

JMA 465/565 Media Ethics Spring 2011

Instructor:

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Office hours:

M: 4-5 p.m.
T-Th: 3-4 p.m.
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Grad assistant: Rebecca Schiffer: Email: Schifferr@duq.edu

Class meeting: 6 p.m. -8:40 p.m. Mondays, 447 College Hall

Instructional aims:

This course examines ethical issues that challenge media professionals and consumers. It is designed to give students tools that can guide their moral decisions about their creation and use of the mass media by interpreting and applying ethical theory—from the classicists to the contemporary. Focus will be on theories of moral maturation, the tension between universal values and cultural specificity, and the contrast between commitment and cynicism.

Texts:

Various readings available on the website for this course: www.blackboard.duq.edu

Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins: *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases*, 7th edition

Grading:

Midterm	20%
Analytical research paper	30% (50% for graduate students)
Journals	15%
Discussion/participation/critiques	15%
Final exam	20% (undergrads only)

A plus and minus grading system will be used.

Attendance will be taken in various ways throughout the term. You are permitted one absence without a verified medical or family emergency—and leaving at the break counts as an absence. After more than one absence, your grade will be lowered one-half letter grade per absence.

See appendix for descriptions of all assignments.

Blackboard:

We will use Blackboard in a number of ways. Login at <http://www.blackboard.duq.edu>. You will need to use your Duquesne email account or have your email forwarded from that account to the address you prefer. On Blackboard, you will find:

- week-by-week readings, journal questions and other assignments
- guidelines for written work under Assignments,
- sources that might be useful in your research under Weblinks

- syllabus, PowerPoint lectures (available after class meeting), and sample Analytical Papers under Course Information, and
- email contacts for all students, grad assistant and instructor under Communication.

If you do not want to check your Duquesne University email, please arrange to have your duq.edu email forwarded to the account that you prefer. Make sure your Duquesne email account is not full. If it is, messages bounce back. Do this immediately.

Other matters:

Getting home safely. When we leave this class, it will be dark. If you do not feel safe getting to your car or bus stop or home, please let me know. I will find someone to accompany you. We need to take care of one another.

Attendance. Students should demonstrate professional behavior by attending class and actively participating in class activities. If you must miss a class, please contact a classmate for notes and handouts.

I-Grade policy. Students must complete 80% of the coursework to warrant a grade of incomplete ("I"). The McNulty College policy states that "I" grades must be removed within one year or else the class must be repeated. For undergraduates, the "I" must be removed according to the schedule in the most recent Schedule of Classes booklet.

Academic integrity. Students are expected to adhere to the University's rules and regulations on academic integrity. Students are responsible for reading the University's academic integrity policy.

See: <http://www.cte.duq.edu/newsletter/writingresources/integrity.html>

E-mail. Students and instructor will often communicate electronically. Some assignment instructions may be given using e-mail. Students should check their Duquesne e-mail regularly.

Students with disabilities. Students with a documented disability may obtain appropriate academic support through the Office of Special Student Services. Please notify the professor and contact the Office of Special Student Services (412) 396-6657 for additional information.

Emergency preparedness plan. Emergency procedures are posted in classrooms. Students and faculty are responsible for acquainting themselves with emergency procedures so that they are prepared if an emergency occurs.

Schedule and assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Assignment
1/ Jan. 10	<i>Introduction to Ethics</i>	Readings: <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 1: Introduction. (You will be reading this after the class meeting, but the chapter is foundational.)
Jan. 17	NO CLASS	MLK DAY
2/ Jan. 24	<i>When is it OK to lie?</i>	Readings: Week 2 folder. Journal of Reflection: Discuss whether <i>The Jungle's</i> use of fact to create fiction can be called deception. Or, do you consider fiction a pathway to a larger truth in this instance? (If you don't know much about this book, follow the link to Wikipedia.) Apply Roy Peter Clark's article and Sissela Bok's chapter to your answer.
3/ Jan. 31	<i>Doing what's best for (almost) everybody</i>	Readings: Week 3 folder <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 2: Information Ethics and case 2-C and 2-E Journal of Reflection: After viewing the Food Lion report in the last class meeting, decide if it constitutes a justified deception. Apply Sissela Bok's chapter (from last week's readings) and the Poynter guidelines on deception and the use of hidden cameras.
4/ Feb. 7	<i>Doing one's duty</i>	Readings: Week 4 folder on Immanuel Kant <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 3: Advertising Ethics and case 3-D. Journal of Reflection: Cite examples in chapter 3 to discuss whether advertising can be accused of "using" people "merely as means" and not as ends in themselves? Do guerilla marketing and cyber marketing cross this moral line that Kant draws? How so? Each group should check out one cyber marketing website as per instructions on Blackboard. Leaders should demonstrate the site for the class. Due: Paper proposal on analytical paper for discussion groups. (See Appendix for instructions.)
5/ Feb. 14 Happy Valentine Day	<i>Growing up and growing wise</i>	Readings: Week 5 folder on Moral Development. Print out a copy of the Stages of Moral Development to bring to class. <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 11: Becoming a Moral Adult

		<p>Journal of Reflection: Think of a moral epiphany in your own development/education when a question or new realization disoriented you and pushed you to a recognition of multiple moral views in the world. How did your thinking change to accommodate this realization? Relate this personal experience to the hierarchies of moral development studied here. How might moral development—as exemplified by leaps in reasoning such as the one you just described—allow an individual to move toward a recognition of the bond of universal values between the Self and Other.</p> <p>Due: Paper proposal to instructor (See Appendix).</p>
6/ Feb. 21	<i>Our obligations to one another</i>	<p>Readings: Week 6 folder on Hobbes and Post-Gazette case <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 5: Privacy and cases 5-C and 6-E (p. 173).</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: Apply Hobbes Rational Egoism and Social Contract Theory ethical theory to privacy issues in cases 5-C and 6-E (p. 173) and to the Post-Gazette photo in the Week 6 folder.</p> <p>Due: Midterm exam (undergrads) or paper (grads).</p>
Feb. 28	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK
7/ March 7	<i>Your Rights, My Rights, and Our Rights</i>	<p>Readings: Week 7 folder on Human Rights <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 8: Picture This and all the cases for this chapter.</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: Read case study about President Charles Dougherty’s order to WDUQ to give back promotional money to Planned Parenthood. Do believe this action was a violation of free speech? Do you believe the action was ethically justified? Why or why not? Examine the case in light of Wasserstrom’s definition of a human right. By this definition, did Planned Parenthood have a right to air its message? Did WDUQ have the right to pull it?</p> <p>Take privacy survey. (Instructions forthcoming.)</p> <p>Due: Bring one printed copy of outline of analytical paper (see instructions in Appendix), with bibliography. Copy your discussion leader. Send one copy to each of your two peer critics. Turn in a printed copy to me with your original proposal with my feedback. Turn in original proposal with the outline.</p>

8/ March 14	Media violence: <i>What bloody difference does it make?</i>	<p>Readings: Week 8 folder: “Harm” and “Morally Offensive Content.” <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 10: The Ethical Dimensions of Art and Entertainment and case 10-E.</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: Discuss how the ideas in the week 8 folder—“Harm” and “Morally Offensive Content”—might apply to the case 10-E.</p> <p>Due: Return outlines to their authors. See Appendix. Evaluate students on each of the four requirements for the outline.</p>
9/ March 21	Watching out for the little guy	<p>Readings: Week 9 folder on John Rawls <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 9: New Media and case 9-F</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: Take case 9-F. Answer at least one question from each of the three categories (micro, middle, and macro) for this case.</p>
10/ March 28	Being a good person	<p>Readings: Week 10 folder: Aristotle, Virtue Ethics, and “Role Virtue,” Alasdair MacIntyre <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 7: Media Economics</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: Part 1: Part of Aristotle’s Golden Mean is a consideration of the <i>entelechy</i>, or inherent end. What do you see as the mission (or <i>entelechy</i>) of journalism in a democratic society? How was it violated in two of the five cases discussed in Chapter 7. Part 2: Describe what you understand that MacIntyre means by ‘the practice’ and how you think about it in terms of your own professional ambitions.</p> <p>DUE: Paper drafts to peer critics</p>
11/ April 4	What do we owe the community?	<p>Readings: Week 11 folder: “Bowling Alone” by Robert Putnam; <i>Grad students:</i> Read paper, “What Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke say about....” Do short report to class.</p> <p>Check out “Are Americans Lonely?” under Weblinks. <i>Media Ethics:</i> Review the explanation of Jayson Blair’s ethical violations on pp. 31-34.</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: Talk about the home you grew up in. Did you grow up in a community with the kind of social capital that Robert Putnam describes? How do you think your grandparents’ and parents’ childhood communities fit Putnam’s description? Are the people who live there</p>

		<p>more or less lonely now?</p> <p>Due: Peer critics return papers to the writers with comments.</p>
12/ April 11	Public Relations: Fooling or helping?	<p>Readings: Week 12 folder: Graduate students only: Chapter on Foucault from <i>Moral Engagement in Public Life</i>. Do short report to class.</p> <p><i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 6: Mass Media in a Democratic Society. Also see online cases from chapter 3 (p. 67) “Exxon’s whipping cream...” and “Public relations role in the Alar scare.”</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: How is public relations’ persuasive power abused in the cases above? What ethical theory do you think would help in the cases?</p> <p>Due: Papers to instructor.</p>
13/ April 18	Who is our “neighbor” in an age of globalization?	<p>Readings: Under Weblinks on Blackboard, open the picture of the Starving child with vulture hovering and James Natchwey’s photographs and the file of Neda materials.</p> <p>Week 13 folder: Grad students only: Chapter on Levinas from <i>Moral Engagement</i>. Do short report to class.</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: Choose a media artifact –e.g. a movie, news story, photograph or other example of mass media (you may use one of the ones under Weblinks assigned for today). Discuss how the media in this case helps you to see “the stranger” who comes from another time or place and come to appreciate that person’s situation.</p>
14/ April 20 WEDNESDAY	The truth: We gotta have it	<p>Readings: Week 14 folder: Sissela Bok, “Lies in for the Public Good” and Lawrence Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe, Settling Accounts with Torturers</i>, an excerpt.</p> <p>Journal of Reflection: The old, biblical expression says: “The Truth shall set thee free.” Why do we, as the public, need the truth about public affairs? Use principles from Sissela Bok and examples from Weschler to explain your points.</p>

Final 6 p.m. Monday, May 2:

- Last date to turn in Analytical Paper rewrite
- Final exam for undergraduates.

APPENDIX

Description of assignments

Journals

Journals of Reflection:

- **Journal entries should demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in the readings. The evaluation of the journals will be weighted to reflect this priority.**

Each week, students will write a journal entry in response to the question posed on the syllabus for that week. Your journal entry is due at the beginning of class on my desk. Entries that arrive after class has begun will be docked. No journal entries will be accepted later than one week after the due date. You may skip one week during the term, but this will include excused absences for illness.

- On Blackboard under Assignments, you will find a guide to writing each journal entry in the document Journal Template. This will tell you about required length, etc. The document Journal Evaluation Guidelines will show you the basis on which the entry will be evaluated.
- Direct all questions and concerns about the journals to Graduate Assistant Rebecca Schiffer.

Participation

Participation/Conduct of the class:

Ethics is something you do, so you are active participants all through this class. Most of the discussion will be based on informed opinion; therefore, students should come prepared by having done the readings. Students should expect to contribute when called upon and to contribute their opinions when moved to do so. To establish the importance and rhythm of this, students will:

- Sit in assigned seats
- Expect to be called upon
- Come prepared for class
- Attendance is expected and recorded twice each class session: At the beginning of class and in the discussion groups.

HOW DISCUSSION IT WORKS:

- Everyone will participate; no back benchers
- Student may chose not to answer when called upon by using a “dodge,” such as “I don’t want to talk just now” and “Will you please call on me later” and “Why are you asking me THAT question?” I will willingly move on and not embarrass you.
- Issues raised in this course are rarely resolved by our arrival at right answers, although we may agree that some resolutions are more appropriate and justifiable than others.
- Discussion group leaders will evaluate you on the quality of participation in discussion, your knowledge of the readings, and the value of your peer critique of outlines and papers.

Exams

Undergraduate Midterm and Final:

The midterm is take-home exams. Essay questions will ask you to apply ethical theory and reasoning to a case study. The final exam is an objective and short answer test that covers lectures and reading materials from the midterm to the end of the term.

Graduate student midterm:

Do a biographical sketch of a major contributor to the field of media ethics – about five pages, double-spaced.

- Explain the subject's major contribution to the field. List any other contributions.
- Describe the relationship of the major contribution to the historical moment in which it is situated.
- Use concepts from lectures and readings.
- Present bibliography of all works by this contributor.
- Include bibliography of books used for research

(Hint: The wise student will choose a figure whose work contributes to her or his analytical paper topic.)

Analytical Papers: Requirements and Deadlines

Choose a media ethics topic that interests you (e.g. violent video games, political advertising; war rhetoric; violence in the entertainment media; privacy rights on the internet or in the news; the news media's framing of crime; video news releases that pre-package public relations video to look like television news; television's use of video news releases). It is important that this topic comes from your interests.

The more difficult demand is in the next step: Turn the topic into a thesis. You may need to do a little research before you can do this. A thesis makes an argument, an assertion. This argument must be about media ethics as it pertains to your topic. (See next page for examples.)

Examples of appropriate theses:

- Negative political advertising causes unnecessary harm to the political process by encouraging cynicism and discouraging citizen participation.
- The press failed in its professional and ethical obligation to look with skepticism at the WMD argument that the Bush administration made to justify the Iraq invasion;
- Public relations cannot use persuasion as an excuse to engage in deception or to cover up wrongdoing.
- As Gandhi and Martin Luther King demonstrate, mass media manipulation can be used honorably in the service of a good cause.
- Parents have the only responsibility for guarding children against inappropriate video games (or television programs).
 - OR: Video game producers have a social responsibility to the welfare of children.
 - OR: Parents, television producers, and the Federal Communication Commission all share a social responsibility to be mindful of children's welfare.)
- In order to be consistently ethical in their practice, public relations professionals must have as much loyalty to the public as to the client.

- Advertising cannot be practiced ethically if *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware) is its only governing principle (especially when advertising dangerous products or targeting vulnerable audiences).
- Wikileaks has (or has not) been ethical in its release of documents.
- The music industry has an ethical obligation to artistic integrity and not merely to commercial gain.

You must:

- Support this thesis with at least three rhetorical proofs or arguments that draw on the literature and on the ethical theory introduced in this class.
- Evaluate the thinking in these arguments or in the behavior of the persons in a case you are examining for their moral maturity, citing Kohlberg or Gilligan.
- Follow APA or MLA style

You should have at least 12 (16 for graduate students) references, the majority of which come from:

- Professional journals (i.e., written work aimed at media professionals: books such as Downie and Kaiser's *The News about News* and journals such as *Quill*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Advertising Age*, etc.) and
- Scholarly books and articles (i.e., the kind that contain footnotes).

I will be happy to work with any of you individually, in person or by email to help you develop the idea for your paper.

NOTE: You can view sample "A" papers from previous terms under Course Information on the Blackboard site. Be aware that the assignment requirements may have changed slightly since these samples were submitted.

Deadlines:

- **Week 4—Feb. 7:** Each student will prepare a proposal, which will be discussed and refined within discussion groups. At this point, you should have a thesis, not merely a topic. If you are drawing a blank, consult with me beforehand. It is not okay to come to this session without an idea.
- **Week 5—Feb. 14:** Each student will hand in a proposal that contains: a central thesis (not merely a topic) and at least five references. The references must be in MLA or APA style and be accompanied by an explanation of what material you will use from this source.
- **Week 7—March 7:** Students will bring one printed copy of an outline to class with a bibliography of at least 10 sources. Groups will assign each student two critics to whom that student will send (or hand) a copy of his/her outline. (So each student should also be a critic to two others.) Group leaders should be copied on all correspondence. The printed copy of the outline will come to me. The outline should contain the following:
 - The thesis statement makes a strong argument about media ethics.
 - The thesis is supported by three arguments or 'proofs' that are clearly spelled out.
 - An application of ethical theory in support of each argument and a use of moral maturity theory to weigh decisions or behavior.
 - An annotated bibliography that contains 10 (or 15 for graduate students) academic or professional books and journal articles on or related to the subject. They must be in MLA or APA style and the annotation will explain how these sources apply to your subject.

- **Week 8—March 14:** Critics will comment on the outlines, sign them, and return them to the student and copy discussion leader. Critics should comment on the viability of the thesis and the quality and quantity of the supporting arguments. Look for the elements listed above
- **Week 10—March 28:** Papers are due to the critics. In addition to what you put in your outline, you should now use an ethical theory to support each of your three arguments.
- **Week 11—April 4:** Critics return papers to the writers with comments. Same criteria as above for week 8, but the paper must now contain 12 sources for undergraduates and 16 for graduate students. Group leaders will verify that the exchange and criticism was completed.
- **Week 12—April 11:** Papers are due to instructor.
- **April 27- final exam period:** Final rewrite of the paper due to the instructor. Please attach the draft version of this paper with my feedback.