MEJO 141.001 MEDIA ETHICS

**Summer 2020 SYLLABUS**

Classroom: Zoom https://unc.zoom.us/j/93162272080

A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generatedTime: MTWThF 1:15-2:45 p.m.

**Instructor:**

**Farnosh Mazandarani**

Office: Zoom

Office Hours: By appointment

E-mail: Farnosh@live.unc.edu

**Course Goals and Objectives:**

Welcome to MEJO 141! We’re here to learn about media ethics. Media professionals talk a lot about doing the right thing, but they’re constantly criticized for ethical and moral shortcomings. We’re going to look at the relationships of ethics, ethical dilemmas, and ethical practices within a variety of media professions including entertainment media, journalism, visual communication, public relations, and advertising.

This class explores – both in class discussions and written assignments – what constitutes ethical practices, what interferes with ethical practices, and what emerging ethical issues may challenge you as the future leaders of the media and journalism fields.

Here are the specific course objectives:

•Integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas 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.

**Readings:** The required text for this course is Media Ethics: Issues & Cases (9th edition) by Patterson, Wilkins, and Painter.

The text will be discussed in length and used in every class. All assigned readings should be completed before class. If you cannot afford the text, there are two copies available in the Park Library to read as well as my personal copy you can peruse during office hours or by appointment.

**Sign up for a Slack Account under “MEJO 141”** [**Invite Link Here**](https://join.slack.com/t/mejo-141-workspace/shared_invite/zt-e92gdd6b-6KRr8ii_rTEVAKY36GIRVA)

We will use this site as a way to communicate inside and outside of class. You can also use it to aid in discussion with your classmates and as the primary way to ask me questions. This, along with Sakai will also be where you will turn in all your work and assignments. I will send you an email invitation to our Slack page.

**ABOUT THE CONTENT AND CLASS**

This course may at times include topics, materials, and discussions that could be disturbing  or distressing to some people. 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 are responsible for any material covered during time that you miss, and you should make arrangements to get an update from a classmate. 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 (CAPS).](https://caps.unc.edu/)

**Basic guidelines:**

* + **Please be on time** – it’s a matter of professionalism, responsibility, and mutual respect (all huge themes  of this course). Class starts promptly at 8 a.m. – be there!
  + **Be respectful** – We need to hear what everyone has to say. Participation and discussion are keys to this  course, and I hope we have some intense sessions. In other words, we don’t all have to agree, but I do  request that you be respectful in your disagreement.
  + **Be respectful, part 2** – if you must leave the room, please limit the disruption. For  example, don’t let the door slam!
  + **Communication is key** – Many, many misunderstandings, issues, problems, or situations (crisis  communications folks can come up with all sorts of names for it) can be solved by communication. If I don’t know there is a problem, I can’t help to solve it. In essence, please come talk to me when you have concerns about the class or anything else that you think I can help with.

**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 in bold 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 (was?) required for MEJO 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. As you’ll see in the schedule, there are a few writing assignments that together meet this stipulation.

**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**

(919) 962-8300

accessibility.unc.edu

**The Learning Center**

(919) 962-7227

learningcenter.unc.edu

**Diversity:** The University’s policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined [here](http://policy.sites.unc.edu/files/2013/04/nondiscrim.pdf). 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 or (919) 966-4042.

**Honor Code:** You need to know and follow UNC’s policies regarding academic honesty in this class. I will enforce all these rules. 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/>

**Attendance:** An absence on a due date does not justify a late assignment. Your attendance will be posted on Sakai.

**Make-Up Policy:** Exams may be made up in the event of a medical emergency that is documented with a doctor’s note. Make-up exams will be given at the end of the semester.

**GROUP ASSIGNMENT**

**Ethics in the News Presentation** - 20%

You will be assigned to a group of 2-3 students and asked to identify a news item dealing with  a mass media ethics-related event that has been in the news sometime during the previous two weeks. You’ll explain the item to the class (15 minutes) and lead a short discussion (15 minutes). Each group member will receive the same grade for the assignment, unless a member does  not show for the presentation or is demonstrating a clear lack of participation in the project. The assignment consists of three components: the information you provide via Slack to educate your fellow students on your topic prior to class (news items, videos, links etc.), identify appropriate ethics codes to consider, your in-class presentation (using effective visuals such as a few PowerPoint slides); and your assistance guiding the discussion in class. You will be responsible for helping lead/manage the discussion in class, which is where we’ll discuss the ways (and there will be multiple; remember, these decisions aren’t black and white!) we might address the dilemma.

Some good places to find topics are [Poynter’s Everyday Ethics Column](https://www.poynter.org/channels/ethics) and the [iMedia Ethics](https://www.imediaethics.org/) website.

Please have your information posted to the appropriate Slack channel by at least 1pm **TWO  DAYS** before your assigned presentation day. This gives your fellow students time to review the information you provide and to create their discussion points and questions. You should submit your in-class presentation (PowerPoint, handouts, etc.) to me through Slack before class on the day of your presentation.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate your project:

1. Is the topic timely (within the two-week time frame), and does it involve an issue of ethical concern to mass media professionals?
2. Do you clearly explain the situation? Do you clearly outline the ethical issue(s) the situation presents? Do you apply the appropriate ethics codes to analyze the situation and help inform your proposed response?
3. Do you effectively present your topic in class, using appropriate and effective visual aids (presentation slides, etc.)?
4. Do you effectively help guide class discussion, responding as appropriate to classmates’ comments and questions?
5. Do you submit all your materials on time?

**INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS**

*All written assignments should be turned into the appropriate Sakai assignment as Word documents with the exception of discussion points. Please double-space all written assignments using 12-point Times New Roman and 1” margins. The tone for all writing can be conversational but should also be professional.* ***Late work will result in a full letter grade deduction. Assignments more than 24 hours late will not be accepted and a grade of 0 will be recorded.***

**Assignments – 30% (10% each)**

You will be given three writing assignments throughout the semester. These will be found on Sakai along with a grading rubric. They will also be discussed in class and you are encouraged to review the material early to ask questions either in class or on Slack. The prompts will be available at least one week in advance of the due date. An optional 3rd assignment is available for students who would like to increase their total weighted course grade.

**Reading Responses- 10% (5% each)**

Each student will discuss a topic from the assigned reading ***twice*** during the semester. The student will turn in a 1.5 to 2-page response paper. This assignment allows you to reflect on your assigned reading. It is an opportunity to “think out loud” about issues that interest you and that are connected to the reading. You may talk through a new idea arising from your reading, contemplate what confuses you, argue an inconsistency, defend an idea represented in the reading, offer an alternative view, elaborate/apply via a personal experience, etc. Turn in your written paper to the **Sakai** assignment section ***24 HOURS BEFORE THE ASSIGNED CLASS DATE***.

**Slack Participation- 10%**

When not primarily responsible for introducing a topic or a news presentation during a class meeting, each student will present (orally in class and/or in writing on Slack) **TWO** discussion points and/or questions **PER WEEK**. Prepare two questions or discussion points (open-ended rather than yes/no) to facilitate discussion of the assigned readings, topic, or news presentation. You will need to ask different questions than those that are already posted, so if someone has already posted your question or made your point, come up with something new. You can bring up your discussion point in class or post your discussion point on **Slack**.

**Midterm/Final Exam – 10% and 20%, respectively**

Two quizzes will test your understanding of the material covered in lectures, assigned readings,  and class presentations. The first exam will test material up until that date, while the final exam is comprehensive. Exams may include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, and short-answer questions to test your understanding of the material covered in lectures, in-class activities, assigned readings, and in-class presentations.

**Grading:** Course grades will be calculated using the following percentages:

The final course grade will be calculated using the following scale:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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 |

Ethics in the News Presentation 20%

Three Assignments 30%

Reading Response 10%

Slack Participation 10%

Midterm Exam 10%

Final Exam 20%

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 they 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+.

**MEJO 141.1 Media Ethics Tentative Daily Schedule**

**\*\*\* Please note: this schedule is subject to change if speaker opportunities arise, a pandemic hits our town and livelihood, etc. \*\*\***

May 13 Introduction to the course and the subject of ethics

May 14 Introduction to Ethical Decision Making

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 1

May 15 (Finishing) Introduction to Ethical Decision Making

Entertainment Media: Standards and Practices, MPAA, FCC, etc.

May 18 (Finishing) Entertainment Media: S&P, MPAA, FCC, etc.

Television Media: History of Ethical Development and Ratings

**\*Assignment 1 given\***

May 19 The Ethical Dimensions of Art and Entertainment

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 10 ***and*** Case Studies

May 20 Continuing Ethical Dimensions of Art and Entertainment

May 21 The Ethics of Photo and Video Journalism

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 8 ***and*** Case Studies

May 22 Continuing Ethics of Photo and Video Journalism

EITN:

**\*Assignment 1 DUE BEFORE CLASS on May 22nd on Sakai\***

Mon, May 25 NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY

May 26 Information Ethics: A Profession Seeks Truth

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 2 ***and*** Case Studies

EITN:

May 27 Continuing Information Ethics: A Profession Seeks Truth

EITN:

May 28 Loyalty: Choosing Between Competing Allegiances

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 4 ***and*** Case Studies 4A-4D

EITN:

May 29 Continuing Loyalty: Choosing Between Competing Allegiances

Midterm Review

EITN:

***June 1 MIDTERM – ON SAKAI***

June 2 Privacy: Looking for Solitude in the Global Village

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 5 ***and*** Case Studies

EITN:

**\*Assignment 2 given\***

June 3 Continuing Privacy: Looking for Solitude in the Global Village

EITN:

June 4 Mass Media in a Democratic Society: Keeping a Promise

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 6 ***and*** Case Studies

EITN:

June 5 Continuing Mass Media in a Democratic Society: Keeping a Promise

EITN:

June 8 Strategic Communications

EITN:

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 3 ***and*** Case Studies

**\*Assignment 2 DUE BEFORE CLASS on June 8th on Sakai\***

**\*Assignment 3 given\***

June 9 Continuing Strategic Communications

EITN:

June 10 Informing a Just Society

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 9 ***and*** Case Studies

EITN:

June 11 Media Economics: The Deadline Meets the Bottom Line

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 7 ***and*** Case Studies

EITN:

June 12 Becoming a Moral Adult

\*Read for today: MEIC, Chapter 11

EITN:

June 15 Finishing All Lectures

**Final Exam Review**

**\*Assignment 3 DUE BEFORE CLASS on June 15th on Sakai\***

***June 17&18 Final Exam on Sakai***