

MEJO 141
SPRING 2020 SYLLABUS
33 Carroll Hall
TR 2-3:15 p.m.

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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 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. I'll have a seating chart (seating will

be restricted to rows closer to the front of the classroom), so you'll need to pick a spot and stay there for the semester. 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 four (4)** absences without it affecting your attendance grade. You do not need to turn in forms excusing an absence. You have four 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 four absences will result in point deductions from your final overall course grade. Specifically, each absence beyond 4 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 5 absences, your final score is now 80.

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, or take part in an in-class assignment. 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 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.

You may not have your laptops open 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 [here](#). 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](#).

AEJMC values

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values that our majors should be aware of and competencies our majors should be able to demonstrate by the time they graduate from our program. You can learn more about them here under the heading "Professional values and competencies" <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

In this class, we will focus on the following values:

- 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 professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

Readings:

Required textbook:

Peck, L. A., & Reel, G. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Media Ethics at Work: True Stories from Young Professionals* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

In addition to the textbook, I may assign readings from other sources. These articles, blogs, 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 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 grades:

A 95.0-100	C+ 77.0-79.99
A- 90.0-94.99	C 74.0-76.99
B+ 87.0-89.99	C- 70.0-73.99
B 84.0-86.99	D+ 67.0-69.99
B- 80.0-83.99	D 60.0-66.99
	F 59.99 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 [Explanation of the Grading System](#) (click Undergraduate Grade Definitions.)

I don’t negotiate grades, but I will hear your concerns and talk with you about them. If you want to discuss any assignment, exam or paper 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 Explanations

- Participation 10%
- Exploring Media Ethics (paper) 15%
- Ethics in the News (presentation) 15%
- Exam I 25%
- Exam II/Final Exam 35%

Participation (10% of grade). Class participation will be divided in the following way: ½ of your participation grade will come from your participation in our class discussions. To receive the 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, ½ of your participation grade will come from your participation during in-class exercises and activities. These in-class exercises will include a variety of activities to help you make connections among the material you’re reading and make connections from that material to current ethical issues in society. These activities and exercises will include things like asking you to write out responses to the readings which you will then share with the class, to or to work in groups to answer some questions and discuss your findings with your classmates, or to think through hypothetical situations.

Important: 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 discussions.

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 26th.

Ethics in the News (EITN) presentation (15% of grade). 50-point scale. You'll be assigned to a group of 3-4 students, and each group will be responsible for locating a current 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. Please send me an electronic copy of any material you have for the presentation. 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 11th.
- Exam II/Final Exam (35% of grade). The final exam is Mon., May 4th, 12-3 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 may include multiple choice questions, identifications, short answer questions, and essays. The final exam is not cumulative, but it includes more material than Exam I.

Tentative Course Schedule

Th Jan 9 Introduction to and overview of the course: policies and expectations

Unit I - Professional ethics: codes and practices

T Jan 14 An introduction to ethics/ethical decision-making
Textbook: Ch. 1 (Peck); Ch. 2 (Elliott)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings

Th Jan 16 Corporate media ethics – an introduction
Check Sakai site for any additional readings

T Jan 21 Corporate media ethics – continued
Textbook: Ch. 23 (Ritzenthaler)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings

Th Jan 23 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)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings

- T Jan 28 **EITN presentation/Group 1**
Producing media content –manipulation & misrepresentation
Textbook: Ch. 3 (Mensing); Ch. 6 (Waters); Ch. 8 (Daniels)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings
- Th Jan 30 **EITN presentation/Group 2**
Producing media content – manipulation & misrepresentation/fairness
Textbook: Ch. 4 (Austin); Ch. 9 (Mirando)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings
- T Feb 4 **EITN presentation/Group 3**
Information, ethics and social media
Textbook: Ch. 12 (Parrish & Reel); Ch. 24 (Leach)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings
- Th Feb 6 Discuss midterm exam and options for *Exploring Media Ethics* paper
- T Feb 11 **Exam I**
- Th Feb 13 **EITN presentation/Group 4**
The ethics of media research
Textbook: Ch. 5 (Furlow)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings

Unit II - Media framing and ethics of representation

- T Feb 18 **EITN presentation/Group 5**
Media framing and representation
Check Sakai site for any additional readings
- Th Feb 20 The ethics of representation & news coverage
Textbook: Ch. 11 (Brown); Ch. 13 (Davies & Rodenberg);
EITN presentation/Group 6
Check Sakai site for any additional readings
- T Feb 25 **EITN presentation/Group 7**
Ethics of representation: Whose voices?
Textbook: Ch. 26 (Concepción)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings
- Th Feb 27 **EITN presentation/Group 8**
Ethics of representation: How much information?
Textbook: Ch. 15 (Reimold); Ch. 17 (Niekamp)
Check Sakai site for any additional readings

T	Mar 3	Ethics of representation: Special circumstances and cases Ch. 14 (Frederick & Meader); Ch. 19 (Boynton & Rhew) <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
Th	Mar 5	Individual work and meetings on paper
T	Mar 10	Spring Break
Th	Mar 12	Spring Break
T	Mar 17	The ethics of representation & news coverage/special topic <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
Th	Mar 19	EITN presentation/Group 9 The ethics of representation & news coverage/special topic <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
T	Mar 24	The ethics of representation & news coverage/special topic <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
Th	Mar 26	Exploring Media Ethics paper due Please be prepared to discuss your papers with the class

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

T	Mar 31	Understanding media literacy <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
Th	Apr 2	Media literacy, continued. <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
T	Apr 7	EITN presentation/Group 10 Media literacy group exercise <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
Th	Apr 9	EITN presentation/Group 11 Media literacy group exercise <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
T	Apr 14	EITN presentation/Group 12 Media literacy group exercise <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>
Th	Apr 16	EITN presentation/Group 13 Developing a media ethics guide: best practices <i>Check Sakai site for any additional readings</i>

T Apr 21 Discussion of findings from media literacy exercise/media ethics guide

Th Apr 23 Review for Exam II/Final Exam

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**Exam II/Final Exam      Monday, May 4      12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**