U.S. media and communication professionals in Australia. You should: 1) identify how the issue has been addressed by practitioners in each country, 2) state your position on the issue, and 3) outline the arguments for and against this approach. You should include your own research, information you gather while on media visits and from observing the local media, and your own experience. This is an individual assignment and should reflect only your own work. The paper should be approximately 2 - 3 pages, double spaced, and no more than 800 words, not including references. Think of this as a three-page decision memo where you will want to spend at a minimum one page explaining the situation in both the United States and Australia. The other difference is YOU get to pick the dilemma.

### **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)
E	(below 60)

Successful completion of the course requires a C or higher.

**Course Schedule:**

**Friday, May 10, 2013**

- Go over syllabus
- Introduction to Ethics

**Monday, May 13, 2013**

- Ethics and ethical theories

**Wednesday, May 15, 2013**

- Decision Memos

**Thursday, May 16, 2013**

- **DECISION MEMO ONE DUE**
- Fake it till you make it

**Monday, May 20, 2013**

- What is a reporter

**Wednesday, May 22, 2013**

- What is a reporter (cont.)

**Thursday, May 23, 2013**

- **DECISION MEMO TWO DUE**
- Being Independent

**Friday, May 24, 2013**

- Real World Examples

**Wednesday, May 29, 2013**

- **DECISION MEMO THREE DUE**
- Presentations

**Wednesday, June 19, 2013**

- **ETHICAL PAPER DUE**

**Tips for doing well in this class:**

- Come to every class
- Participate
- Engage in discussions with your classmates
- Think critically