

MEJO 141
FALL 2019 SYLLABUS
33 Carroll Hall
TR 2-3:15 p.m.

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Office hours: Tuesdays 9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. and by appointment

Course Description and Purpose

Welcome to MEJO 141! During this semester we'll be talking about media ethics. Specifically, we'll be looking at how media professionals learn about, think about and deliberate on the ethics of their work. In addition, we'll cover material that addresses the ethics of how media represent various groups and social issues, and we'll explore how consumers and users of media content can become more aware of and experienced with asking questions about the ethics at play in media coverage.

Learning Objectives

Following this course, you should be able to:

- Compare ethical standards as they have been applied to case studies of media professionals;
- Articulate the various strategies, guidelines and codes for evaluating ethical dilemmas in media;
- Critique the ways in which media have framed and covered some social issues and social groups;
- Apply principles of media literacy as you evaluate media messages and content for ethical practices.

Contacting me and turning in assignments

If you have questions, please email me at the address listed above. If I don't respond to you within 48 hours during weekdays, please assume that I didn't receive your email, and email me again. I would also be happy to set up an appointment to speak with you in person or by phone. I will check email daily from Monday morning until Friday afternoon.

Attendance & Classroom Policies

You are a vital part of the success of this course, so your attendance is desired, welcomed, and expected. This course depends on your ability to critique and discuss the readings, comment on current media content and engage in meaningful discussion about all of this. I expect your attention to be on the discussion we're having in class. Therefore, I will expect that your cell phones and other devices are powered off and that computers are only present in class if you are taking notes or viewing materials as assigned by the instructor.

You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings for that day. That means completing the assigned readings before you arrive to class.

I will take roll every class session at the beginning of class. A student will be considered absent if

they arrive to class more than 10 minutes late and/or they leave class early. I do understand that some class absences are unavoidable, so you may **take three (3)** absences without it affecting your grade. You do not need to turn in forms excusing an absence. You have three absences to use as you will. Use these for personal reasons or for reasons that the university defines as excused (religious, family emergency, illness or participation in university sanctioned activities). Use them wisely because anything beyond three absences will result in point deductions from your final overall course grade. Specifically, each absence beyond 3 absences will result in a 2-point deduction from your final overall semester grade. For example, if 82 was your final score/grade and you have 4 absences, your final score is now 80.

More on Laptops

In terms of using laptops, I will rely on you to monitor yourselves about your use of your laptops during the course. That means, I expect that if you use a laptop during the class you are using it to take notes about class content. I expect that you'll be paying attention to what I am saying and to what your classmates are saying and be engaged in the class for that 75 minutes that we're meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

You should also know that if I provide PowerPoints of my lectures, they will only be outlines of what we discuss. You'll need to fill the information in by taking good notes. And speaking of that, there's some research that shows that we do better on exams and better at remembering content when we write out our notes. I've provided two of those articles/studies in a folder on the Sakai site, just so you'll have that. I hope you'll think about what might be best for your learning style and ability to retain information and then decide how you want to take notes in class. To sum up: I expect you to give me your attention in class, and I will work to make the course engaging for us all. And I promise to give you my full attention when I receive an email from you or when you visit me in my office about any concerns, questions or problems you have.

There are three occasions where **laptops are not permitted** during the class period: **during exams**; when we have a **guest speaker**; and **during the EITN group presentations**.

Important UNC policies and procedures:

Honor Code

Students must adhere to the letter and spirit of the [university honor system](#). Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated – this includes plagiarism, cheating or any false means of obtaining a grade – and may result in failure of the course, and suspension or expulsion from the university. If I suspect academic dishonesty, I have a duty to report it to the MJ-School's senior associate dean for undergraduate studies, the Student Attorney General, or the judicial programs officer in the Dean of Students' office for further action. For information on how to avoid plagiarism, go to The Writing Center's [plagiarism](#) site.

Special Accommodations:

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

Diversity:

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2015-2016 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>
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.

Title IX/SAFE at UNC

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here <http://campusconversation.web.unc.edu/resources/>

Readings:

The required textbook for this class is *Media Ethics at Work: True Stories from Young Professionals* (2nd edition). Edited by Lee Anne Peck and Guy S. Reel.

In addition to the textbook, I may assign readings from other sources. These articles, blogs or book chapters, or websites will be available from the course Sakai site in that day's folder. Remember to check the Sakai site for additional readings and resources in plenty of time to prepare for our class session.

You are responsible for any and all material in lectures, videos, class discussions, and assigned readings (even if we don't cover the material in the readings in class). We may not cover in detail all of the material in your assigned readings, but I do expect you to have read the material and to be able to use it in our class discussions and to know it for your exams.

Note: There will be some material that you will be exposed to via the readings and videos that may be upsetting because of the topics dealt with. Please let me know if you have any questions about the material or if you need to talk with me about any of the assigned readings, videos or assignments. Students who experience discomfort during any of our class sessions are welcome to step out briefly.

Grades

Scale for final course grades:

A 95-100	C+ 77-79
A- 90-94	C 74-76
B+ 87-89	C- 70-73
B 84-86	D+ 67-69
B- 80-83	D 60-66
	F 59 and below

Note: Grades are assigned according to criteria established by a UNC-CH Committee on Grading. For example, an "A" grade indicates superior work, whereas a "C" grade indicates sufficient performance. For an understanding of what the various grades mean, see the UNC Faculty Council's statement [here](#).

I don't negotiate grades, but I will hear your concerns and talk with you about them. If you want to discuss any assignment or exam grade, I ask that you take **24 hours** before emailing me about the grade and provide information in the email about your

questions. Also, you will need to contact me about any concerns you have about a grade within **(1) one week** of receiving the grade.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

➤ Participation	5%
➤ Reading Responses	10%
➤ Exploring Media Ethics (paper)	15%
➤ Ethics in the News (presentation)	15%
➤ Exam I	25%
➤ Exam II/Final Exam	30%

Below is an explanation of the Course Requirements:

Participation (5% of grade). Class participation is worth 30 points and will be divided in the following way: 15 points of your participation grade will come from your participation in our class discussions. To receive the 15 points for this part of your participation grade, you must contribute to our class conversations and discussion at least once during every week that we have class discussion. In addition, 15 points will come from your participation during in-class exercises and activities. Throughout the semester we will have several in-class exercises. You **MUST** be in class and participate in the activity in person to receive credit. If you are absent, you cannot receive credit for these. These won't always be on the schedule as they will sometimes develop out of our class discussion.

Reading Responses (10% of grade). (0-5 points for each day you post/10 weeks to post: total= 50 points). For 10 weeks during the semester, you will have an opportunity to post responses or reactions to **all** of our readings for that week. Each response for each reading should be about 250 words. These responses will help you participate in class discussion, and they should also be useful when you are studying for your exams. You will post these reading responses to the Discussion Forum. To receive credit, your responses must be posted by 11:55 p.m. the night before the class where we'll discuss those readings. You will not be able to post after the due time/date. And please be prepared to discuss your responses in class.

Exploring Media Ethics paper (15% of grade). 100-point scale. Each student will write a 3-page (900-word maximum) paper on some issue of media ethics. I'll provide additional guidelines and options for this paper. The paper is due Thursday, March 28.

Ethics in the News (EITN) presentation (15% of grade). 100-point scale. You'll be assigned to a group of 3-4 students, and for each class day, one group will be responsible for locating a news item dealing with mass media ethics. You'll explain the item to the class and lead a short discussion. You will also need to have a handout or PowerPoint with key takeaways from your presentation as well as discussion questions to guide a class discussion about the topic. Each group member will receive the same grade for the assignment. The schedule for the EITN presentations will be posted on the class Sakai site.

Exams

- Exam I (25% of grade). Exam I is Tuesday, February 12th.
- Exam II/Final Exam (30% of grade). The final exam is Monday, May 6, 12 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Exams will cover lectures, discussion, presentations, videos and readings. You are responsible for any material in your readings even if we have not covered the material in class. The exams will include multiple choice questions, true/false questions, identifications, and short answer questions. The final exam is not cumulative, but it does include more material than the midterm exam.

Tentative Course Schedule

Th Jan 10 Introduction to and overview of the course: policies and expectations

Unit I - Professional ethics: codes and practices

T Jan 15 An introduction to ethics/ethical decision-making
Textbook: Ch. 1 (Peck); Ch. 2 (Elliott)

Th Jan 17 Corporate media ethics
Watch “Micky Mouse Monopoly”

T Jan 22 Discuss ethical issues raised in “Micky Mouse Monopoly”
Textbook: Ch. 23 (Ritzenthaler)

Th Jan 24 Corporate media ethics – doing what’s asked/doing what’s right
Textbook: Ch. 10 (Kennedy & Vella); Ch. 16 (Auger); Ch. 20 (Previs);
Ch. 22 (Niekamp)

T Jan 29 Producing media content –manipulation & misrepresentation
Textbook: Ch. 3 (Mensing); Ch. 6 (Waters); Ch. 8 (Daniels)
EITN presentation/Group 1

Th Jan 31 Producing media content – manipulation & misrepresentation/fairness
Textbook: Ch. 4 (Austin); Ch. 9 (Mirando)
EITN presentation/Group 2

T Feb 5 Information, ethics and social media
Textbook: Ch. 12 (Parrish & Reel); Ch. 24 (Leach)
EITN presentation/Group 3

Th Feb 7 Discuss midterm exam and options for *Exploring Media Ethics* paper

T Feb 12 **Exam I**

Th Feb 14 The ethics of media research
Textbook: Ch. 5 (Furlow)
EITN presentation/Group 4

Unit II - Media framing and ethics of representation

T	Feb 19	The ethics of representation EITN presentation/Group 5
Th	Feb 21	The ethics of representation & news coverage Textbook: Ch. 11 (Brown); Ch. 13 (Davies & Rodenberg); Ch. 26 (Concepción) EITN presentation/Group 6
T	Feb 26	Ethics of representation Textbook: Ch. 14 (Frederick & Meader); Ch. 15 (Reimold) EITN presentation/Group 7
Th	Feb 28	Ethics of representation Textbook: Ch. 17 (Niekamp); Ch. 19 (Boynton & Rhew) EITN presentation/Group 8
T	Mar 5	The ethics of representation & news coverage/gendered violence
Th	Mar 7	the ethics of representation & news coverage/gendered violence
T	Mar 12	Spring Break
Th	Mar 14	Spring Break
T	Mar 19	Workshop: Outlining the “Exploring Media Ethics” paper
Th	Mar 21	Workshop: Organizing the “Exploring Media Ethics” paper
T	Mar 26	Individual work and meetings on paper
Th	Mar 28	Exploring Media Ethics paper due Discussion of paper topics

Unit III: Media literacy and ethics: Critical consumption of media

T	Apr 2	Understanding media literacy Sakai reading: <i>Introduction to Media Literacy</i> EITN presentation/Group 9
Th	Apr 4	Exercise on media literacy: research critiquing content and developing best practices guide
T	Apr 9	Media ethics in popular culture EITN presentation/Group 10

Th Apr 11 Media ethics in popular culture
EITN presentation/Group 11

T Apr 16 Developing a media ethics guide: best practices
EITN presentation/Group 12

Th Apr 18 Developing a media ethics guide: best practices
EITN presentation/Group 13

T Apr 23 Presenting our revisions to ethics codes/best practices
Th Apr 25 Review for Exam II/Final Exam

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**Exam II/Final Exam Monday, May 6 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**