**MEJO 141**

**Media Ethics**

Fall 2019

Monday and Wednesday, 11:00am-12:15pm

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**Office Hours**: 8:00-9:00am Monday and Wednesday

This course introduces students to media ethics. It offers various ethical frameworks for students to think through what people ought to do as they make decisions and act in media-related professions, from journalism to advertising and public relations. Acting ethically requires carefully thinking through professional dilemmas, deciding on the best course of action, justifying decisions to stakeholders, and being held accountable for courses of action. In the context of ethical decision-making, there are rarely clearly right or wrong answers to professional dilemmas. The aims of this course is to provide students with training in critical decision-making, a set of overarching principles and frameworks to help guide thought and action, and a familiarity with relevant cases to help them make decisions. The first half of the course introduces students to ethics and provides a broad overview of ethical frameworks for journalism and strategic communication. The second half of the course goes into practical depth in media ethics by analyzing contemporary cases.

During the course of this class we will discuss a number of contemporary ethical issues, some of which may be controversial and involve sensitive discussions. Despite its size, this course is premised on active discussion and is run as a seminar. I expect that you will respect your fellow students, and part of that is keeping what is said in the classroom in the classroom. You are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss them.

**Accreditation**

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 Students taking this course will be able to think critically, creatively, and independently, learn how to conduct research and evaluate information, write correctly and clearly, and critically evaluate their own work and that of others.

**Readings**

The text for this course is *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases* (8th edition) by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

Other assigned readings are available on Sakai

**Assignments**

***Class Discussion and Facilitation***

During the course, in groups of two you will be responsible for leading one class discussion on a contemporary ethical dilemma or issue. The class will be yours for approximately 10-15 minutes (more if the discussion is really good!) There is a sign-up sheet on Sakai. Leading class discussion means: choosing a topic that has an ethical dimension to discuss (the case should be from the past ten years), circulating one or more readings in advance about the topic, having questions or a prompt ready for class discussion (such as a statement like: ‘who wants to argue that…’), facilitate the ensuing discussion, and summarize your own position.

***Summary and Critique of a Code of Ethics***

Working in groups (no more than four), you will write a summary and critique of one of the following codes of ethics. In your response, address the main tenets of these codes, the ethical framework (if provided), justifications for the guidelines (if provided), any shortcomings, gaps, or problematic statements that your group perceives, and any means of holding people or organizations accountable that these codes provide. Once you discuss these things, provide at least one real-world example of a violation of the ethical code and explain a) why it constitutes a violation, b) what your group would have done differently, and c) what accountability should look like.

Papers should be ten-fifteen pages double-spaced.

*American Advertising Federation*:

<http://www.aaf.org/_pdf/aaf%20website%20content/513_ethics/iae_principles_practices.pdf>

*Buzzfeed:* <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/shani/the-buzzfeed-editorial-standards-and-ethics-guide>

*The New York Times:* <https://www.nytimes.com/editorial-standards/ethical-journalism.html#pursuingTheNews> including the Social Media Policy*:* <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/13/reader-center/social-media-guidelines.html>

*Edelman:* <https://www.scribd.com/document/96444691/Code-of-Ethics>

*Global Alliance PR:* <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/code-of-ethics>

*Public Relations Society of America:* <https://www.prsa.org/ethics/>

*Society for Professional Journalists:* <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

This assignment will be due in advance of fall break.

***Research Participation:***

Students are required to complete 2 hours of research over the course of the semester. There are two ways you can fulfill this requirement. The first is to participate in two hours of academic research studies in the School of Media & Journalism. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive first-hand experience with communication research. You will be able to sign up online to participate in these studies. The second is to write two, 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.

***Case Study Final Paper:***

For your final paper, you are going to work in groups (no more than four) to write an ethics case study on the order of one of the examples from the book. The case study should a) provide extensive background on the case, including what the various actors at issue did, b) summarize the main ethical issues/questions that are implicated in the case study, c) discuss the outcome of the case as it actually occurred, and d) make your own original argument in relation to what the various actors involved *should* have done and provide a detailed explanation for *why*. This paper should be 15-20 pages in length, including examples from the case. You can choose a case presented in class, or an entirely new case.

This paper is due at the final exam. You will present your case studies during the final exam for no more than ten minutes.

**Grades**

Research Participation: 5%

Participation, including attendance, class facilitation, and final paper presentation: 20%

Summary and Critique of Code of Ethics: 30%

Final Paper: 45%

You are assigned letter grades for participation, reading comments, and your class presentations and papers.

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 64-66%

F Below 64%

**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/

**Honor Code:**

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (http://honor.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. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor’s responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

**Seeking Help:**

If you need individual assistance, it’s your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

**Diversity**:

The University’s policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 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.

**Laptops**

It pains me to do this, perhaps because I believe we have agency over our psychological desires, but the persistent distraction of social media is just too much to bear. People’s heads buried in their laptops simply diminishes classroom discussion, and is particularly rude during class presentations and guest speakers. Because of this, we all have to digital detox a bit, so no laptops or mobile phones in class. Don’t worry, we will consume plenty of media in class.

**Course Schedule**

**Part One: Introduction to Ethics**

*Wednesday, August 21st*

Introduction to the course

*Monday, August 26th*

Media Ethics, Chapter One

*Wednesday, August 28th*

No Class

*Monday, September 2nd*

Labor Day Holiday

*Wednesday, September 4th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Two

*Monday, September 9th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Three

*Wednesday, September 11th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Four

*Monday, September 16th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Five

*Wednesday, September 18th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Six

*Monday, September 23rd*

Media Ethics, Chapter Seven

*Wednesday, September 25th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Eight

*Monday, September 30th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Nine

*Wednesday, October 2nd*

Media Ethics, Chapter Ten

*Monday, October 7th*

Media Ethics, Chapter Eleven

*Wednesday, October 9th*

Final Paper Discussion: Come prepared to discuss a) your groups, b) your final paper ideas.

Summary and Critique of a Code of Ethics Due

*Monday, October 14th-Friday, October 18th*

Fall Break: no classes this week

**Journalism Ethics in a Changing World**

*Monday, October 21st*

Culver, Kathleen Bartzen. "Disengaged Ethics: Code development and journalism's relationship with “the public”." *Journalism Practice* 11, no. 4 (2017): 477-492.

Hindman, Matthew. "Journalism ethics and digital audience data." *Remaking the news: Essays on the future of journalism scholarship in the digital age* (2017): 177-195.

*Wednesday, October 23rd*

Dörr, Konstantin Nicholas, and Katharina Hollnbuchner. "Ethical challenges of algorithmic journalism." *Digital Journalism* 5, no. 4 (2017): 404-419.

*Monday, October 28th*

Kool, H. (2016). “The Ethics of Immersive Journalism: A rhetorical analysis of news storytelling with virtual reality technology.” *Intersect: The Stanford Journal of Science, Technology, and Society*, *9*(3).

*Wednesday, October30th*

Karlsson, Michael, and Christer Clerwall. "Transparency to the Rescue? Evaluating citizens’ views on transparency tools in journalism." *Journalism Studies* 19, no. 13 (2018): 1923-1933.

*Monday, November4th*

Tandoc Jr, Edson C., and Joy Jenkins. "Out of bounds? How Gawker’s outing a married man fits into the boundaries of journalism." *New Media & Society* 20, no. 2 (2018): 581-598.

*Monday, November 11th*

Jenkins, Joy, and Edson C. Tandoc Jr. "Journalism under attack: The Charlie Hebdo covers and reconsiderations of journalistic norms." *Journalism* (2017): 1464884917724597.

**Strategic Communication**

*Wednesday, November 6th*

Neill, Marlene S., and Nancy Weaver. "Silent & unprepared: Most millennial practitioners have not embraced role as ethical conscience." *Public Relations Review* 43, no. 2 (2017): 337-344.

*Wednesday, November 13th*

Schauster, Erin, and Marlene Neill. "Have the ethics changed? An examination of ethics in advertising and public relations agencies." *Journal of Media Ethics* 32, no. 1 (2017): 45-60.

*Monday, November 18th*

Ikonen, Pasi, Vilma Luoma-aho, and Shannon A. Bowen. "Transparency for sponsored content: Analysing codes of ethics in public relations, marketing, advertising and journalism." *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 11, no. 2 (2017): 165-178.

*Wednesday, November20th*

Belanche, Daniel. "Ethical limits to the intrusiveness of online advertising formats: A critical review of Better Ads Standards." *Journal of Marketing Communications* (2019): 1-17.

*Monday, November 25th*

Jill Austin, M., and Mary Lynn Reed. "Targeting children online: Internet advertising ethics issues." *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 16, no. 6 (1999): 590-602.

*Monday, December 2nd*

Jin, Yan, Augustine Pang, and Joshua Smith. "Crisis communication and ethics: the role of public relations." *Journal of Business Strategy* 39, no. 1 (2018): 43-52.

*Wednesday, December 4th*

Bjola, Corneliu. "The ethics of countering digital propaganda." *Ethics & International Affairs* 32, no. 3 (2018): 305-315.

Final Class Period Tuesday, December 10th, 12:00pm

Final presentations and papers due