

Media Ethics

MEJO 141.002
Spring 2017
MW 1:00 p.m. - 2:40 p.m.
Wilson 128

Instructor

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Office Hours

Drop in office hours on **Mondays 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** in **Carroll 47***

By appointment in the adjunct suite* or elsewhere

**This office is located in the adjunct suite in the basement of Carroll Hall, underneath the student records office.*

Shelving hard decisions is the least-ethical course.

— *Adrian Cadbury, British business executive*

Course Overview

We're going to look at the relationships of ethics, ethical dilemmas, and ethical practices within a variety of media professions – print, broadcast, and online journalism; various visual communications approaches for news and business; public relations; advertising; and even hybrids.

This class permits all students the opportunity to explore – both in class discussions and in written 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.

Course Objectives

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

- Integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas to professional situations

- Critically analyze current media 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.

Professional Values & Competencies

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>.

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Think critically, creatively and independently
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Prerequisites

None! This class is required for MEJO majors, and it meets a requirement for a minor in social and economic justice. Beginning Fall 2016, MEJO 141 meets the General Education requirement for philosophical and moral reasoning (PH)! That means, during the course of this semester, each student will complete at least 10 pages of writing. As you'll see in the week-to-week schedule, there are a few writing assignments that, together, meet this stipulation.

About the Content

This course may at times include topics, materials and discussions that can be disturbing or distressing, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate all the directions our conversations may take. If you find it necessary to step out of the classroom, you may do so without penalty. However, you still are responsible for any material covered during time that you miss, and you should make arrangements to get notes from a classmate. I will be happy to meet with you if you have concerns. Please also remember that the university provides a number of resources and services to help you cope with any difficult challenges you face while part of the Carolina community and beyond through Counseling and Psychological Services (aka CAPS): <https://campushealth.unc.edu/services/counseling-and-psychological-services>.

Required Textbook & Readings

Media Ethics: Issues and Cases, 8th edition

Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

At least one copy is available at the Park Library, and the bookstore now has textbook rentals. The textbook will be supplemented by **articles** or **other readings**, which you may access via the Resources Folder in Sakai (<http://sakai.unc.edu>).

All assigned readings should be completed before the appropriate class sessions for which they are assigned to ensure that you're ready to discuss, ask questions, offer opinions, disagree, argue, share knowledge, etc. That's what will make this class fun!

Professional Curiosity

This is a real-world class in which we're going to examine the challenges and dilemmas of today's media and communication professions. Please keep up with what's going on in the world and in your profession. Take some time each day to check out the news in papers, magazines, TV and/or online. One suggested resource is *The Skimm* (<http://www.theskimm.com/>), available online and as a daily newsletter. *The New York Times* offers a variety of subject-specific newsletters (<http://www.nytimes.com/newsletters>) and *The Daily Brief* from Quartz (<http://qz.com/daily-brief>) sends out short recaps about current events each morning. Additionally, news apps like *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* offer push notifications and daily debriefs. You can also like different new organizations on Facebook, like AJ+ (<https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/>).

Find out what ethical issues face professionals in your field by taking a look at the trade journals available in the Park Library (second floor of Carroll Hall) or online. See something interesting? Bring it to class or post it on Sakai! The more the merrier!

Honor Code

You are expected to conduct yourself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://studentconduct.unc.edu/>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. You may retrieve the full document, *The instrument of student judicial governance*, at <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf>.

Diversity & Inclusion

The School of Media and Journalism adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements in spring 2016 with accompanying goals:

<http://www.mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion>. Additionally, the University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined here:

<http://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>. 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.

- **Harassment:** UNC does not tolerate harassment based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or for any other reason. It is also a violation of the Honor Code and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments. If you need assistance with a harassment issue or problem, bring it to my attention or The Office of the Dean of Students, dos@unc.edu or 919/966-4042.
- **Special Accommodations:** If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Resources & Service Office website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>, call 919/962-8300, or use NC Relay 711.

Attendance & Participation

Please be here! You'll find it to be handy. Please sign yourself in each class period you attend – a list is on the classroom wall. The success of this class depends in large part on the quality of class discussion. You can't contribute to class discussion if you're not in class. Therefore, the following attendance policy will be in effect this semester: You may be absent from class **three times** ("excused" or "unexcused") before I take points off for missed classes. However, please note that you are still held accountable for any material covered during classes, and you will lose credit for any in-class assignment or other activity completed during classes you do not attend.

It is your responsibility to sign in each class period. You do not have to notify me of your reasons for your absences, nor do you have to provide a doctor's note. Use your absences wisely. If you know you need to be absent for university-related activities or other obligations, be sure to factor those into your absences.

For each class you miss after three, your final grade will be lowered by **three points**. For example, if your grade average is a B- (81) and you have four absences, your final grade will be altered to a C+ (78).

Please note: Chances are EXCELLENT that you will need all of your absences for sick days or other types of emergencies or opportunities. I strongly suggest that you save your absences for these purposes. DO NOT waste your absences on “the weather’s too nice (or too lousy) to come to class” and then ask for an exception to the attendance policy when you actually come down with the flu.

Additionally, I distinguish between attendance and participation. In addition to warming a chair twice a week, I expect everyone to be **active participants in the class and/or on Sakai** – ask questions, offer your opinions, and challenge. I think you’ll find it makes learning easier and even more fun. We can make the class community interactive and ethical decision-making more effective through dialogue. Join the fun!

Here are criteria I follow for determining the participation portion of your grade. I’ll also ask you to assess yourself via these criteria.

- **A** students participate in most of the class discussions during nearly every class period (or try to participate by raising their hands often when questions are asked) **and/or** contribute on Sakai Forums at least twice weekly. Consistency is the key. They contribute interesting and/or thought-provoking ideas and occasionally bring in outside material relevant to the class and to the readings. They don’t talk simply to hear their own voices, and they do not take over the discussion, but let others have a turn. They’ve probably asked some interesting questions along the way. They arrive to class on time and do not miss classes. (9-10)
- **B** students participate in some of the class discussions each week **and/or** contribute on Sakai Forums at least once or twice weekly, but either are not at quite the same level and/or comments are not always as insightful as the A students. However, they still have some interesting things to say or questions to ask whether in class or online. They may have no absences and they arrive to class on time. (7-8)
- **C** students may participate in class or on Sakai Forums from time to time but mostly prefer to lurk. They may have had some pretty good things to say but just don’t speak up/contribute online too often. They may have no absences or perhaps they have more than they should. They may be tardy on occasion, without any comment. (5-6)
- **D and F** students have barely said anything all semester whether in class or on Sakai Forums, or even if they have contributed occasionally, they might have too many absences. They are mostly lurkers even if they have fairly good attendance. They tend to respond only when called on. They may or may not have arrived to most classes on time. (≤ 4)

Assignments & Deadlines

All outside assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class period (aka, 1:25 p.m.). Late papers (1:26 p.m. and later) will receive a reduced grade unless you and I agree before the assignment is due that it can be late. No assignment will be accepted if it is turned in more than 24 hours after its deadline – a grade of F will be recorded. In-class assignments are

just that – we'll work on them in class and you will turn them in when class ends. **Missing an in-class assignment constitutes a zero for that item.**

Your final grade will be based upon:

Assignments (homework & in class)	25%
Participation (in class and/or Sakai forums)	10%
Ethics in the News group project	10%
Research participation	5%
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	25%

Grading Scale

A	94% and higher
A -	90 - 93
B +	87 - 89
B	84 - 86
B -	80 - 83
C +	77 - 79
C	74 - 76
C -	70 - 73
D +	67 - 69
D	64 - 66
D -	60 - 63
F	59% or below

Sakai

Valuable information and tools are available via Sakai. As a student registered in MEJO 141, you have automatic access to this site. Please use it regularly, especially under:

- **Forums:** Yes, participation in Sakai discussions counts as class participation. Join in! This will be a place to continue and/or spark class discussion at any time – even if it’s a topic area that we’ve already covered. You may come up with some great ideas outside of class – please express them here, and share your views with your classmates. Post opinions, brainstorm, afterthoughts, new ideas, links to articles you’ve read, pose questions, make announcements, etc. All postings must adhere to University policies and standards. So, basically, please be respectful of all opinions, whether you agree or not. See above for participation criteria as it relates to Forums.
- **Syllabus:** Surprise! The syllabus for this class is posted in this section.
- **Resources:** PowerPoints and supplemental readings are posted in this section. Many students find it advantageous to access PowerPoints prior to class so in-class participation is easier. Why write it all down by hand when it’s online?? My PowerPoints are merely outlines for discussion – I do not provide all the detail – that’s what note-taking is for. Every career you may go into requires you to take good notes to make sure you report accurately, represent your clients accurately, and get the names accurate for photo cutlines.
- **Assignments:** The in-class and homework assignments for this class are posted in this section. Keep in mind that any homework assignments announced in class will be posted after that class period.
- **Gradebook:** If you have a question about a grade, please bring it to my attention within a week of it being posted (rather than waiting until the semester ends).

Research Participation Requirement

Students in MEJO 141 are required to complete two hours of research over the course of the semester. There are two ways you may fulfill this requirement. The first way is to participate in two academic research studies in the School of Media and Journalism. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive first-hand experience with media and communication research. You will be able to sign up online to participate in these studies – and, double-dipping is allowed if you are taking another class that requires research participation!

The second way to fulfill your research participation requirement is to **(a)** write assessments (two pages each) of two study topics in Journalist’s Resource (<http://journalistsresource.org/studies>); or **(b)** write two two-page summaries/critiques of academic research articles. Each review counts for one hour of research participation, so you may 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 Research*, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *Mass Communication and Society*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. Get some guidance here: <http://guides.lib.unc.edu/jomcResReq>.

Your summaries are due no later than **Friday, April. 28 at 5:00 p.m.** (LDOC). Early papers are cheerfully accepted!

A Few Words On Grades

I follow the University's Grading Standards, as adopted by the Faculty Council:

"A" Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development. The "A" grade states clearly that the student has shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study that he/she may be strongly encouraged to continue.

"B" Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The "B" grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.

"C" A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The "C" grade states that, while not yet showing any unusual promise, the student may continue to study in the discipline with reasonable hope of intellectual development.

"D" A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The "D" grade states that the student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of D grades should be taken to mean that the student would be well advised not to continue in the academic field.

"F" For whatever reasons, an unacceptable performance. The "F" grade indicates that the student's performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content. A grade of F should warrant an adviser's questioning whether the student may suitably register for further study in the discipline before remedial work is undertaken.

Please note: Although grades are not negotiable, I will give every consideration to any concerns you have about an assignment grade, as long as the concern is identified *promptly*. If you have questions about or dispute a particular grade, the issue needs to be taken care of within a week of receiving that particular grade. The only grades that will be discussed at the end of the semester are those assignments you complete at the end of the semester.

Week by Week – MEJO 141-002 for SPRING 2017

This schedule is subject to change. Changes to the schedule will be communicated via email and Sakai. Readings may vary based on current events. Refer to the Resources section of Sakai for the most up-to-date readings.

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments For This Day
		Check Sakai for latest!
Jan. 11	Welcome! Why talk about ethics?	Whine about winter break being over... ☹
Jan. 18	Case discussion: What were they thinking?!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “UW-Madison doctors photo to stress diversity” (Sakai) ● “Trust me, an infamous serial liar says” (Sakai) ● “Recordings: State rep asked aide to hide relationship” (Sakai) ● Company parts ways with PR exec after AIDS in Africa tweet (Sakai)
Jan. 23	Getting our bearings	* ‘Can ethics trump law?’ (Sakai) * ‘Obituary should look at person’s whole life, not just a bad part’ (Sakai) * ‘Patchwriting’ is more common than plagiarism, just as dishonest’ (Sakai) * Caleb Hannan: ‘Screwing up has not made me an expert’ (Sakai) ***DUE: Plagiarism exercise (see Sakai –Assignments)***
Jan. 25	Foundations – the dead guys	*Ch. 1 * Building Blocks” handout (Sakai) **”Toronto Star identifies 71-year-old rape victim at family’s request” and “Why we published Twitter handle of alleged rape victim” (both in one document on Sakai)
Jan. 30	More dead guys	* ‘Diverse voices are missing from the debate over showing the Rice video’ (Sakai) * Ethical communication handout (Sakai)
Feb. 1	Moral development – Kohlberg and Gilligan	Ch. 11 *** DUE: Dead Guys exercise” (see Sakai - Assignments)
Feb. 6	More moral development	▪ * ‘Safe? Are you sure? Vendors court colleges’ (Sakai) * ‘Newsjacking for a cause: The Power of the offer’ (Sakai – same document) **Ethics In The News – discuss assignment/assign teams**
Feb. 8	Intro to the TARES test	pp. 56-59 ***“Renegade pharmacist’ infographic stirs Coca-Cola health debate” and “Here’s What’s Wrong With That Viral Coca-Cola Graphic” (both in same document on Sakai) * ‘The TARES Test: Five principles for ethical persuasion’ (Sakai)
Feb. 13	Decision-making techniques	* pp. 5-7 (Bok model), pp. 86-90 (Potter Box); * Potter Box chart (Sakai) * The decisions behind the New York Magazine’s Cosby Cover (Sakai) * Can AA be anonymous in the paper? (Sakai) *’Cosby’s exhibit at the Smithsonian Elicits Polarized Public Responses’ (Sakai) * ‘When the President uses the n-word’ (Sakai) * “Racist letters: To run or not to run” (Sakai) * Racist letter in DTH (Sakai)

Feb. 15	Professionalism and codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 'Covering gay marriage when it's really, really personal' (Sakai) * 'Your call: Would you rep the dentist who killed Cecil the Lion?' (Sakai) * "Know your rights: Photographers (Sakai)
Feb. 20	Using ethics codes and makin' decisions - case discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> **AL GOP Legislative Leaders To Journalists: "Show Us Your Papers" (Sakai) **Ferguson: On parachuting in and breaking news on Twitter' (Sakai) * <i>SF Weekly</i> publisher backs off plan to use cover story to 'make up' with advertiser (Sakai) <p style="text-align: center;">***DUE: Ethics Code Scavenger Hunt ** (Sakai, Assignments)</p>
Feb. 22	Loyalties	<p>Ch. 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * "One person's tragedy, another person's prize" (Sakai) * Advice on publishing graphic photos from Iraq (Sakai)
March 27	Photo Challenges and review for midterm	<p>Ch. 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 'When deciding to run an open-casket photo, picture editors matter' (Sakai) **Photographer as Witness: A Portrait of Domestic Violence' (Sakai) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>When deciding to run an open-casket photo, picture editors matter</i> (Sakai) ▪ <i>'Napalm girl' photographer returns - with iPhone, Instagram</i> (Sakai) ▪ <i>NPPA: Forcing BBC to delete Virginia shooting images was 'unlawful'</i> (Sakai)
March 1 Midterm		
March 6	Hand back Midterms Review Answers	
March 8	Truth, honesty and their antecedents	<p>Ch. 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 'Rachel Dolezal: The story behind the story' (Sakai) * '20 Questions A Journalist Should Ask About Poll Results' (Sakai) <p style="text-align: center;">***DUE: TARES Assignment ** (Sakai, Assignments)</p>
March 11 - Spring Break March 19		
March 20	More truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * CNN panel explodes after ex-cop says Sandra Bland died because she was 'arrogant from the beginning' (Sakai) * Narratives about Silent Sam collide (Sakai) * 'Pulling a fast one at the polls' (Sakai) * 'White guys win again. Was this college catalog cover a loser?' (Sakai)
March 22	Ads, persuasion, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Unspun – chapters 2-4 (Sakai)</i> <p>Ch. 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stereotyping and How To Stifle Creativity (Sakai) *What the ad doesn't tell you (Sakai) * Why brands believe Black History Month is best celebrated year-round
March 27	Objectivity, frames, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> **How The Media Can Stop Embarrassing Themselves At The Hands Of Police' (Sakai) * 'Seven principles of media objectivity' (Sakai)

March 29	More objectivity, frames...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ch. 9 *'Snake-Handling Pentecostal Pastor Dies from Snake Bite' (Sakai) * Obituary: Clay William Shephard; Obituary for Wake County man who died of drug overdose goes viral; Obituaries Shed Euphemisms to Chronicle Toll Heroin (Sakai – note: all 3 are in same Word doc)
April 3	Ethics In the News	Ethics in the News team presentations – ***** ALL PAPERS DUE TODAY
April 5	Ethics In the News	Ethics in the News team presentations continued...
April 10	Privacy	▪ Ch. 5
April 12	Complete privacy discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A secret no more: Porn pays for Duke student's tuition (Sakai) *'How the NYT obtained Bill Cosby's deposition' (Sakai) *'Foundation to Discontinue References to Murdered Girl' (Sakai)
April 17	Issues of diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> **Intolerant of 'racial tolerance'" by Barry Saunders (Sakai) * 'Why aren't there more minority journalists?' (Sakai) * 'Drug laws in Japan pose problems for Toyota Exec' (Sakai)
April 19	Balancing democratic ideals and economic realities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 7 * 'Advice from two Millennials on how businesses can do good' (Sakai) * 'Are ethical companies more profitable?' (Sakai)
April 24	Finish up media, democracy and economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 6 * 'The media doesn't (sic) own the story anymore' (Sakai) * 'Virginian-Pilot journalists: Corporate management pressure is stifling coverage" (Sakai)
April 26	LDOC – optional review for final	Bring yourself and your notes (option, recommended)
April 28	LDOC	***** Research Participation Summaries due in Sakai (5pm)
May 4 12:00 P.M.	Final exam at noon	FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 4nd @ 12:00 p.m. in our regular classroom