

When I was Director of Graduate Programs, School of Communication, Point Park University, for 9 years, I designed a required/core M.A. course called JOUR 519 Sociology of Journalism & Media Ethics. The first full half of the semester was devoted to media sociology, and the second half to media ethics (including print journalism, broadcast journalism, photojournalism, public relations, and advertising). I believe that this is the only course in the country like this.

Why did I do it? That's simple, even obvious (at least to me). Because media ethics on the ground do not exist in a vacuum. If they did, all media professionals would always be ethical. But they're not. Media sociology goes a long way to explain WHY media practitioners sometimes make ethics mistakes (both intentionally and not), while not in any way excusing them. (The core/required course in media law is an entire semester of its own, because media law requires an entire semester and then some.)