

JOUR 575 – MASS MEDIA ETHICS AND SOCIAL ISSUES

MAY INTERSESSION 2010

GENERAL INFORMATION

Class Time: 1:00 – 4:10 pm Monday-Friday (section 1)
Classroom: Farley Hall, room 125
Instructor of record: Dr. Kristen Alley Swain, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism & New Media
Office: Farley 135
Office hours: 12:15-12:45 pm Mon-Fri; 4:10-4:30 pm Mon-Thurs; and by appointment
Telephone: 662-915-7637
Mailbox: Farley 104 (main journalism office)
E-mail: kaswain@olemiss.edu
Blackboard: <http://blackboard.olemiss.edu>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Polls consistently show that most Americans believe media practitioners are near the bottom of the pile in ethical behavior. The question of ethics is central to the credibility of media. On what basis does a media professional decide the right thing to do? With pressing deadlines, confounding technology, and intense competition, how can we balance ethical concerns against making money? Many dilemmas present conflicting rights and unavoidable wrongs. This course surveys techniques of moral analysis, argument, and decision making that media professionals use in news and persuasive communications.

We will use classical ethical theory, moral reasoning models, and critical-thinking skills to resolve ethical choices through case studies involving reporters, editors, broadcasters, and practitioners in advertising, marketing, and public relations. We will study actual cases of people faced with serious ethical problems and learn how other thinkers have grappled with these issues. This course is designed to help you develop decision-making strategies based on ethical principles.

We will formulate and discuss professional ethics for media professionals, and analyze the social forces affecting media performance. We will use tools that help you weigh the benefits and harm brought about by various actions, recognize an ethical problem as different from a clear case of wrongdoing, and gather relevant facts and consciously consider the loyalties and responsibilities involved. Ultimately, you will learn to develop a rational, systematic way of analyzing ethical problems and move beyond gut reaction / conscience to reason your way to a defensible course of action.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications

READINGS AND MATERIALS

Optional textbook: *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases* (2008). Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins, 6th edition. McGraw-Hill. Lectures and case studies will be pulled from this text.

Bring to every class:

- A notebook and pen
- Questions and comments about the lectures and assignments
- A memory stick/thumb drive to save files
- Optional: laptop computer, if you have one, for team activities

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on scores you receive on the following assignments.

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
<u>Team-based grades</u>	300 points (44 percent)
2 team case study projects	200 (100 points each)
2 team presentations	100 (50 points each)
 <u>Individual grades</u>	 385 (56 percent)
Final exam	100 points
Film analysis essay	50 points
Film analysis presentation	10 points
Reflection essay	25 points
Peer evaluations for teamwork	50 (25 points each)
In-class exercises	5-10 points each
Class participation / attendance	50 points

Check your grades throughout the semester on Blackboard. Semester grades will be assigned using the following numerical scale:

<u>GRADE</u>	<u>RANGE</u>	<u>PERFORMANCE REFLECTED BY THIS GRADE</u>
A	89.50-100.0	Superior work exceeds expectations and shows initiative/enterprise
B	79.50-89.49	Good/above average work exceeds most expectations; well written
C	69.50-79.49	Average work meets expectations; work is often vague, confusing, or wordy.
D	59.50-69.49	Often fails to meet expectations/deadlines; missed classes
F	0.00-59.49	Fails to meet basic expectations; work missing or poor in content/structure

Incompletes: A grade of “I” (incomplete) cannot be issued, except in extenuating circumstances in which the student makes arrangements with the instructor before the last day of class and provides official documentation of circumstances beyond the student’s control that prevented the student from completing specific course requirements.

ASSIGNMENTS

TEAM CASE STUDIES

Each student will be assigned to a team of 3-5 members, and some class sessions will include time periods in which teams can collaboratively analyze case studies with instructor assistance. Each team will analyze two media ethics cases, one about a news/information case, and the other about a strategic communications case. For each case study, each team will receive a handout that provides guidelines, including a specific ethical decision-making model and other questions to guide the analysis.

TEAM PRESENTATIONS

Each team will do a 15-20 minute interactive class presentation after completing each team case study. Each presentation should include a PowerPoint and/or class handout. The best presentations encourage class participation, through open discussions during the presentation, a questionnaire/survey beforehand, a role-play or skit, interactive game, etc. Be creative!

FINAL EXAM

The closed book, closed-notes final exam will test knowledge of discussions, exercises, and lectures. The exam will mainly consist of multiple-choice, short answer, true-false, and matching questions. Lecture notes and other relevant materials will be posted on Blackboard.

FILM ANALYSIS ESSAY AND PRESENTATION

Each student will write an essay analyzing a chosen feature movie, to examine social stereotypes as shown in the character portrayals in the film. The essay will address specific analysis questions and cite quotes and situations/scenes as examples to support the stated views. Students each will do a 5-10 minute presentation in class, by showing a scene from his/her movie and discussing the stereotypes in it.

REFLECTION ESSAY

Each student will write a reflection essay at the end of the semester that will answer a set of questions that explore learning outcomes and lessons learned during the semester. It will be evaluated on thoroughness, insights, writing quality, use of supporting examples/evidence, and critical thinking.

PEER EVALUATIONS

You will have opportunities to provide confidential feedback on each of your team members for each team case study. This feedback will be used to calculate a confidential, weighted peer evaluation grade for every student in the class. Students who take the greatest initiative and leadership receive higher peer grades than those who do participate passively or less frequently. The instructor will monitor team participation but will not change peer evaluation scores or mediate conflict among team members. Stay in touch with your team members every day, especially if you cannot attend a class. Provide fair and candid feedback on the performance of every team member, and never discuss peer grades with anyone.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

The class participation grade will be based on attendance and completion of in-class exercises. Only students who turn in this work by the end of the class period when it is given will receive this class participation credit. These brief assignments cannot be made up for a grade, but students who present documentation of an excused absence within one week of a missed in-class assignment will not lose points for missing it. In addition to the in-class activities, you are encouraged to offer your opinions and questions in class. Here are a few tips for good participation:

- *Do your share* – Don't sit silently. Be prepared to share relevant examples, experiences, or anecdotes. You'll learn more from active engagement than from passive listening to lectures.
- *Summarize* – Be prepared to provide an overview of the important points in a reading or discussion. Identify and explain concepts or theories, important points or arguments, models or frameworks, definitions of any unfamiliar terms, and any other relevant issues.
- *Analyze* – Critically evaluate each reading. How could we apply this knowledge in a professional setting? How do the ideas square with your own experience or knowledge?
- *Synthesize* – Carefully listen to others' comments and remember what has already been said. Try to bring together what's been written or said to form new insights, questions, or conclusions. It's OK to disagree, but be patient and constructive.
- *Ask questions* – Is anything unclear or unfamiliar? Is there something that might help us explore an issue more thoroughly? When you run across something you don't understand while reading an article, write down the questions and offer them during class discussions.
- *Be a good colleague* – Offer input and ideas about others' readings and assignments. Engage your fellow students and the instructor both in and out of class. *All viewpoints are welcome.*

<h2>OTHER COURSE POLICIES</h2>

Blackboard – Check Blackboard frequently for announcements and other postings. You can use Blackboard to e-mail the instructor or classmates. Also, be sure to save everything you produce for this class. Print a hard copy of all work for your own files and keep digital copies on your computer, in case something disappears. Keep all work until you have received the final grade.

Deadlines – No late assignment will be accepted. Students not presenting a legitimate medical or other emergency excuse will receive a zero. Even one zero or unexcused absence could seriously affect your grade. Don't ask for an extension unless your circumstances are truly extenuating; your ability to meet deadlines is critical to your future professional success.

Attendance – You are expected to attend every class, arrive on time, bring your assigned work to class, and offer ideas and insights during discussions. Be on time for all class sessions. Tardiness, leaving early, or talking out of turn can count against your grade. If you must arrive late, do not disrupt the class. Please keep your cell phone turned off or set to vibrate during class, and do not talk with classmates except during times set aside for team work.

A zero will be recorded for any missed or late assignment not excused in advance. Excused absences must be arranged with the instructor *before* the absence and must be documented. If you have an excused absence, your assignments will be due by the end of the next class. Since the class meets every day, you are responsible for arranging to meet with the instructor to make up all missed work by the next class session, plus any other work due in that class. Each unexcused absence will result in a 2 percent reduction in your final grade.

An in-class exercise or exam can only be made up if a student notifies the instructor of extenuating circumstances *before* the class in which it will be completed. If the student is physically unable to notify the instructor prior to the exam, he/she must notify the instructor as soon as possible and no later than the beginning of the following class session. In order to make up an in-class exercise or exam, the student also must provide documentation, such as an emergency room receipt.

The instructor may drop students from a course, based on attendance, without the student's consent. UM students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid. Inform the instructor of extenuating issues. If you have a physical, emotional or personal problem that may interfere with your performance, discuss it with the instructor as soon as the problem arises. Every effort will be made to accommodate legitimate problems if they are discussed in a timely fashion.

Academic Dishonesty – Cheating will be dealt with harshly. You are expected to demonstrate the highest level of personal, academic and professional conduct. Plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, or assisting in academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the semester. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, inventing sources, making up quotes, doctoring quotes, failing to properly acknowledge the source of information or opinion, or inventing information. Specific penalties for academic dishonesty will be determined by the university administration and individual faculty member, according to university policies outlined in the student handbook.

Student Disability Services – It is the responsibility of any student with a disability who requests a reasonable accommodation to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (915-7128). Contact will be made by that office, through the student, to the instructor. The instructor will work with the student so that a reasonable accommodation of any disability can be made. Appropriate documentation is required from the Office of Student Disability Services before arrangements can be made.

Diversity – The School of Journalism and New Media is committed to diversity in the classroom, in its publications and in its various organizations and components. Faculty and staff recognize that the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of their colleagues and students are best served through respect toward gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture and other personal characteristics. In addition, the school is committed to taking a leadership position that calls for promoting a commitment to diversity in and out of the classroom and in the practice of journalism.

Inclement weather – If the university is operating, we will hold class and attendance will be taken. Please contact Dr. Swain if driving conditions make it dangerous for you to get to class.

JOUR 575 SCHEDULE: MAY INTERSESSION 2010

Classes will involve discussions about media ethics, based on lectures, exercises, videos, student presentations, and case studies. You will receive a detailed instruction handout for each assignment. The schedule below shows the order of topics and assignments.

DATE	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENTS
Mon, May 10	Intro to ethical decision making; video case discussion	Personal info questionnaire
Tue, May 11	News and information ethics	Work on first team case study
Wed, May 12	Privacy	
Thu, May 13	Photo and video journalism	Team case study 1 due
Fri, May 14	News/info cases	Team presentations; peer evals
Mon, May 17	Mass media and democracy; media economics	Work on second team case study
Tue, May 18	Advertising ethics	Individual film analysis essay due
Wed, May 19	Loyalty and public relations ethics	Film essay presentations
Thu, May 20	New media ethics	Film essay presentations
Fri, May 21	Entertainment ethics; moral development theory	Team case study 2 due
Mon, May 24	Strategic communication cases	Team case study 2 presentations; peer evals for 2 nd case study; individual reflection essay due
Tue, May 25	Final exam, 1:00 pm	Final exam