

MEDIA ETHICS

UNC-Chapel Hill | Hussman School of Journalism and Media | MEJO 141.5 |

A day-by-day schedule with general topics, readings, homework, assignment due dates, and tests can be found at:

<https://tinyurl.com/FallCavalchire141>

PLEASE BOOKMARK, AS YOU WILL NEED TO RELY HEAVILY ON THIS THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER!

Meeting time

Mondays and Wednesdays from 8-9:15 a.m. in Carroll Hall, Room 305 (Freedom Forum on the third floor)

OR

Virtually via Zoom (Recordings of my live sessions will also be posted on Sakai following class)

Classroom Zoom Link: [Professor Cavalchire's Zoom Room](#)

Final Exam Date: Wednesday, November 18th at 8:00 a.m.

Instructor

Madison Cavalchire

madcav@email.unc.edu

Office Hours: Email me to set up an appointment. I am happy to chat via phone, Zoom, FaceTime, or in-person on campus (with masks, while socially distanced ☺). I am on campus on Mondays and Wednesdays and am typically available directly following our class up until my next class at 3:00 p.m.

Course objectives

The purpose of this class is to help you make effective ethical decisions within your profession. By semester's end, you should be able to:

- Integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas to professional situations to resolve ethical dilemmas.
- Critically analyze current media professional practices through reading and discussing communication topics found in trade journals and other media.
- Compare ethical codes and standards of our professions and examine how similarities and differences help or hinder their professional relationships.

Course Goals and Accreditation

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media 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>

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.

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. That means during the course of this semester, each student will complete at least 10 pages of writing. Our assignments, forum posts, and papers 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 (or virtual Zoom room), 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, Lee Wilkins, and Chad Painter. The textbook will be supplemented by articles or other readings, videos or podcasts. All assigned readings should be completed before the appropriate class sessions so you are ready to answer questions, debate, and ask more questions.

Professional curiosity: This is a real-world class in which we're going to examine the challenges 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. I like AXIOS, which delivers a smart early morning national round up to your mailbox: You should also be looking at *The News and Observer* and/or local news stations for updates. Keep an eye out for ethical issues facing professionals. If something interests or confounds you, raise it.

Honor Code: You are expected 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 some of this 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](#).

Diversity and Inclusion: The School of Journalism and Media 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 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: Regular attendance is expected. This class is discussion-based and the tests will be drawn largely from what comes from these discussions. There IS a difference between attendance and participation. In short, you can't just show up and expect an outstanding participation grade. You need to take part in the conversation. I understand it may be harder to participate if you are taking this class virtually. You can still earn credit by participating in the live conversation via Zoom or commenting in the chat box. You can also write forum posts (outside of our assignments) and comment on other students' forum posts. I will explain more and go over this in detail on the first day of class.

Discussion is at the heart of this class, as you are building skills in decision-making. Think of this class like driver's ed. You can read the manual and pass the written license test, but do you really learn to drive without doing it? To master ethical decision-making, you need to read the book and hear the lectures, but you need to be working out these ideas with discussion and debate in class. 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.

Forums: Many of our homework assignments come in the form of forum posts. I will give each of your individual forum posts a number grade, 0-5 (0 if you just didn't do it). At the end of

the semester, I will take the average score out of all of your forum post assignments. That average grade is the grade I will give you for the ‘Forums’ category in our gradebook.

Here is the basic rubric I will follow when looking at your forum posts:

Online Discussion Board Rubric

Contributions	Description	Points Assigned
Provocative	Response goes beyond simply answering the prompt; attempts to stimulate further thought & discussion	4-5
Substantial	Response provides most of the content required by the prompt, but does not require further analysis of the subject.	3-4
Superficial	Response provides obvious information without further analysis of the concept; lacks depth of knowledge or reasoning	2-3
Incorrect	Response does not accurately address the prompt; rambling and/or without consistency	1-2
None	No response provided to the prompt within the associated timeframe	0

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 your classmates are saying, but you do have to afford them the same courtesy you will be afforded. You will not be censored, but you will be courteous.

Here are the guidelines 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 comment** on Sakai Forums. 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, 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: Accepting late assignments is unfair to the students who have sacrificed to turn their work in on time. An automatic 10 percent deduction will be applied to each assignment turned in after the time it is due, provided the assignment is turned in on the same day it is due. An additional 10% deduction will be applied for each subsequent 24 hours that pass after the due date/time (i.e., 10 percent is taken off for each day). 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.**

Sakai and The Class Note: Valuable information and tools are available through Sakai.

Assignments will be posted for each day, reminding you what to read, what to post, what to turn in. BUT you will miss a lot of information and extra insights if you are not also reading the class notes I send out. This will include reminders, assignment changes, and answers to questions that other students may have raised. You want to read these: You NEED to read these. I'll send them out via Messages on Sakai. They'll also go to your email.

Research Participation Requirement:

Students in sections of MEJO 141 are required to complete two hours of research over the course of the semester. There are virtual options. There are a few ways you can fulfill the research requirement:

First, you can participate in academic research studies (must equate to two hours of research in total) in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive firsthand experience with research. If you are enrolled in another class that has a research requirement, it may also satisfy the research requirement for this course. If you have questions about the subject pool participation, please contact Professor Joe Bob Hester (joe.bob.hester@unc.edu). You must fulfill your participation in research studies by our final exam date (Wednesday, November 18th by 8:00 a.m.).

Second, you can write two, two-page summaries and critiques of academic research articles. Each two-page review counts for one hour of research participation, so you can combine participation in the studies with article reviews to fulfill the research requirement. You may summarize any research article published in the past two years in the following journals: Journal of Advertising, Journal of Public Relations Research, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Public Relations Review, or Mass Communication and Society. You must identify the author, date, article title, and journal title on each of your summaries. Article summaries are due by our final exam date (Wednesday, November 18th by 8:00 a.m.).

Option 3: You can do a combination of research and article summaries! A one-hour research study and one, two-page article summary would fulfill the full requirement.

Grading for research participation requirement (5%)

- 5% = Completing 2 studies or 2 two-page articles reviews
- 2.5% = Completing 1 study or 1 two-page article review
- 1.25% = Completing .5 study or 1 one-page article review

Grade Breakdown:

Your final grade is based on:		Grading Scale
Participation (in class, Zoom, and/or Sakai)	10%	A: 93-100
Research Participation	5%	A-: 90-92
Assignments (forum post assignments/homework/exercises)	20%	B+: 87-89
Test 1	10%	B: 84-86
Test 2	10%	B-: 80-83
Test 3	10%	C+: 74-79
Midterm paper	15%	C: 73-78
Final exam	20%	C-: 70-72
		D: 72 -64
		F: Below 64

About 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.

How Instructors Think About the Grades in This Class (Borrowed from Professor Lois Boynton): I couldn't say it better, so I borrowed it and attributed it:

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.