

MEJO 141 Media Ethics

Ethics in the News Assignment

Due dates identified via sign-up sheet in class | 15% of course grade

Each student will sign up for a class day (using the sign-up tab on Sakai) during which he/she is responsible for presenting to the class a mass media ethics-related event that has been in the news sometime during the previous seven days. (If it's more than a week old, please pick another topic.) This is a good way to begin "flexing" your critical thinking and applied reasoning skills in response to real-world challenges faced by mass media professionals.

The assignment consists of three components: the information you present to educate your fellow students on your topic and to identify appropriate ethics codes to consider; your in-class presentation (using effective visuals such as a few PowerPoint slides); and your assistance guiding the discussion in class.

For your project, you will create a discussion thread in the Ethics in the News forum on Sakai. In your comments, clearly explain the media-related ethical issues involved in your topic and which professional ethics codes apply, and post one or two questions to start class discussion. Provide a link/attachment or two on Sakai for class members to familiarize themselves with the issue (news items, videos, etc.). Don't go overboard; this is just one reading component of that day's class. You will be responsible for leading/managing discussion of the topic on the discussion board throughout your assigned class period.

Remember, YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PROVIDE AN "ANSWER" TO THE DILEMMA. This exercise is to clearly articulate the issue(s) at hand and the tools we might use to inform a proposed plan of action. You will be responsible for helping lead/manage the discussion in class, which is where we'll discuss the ways (and there will be multiple; remember, these decisions aren't black and white!) we might address the issues.

Please have your information posted to the discussion board by no later than noon TWO DAYS before your assigned presentation day. This gives your fellow students time to review the information you provide and consider your discussion questions.

This assignment counts for 15 percent of your grade. You will automatically lose one letter grade if your pre-presentation materials are not posted on time (because you aren't allowing your classmates time to read about your

topic!). You should submit your in-class presentation (PowerPoint, handouts, etc.) to me through the Assignment on Sakai NO LATER than before class on the day of your presentation.

Criteria used to evaluate your Ethics in the News presentations:

1. Is the topic timely (within the one-week time frame), and does it involve an issue of ethical concern to mass media professionals?
2. Do you clearly explain the situation? Do you clearly outline the ethical issue(s) the situation presents? Do you apply the appropriate ethics codes to analyze the situation and help inform your proposed response?
3. Do you effectively present your topic in class, using appropriate and effective visual aids (presentation slides, etc.)?
4. Do you effectively help guide class discussion, responding as appropriate to classmates' comments and questions?

Some good places to find Ethics in the News topics are Poynter's Everyday Ethics Column at <http://www.poynter.org/tag/everyday-ethics/> and the iMedia Ethics website at <http://www.imediaethics.org/>.

See the document containing a sample Ethics in the News student post and potential topics for inspiration under the Resources section on Sakai.

As always, connect with me if you have questions (well in advance of your scheduled presentation day!).

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Ethics in the News Topic Examples

- Wall Street Journal fires Jay Solomon over involvement with arms dealer
<http://www.politico.com/blogs/on-media/2017/06/21/jay-solomon-wall-street-journal-fired-239819>
- Trump, Clinton Supporters Differ on How Media Should Cover Controversial Statements
<http://www.journalism.org/2016/10/17/trump-clinton-supporters-differ-on-how-media-should-cover-controversial-statements/>
- ‘We Are Deeply Apologizing to Our Guests’: Sonic Drive-In Pulls ‘Extremely Insensitive’ Commercial
<https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/culture/social-issues/deeply-apologizing-guests-sonic-drive-pulls-extremely-insensitive-commercial/>
- Exit By First Black Female ‘Today’ Show Co-Host Called ‘Whitewashing’ By Journalists’ Group
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/today-show-hosts-departure-called-whitewashing-by-journalists-group_us_58945f1be4b0c1284f2551d1

Ethics in the News Assignment Example

My Ethics in the News Presentation today surrounds the ethics of direct to consumer advertising of prescription medication. Last Thursday, [the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists \(ASHP\), one of the preeminent groups of board certified pharmacists in the nation, called for Congress to ban all direct to consumer advertising for prescription medication and medication-containing devices](#). While the article linked points out that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce is currently reviewing an act that would restrict rather than ban direct to consumer marketing of prescription medication, the ASHP makes the case that this is not enough and that these types of advertisements should be banned entirely. I would like to use this as a starting point to discuss the ethical implications of advertising prescription medication directly to consumers and whether or not it should be allowed.

Examples of direct to consumer prescription medication advertisements:

- [A commercial for a prescription insomnia medication](#)
- [A print advertisement for antidepressant aid, Abilify:](#)

I have a few questions that I would like everyone to consider in regards to this type of advertising:

1. Prescription medications are different than typical products being advertised directly to the consumer because they present a greater opportunity to impact a person’s life and health, whether that impact is positive or negative. Because of this difference, do you think that the same [ethical principles outlined by the American Advertising Federation \(AAF\)](#) should apply to the advertisement of medication? Should there be stricter or more specific ethical standards in place for advertisers in the pharmaceutical industry?
2. [The FDA website has a list of things that advertisements for prescription medication are and are not required to tell you](#). Do you think that what the advertisements are required to tell you is sufficient? Should some of the things on the “not required” list be required in order to make this type of advertising

more ethically sound?

3. Lastly, how do you feel in regards to the future of this type of advertising? Do you agree with the ASHP that it should be banned, do you think that it is fine how it is, or do you think it should be allowed with some alterations to make it more ethical?

LINKS

- News article
<http://www.pharmacytimes.com/news/health-system-pharmacy-association-stands-against-dtc-advertising>
- Commercial for a prescription insomnia medication
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMzVNnv78w>
- Print advertisement for antidepressant Abilify
<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/51/1f/b0/511fb06704879f5337e1275b58bcb675.jpg>
- American Advertising Federation Principles & Practices for Advertising Ethics
https://www.aaf.org/PDF/AAF%20Website%20Content/513_Ethics/IAE_Principles_Practices.pdf
- FDA drug advertisement requirements
<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/PrescriptionDrugAdvertising/ucm076768.htm#requirements>