

JOMC 141: Professional Problems and Ethics

Course Meeting Information

Monday & Wednesday
2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Carroll Hall Room 143

Instructor Information

Liz Woolery | ewoolery@email.unc.edu
Office Hours: Mon. & Weds. 3:15 – 4:15
Appointments available via email.
Office: 365 Carroll Hall

Course Objectives

From the university course catalog: “Intensive study through concepts and cases of ethical issues and problems facing mass communication professionals in modern society.”

In this course you will develop your ability to identify, understand, and evaluate the ethical decisions that mass communicators make every day. This course is not about “dos” and “don'ts,” but instead about providing you with the necessary tools to make ethically sound decisions in a field that has undergone significant change in recent years. We’re going to look at the relationships of ethics, ethical dilemmas, and ethical practices within a variety of mass communication professions – print, broadcast, & online media; visual communication; graphic design; public relations; and advertising. This class is designed to permit all students the opportunity to explore – through in-class discussions, projects, blog posts, and other assignments – what constitutes ethical practices, what interferes with ethical practices, and what emerging ethical issues may challenge you as the newest generation of professional communicators.

The purpose of this class is to help you make ethical decisions on the job in an organized way. To that end, here are a few objectives. By semester’s end, you should be able to:

- Apply ethical theories and philosophies to professional situations;
- Critically analyze current mass communication professional practices 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, defend, and apply your own set of guidelines to tackle ethical situations and develop your own personal yardstick by which to measure your ethical decisions.
- Become familiar with the ethical issues inherent in mass communication work, including philosophical foundations and how they inform much of our current understanding of these ethical dilemmas
- Become familiar with resources helpful when facing ethical dilemmas in the field
- Gain a basic understanding of mass communication law and a familiarity of your rights as journalists
- Understand what speech and press protections exist outside of your role as journalists
- Develop the analytical and reasoning skills necessary to apply ethical case study precedents to potential ethical problems

Required Text

We are using the most recent edition of the textbook – be sure to get the correct edition!

Philip Patterson, Lee Wilkins, *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases* [8th Ed], McGraw-Hill, 2013

You can purchase the textbook at Student Stores or online. Alternatively, you may consider renting the textbook through Amazon, Kno, or other textbook rental services. I believe an electronic copy of the book exists on some of these services. Finally, the textbook is on reserve in the Park Library for 2-hour blocks of use.

The text will be supplemented by articles or other readings. All assigned readings should be completed before class.

Communication

My email and office information are above, but there are a few other outlets we can use to communicate over the semester.

Course Blog: <http://jomc141fall13.web.unc.edu>

We have a course blog. Yay! Every student will be required to contribute to the blog every three weeks, for a total of 5 posts over the semester. See more info in the assignments section below.

Course Sakai Site: <https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/jomc141woolery>

This is the course management website. You can send emails to the entire class here, as well as post in the forum (if you opt out of the Facebook group). PowerPoint slides, reserve readings, practice exam questions, and other materials will be posted on the Sakai site for this course. It is your responsibility as a student to check Sakai for updates to course readings, assignments, and other pertinent information.

Course Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/595487390503668>

My hope is that we can use this as an alternative to the Sakai site discussion boards. I think many of you (and myself included!) are on Facebook more often than Sakai. Membership is not required – but it is *strongly* encouraged. Please consider joining the group, if not also contributing to it, as this will be a nice way to distribute information in a way that doesn't clutter up (and subsequently get lost in) your inboxes. I will use the Facebook page to post updates about assignments, cancelled classes, etc. Those same updates also will be posted to Sakai if you are not inclined to join the Facebook group.

Over the course of the semester you are expected to share several pieces of course-related content via any of the above. See “Assignments” below for more details.

Attendance Policy

Please be here! You'll find it to be helpful. The success of this class depends in large part on the quality of class discussion. We'll have some fun stuff to talk about and you can't do that if you're not here. Lectures are designed to explain, expand upon, and update the material in the textbook and your independent projects and work.

You will be allowed two absences without penalty. You need not provide any excuse or explanation for these absences. However, for each absence in excess of two, your final grade will be reduced by one point. For example, if you complete the semester with an average of 83 but with a total of four absences your grade will be reduced to 81. You should use your two allowed absences wisely, saving them for illnesses, job interviews, or trips arranged as part of another class, for example. No extra absences will be granted to complete assignments for other classes or for campus publications

Attendance will be taken at the start of class. If you arrive after the attendance sign-in sheet has circulated you will be counted as absent. If you need to leave class early, please tell me before class begins. Otherwise you will be counted as absent.

Turn off your cell phones. You may use a computer in class, but you will lose that privilege if you are observed working on anything except work for this course on your computer.

Napping and side conversations in class will not be tolerated.

Honor Code

The Honor Code and the Campus Code, embodying the ideals of academic honesty, integrity and responsible citizenship, have for over 100 years governed the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University. Acceptance by a student of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in these codes and a respect for this most significant University tradition.

Your participation in this course comes with the expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the Honor Code. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, because any breach in academic integrity, however small, strikes destructively at the University's life and work.

The [Instrument of Student Judicial Governance](#), which contains the provisions of the Honor Code, states that students have four general responsibilities under the Code:

1. Obey and support the enforcement of the Honor Code;
2. Refrain from lying, cheating, or stealing;
3. Conduct themselves so as not to impair significantly the welfare or the educational opportunities of others in the University community; and

4. Refrain from conduct that impairs or may impair the capacity of University and associated personnel to perform their duties, manage resources, protect the safety and welfare of members of the University community, and maintain the integrity of the University.

The Instrument defines plagiarism as "deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise."

Please submit all written work with the following pledge: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment."

Course Grades

Your course grade will be based on several types of work you will complete over the semester.

Written Assignments	15% (Three assignments @ 5% each)
Small Group Project	15%
Blog Posts	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Project	30%

The alpha/numeric conversion for course grades is as follows:

A = 93-100	A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76	C- = 70-72*	D+ = 67-69	D = 60-66	F = below 60	

*This course is required for students enrolled in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. You must earn a C- to avoid repeating the course.

Course Work

Written Assignments: These will include in-class assignments such as a case study evaluation, sharing examples of ethical issues, writing a reflection paper after a guest speaker, working through an ethical dilemma, etc. I will offer 5 assignments; you are required to complete any 3. You will hear more about these assignments throughout the semester.

Blog Posts: You are required to contribute to the blog every three weeks throughout the semester. I've broken down the syllabus into three-week chunks and noted the last day in every three-week period. That is the absolute last day to post your blog post for that period. That does not mean you can't post it in week one or two of that period. You can post whenever you want during each three-week period, whether it's Day 1 or Day 21.

Examples of quality contributions: post thoughtful questions and answers in response to your required readings and in-class discussions, share helpful resources, and perhaps most importantly, examples of content that makes you think about ethics or the ethical issues behind

that content. See an advertisement that you think crossed the line? Share it! An example of unethical reporting? Post it! We will use some of these examples in class as a jumping off point for discussion.

In addition to sharing content you find, you are required to include thoughtful commentary or analysis on the vast majority of your posts. Alternatively, your commentary/analysis can be in response to content someone else has posted. You should anticipate spending at least 250 words on each post/comment. That's roughly one single-spaced page.

Using your Onyen, you will be able to author posts on the course blog. Once I add you as an author, you will receive a welcome email from Web.UNC and you are then free to blog.

You'll see (below, in the assignments list) that I've given you a topic for your first blog post. In the future I will leave it up to you to determine what to post and whether you post content you find or contribute by joining/starting conversation in the comments. We may have one or two guests speakers, in which case I'll ask that you write your blog posts as responses to those speakers.

First blog post: Due by Wednesday, Sept. 4 at 2 p.m. Appx. 250 words on an ethical dilemma/situation/issue facing your area of study. See the Facebook group or the "Announcements" section on Sakai for examples of ethics news sources. Include real-world example(s) in your discussion.

Small Group Project: You'll be assigned to a small group. Each group will be responsible for locating a current ethical dilemma facing a mass communication industry. You'll identify the issue, propose an ethical decision-making framework, and arrive at a conclusion; the format will be an in-class presentation followed by a short discussion. Each group member will receive the same base grade. The individual grade might then be adjusted based on feedback from other team members. Groups will be assigned on Sept. 4; topics are due to me for approval at 5 p.m. on Sept. 25; presentations will take place on October 7. I will provide a handout describing the projects on Sept. 4.

Midterm Exam: You will have a midterm exam. The midterm exam is scheduled for the Monday before fall break. The exam format will be discussed in class. Make-up exams are only given in cases of extreme emergencies and then only if I am notified in advanced of the exam.

Final Project: Your final work product for this course will be a group or individual project (your choice). Regardless of whether you choose the group or individual route, a research paper will be involved. Groups will also be required to do an in-class presentation. All students will meet with me in October to discuss the topic for their final paper. All students will need to have a written research paper proposal approved by me. I will provide a separate handout with information about the final project and proposal.

First Amendment Day: This is an extra credit opportunity. You will receive one point on your final course grade if you either attend the keynote lecture on Tuesday, Sept. 24 at 7 p.m. OR if you actively volunteer in the organization of the event. There is an organizational meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 28 at 5 p.m. in Carroll Hall room 33 for interested volunteers.

Course Work Policies

Late Work: Late work will receive 10% off for the first day, and 5% off per day after that. There’s no latitude on the final project. You’re responsible for turning in all projects on the dates they’re due, even if you’re absent that day.

Submission Policy: Any written work should be double-spaced, submitted via Sakai, and in Word document form. If any of those options are unavailable to you, please see me ASAP!

Assignment Schedule

Note: This schedule is a guide and we may revise it as the semester progresses.

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment Due for Class
				<i>See the “Resources” folder on Sakai for links to items referred to as “Sakai readings.”</i>
1	Wed.	8/21	Introduction to the Course.	
2	Mon.	8/26	Why study ethics? What is it? Foundations, principles, theories, case studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 1 • Sign up for Facebook group (strongly encouraged) and the course blog (required). • Complete the Student Info/Interest form, if you haven’t already: http://goo.gl/pF2FU V
2	Wed.	8/28	Philosophical foundations of ethics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 1
3	Mon.	9/2	<i>No Classes – Labor Day</i>	
3	Wed.	9/4	Philosophical foundations of ethics. (con’td)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First blog post due! • Sign up for Small Groups for Project:

				goo.gl/UNTWkf
4	Mon.	9/9	Moral development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook: Ch. 11
4	Wed.	9/11	More moral development, start decision-making techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sakai Readings
5	Mon.	9/16	Decision-making techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook: pp. 4-7 (Bok model), pp. 99-103 (Potter Box); Sakai readings
5	Wed.	9/18	Guest Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Readings TBD</i>
6	Mon.	9/23	Decision-making techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sakai Readings Due: Decide whether you want to work on your final project as an individual or as a group
6	Tues.	9/24	First Amendment Day – Extra Credit Opportunity	
6	Wed.	9/25	New media ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook Ch. 9 Sakai readings
7	Mon.	9/30	Professionalism and codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sakai Readings Second blog post due by 2 p.m.! Small Group Project Topics Due to Liz by 5 p.m.
7	Wed.	10/2	Accuracy, truth, veracity, & honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook: Ch. 2
8	Mon.	10/7	Small Group Project Presentations	
8	Wed.	10/9	Midterm Exam Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring questions!
9	Mon.	10/14	Midterm Exam	
9	Wed.	10/16	<i>Start Your Fall Break Early! No Class Today.</i> Third blog post due by 2 p.m.!	
10	Mon.	10/21	Framing, manipulation	
10	Wed.	10/23	Objectivity, frames, subjectivity, manipulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sakai Readings
11	Mon.	10/28	Ethical issues in visual communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook: Ch. 8 Sakai Readings

11	Wed.	10/30	Loyalties and competing duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 4 • All research project topics must be approved by today!
12	Mon.	11/4	Persuasion in strategic communication and advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 3 • Sakai Readings
12	Wed.	11/6	Persuasion in strategic communication and advertising (cont'd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TARES test: Five principles for ethical persuasion (Sakai) • Bring an advertisement (magazine, newspaper, online – any source will do!) • Fourth blog post due by 2 p.m.!
13	Mon.	11/11	Conflicts of interest, bias, & objectivity/subjectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 5 • Research project proposal due
13	Wed.	11/13	Privacy: Legal Foundations, Case Studies & Hypotheticals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 5 • Research project proposal due
14	Mon.	11/18	Privacy: Legal Foundations, Case Studies & Hypotheticals (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sakai Readings
14	Wed.	11/20	The role of mass communication in a democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 6 • Sakai Readings
15	Mon.	11/25		
15	Wed.	11/27	<i>No Classes – Thanksgiving Break</i> Fifth blog post due by 2 p.m.!	
16	Mon.	12/2	Diversity issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sakai Readings • Turn in Diversity game (see Sakai) http://www.mije.org/diversitygame
16	Wed.	12/4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final papers due at 5 p.m.! • Group presentations in class (if possible)

		12/10	4 p.m.: This is when the final exam would normally take place. Depending on how the end of the semester goes, this time may instead be used for final group presentations. Like the exam, attendance will be mandatory if presentations take place at this date/time.
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