

COMM/JOUR303 Communication Law and Ethics

Fall 2011

Mon/Wed 3:50-5:20

Haley 104

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Office Hours: Mon. 2:00-3:00, Tues. 10-11, Wed. 10-11, by appointment Thur., Fri. 10-11

Course description

From the catalog: Explores issues of communication and mass media from legal as well as ethical perspectives. This class will introduce you to the First Amendment and issues concerning the freedom of expression, including libel, privacy, and regulation of broadcasting and advertising. The class will also examine what different philosophical perspectives would say about ethics in communication, and apply them to specific cases.

We will examine what a journalist/professional communicator has a right to do (or not) in communication law. This class will introduce you to the First Amendment and issues concerning the freedom of expression, including libel, privacy, and regulation of broadcasting and advertising. In the communication ethics focus, we'll discuss how we decide what is right for media and communicators to do. We will review what a number of philosophical perspectives would say about ethics in communication, and apply those ideas to specific cases. Students will learn to analyze potential ethical issues and learn processes to make the best decisions possible when considering various stakeholders.

Requirements this course fulfills

This class counts for the Communication Studies Major (in the Mass Comm. area) as well as minors in Communication Studies, Journalism, and Ethics. The class may be cross-listed across two programs (as long as only half of that program counts elsewhere). The class does not fulfill any CARs or AOKs.

Course readings

Required Textbooks:

--Trager, R., Russomanno, J., & Ross, S.D. (2012) *The Law of Journalism and Mass Communication*, 3rd Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (you need to have the 3rd edition of this text)

--Foreman, G. (2010). *The Ethical Journalist*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Additional required readings may be posted on the Moodle site for this course.

You are also expected to keep up on current events, reading a daily newspaper, watching a daily newscast, etc., as we'll discuss many current issues as they relate to communication law and ethics.

Course assignments/projects:

Exams: There will be two exams: a midterm (Oct. 5), and a final (Dec. 12). Please plan your schedule accordingly, as these dates are already set in your syllabus. Exams will be based on lectures, readings, class discussions, and videos.

Quizzes: We will have daily reading quizzes, to make sure you've kept up with the readings and that you are ready to discuss the readings. Quiz questions may include the following: "What's the most important thing you learned from the readings this week?", "What is one question you'd like to discuss based on this week's readings?", "How do you respond to the chapter statement that. . . ?". Quizzes will be given at the start of class—all quiz dates appear in the schedule. Quizzes cannot be taken early or late—if you miss class, you missed the quiz. Quizzes will be given a limited amount of time, and cannot be made up if you are late for class and either miss the quiz or cannot finish the quiz due to your lateness. Your two lowest quiz scores will be dropped.

Projects: (Instructions to be provided later)

- Legal summary/analysis: Each of you will write (and prepare to discuss) a summary of a Supreme Court case, as well as an analysis of the legal issues related to another case we'll be examining as a full class (due dates in schedule)
- Media ethics analyses: Two analysis assignments will deal with specific/real ethical circumstances (due dates in schedule)
- Media Ethics discussions: In addition to participating in class-wide or small group discussions of ethics cases, pairs will lead discussions of media ethics cases from the Foreman textbook during the second half of the semester.

Grade breakdown

Legal case summary	10%
<i>Shattered Glass</i> ethics analysis	10%
<i>Deliberate Intent/Hitman</i> legal analysis	10%
Ethics and privacy analysis	10%
Leading a media ethics discussion (cases in Foreman)	10%
Quizzes	10%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%
Attendance/Participation	10%

Fall 2011 COMM/JOUR 303 Schedule

	Topics	Readings	To Do:
Week 1			
Sept. 5	Course introduction		
Sept. 7	Defining law & ethics	Trager et al, Ch. 1 Foreman, Chs. 1 & 2	<i>Sample quiz</i>
Week 2			
Sept. 12	Introduction to Communication Law	Trager et al, Ch. 2 & Glossary (723-731)	<i>Quiz #1</i>
Sept. 14	Introduction to Communication Ethics	Foreman, Chs. 3, 4, 5 & Glossary (link in Moodle)	<i>Quiz #2</i>
	<i>FYI: Sept. 16: Constitution Day (observed Fri., officially Sat.)</i>		
Week 3			
Sept. 19	Speech Distinctions	Trager et al, Ch. 3	<i>Quiz #3</i> Legal case summary due
Sept. 21	Ethics theories and tools	Foreman, Chs. 6, 7, & 8	<i>Quiz #4</i>
Week 4			
Sept. 26	Fabrication/plagiarism	Foreman, Ch. 9	<i>Quiz #5</i>
Sept. 28	Libel, Part I	Trager et al, Ch. 4	<i>Quiz #6</i> Shattered Glass analysis due 9/30 by 4:00 p.m.
Week 5			
Oct. 3	Libel, Part II	Trager et al, Ch. 5 Foreman, Ch. 12	<i>Quiz #7</i>
Oct. 5	Midterm Exam		Midterm Exam
Week 6			
Oct. 10— no class	No class: Fall Break		
Oct. 12	Privacy Law	Trager et al, Ch. 6	<i>Quiz #8</i>
Week 7	<i>(FYI: Oct. 17-23 Free Speech Week)</i>		
Oct. 17	Ethics of privacy	Foreman, Ch. 14	<i>Quiz #9</i> <i>Ethics case discussions: #14 & 15</i>
Oct. 19	Newsgathering Ethics of deception	Trager et al, Ch. 8 Foreman, Ch. 16	<i>Quiz #10</i> <i>Ethics case discussion: #18</i>
Week 8			
Oct. 24	Reporter's Privilege	Trager et al, Ch. 9	<i>Quiz #11</i>
Oct. 26	Free press/fair trial	Trager et al, Ch. 10	<i>Quiz #12</i> Ethics & privacy analysis due
Week 9			

Oct. 31	News, distress and harm	Trager et al, Ch. 7	<i>Quiz #13</i>
Nov. 2	News, distress and harm, continued	Foreman, Ch. 10	<i>Quiz #14</i> <i>Ethics case discussions: #5-8 (2)</i>
Week 10			
Nov. 7	News, distress and harm, continued	Foreman, Ch. 13 & pp. 373-375	<i>Quiz #15</i> <i>Ethics case discussions: #12,13, & 24</i>
Nov. 9	Photo ethics	Foreman, Ch. 19	<i>Hitman analysis due</i>
Week 11			
Nov. 14	Obscenity	Trager et al, Ch. 12	<i>Quiz #16</i>
Nov. 16	Taste & Indecency	Foreman, Ch. 15	<i>Quiz #17</i> <i>Ethics case discussions: #16 & 17</i>
Week 12			
Nov. 21	Copyright law	Trager et al, Ch. 13	<i>Quiz #18</i>
Nov. 23—no class	No class: Thanksgiving Break		
Week 13			
Nov. 28	Business of media, Diverse coverage	Foreman, Chs . 11 & 17	<i>Quiz #19</i> <i>Ethics case discussions: #9 & 20</i>
Nov. 30	Advertising Law & Ethics	Trager et al, Ch. 14 In Moodle: Patterson & Wilkins, pp. 55-66 ¹	<i>Quiz #20</i>
Week 14			
Dec. 5	New Technology & Ethics	Foreman, Chs. 18 & 20	<i>Quiz #21</i> <i>Ethics case discussion: #21</i>
Dec. 7	Electronic media & law	Trager et al, Ch. 11	<i>Quiz #22</i>
Finals Dec. 12-16	Final Exam: Monday, Dec. 12 9-11 a.m. (2-hour final)		<i>Final Exam</i>

¹ Full citation: Patterson, P., & Wilkins, L. (2011). *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases* (7th Edition). "Ch. 3: Strategic Communication: Does Client Advocate Mean Consumer Adversary?" (pp. 55-66). New York: McGraw-Hill.