

# MEJO 141.4| Media Ethics

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## Course Details:

Classroom: Carroll 33

Time: T/Th 3:30 PM – 4:45 PM

**Instructor:** Jonathan Schlosser

**Email:** [JSchloss@live.unc.edu](mailto:JSchloss@live.unc.edu)

**Website:** JonathanPhilipSchlosser.com

**Office:** Carroll 347 (in the Graduate Admissions Suite)

**Office Hours:** Friday 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM and By Appointment

**Slack:** mediaethics141-4.slack.com

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## Welcome to Media Ethics!

### Course Description:

In this course, we will broadly examine the field of media ethics. This will include identifying your relationships with ethics, ethical dilemmas you may face, and ethical practices that will be useful in navigating a variety of media professions including journalism, visual communication, public relations, and advertising. Throughout the course, we will review ethical dilemmas that professionals have had to face in the past including case studies pulled from print, broadcast, online, and social media. With in-class discussions and written assignments, this course will explore ethical practices, effects of ethical practices, and the emerging ethical challenges that future media professionals may face.

### Specific Aims of This Course:

- Develop strong understandings of ethical foundations that can be applied to professional situations.
- Critically analyze current media professional practices through reading and discussing communication topics found in journals and other media
- Be able to think through potential ethical challenges and to apply skills to navigate them.
- Develop, defend, and apply a set of ethical guidelines to help navigate ethical challenges.

### Course Materials:

**Textbook:** *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases (9th edition)* by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

The text will be supplemented by articles, other readings, and videos. **All assigned readings should be completed before class.**

**Laptop:** Please bring a laptop or similar device to class, some of our activities will use technology and may require computer access.

**Slack:** Please sign up for a slack account and join our classroom discussion. The link to the group will be mailed to you at the start of class. When you receive that email, please complete the steps to join. Slack will be a primary area for classroom discussion, posts and questions from me, and an alternative format to discuss work and progress.

Sakai and email will be used to make announcements and distribute course material (readings, slides, handouts, assignment guidelines, etc.). Emails will be sent only to your UNC email account. **It is your responsibility to keep up with information, instructions, and/or assignments from class, including those not listed in this syllabus.**

### **Course Guidelines:**

- Please be on time!
  - Key announcements will be made at the beginning of class and review/contextualization will be as well; therefore, it is important to be on time and ready to go.
- Be respectful!
  - Participation and discussion are key to the course – please respect what each of us has to say.
- Keep an open mind!
  - Many topics discussed in this course will be difficult or controversial. I hope that we can keep respect in place and listen to each other's ideas. You may not agree but it is fair to give them their time and listen.
- Please communicate!
  - Many potential issues can be resolved through communication. If you have concerns, please feel free to come and talk about it.
- Protect yourself!
  - If any material, topic, or conversation becomes too overwhelming at any point, please feel free to take a break and step outside or go for a walk. It is important to protect yourself and it is very much understandable to step away.
  - Also, if there is anything that requires a conversation, please feel free to email me a time or come to office hours.
  - If you prefer to talk to someone else, there are a multitude of resources on campus, and if requested those can be provided to you.

### **Professional Values and 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://bit.ly/2b2FoBB>. 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. The values and competencies below are most relevant for this course:

- 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 (JOMC) majors, and it meets a requirement for a minor in social and economic justice. MEJO 141 also now meets the philosophical and moral reasoning (PH) requirement of General Education. That means, during the course of this semester, each student will complete at least 10 pages of writing. There are a few writing assignments throughout the semester that, when combined, meet this requirement.

### **Accommodations:**

If you may require reasonable accommodations to ensure that you have equal access to this course, you are encouraged to self-identify with either of the following offices, depending on your individual needs. Please notify the program at (919) 843-9471, as well.

Department of Accessibility Resources & Service

Phone: (919) 962-8300

Website: [accessibility.unc.edu](http://accessibility.unc.edu)

The Learning Center Service

Phone: (919) 962-7227  
Website: [learningcenter.unc.edu](http://learningcenter.unc.edu)

**Diversity:**

The University's policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined [here](#). In summary, UNC 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 the attention of the instructor or The Office of the Dean of Students, [dos@unc.edu](mailto:dos@unc.edu) or (919) 966-4042.

The University's *Policy Statement on Non Discrimination and Policies on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct* are outlined in the following links:

- <http://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/policy-statement-on-non-discrimination/>
- <https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>

\*For more information about discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, interpersonal violence, or stalking, please take a look at Safe@UNC (the main portal for resources and information):  
<https://safe.unc.edu>

**Honor Code:**

Academic Honesty will be enforced in this class. Therefore, you need to know and follow UNC's policies regarding academic honesty. All participants in this course are expected to complete their own work and there will be no leniency for cheating. Anyone in this course who has concerns about the Honor Code or the role it plays in this course are encouraged to meet with the instructor, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Students Charlie Tuggle, or a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

You can learn all about the UNC Honor System and expectations for student behavior here: <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/>

**Concerning Course Content:**

This course may, at times, include topics, materials, and discussions that can be disturbing or distressing. 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 the time that you miss, and should make arrangements to get notes from a classmate. If you have any concerns, you can also schedule a meeting with me or come to office hours. Please also remember that the university provides a number of resources and services to help you cope with any difficult challenges you face.

Counseling and Psychological Services (aka CAPS): <https://studentaffairs.unc.edu/about-us/departments/counseling-and-psychological-services>

**Attendance:**

Attendance will be taken via a sign in sheet. Please sign yourself in each class period you attend. It is your responsibility to sign in each class period. Please be honest about this process and respect the UNC Honor Code.

You are permitted 3 absences from class. For each class you miss after 3, your final grade will be lowered by three points. I strongly suggest that you save your absences for emergencies and sick days. An absence on a due date does not justify a late assignment.

Students who have no absences for the semester will receive a bonus of five points on the final exam.

**Participation:**

The success of this class depends in large part on the quality of class discussion and students coming to class prepared. To achieve a high participation grade, please actively contribute to the discussion, complete work prior to class, pay attention, and be fully engaged. Participation will be tracked throughout the course and you will receive a grade. Everyone in the class will start with a 100 for participation. It can only go down, but being active in the classroom will keep it up there. If you actively pay attention, contribute occasionally, and complete the things required for class, you will be fine.

**Grading & Evaluation:**

The table below outlines the percentage that each of the assignments in this course will count towards your final grade.

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Participation</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Group Project on Decision-Making Framework</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Group Presentation on Theorist</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Individual Essay</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>25%</b>

The University's Grading Standards will be applied to this course:

A	=	93 - 100
A-	=	90 - 92.9
B+	=	87 - 89.9
B	=	83 - 86.9
B-	=	80 - 82.9
C+	=	77 - 79.9
C	=	73 - 76.9
C-	=	70 - 72.9

D+	=	67 – 69.9
D	=	60 – 66.9
F	=	59 or Below

“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 disciplines; 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 reason, 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.

Grades will be posted on Sakai for all assignments.

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, this 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.

Final averages are not rounded; to receive an A- for the class, for example, you must earn a 90 percent final average. A final average of 89.6 is a B+.

### **Group Presentation on Theorist**

For this project, you and a group of your choosing will pick one of the main theorists and review their work and contributions to the media ethics field. These presentations will work to

teach the class about the different theorists and should communicate the main points surrounding their contributions. In essence, you will be developing and teaching the class about your theorist. The presentation should be 10-15 minutes. You can include a background on the theorist, an overview of their work, the specific contribution made to media ethics, connections to our course, and connections to professional situations. Additionally, you will apply the work of this theorist to an issue you may face while working professionally and discuss its applicability. The deadline for this assignment is **Tuesday, September 10** with presentations taking place on **Tuesday, September 10 and Thursday, September 12.**

### **Group Project on Decision-Making Framework**

For this assignment, you and your group will apply one of the decision-making frameworks discussed in class (Potter Box, TARES test, etc.) to a current news story or advertisement. The news story or ad should be current (within the last 6 months) and it should be pre-approved. You and your group will review the news story or ad and you will assess the ethical decisions that may have come into play. The product should be a critical review of the ethical dilemmas and an analysis of how to navigate those dilemmas. This group project will be submitted as a 5-6 page essay. The deadline for this assignment is **Tuesday, October 22.**

### **Individual Essay**

For this assignment, you will be tasked with writing an 8-10 page paper that discusses a challenge in the media landscape and the ethical considerations that stem from that challenge. Some topics include privacy, partisanship, digital media, “fake news”, gender bias, racial bias, diversity, etc. The assignment will give you the opportunity to apply the knowledge learned throughout the course and to connect it to your future career. This assignment will require you to think deeply and to critically analyze the challenge that you are focusing on. The deadline for this assignment is **Tuesday, December 3.**

### **Mid-Term Exam & Final Exam**

These will be multiple choice exams designed to test your knowledge of the material learned in class. The midterm will be 40 multiple choice questions and will take place on **Tuesday, October 15.** The final exam will consist of 60 multiple-choice questions and the date for that is to be determined. These exams count for a large portion of your grade and should be prepared for diligently.

### **Schedule:**

The schedule below outlines the major topics covered in the course, as well as dates for assignment deadlines and exams. This schedule is subject to change, especially if there are guest speakers or weather events. Any updates will be clearly communicated and provided through Sakai.

This does not contain additional readings and articles that will be posted throughout the course. All readings will be posted to Sakai – please keep these in mind while progressing through the course.

### **Key Dates:**

Classes Begin: Tuesday, August 20  
No Class: Monday September 2

Fall Break: Thursday, October 17 and Friday, October 18  
 Thanksgiving Break: November 27, 28, 29  
 Last Day: Wednesday, December 4

<b>MEJO 141 Schedule Fall 2019</b>	
Tuesday, August 20	Introduction to Course Why talk about ethics?
Thursday, August 22	Introduction to Case Studies See Sakai for posted readings.
Tuesday, August 27	Ethical Foundations Read: Chapter 1, Essay, and Case Study See Sakai for additional readings.
Thursday, August 29	Ethical Foundations Read: Chapter 1, Essay, and Case Study See Sakai for additional readings.
Tuesday, September 3	Information Ethics Read: Chapter 2 and Case Studies A-H, except C See Sakai for additional readings.
Thursday, September 5	Information Ethics Read: Chapter 2 and Case Studies A-H, except C See Sakai for additional readings.
Tuesday, September 10	<b>Group Presentations</b>
Thursday, September 12	<b>Group Presentations</b>
Tuesday, September 17	Strategic Communication Read: Chapter 3 and Case Studies A-G, except F See Sakai for additional readings.
Thursday, September 19	Strategic Communication Read: Chapter 3 and Case Studies A-G, except F See Sakai for additional readings.
Tuesday, September 24	Loyalties

	<p>Read: Chapter 4 and Case Studies B - H See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Thursday, September 26	<p>Loyalties Read: Chapter 4 and Case Studies B - H See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Tuesday, October 1	<p>Privacy Read: Chapter 5 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Thursday, October 3	<p>Privacy Read: Chapter 5 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Tuesday, October 8	<p>Photojournalism Ethics Read: Chapter 8 and All Case Studies (many of these contain sensitive content) See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Thursday, October 10	<p>Photojournalism Ethics Read: Chapter 8 and All Case Studies (many of these contain sensitive content) See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Tuesday, October 15	<p><b>Midterm</b></p>
Tuesday, October 22	<p>Media Economics Read: Chapter 7 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.</p> <p><b>Group Projects Due</b></p>
Thursday, October 24	<p>Media Economics Read: Chapter 7 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Tuesday, October 29	<p>Mass Media and Democratic Society Read: Chapter 6 and Case Studies A-G, except E See Sakai for additional readings.</p>
Thursday, October 31	<p>Mass Media and Democratic Society Read: Chapter 6 and Case Studies A-G, except E</p>

	See Sakai for additional readings.
Tuesday, November 5	Media and Justice Read: Chapter 9 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.
Thursday, November 7	Media and Justice Read: Chapter 9 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.
Tuesday, November 12	Ethical Dimensions of Art & Entertainment Read: Chapter 10 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.
Thursday, November 14	Ethical Dimensions of Art & Entertainment Read: Chapter 10 and All Case Studies See Sakai for additional readings.
Tuesday, November 19	Becoming a Moral Adult Read: Chapter 11 See Sakai for additional readings.
Thursday, November 21	Becoming a Moral Adult Read: Chapter 11 See Sakai for additional readings.
Tuesday, November 26	Ideals vs. Reality See Sakai for Posted Readings.
Tuesday, December 3	<b>Final Review &amp; Essays Due!</b>
Thursday, December 12 At 4:00 PM	<b>Final Exam</b>