

Welcome to Media Ethics!

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Course objective

Through this course, we will learn how to:

- critically analyze current professional practices in mass communication through reading and discussing communication topics found in trade journals and other media;
- compare ethical standards of mass communication professions and examine how similarities and differences help or hinder their professional relationships;
- develop and apply a set of guidelines to tackle ethical situations;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

Course overview

The University catalog describes this course as “intensive study of professional and ethical issues and problems facing the mass media and their employees in relation to modern society.” During this course, we’ll explore the historical roots of ethics along with ethical principles and practices and their application in your work as a media professional. We’ll use historical and current events as well as our personal experiences to explore the ethical challenges in 21st-century media.

Required texts, materials and assigned readings

Text: *Media Ethics and Cases: 8th Edition*, by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

Materials:

Each student is **REQUIRED** to obtain a Twitter account by Tuesday, Sept. 4. This is essential for online communication with this course. If you need help setting up one of these accounts, please see me.

Other assigned texts (both print and multimedia) may be assigned and posted to the course Sakai site. Assigned readings are to be completed *prior* to their corresponding class meeting date. Your preparation is essential to lively discussion.

Also: Please continue to consume media from a diverse array of sources. I'll be drawing on stories from international, national, state, local and campus news media for examples in the course (e.g., the BBC, CNN, MSNBC.com, FOX News, NPR, *The New York Times*, *The Raleigh News & Observer*, The Daily Tar Heel, reesenews.org, HuffPo, etc.). If you find an interesting story, post, blog, meme, etc., feel free to share it with members of the class by posting it to our Sakai site or tweeting it with the hashtag #J141.

Course structure and standards

This course uses hybrid (online and face-to-face) instruction and peer-to-peer learning. We'll meet online at least once during each unit, when you'll be required to participate in the discussion via a Twitter chat or by posting questions/responses to the course Sakai site.

Attendance: I take attendance in the online portion of the class via timely participation in the assigned exercises; I take attendance via sign-in sheet during F2F sessions. Per University guidelines, each student is permitted three absences. Use them wisely. If you know in advance that you will miss a class session, please contact me so that arrangements may be made for turning in work.

Honor and Campus Code: It is the responsibility of each student to abide by the UNC Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University, student, or academic personnel acting in an official capacity; and the Campus Code, which prohibits students from significantly impairing the welfare or educational opportunities of others in the University community. (<http://honor.unc.edu/>)

Diversity: The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression or disabilities.

Grade structure

- 40% Exams (4 exams - 10 percent each)
- 20% Homework, quizzes and individual topic blog (600 words)
- 20% Group presentation
- 10% Active online and in-class participation
- 5% Attendance
- 5% Research participant component

*Students who have a 90 or above as of Tuesday, Dec. 3, will be given the opportunity to opt out of the final and take their grade as it stands.

Final grades are calculated on the 10-point scale.

Students in JOMC 141 are required to complete 2 hours of research participation over the course of the semester. There are two ways you can fulfill this requirement. The first way is to participate in 2 hours of academic research studies in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive first-hand experience with mass communication research. You will be able to sign up online to participate in these studies. The second way to fulfill your research participation requirement is to write 2 two-page summaries and critiques of academic research articles. Each review counts for one hour of research participation, so you can combine participation in the studies with article reviews to fulfill the research requirement. You may summarize any article published in the past two years in the following journals: Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Journal of Advertising, Mass Communication and Society, Journal of Mass Media Ethics, and Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media.

Course schedule

We will take on the course material in four units. Each unit will close with an examination; the final exam will be comprehensive.

This schedule is subject to change. Please monitor your UNC email account and Twitter account regularly for updates.

**Unit 1: Developing a Foundation:
History, philosophy and personal perspectives of ethics**

*Tuesday, Aug. 20: Who am I? Why am I here?

Read Ch. 11

Thursday, Aug 22: Becoming a moral adult

Tuesday, Aug. 27:

Historical survey of ethical principles.

Read Ch. 1, including cases.

Thursday, Aug. 29: Ethics in the profession.

Read Ch. 2 and skim cases;

Branch post on personal perspective of ethics

Tuesday, Sept. 3: Philosophies of Ethics.

Guest speaker: Adam Cantley

National President of Kappa Kappa Psi

In-class example of case presentations.

Review of expectations for topic blogs.

Thursday, Sept. 5: Applying ethics to a contemporary problem. What would Aristotle et al., do?

In-class example of case presentations. Review Ch. 2

Tuesday, Sept. 10: Guest speaker: Stephanie

Willen Brown, Park Library. Finding materials for

presentations. **Post discussion responses on Ch. 2.**

Thursday, Sept. 12: **Group presentations on Ch. 2 cases**

Tuesday, Sept. 17: **Review of Chapters 11, 1 & 2.
Post any questions about the exam to discussion by
8 p.m.**

Thursday, Sept. 19: **Exam No. 1 (Multiple choice)**

Unit 2:

Crossing the divide(s): Media ethics and money

Tuesday, Sept. 24: **The Bottom Dollar: Ethics in dealing with
clients, consumers and loyalty.**

**Read Ch. 3. and small-group case; post questions for
discussion by 2:15 p.m.**

Thursday, Sept. 26: **The TARES test; Review Ch. 3
Advertising blogs due Friday, Sept. 27, by 5 p.m.
Group presentations on Ch. 3 cases**

Tuesday, Oct. 1: **Conflicts of interest: Read. Ch. 4;
Post questions for discussion by 2:15 p.m. today**

Thursday, Oct. 3: **No class meeting.
Loyalties blogs due Friday, Oct. 4, by 5 p.m.**

Tuesday, Oct. 7: **Read. Ch. 7;
Post discussion questions by 2:15 p.m.**

Thursday, Oct. 10: **Economic drivers in decision-making.
Citizen journalists blogs due Friday, Oct. 11, at 5 p.m.**

Tuesday, Oct. 15: **Economic drivers in decision-making.
Twitter chat, 1 p.m. - 2 p.m., in lieu of class
and discussion posts**

Thursday, Oct. 17: **Open class.**

Tuesday, Oct. 22: Economic drivers in decision-making.
Linking cases and real-life examples.

Sponsored content blogs due on Friday, Oct. 23

Thursday, Oct. 24: **Exam No. 2; Group, take-home exam.**

Unit 3

Privacy and Pictures

Tuesday, Oct. 29: **Read Ch. 5 and assigned case(s).**

Thursday, Oct. 31: Privacy and pictures.
Group presentations.

Tuesday, Nov. 5: Issues of privacy.
Post questions to discuss by 2:15 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 7: Privacy and pictures.
Photojournalism blogs due Friday, Nov. 8, at 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 12: **Read Ch. 8.**
Privacy and pictures essay assignment.
Privacy blogs due Friday, Nov. 13, at 5 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 14: **Exam No. 3 - Short answer**

Unit 4

Tuesday, Nov. 19: **New Media Issues**

Thursday, Nov. 21: New media issues; **Read Ch. 9.**

Tuesday, Nov. 26: New media issues.

Review Ch. 9 and assigned case(s).

Post discussion questions by 2:15 p.m.

New media blogs due Friday, Nov. 28, at 5 p.m.

**Tuesday, Dec. 3: New media issues.
Review Ch. 9 and assigned case(s).**

Final exam: Saturday, Dec. 7 at noon.