***MEJO 141 – Media Ethics: Summer II 2020***

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**Office Hours:** By request. If you need to meet, I’ll do everything to make it happen, via Zoom or phone.

C**ourse Overview**: We’re going to explore how media professions and publications establish ethical guidelines and how difficult it can sometimes be to follow them. We will seek to define ethics and learn whether they are innate, learned or some combination of both, and we will establish their historical roots and learn if ancient concepts can be applied to modern day dilemmas. We may even seek to answer some core questions, like ‘does anything matter anymore’? We will explore how ethics play throughout the communications approach in journalism; public relations; and the advertising industry. We will also discuss what emerging ethical issues may challenge the newest generation of professional communicators. That’s you.

**Course Objectives**: You will learn to draw on the experience and musings of others to make organized ethical decisions within your profession. By semester’s end, you should also be able to:

å integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas to professional situations;

å critically analyze current media practices through reading and discussing

communication topics found in trade journals and other media;

å compare ethical standards of mass communication professions and examine how

similarities and differences help or hinder their professional relationships;

å develop, defend, and apply your own set of guidelines in ethical challenges.

å think critically about a wide range of complex issues with no easy answers.

**Operating Remotely: This will be hybrid class, meeting twice a week via zoom and with some online assignments and supplementary discussions. The tests and quizzes will be online, the zoom sessions will be an hour and 15 minutes and will focus on lecture, readings and discussion. I will do my best to accommodate you on any issues with internet connectivity, or zoom functionality. I will absolutely work with you, just communicate with with me and let me know of any potential obstacles and issues. We’ll figure it out.**

**Professional values and competencies**: The Hussman School’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](http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/program/principles.shtml#vals&comps). 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:

* **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;**
* **Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;**
* **Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, 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;**
* **Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;**
* **Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;**
* **Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;**
* **Critically evaluate your own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;**
* **Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;**
* **Notice how many times “thinking critically,” is mentioned or alluded to above? That’s a called a hint of what I’m expecting of you. We are not here to regurgitate information we crammed into our heads moments before a test.**

## *Prerequisites:* None.This class is required for MEJO majors, and it meets a requirement for a minor in social and economic justice.

MEJO 141 also meets the General Education requirement for philosophical and moral reasoning (PH). That means, during the course of this semester, each student will complete at least 10 pages of writing. As you’ll see in the week-to-week schedule, there are a few writing assignments that, together, meet this stipulation.

**About the content**:  This course may at times include topics, materials and discussions that can be disturbing or distressing, and 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 time that you miss, and you should make arrangements to get notes from a classmate. I will be happy to meet with you if you have concerns. Please also remember that 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 (aka CAPS): <https://campushealth.unc.edu/services/counseling-and-psychological-services>.

**Required Text**:

***Media Ethics: Issues and Cases***, 9th edition, by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

At least one copy is available at the Park Library, and the bookstore now has textbook rentals. The textbook will be supplemented by articles or **other readings.** All assigned readings should be completed before the appropriate class sessions for which they are assigned to ensure that you’re ready to discuss, ask questions, offer opinions, disagree, argue, share knowledge, etc. See participation, below.

**Professional curiosity**: This is a real-world class in which we’re going to examine the challenges and dilemmas of today’s media and communication professions. You’ll need to keep up with what’s going on in the world and in your profession, as current events and issues will play a large role in the class. Take some time each week to check out the news in papers, magazines, TV and/or online – one resource I like is *The Skimm* (<http://www.theskimm.com/>). Keep an eye out for ethical issues facing professionals in your field by taking a look at the trade journals available in the Park Library (second floor of Carroll Hall) or online. Feel free to raise topics in class. If something interests or confounds you, raise it. Let’s talk about it.

**Honor Code:** You areexpected to conduct yourself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://studentconduct.unc.edu/>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. After all, this is an ethics class; there will be zero allowance for ethical lapses. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. We are going to spend much of a class discussing plagiarism. There will be no excuses. Your work will be your own. You may find the full text of *The instrument of student judicial governance* here: [https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf](https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/instrument.pdf).

**Diversity and Inclusion:** The School of Media and Journalism adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements in spring 2016 with accompanying goals: <http://www.mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion>. Additionally, the University’s policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined here: <http://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>. In summary, 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.

* **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, please bring it to my attention or to The Office of the Dean of Students, at [dos@unc.edu](mailto:dos@unc.edu) or 919/966-4042.
* **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 Accessibility Resources & Service Office website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>, call 919/962-8300, or use NC Relay 711.

**Attendance *and* Participation:** We will be discussing these issues in depth, and the quizzes, papers and exams will be drawn largely from what comes from these discussions. You need to at the scheduled meetings. I totally get that we are still in unprecedented times, so if you can’t class, or if your internet is suspect, or if you just need a day, I get it, just let me know. You’ll be responsible for the material covered in the zoom sessions, but I’ll send around a video as long as you keep the communication open and let me know when you are going to miss class or when you are ill.

You may be absent from class three times (“excused” or “unexcused”) before I take points off for missed classes. **Please note**, however, that you are still held accountable for any material covered during classes, and you will lose credit for any in-class assignment or other activity completed during classes you miss. It is your responsibility to sign in each class period. You do not have to notify me of your reasons for your absences, nor do you have to provide a doctor’s note. Use your absences wisely. If you know you need to be absent for university-related activities or other obligations, be sure to factor those into your absences. For each class you miss after three, your final grade will be lowered by three points. For example, if your grade average is (81), a B-, and you have four absences, your final grade will become (78), a C+.

**Additionally**, participation is important. You are expected to be active either in class discussions, through Sakai message boards, or both: Ask questions, offer your opinions. And challenge me and your classmates. The class is about learning to think critically about complex issues, which are often without a clear sense of right or wrong. A robust dialogue is key. Here is the other key: Though we may discuss things that prompt passionate disagreement, these conversations will be civil and respectful. Everyone will be heard, but a**ny disrespect, or name calling will have severe consequences.** Here are the guidelines I follow for determining the participation portion of your grade.

* **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 on Sakai Forums at least twice weekly. Consistency is important. Students contribute interesting and/or thought-provoking ideas and occasionally bring in outside material relevant to the class and to the readings. They don’t talk simply to hear their own voices, and they do not take over the discussion, but let others have a turn. They’ve probably asked some interesting questions along the way. They arrive to class on time and do not miss classes. (9-10)
* **B** students participate in some of the class discussions each week **and/or** contribute on Sakai Forums at least once or twice weekly, but either are not at quite the same level and/or comments are not always as insightful as the A students. However, they still have some interesting things to say or questions to ask whether in class or online. They may have no absences and they arrive to class on time. (7-8)
* **C** students may participate in class or on Sakai Forums 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. (5-6)
* **D and F** students have barely said anything all semester whether in class or on Sakai Forums, 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. (<4)

**Assignments and Deadlines**: All outside assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class period (aka, 8 am). Late papers will receive a reduced grade unless you and I agree beforehand that it can be late. No assignment will be accepted if it is turned in more than 24 hours after its deadline – a grade of F will be recorded. In-class assignments are just that – we’ll work on them in class and you will turn them in when class ends. **Missing an in-class assignment constitutes a zero for that item.**

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| **Your final grade** will be based upon  \*Participation (in class and/or on Sakai) 20%  \*Paper 1, quizzes, etc (*lowest dropped*) 25%  \*Research participation 5%  \*Test 1 15%  \*Test 2 15%  \*Final exam (Final Paper) 20% | **Grading Scale**:  A = 90-100  B = 80-89  C = 70-79  D = 60-69  F = <60  (and +/- as appropriate) |

**Sakai**: Valuable information and tools are available through Sakai. As a student registered in MEJO 141, you have access to this site. Please use it regularly, especially under:

* ***Forums***: Participation in Sakai discussions counts as class participation. It’s a place to continue and/or spark class discussion at any time – even if it’s a topic we’ve already covered. Post opinions, brainstorms, afterthoughts, new ideas, links to articles you’ve read, pose questions, make announcements, etc. All postings must adhere to University policies and my standards of civility and respect.
* ***Syllabus***: The syllabus for this class is posted in this section. We are going to go over much of the syllabus on the first day of class. You’re responsible for the information listed here. And if you mention this line to me privately, I’ll drop your second lowest quiz grade. Your lowest will already be dropped.

**Research Participation Requirement**: Students in MEJO 141 are required to complete two hours of research over the course of the semester. There are two ways you may fulfill this requirement. You can participate in two academic research studies in the School of Media and Journalism.  Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive first-hand experience with media and communication research.  You will be able to sign up online to participate in these studies – and, double-dipping is allowed if you are taking another class that requires research participation.  The second way to fulfill your research participation requirement is to **(a)** write assessments (two pages each) of two study topics in Journalist’s Resource (<http://journalistsresource.org/studies>); or **(b)** write two two-page summaries/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 summarize any article published in the past 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*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. Get some guidance here: [http://guides.lib.unc.edu/jomcResReq](http://guides.lib.unc.edu/jomcresreq). Your summaries are due no later than Thursday, Dec. 14, at 8 am: our final exam date and time. Early papers are accepted with gratitude.

**A Few Words on Grades**: I will 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 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 discipline; 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 reasons, 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.

**The Stolen from the Boynton Corollaries**: Here are some tips from another instructor, that seem pretty spot on to what I’ll be looking for:

**A**: Your work is “wow!” Your thinking is clear and original. Your assertions are logically supported with plenty of relevant evidence. Your writing is strong and grammatically correct.

**B**: Topics are carefully and thoughtfully covered. Superficial flaws in logic, evidence, or organization exist, but your case is clear and on-target. Writing is strong with very few errors. Your work is quite good.

**C**: One or two minor elements of the assignment or evidence are weak or missing. Organization is adequate. Writing contains several misspellings or grammatical errors. Your work is average (which, BTW, is not a bad thing!!).

**D**: Several elements of the assignment or evidence are missing. Organization is haphazard. Writing contains numerous mistakes and detracts from the message. Your work is below average.

**F**: You miss the point of the assignment, or you don’t complete the assignment. Most or all of the required elements are missing. Writing is poor and it’s difficult to discern the message. Your work is failing.

**Basic guidelines**:

* **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. If I can get here on time, so can you.
* **Be respectful** – The topics discussed in class might generate some intense disagreements. That is ok; these are weighty subjects with lots of gray areas. But, we will be respectful of other points of view. You don’t have to like what classmates are saying, but you do have to afford them the same courtesy you will be afforded. I simply will not tolerate incivility. You will not be censored, but you will be courteous.
* **Turn off the ringers** – Turn off the ringer to your phones before class starts. Treat this like the ballet or a small theater. If you are expecting an emergency phone call, let me know before class, keep the phone on silent and leave the room quietly if need be. If there are interruptions I will ban phones from the class and begin to deduct points. And no faces buried in phones during a lecture or discussion. It’s just rude. Yes, I will take points off for rudeness in an ethics class.
* **Keep the classroom neat and clean** – Pick up after yourselves. It’s a super-early class, so by all means bring in coffee and non-stinky breakfast foods. If there are any nut allergies we’ll ban nuts too, but I don’t care if you have some reasonable classroom foods. Just take your trash with you.

**Week by Week – MEJO 141 for Summer II 2020**

**\*\*\* Please note: this schedule is subject to change along with current events, speaker opportunities, hurricanes and the like – I will advise\*\*\***

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings and Assignments for this day** |
| Week of Jun. 22 | Welcome. Introductions. Review syllabus.  Why are we here? Who cares about ethics? What the heck is an ethic? How to begin thinking about ethics; What were they thinking?; | Syllabus review. What unifies ethics across the communication industry?; Why does all this matter? How to write a college paper. A preview of what’s to come.   * Principles of ethical journalism (email) * SPJ Code of Ethics (email) * Ch. 1, book * Quiz 1 |
| June. 29 | Getting our bearings and laying foundations: initial viewpoints; | * Ch.2, book * Why Facts Don’t Change Our Minds * Unspun * Quiz 2 * Paper 1 * Moral Development |
| July 6 | Protests, racism, bias, coronavirus, a burning world | * Readings TK * Test 1 |
| July 13 | Empathy and hypocrisy | * The Good and Bad of Empathy * The limits of empathy * If Lions Could Talk * Mona Lisa |
| July 20 | Photos | * Ch. 8 * Falling Man * Test 2 |
| July 27 | Last Week | * Final paper will be the final exam. Due July 28 |