

Ethics and Issues in Mass Communication
JMC 40010-001 Honors
and JMC 40010-005
Spring 2011

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Class details: 213 Franklin Hall
9:15-10:30 Tuesday & Thursday
Texts: 1.) *Media Ethics, Issues & Cases*, 7th edition, by Philip Patterson
and Lee Wilkins, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2011
2.) *How Good People Make Tough Choices, Resolving the
Dilemmas of Ethical Living*, by Rushworth M. Kidder, Fireside, 1995
(Both books are available used in paperback.)
Supplies: Folder, binder or file for handouts, etc. Internet access

HERE WE GO: I'm delighted that you've chosen this class and I'm looking forward to this learning adventure. My goal is to introduce you to a complicated subject that requires personal reflection. Please let me know how I can help you be comfortable in our discussions and with sometimes-difficult decision making.

OBJECTIVE: Socrates, one of the earliest philosophers said that morality is about "no small matter, but how we ought to live." And, though he's been dead for centuries, "how we ought to live" defines ethics, which is highly personal. People's ethical decision-making skills evolve over time and many factors influence those skills and decisions. Recognizing that students' ethics are still evolving, we will try to identify and refine your ethical problem-solving skills so that you have a foundation for the ethical dilemmas in your future career and also in life.

Media practitioners should realize the power their decisions have on various audiences. Aspiring journalists must realize that ethics decisions will most likely play out in public and often trigger surprising, sometimes vehement, public reaction. This course is about critical thinking and the underlying values that frame ethical decision-making. We'll cover very basic ethics philosophies and apply them to real situations. We'll use theory and moral reasoning to

examine media decision-making beyond news judgment and common sense. The course does not attempt to give students rules for ethical behavior.

Someone once said: "Ethics is what you do when no one is looking." Let's figure out *why* you do whatever that is whether or not someone is looking.

REASONS NOT TO TAKE THIS COURSE:

You aren't prepared for a writing-intensive course.

You aren't serious about deadlines.

You don't plan to participate. I understand that some people are reluctant to speak up in class, especially when discussing attitudes, values, morals and the like. But discussion in this class is imperative. It should be vigorous, so you must make a commitment to contribute. That does not mean just talking, but adding insight to the discussion. And that means you should show up having read or watched the assigned material so that you can demonstrate your thinking about the concepts we're covering.

You should take this class seriously, but not somberly. However, if you're waiting for me or someone else to give "the right answers," this is not the class for you.

ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION: A colleague told me that the experience in a class is generated through the interaction of everyone present. That experience is just not the same without you. Attendance and participation count for 50 points toward your grade. I'll take attendance each time we meet. You cannot participate if you're not here. Being here, prepared to discuss your thinking, is required. Lively debates are essential.

All absences will result in 0 points for that day. Signed medical excuses and verifiable personal emergencies are the only excused absences. Please notify me by email if you're unable to be in class. Do not ask me to excuse you to complete work in other classes or to conduct interviews for student media, for example. Arrange to do these things at times that do not conflict with this class.

Students who are not officially registered may not attend classes. If you do not register by the deadline for course registration, you will not receive credit for this course. Last day to drop is Jan. 23. Last day to withdraw is March 20. These actions may be accomplished online.

DECORUM: You're expected to arrive on time and stay until class is dismissed. People arriving late and leaving early cause disruption and interrupt discussion, so avoid this unless you have a true emergency such as a car breakdown. Oversleeping is not a true emergency.

Do not leave the room during class without permission.

Please do not tell others they can find you here and that it's acceptable for them to interrupt class to talk to you. Unless I've asked you to engage in discussion, avoid private conversation because it, too, is distracting and disrespectful. If your behavior is disruptive I'll ask you to leave.

Cell phones, pagers, iPods and other devices also are disruptive. Make sure they do not ring, sound or chime in class. Do not text or check texts during class; this is just rude. You may not use a laptop unless it's for a presentation.

As you know, eating and drinking in these new classrooms is strictly forbidden because of the new furnishings and equipment. No eating, including gum chewing, is allowed in class.

GUEST SPEAKERS: Occasionally, we'll have guest speakers or substitute instructors. I expect you to engage them fully so their time is well spent with us. Anything presented by guest speakers can be included on quizzes and can be used in your ethics journal or your final paper.

DEADLINES: Journalism emphasizes strict deadlines in every field. Therefore, deadlines will be *strictly enforced* in this class.

Papers are due at the beginning of class on days indicated unless otherwise noted. Ten points will be deducted from your grade on anything turned in within 24 hours of the deadline. Assignments turned in later will result in 0 points. See me if you have an excused absence and cannot meet a deadline. Deadlines will be changed or extended only for proven, excused absences. Excused absences include medical emergencies, hospitalizations, funerals and significant religious holidays. Leaving early for spring break will not be excused.

It's your responsibility to find out what you missed in any class you do not attend. Collect contact info from your classmates so that you can get notes and assignments.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS/REQUIREMENTS: Your written work is a reflection of your dedication to accuracy and accuracy is the foundation of media credibility. Careless errors will cost you credibility and can cost you time, money, reputation and worse in the real world. In this class, fatal errors (errors of fact), such as name spellings, locations, details, will cost you 10 points per error. Commit yourself to fact checking in this class.

Writing is important in journalism school, of course, but especially in your Writing-Intensive Course. We'll pay close attention to all writing mechanics. Common spelling and usage errors and errors in grammar and punctuation will cost 1 point each. Points also will be deducted for egregious redundancies and other problems with organization, structure, syntax and the like.

Errors to avoid include homonyms such as there/their/they're, it's and its, addition/edition and the like. Problems with usage also show up a lot, such as using "effect" for "affect," "imply" for "infer" and misusing "hopefully." Keep in mind that these are real words; therefore, a computer spell-check program won't help. Work on your grammar and dedicate yourself to good writing. Part of writing is rewriting and editing. Make sure you proofread assignments and follow format instructions. You lose 3 points for each format problem.

These requirements apply to your Ethics Journal and Final Focus paper only. I won't be taking off for writing/technical errors on the shorter assignments; however, I will note writing problems.

Type all assignments in 12-point (readable font) type, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Staple multiple pages together. Put the last four digits of your BANNER ID number only, not your name, on all work. Do not put papers in folders, plastic covers or other binders.

You'll get separate instructions for specific assignments. Keep this information for reference throughout the semester.

VISTA: I may post readings, videos or other material on VISTA for you to study or complete before classes. You will all have access to the same material for this course on VISTA.

QUESTS: We'll have five quiz-tests, quests, covering material from the books including cases. Dates are tentatively noted on the syllabus, and will almost always be on Tuesdays, before we begin a new chapter and topic for discussion. Quizzes are 20 points each for a total of 100 points toward your grade. Once you see your score on each quiz, I'll collect them and keep them in my office where you may view them at any time.

ESSAYS: Three essays will be due during the semester for a total of 100 points toward your grade. These are designed to explore your attitudes toward ethics and real life.

- Essay #1, Personal Ethics Statement: 20 pts.
- Essay #2, Book It – How Good People Make Tough Choices: 40 pts.
- Essay #3, Truth Decay: Media Ethics and Me: 40 pts.

MIDTERM and FINAL EXAMS: There is no midterm exam; your Ethics Journal paper effectively serves as the midterm. It is worth 100 points toward your final grade. Likewise, there is no test during exam week. However, you're required to write a thoughtful mini-research paper called a "Focus Paper," for your final exam. The Focus Paper is worth 150 points toward your final grade.

HONORS REQUIREMENTS: Honors students complete all the requirements for this class plus two additional assignments. A separate sheet outlines the details.

REACHING ME: I'll be available during office hours and at many other times. Unless I'm in a private conversation, my door will be open and you're welcome to stop by and talk. If you can't meet with me during office hours, make an appointment. I'll make myself available to you. Feel free to contact me via phone or email but keep texts to a minimum. Do not use "text talk" in emails or other communication because I won't respond to it. Do not ask questions about class on Facebook or Twitter.

I do much of my work very late so you might get an email response after midnight. My cell phone will likely be off after 9 p.m.

The University sometimes cancels classes because of weather or other emergencies. If the University cancels classes, check Flashline announcements. If I have to cancel class, I'll email the entire group at your [@kent.edu](mailto:yourname@kent.edu) addresses.

If I know in advance that I'll be away from campus, I'll arrange for substitute instructors. When subs cover this class, they will follow our syllabus, take attendance and give quizzes per my instructions.

Note: I'm an Ethics Fellow at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla. As part of my appointment, I sometimes have to go to Florida. If I have a Poynter commitment this semester, I'll let you know asap.

GRADING:

Attendance and participation	50 points
Quizzes (5)	100 points (20 points each)
Essays (3)	100 points (see point totals)
Ethics journals (1 at midterm)	100 points (rewrite permitted)
Focus paper final exam	150 points
TOTAL	500 points

HONORS ASSIGNMENTS:

Viewpoint Report	50 points
What Would <i>Who</i> Do? Project/Presentation	100 points
TOTAL	650 points

I reserve the right to award extra points to students who demonstrate unusual mastery of the subject, dedication to the work or other extraordinary effort. However, grades are unlikely to be curved. There may be limited opportunities for extra credit, but don't count on this. Extra credit will be offered to the entire class. No occasions for individual extra credit will be extended.

GRADE	EARNED	HONORS
A = 93% to 100%	466 - 500	604-650
A- = 90% to 92.99%	450 - 465	585-603
B+ = 87% to 89.99%	435 - 449	565-584
B = 83% to 86.99%	415 - 434	539-564
B- = 80% to 82.99%	400 - 414	520-538
C+ = 77% to 79.99%	385 - 399	500-519
C = 73% to 76.99%	365 - 384	474-499
C- = 70% to 72.99%	350 - 364	455-473
D+ = 67% to 69.99%	335 - 349	435-454
D = 63% to 66.99%	315 - 334	409-434
F = 0 to 62.99%	0 - 314	0 -408

WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE (official University policy): *This course is designated as “writing-intensive.” The purpose of a writing-intensive course (WIC) is to assist students in becoming effective writers within their major discipline. A WIC requires a substantial amount of writing, provides opportunities for guided revision, and focuses on writing forms and standards used in the professional life of the discipline.*

Journalism majors and minors must complete an approved WIC with a minimum C (2.0) grade in order to fulfill the Writing-Intensive Course requirement.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (official University policy): *University policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sas for more information on registration procedures).*

SAS is located on the ground floor of the DeWeese Health Center.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: This is an ethics course, so I shouldn't even have to remind you about academic honesty, plagiarism, cheating and the like. However, check the Kent State University student handbook for the University Conduct Code. It will be strictly enforced.

<http://dept.kent.edu/policyregister/register/Chapter%203/Chapter%203%20Section%203342-3-07.htm>

Plagiarism, cheating and other ways to fabricate or cut corners cannot be tolerated in this profession and will not be accepted in this class. Aside from University and possible legal sanctions, the ramifications of plagiarism or cheating are disastrous for those in media. A journalist found to have plagiarized work, invented sources or made up facts usually is fired, loses the respect of his or her peers and forfeits any chance of a media career. It's not worth it.

Except in cases where you are specifically instructed to collaborate, it is expected that all assignments will be entirely your own work. You are not permitted to use a paper in this class that you've used in another class. That includes interviews you may have done for other classes or student media. If you have an idea you've explored in a previous class and you'd like to pursue it further here, let's talk about it.

And, if you can find a paper on the Web, so can I. Do not use unattributed material from the Internet. In this class, if plagiarism or fabrication is suspected you will be referred to the director of JMC. If plagiarism or fabrication is verified you will receive an F (0 points) for the assignment and likely for the entire course. Please take this seriously.

Official statement from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication regarding cheating and plagiarism:

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication deals in publishable works and educates its students for various aspects of publishing and other communications professions. Within this framework, every student must be aware of the following rules and definitions while in school or on the job:

Fabrication is, in phrasing first used by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, the cardinal sin. Faking quotations, faking “facts”, reporting things that did not happen are not only reprehensible; they could be actionable in court.

Plagiarizing, as defined by Webster, is “to steal and pass off as one’s own the ideas or words of another.” It is unethical and, in cases involving creative work, usually illegal. One of the worst sins a communications practitioner may commit is to plagiarize the work of another – to steal his/her words, thought, or outline and pass them off as his/her own.

Duplicating work is defined as submitting the same work to more than one instructor (or publication) without the prior knowledge and agreement of both.

Commission of any of these offenses while in school is grounds for disciplinary action. If the complaint is upheld, a variety of punishments may be imposed, from a reprimand to a lowered or failing grade in the course to dismissal from the university.

Sources: G. Feighery, D. Gump, J. Harper, J. Marino, P. Plaisance, K. Walsh-Childers, University Policy Register.

CALENDAR

(Jan. 1, 2011)

All assignments are due on or before the date they are listed at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted. Except for Week #1, assigned readings and online viewing must be done before the class meeting. Course plans change frequently because of the pace of the class, the ability of students and current events. I reserve the right to change or alter this calendar at any time, and students will be notified accordingly with updates and revisions.

Jan. 11 (Tue.)	--	Introduction, syllabus What is ethics? Who influences you?
Jan.11 (Thu.)	--	Writing assignments, grading rubric Cases: Umpire and jumper, Obama “sells” jackets
Jan. 18 (Tue.)	--	Essay #1 due: PES <u>Read Forward, Ch.1 & Cases</u> – Philosophical foundations Car in canal and 9-1-1 tapes
Jan. 20 (Thu.)	--	Ch.1, continued Ethical decision-making models: Bok, S.A.D. Industry Codes of Ethics, Poynter “Ethics on Deadline” “Guiding Principles for the Journalist” (handout)
Jan. 25 (Tue.)	--	<u>Read Ch. 2</u> – News Truth, credibility Mirage bar, Cincinnati fire, PETA ads

Jan. 27 (Thu.)	--	Ch.2, continued – Ethical News Values Case: Falling Man Read: http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0903-SEP_FALLINGMAN?click=main_sr
Feb. 1 (Tue.)	--	Quest #1 Read Ch. 8 – Photo Ethics Sensationalism, context, privacy Case: Wounded Marine Read: http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/04/behind-13/
Feb. 3 (Thu.)	--	Ch.8, continued POSSIBLE GUEST: Susan Kirkman Zake
Feb. 8 (Tue.)	--	Read Ch. 9 – New Media Ethics Ethics, technology and social media Ethics for bloggers & commenters, Fourth Estate vs. Fifth Estate Read: http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=101&aid=171527 & http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=171530
Feb. 10 (Thu.)	--	Ch. 9, continued April Branum, Yolanda’s Story, Bambi Francisco, Reverb Read: http://www.mobilecrunch.com/2009/08/22/cheating-the-app-store-pr-firm-has-interns-post-positive-reviews-for-clients/
Feb. 15 (Tue.)	--	Quest #2 Read Ch. 3 – Strategic Communication (Advertising) Advertorials, vulnerable audiences, controversial products Product placement, celebrity “endorsements” Cases: McCafe, Morning Joe and CCN debt ads Read: http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/277914-Morning_Joe_Starbucks_Sponsorship_Gets_Mixed_Reactions.php
Feb. 17 (Thu.)	--	Ch. 3, continued Controversial ads (video and online)
Feb. 22 (Tue.)	--	Honors Viewpoint Reports due Ch. 3, continued (PR) including VNRs Possible “Toxic Sludge Is Good For You” video
Feb. 24 (Thu.)	--	Ch. 3, continued Read: http://toughsledding.wordpress.com/2008/05/27/bringing-the-real-world-to-the-classroom-a-last-look-at-the-hunter-college-fiasco/ GUEST: Prof. Bill Sledzik
March 1 (Tue.)	--	Quest #3 Essay #2 due: “How Good People Make Tough Choices” Discussion of Rushworth Kidder “Choices” book
March 3 (Thu.)	--	NO CLASS – Jan at APPE

March 8 (Tue.)	--	ETHICS JOURNALS DUE Ch. 4, Loyalty Conflicting loyalties
March 10 (Thu.)	--	Ch. 4, continued The Potter Box RTDNA "Recess" and NYT's David Rohde <u>Read:</u> http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/21/world/asia/21taliban.html And: http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=45&aid=165518
March 15 (Tue.)	--	Quest #4 Ch. 5 – Privacy Legal definitions, Circles of Intimacy
March 17 (Thu.)	--	Ethics Journal revisions due Ch. 5, continued Possible discussions: J. Rose, Jennifer Hudson, Kanye West, Tiger Woods, political ads, Olympic luger and more
March 22 & 24	--	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
March 29 (Tue.)	--	Ch. 6 – Media in Democracy <u>Watch:</u> assigned videos GUEST: Eric Mansfield
March 31 (Thu.)	--	Focus paper topics due Ch. 6, continued
April 5 (Tue.)	--	Quest #5 Ch. 7 -- Economics
April 7 (Thu.)	--	Ch. 7, continued <u>Read:</u> http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100118/ap_on_bi_ge/us_nonprofit_muckraking <u>Watch:</u> http://video.pbs.org/video/1386970200 WP "Salons"
April 12 (Tue.)	--	Ch. 10, Ethics in Art and Entertainment
April 14 (Thu.)	--	Truth Decay essay due Ch. 10, continued
April 19 (Tue.)	--	IN-CLASS HONORS PROJECTS #1, 2
April 21 (Thu.)	--	IN-CLASS HONORS PROJECTS #3,4
April 26 (Tue.)	--	IN-CLASS HONORS PROJECTS continue, if needed "Lying" by Sissela Bok
April 28 (Thu.)	--	FOCUS PAPERS DUE – NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED Ch. 11 – Becoming a Moral Adult Class Code of Ethics
Week of May 2	--	NO EXAM DURING FINALS WEEK