

JOMC 141.001: Professional Problems & Ethics

Fall 2014: T, Th 12:30-1:45 p.m.

Carroll Hall, Room 33

Instructor: Suzannah Evans

389 Carroll Hall

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and by appointment

Course goals and objectives: Welcome to JOMC 141! We're here to critically engage with important issues facing every single one of us as both consumers and producers of mass media.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Thoughtfully critique media productions from a professional and consumer point of view
- Understand the sources of difference between ethical values in communications fields and socio-cultural situations
- Develop your own ethical guidelines for your professional aspirations

Required texts and readings

Patterson, P. & Wilkins, L. (2013). *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 8th edition.

A copy of the book is available on reserve at the Park Library in Carroll Hall. Additional readings will be available on Sakai.

You are expected to complete all readings in advance of class. In addition, you should be following major news as it happens. Current events and how they are covered by the media will be the source of many of our discussions. Whether you watch CNN or read Gawker, you should be thinking about what counts as news and how stories unfold. You are also encouraged to bring in questions about media events or post them on Sakai.

Honor Code

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-led honor system for over 100 years. Academic integrity is at the heart of Carolina and we all are responsible for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. The student-led Honor System is responsible for adjudicating any suspected violations of the Honor Code and all suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the honor system. Information, including your responsibilities as a student is outlined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class! Learning is a participatory process. Attendance will be taken every day by a sign-in sheet. You are permitted three absences. After three absences, each absence will result in 2 points removed from your final grade. In other

words, if you have a 91 (A-) and miss a fourth class, your grade will be lowered to an 89 (B+). I will not be asking you for reasons for your absences (and you don't need to email me unless it's an exam/presentation day), but you should know that no absence after your three allowed absences will be excused. You are strongly encouraged to save your permitted absences for when you really need them.

Timeliness. Our class begins at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday. It's a courtesy to your fellow classmates and myself to be on time. Repeated tardiness (5 min or more) will affect your attendance and participation grade.

Courtesy. This is a course about ethics, meaning there are few black-and-white rules that we won't challenge and pick apart. This means your voice and opinion is very important. We will often be discussing difficult and controversial ethical issues. Please respect the opinions of your fellow students. We are here to challenge our assumptions and learn from each other.

Participation. Speaking up in class is encouraged, but you will also participate by posting on our Sakai site. I will post a discussion prompt for each week's topic on the previous Sunday (or earlier). You may post responses (minimum 100 words) on that thread. Alternately, you may post topics inside other general forums on the site, for example, general ethical issues in the news. This can be an interesting news item or media topic that happened that week. You should post 1 time per week; this will be counted in your participation grade.

Regarding guest speakers. We will have 4 or 5 guest speakers during the semester. I hope you'll enjoy learning from them. You will be asked to turn in a short response paper (250-300 words) reflecting on **three** guest speakers' lecture in the following class. You can pick which three speakers. What did you learn that surprised you? What might affect how you think about the media or your own work?

Please note: **READING is required for this course!** The best thing you can do to make class more fun and engaging for yourself is to do the readings, especially current events and case studies.

Participation grades will be based on the following:

- **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 online at least twice weekly. They contribute interesting and/or thought-provoking ideas and occasionally bring in outside material relevant to the class and to the readings. They arrive to class on time and do not miss classes. From their comments, it is clear that they have done the class readings. (9-10)
- **B** students participate in some of the class discussions each week and/or contribute online at least once or twice weekly. They may have no absences and they arrive to class on time. It is usually clear that they have done the assigned readings. (7-8)
- **C** students may participate in class or online 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. It is not clear that they have done the readings. (5-6)

- **D and F** students have barely said anything all semester whether in class or online, 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 and give no indication that they have done the readings. (≤ 4)

Laptops and cell phones. Laptops are permitted in class; however, I reserve the right to ask you to close your laptops during presentations or other class discussions. You are expected to be using your laptop only to take notes for class. Other use may result in my asking you to leave your laptop at home. Cell phones should be set on silent or turned off and left in your backpack, please.

Office hours. My walk-in hours are Tuesday 10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in Carroll 389 (third floor directly above Park Library). You are also welcome to make an appointment by email at least one day in advance. You may also email me with questions. **Please put “JOMC 141” and something about your question in the email subject heading.** Example: “JOMC 141: Midterm exam question.” I will try to answer questions by email with 24-48 hours of receipt. You should not plan on getting an email answer in less than 24 hours! So try not to leave it until an hour before your paper is due.

Diversity. The University’s policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination as outlined in the 2012-2013 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/intro.html>. 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 or disabilities.

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 Department of Disability Services website at <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu> or call 919.962.8300. If you need assistance or services from the Academic Success Program for Students with LD/ADHD please contact them at 919-962-7227 or <http://www.unc.edu/asp/>.

Research Participation Requirement. Students in JOMC 141 are required to complete two hours of research participation over the course of the semester. There are two ways you may fill this requirement. The first way is to participate in two academic research studies in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive first-hand experience with mass communication research. You will be able to sign up online to participate in these studies. The second way to fulfill your research participation requirement is to write two two-page (double-spaced) 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 critique any article published in the last 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*, and *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. Your critiques are due no later than **Monday, December 1, by 5 p.m.**, but you may turn them in at any point in the semester.

Grades

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance: 10%

Participation: 15%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Other assignments: 10%

Final Paper: 20%

Group paper and presentation: 20%

Research requirement: 5%

Grade scale

Final grades will be based on the following scale.

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 = 63-66

D- = 60-62

F = 59 or below

Grades are not negotiable and will not be “rounded up.” However, I will meet with you regarding specific assignment or exam grades as long as you contact me within one week of receiving the grade, with the exception of the final paper.

Exam

We will have one in-class exam, a midterm. The exam will cover material presented in class and in the readings and will be comprised of multiple choice and short answer questions.

Group Project

You will be assigned groups of three to four to do one of two types of group projects: either a case study of a current news ethics controversy, or a TARES test on an ad. I will attempt to assign you to groups based on which type of presentation you want to

do. You will receive an individual grade and a group grade. Your individual grade will be determined by a 3-page double-spaced paper describing your role in the project and the most important finding of your research. This paper is due on the day you give your presentation. Your group grade will be determined by the quality of your findings and presentation. In addition, a portion of your group grade will be determined by student reviewers, so be sure to engage your fellow students.

Final Paper

Your final assignment will be an 8-10 page paper (double spaced, 12-point font, plus a minimum of 10 references) that will be due at the time of our final exam, which is Tuesday, December 9. You must drop a hard copy at my office (Carroll 389) by **12 pm on Tuesday, December 9**. Emailed copies will not be accepted unless we have extreme weather and the university is closed. No late papers will be accepted. You should use APA citation style for your references.

Schedule

Tuesday, August 19: Introduction to the course and syllabus. Why do we study ethics?

Reading: None.

Thursday, August 21: Concepts and Principles of Ethics – Old dead guys.

Reading: Chapter 1 of Patterson & Wilkins; “What Americans Think About Media Ethics” on Sakai.

Tuesday, August 26: More dead guys; the case study approach; Social Responsibility Theory.

Reading: “The uneasy intersection of politics and journalism” on Sakai.

Thursday, August 28: More basics of journalism ethics. Where did it come from, and what does it mean? What is objectivity? What is plagiarism and patchwriting?

Reading: Chapter 2 of Patterson & Wilkins and “An Ethical Audit” on Sakai. Bring in a copy of a recent Daily Tar Heel for an in-class discussion. Also: Groups will be assigned for the group project.

Tuesday, Sept. 2: Decision-making in-class exercise to get to know your group.

You will be given a case study to discuss. Use one of the ethical guidelines discussed in earlier classes to analyze and make a recommendation. It is recommended that one member of your group brings a laptop.

Due: Turn in a short (1-2 doubled-spaced pages) essay based on the in class exercise at the end of class. You may email it to me at sdevans@live.unc.edu with the subject heading: “JOMC 141 decision-making exercise.”

Thursday, Sept. 4: Guest speaker Joel Curran

Tuesday, Sept. 9: The TARES Test

Reading: The TARES Test: Principles of Ethical Persuasion on Sakai

Due: Response paper on Joel Curran's presentation

Tuesday, Sept. 16: Loyalty; Strategic Communications and Public Relations

Reading: Chapters 3 and 4 of Patterson & Wilkins

Thursday, Sept. 18: Guest speaker: Jesse Abdenour on documentaries and truth-telling

Tuesday, Sept. 23: Privacy; social media and the definition of a source.

Reading: Chapter 5 of Patterson & Wilkins

Due: Response paper on Jesse Abdenour's presentation.

Thursday, Sept. 25: Going undercover: the (nearly) lost art of deceptive journalism.

Reading: "Their Men in Washington"; "I Just Wanted to Fly Solo: A Night at the Sugar Ray Festival."

Tuesday, Sept. 30: Photojournalism.

Reading: Chapter 8 of Patterson & Wilkins

Due: Turn in a one-page proposal for your group project. If you are doing a TARES test, identify which ad you plan to discuss and why it's important to scrutinize. If you are doing a case study of a news event, describe the event and what makes it an ethical issue.

Thursday, Oct. 2: Media and democracy; war and national security.

Reading: Chapter 6 of Patterson & Wilkins

Tuesday, Oct. 7: Codes of Ethics: What do they mean?

Reading: See Sakai for codes of ethics for IAE (ads); bloggers; RTNDA (radio and TV); Society of Professional Journalists; NPPA visual journalism; and PRSA. Read the one that's most pertinent to your field and be prepared to discuss in class.

Thursday, Oct. 9: New media

Reading: Chapter 9 of Patterson & Wilkins

Tuesday, Oct. 14: Framing

Reading: TBD

Thursday, Oct. 16: No class; fall break!

Tuesday, Oct. 21: Political ads

Due: BRING in an AD or post a link to one on Sakai by 6 pm on Tuesday.

Thursday, Oct. 23: Guest speaker: Reporter and blogger Elisha Sauers

Tuesday, Oct. 28: Diversity, Sexism and Stereotypes; Midterm Review

Due: Response paper on Elisha Sauers' presentation. Also, post an example of stereotyping in the media on the forum on Sakai by Monday at noon. That means before class!

Thursday, Oct. 30: Midterm Exam!

Tuesday, Nov. 4: You worked hard preparing for your exam, so today is MOVIE DAY! We will watch and discuss an episode from either "The Newsroom," "The Wire" or "House of Cards" that deals with journalism, democracy and ethics. I will take a vote on which program to show.

Thursday, Nov. 6: Public spaces, public faces: celebrities and more.

Reading: Chapter 10 of Patterson & Wilkins

Tuesday, Nov. 11: In-class group project work. I will meet with each group briefly. Ask me anything!

Thursday, Nov. 13: Crisis management for PR professionals. Guest speaker: Daniel Evans

Reading: TBD

Tuesday, Nov. 18: Group Project Presentations

Due: Response paper on Daniel Evans's presentation

Thursday, Nov. 20: Group Project Presentations

Tuesday, Nov. 25: Group Project Presentations

Thursday, Nov. 27: THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS

Tuesday, Dec. 2: Group Project Presentations

Tuesday, Dec. 9: Final paper due to my office (Carroll 389) by 12 pm.

Students who complete this course should be able to:

- 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;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;

- Think critically, creatively and independently.