**SPRING 2021 – MEJO 141.1: Media Ethics**Tuesday & Thursday – 11:00am - 12:15pm|Remote

**Instructor:** Livis James Freeman, Jr  
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**Phone:** 919.389.3486  
**Office Hours:** Via Zoom by appointment only  
**Remote Learning:** Classes will be held online via Zoom. You can access all classes using this link: [**https://unc.zoom.us/j/6600177704**](https://unc.zoom.us/j/6600177704) (*Meeting ID: 660 017 7704*) and this password: **806191**  
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**COURSE OVERVIEW**  
This course will explore the relationships of professional ethics, ethical dilemmas, and ethical practices within a variety of media professions – print, broadcast, and online journalism; various visual communications approaches for news and business; public relations; advertising, etc. 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 past concepts can be applied to modern day dilemmas. We will explore how ethics play throughout the communications approach in journalism; public relations; and the advertising industry. You will have the opportunity to explore what constitutes professional ethical practices, what interferes with acting ethically, and what emerging ethical issues may challenge you as the newest generation of professional communicators.

**Course Objectives**The purpose of this course is to help you make effective ethical decisions within your profession. By semester’s end, you should be able to:

1. Integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas to professional situations to resolve ethical dilemmas
2. Critically analyze current media professional practices through reading and discussing communication topics found in trade journals and other media
3. Compare ethical codes and standards of our professions and examine how similarities and differences help or hinder their professional relationships
4. Develop, defend, and apply your own set of guidelines in ethical challenges

## **Prerequisites and Gen Ed Requirement**None. This course is required for MEJO majors, and it meets a requirement for a minor in social and economic justice. This course 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/log out of Zoom, 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**](https://campushealth.unc.edu/services/counseling-and-psychological-services)**.**

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK, READINGS AND LIBRARY GUIDE**  
***Media Ethics: Issues and Cases***, 9th edition, by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

The textbook will be supplemented by articles and other assigned 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.

The class will also use resources from the following library guide created by Hussman’s Stephanie Brown and her wonderful Park Library Staff - <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/mejo141>.

**Staying in the Know!**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 – two resources I like are *The Skimm* (<http://www.theskimm.com/>) and Axios (<https://www.axios.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. I encourage you to raise topics in class and look forward to discussing them!

**Sakai/Email:**

Other than this syllabus, important information can be found on Sakai and will also be emailed to you. ***Updates will be frequent, so check the announcements section of Sakai often and your email for important course information.*** You are responsible for any course changes that may be made on Sakai or via email, including changes to the syllabus or assignments. Your grades are posted in Sakai only so that you can stay updated on your progress; overall grades on Sakai are rough approximations of your overall grade in the course.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance for online classes is **essential**. Just as professionals in the real-world go to work each day, you as students in our professional school are expected to come to class on time and be prepared to work. This is especially important because this course is being taught remotely.

***No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from ANY class meetings, EXCEPT for THESE*** [***University Approved Absences***](https://attendance.unc.edu/)***:***

*1.Authorized University activities*

*2.Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service* and/or the *Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)*

*3.Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).*

I will take attendance for every class. **Missing class will result in your final grade being lowered.** If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to meet with your classmates and gather the information on what you missed. Missed in-class assessments and activities cannot be made up unless you were absent due to a University Approved Absence.

**NOTE:** *It is your responsibility to communicate with me in a timely manner (within 24 hours) if you are experiencing any internet, technology or other issues that fall outside of university guidelines that might cause you miss an online session.*

**The “Quality Control” Policy**You are media practitioners, and as such I expect that you will write and present yourself with great professionalism because that is what you have been trained and educated to do. Therefore, your course assignments and presentations will be scrutinized for their vernacular and presentation. **Assignment submissions must be grammatically correct and free from spelling errors.**

**Assignments and Grades Policies**

**Submission Requirements:** *Every assignment you submit to me MUST be typed, double-spaced and submitted as a* ***Word Doc.*** Acceptable citation styles for this course are APA or MLA – if at any point in your work you use information from other sources, you must cite it both in the text and with a properly formatted reference list. Not following these specific instructions will result in a loss of points on the assignment.

**Tests and in-class assignments:** Unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse, there will be no make-ups for in-class assignments or tests and no extra time given if arriving to class late. A make-up assignment or test must be done within the week following the original date and it is your responsibility to set up an appointment with me.   
 **Grade Questions/Challenges:** ​If you have concerns about a grade, please inform me via email. I ask that you wait 24 hours after receiving your grade. Please outline your concerns and provide evidence to support your claim. You have two weeks to challenge a grade after it has been posted on Sakai (this does not apply to grades posted during finals). NOTE: I do not discuss grades over email. So, after you contact me about a grade I will set-up a time to meet with me so we can discuss the grade. I do this to protect your grade information.   
  
**Graduate Students**  
Graduate students enrolled in this course will be held to a higher standard and required to complete at least one additional assignment. **Each graduate student must set up a meeting with me to discuss the assignment.** Grading for graduate students will be done according to the HPLF grading scale (High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, Fail).

**Extra Credit Policy:** It’s unlikely you will receive any extra credit opportunities in this course. In the rare and unlikely event that they occur, they will be class-wide, so please don’t ask for individual extra credit assignments.

**Tips/Expectations for our Online Classes** *Camera Video Policy:* Because this course is so discussion heavy, **HAVING YOUR VIDEO CAMERA TURNED ON IS REQUIRED.** Of course, you can always turn off your video if you need to take bathroom breaks. ***Please know that I will take having your camera off regularly as a sign of disrespect to me as a professor and will also lower your class participation grade significantly.***   
  
***Zoom Profile Photo:*** Please take 2 minutes and upload a photo to be viewed when your video is off. This is much more professional than just having your name appear ***(please do still have YOUR name appear).*** I’d prefer it be a professional looking headshot.***Regarding your location:*** Make sure to be in a quiet, well-lit environment with access to power and stable WIFI.

***Regarding Audio:*** Using a headset is best. A set of earbuds with a microphone also works well and helps with audio. Built-in microphone and speakers are acceptable but not optimal. A telephone can be used as back-up for audio.

***Regarding preparation:*** Be prepared to share your screen **(if I request you to)** and have needed documents easily accessible. Also, be sure to log in 5-10 minutes early to test your audio and video prior to class.

***Getting started:*** Go to unc.zoom.us and sign in using your ONYEN. We’ll likely end up using the same weblink for each class (<https://unc.zoom.us/j/6600177704>), but I’ll let you know if that changes. Each session will be recorded. [Here’s a link to give you some additional pointers for online learning via Zoom!](https://help.unc.edu/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0010679&sys_kb_id=60caa6eadb2b0c5070551ffa689619a3)

**Updates and Resources**  
Please reach out to Chris Hill, who’s in charge of our Hussman Triage Hub, if you will need assistance with high-speed internet access, computing, basics on how to receive online instruction, and strategies for being an online student. His contact information is: ([CHJ@unc.edu](mailto:CHJ@unc.edu) or 919-962-0025).  
  
The best source of information about COVID-19 and UNC is the UNC Coronavirus [website](https://unc.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0c240f39418a2baed85c14674&id=32c10e781b&e=362b53f8ba). For health-related concerns, please contact [Campus Health](https://unc.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0c240f39418a2baed85c14674&id=478004e6d9&e=362b53f8ba) or [Counseling and Psychological Services](https://unc.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0c240f39418a2baed85c14674&id=064f43528a&e=362b53f8ba).

**HONOR CODE**  
The Honor Code (<https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/honor-code/>) forms a bond of trust among students, faculty, and administrators. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill operates under a system of self-governance, as students are responsible for governing themselves. As such, our University is transformed into a powerful community of inquiry and learning. The Honor Code embodies the ideals of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship, and governs the performance of all academic work a student conducts at the University. Acceptance of an offer of admission to Carolina presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in our century-old tradition of honor and integrity.

**SEEKING HELP**  
If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with me or your other instructors. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

**DIVERSITY**  
The University’s policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined on the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office’s webpage (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>). 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.

**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 Resources & Services site at <https://ars.unc.edu/>.

**ACCREDITATION**  
The Hussman School of Journalism and Media’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://hussman.unc.edu/accreditation>. 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.  
  
**ASSIGNMENTS (grading rubrics will be provided)**

**Research Participation Requirement – (5% of total grade)**  
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/mejoResReq>. Your summaries are due no later than Friday, May 7th at 12 pm: our final exam date and time. Early papers are accepted with gratitude.

**Class Participation – (15% of total grade)**   
Participating regularly in this course is crucial! You are expected to **attend EVERY class**, **be active** in regular class discussions, and **participate in** guest speaker sessions and other groups’ in-class presentations (asking/answering questions, offering opinions and submitting written takeaways).

Here are the guidelines I follow for determining the participation portion of your grade.

* **A (13-15):** Students participate in most regular class discussions, guest speaker sessions and other groups’ in-class presentations by asking/answering questions and offering opinions. Consistency is important. Must also have submitted all required takeaways from other groups’ presentations and guest speakers. They arrive to class on time and **have NO unexcused absences**.
* **B (10-12):** Students participate in some regular class discussions, guest speaker sessions and other groups’ in-class presentations by asking/answering questions and offering opinions. Consistency is still important. The have submitted most required takeaways from other groups’ presentations and guest speakers (may have missed 1). They arrive to class on time and **have NO unexcused absences**.
* **C (7-9):** Students participate from time to time but mostly prefer to lurk and often keep their cameras off. They may have had some decent things to say but just don’t speak up/contribute too often. They only submitted some of the required takeaways from other groups’ presentations and guest speakers. They may have 0, 1 or 2 absences and/or may be tardy on occasion, without any comment.
* **D and F (<7):** Students have barely had their cameras on or said anything all semester, 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 on time to most classes on time. They barely or didn’t submit required takeaways from other groups’ presentations and guest speakers.

**Group Work: regular discussions, “Ethics in the News” presentation and “Code of Ethics” paper – (30%)**  
You will work in groups of 5 for most of the semester.Each group will meet regularly in breakout rooms during class for mini discussions. Each group will also be responsible for 2 major projects throughout the semester: an “Ethics in the News” in-class presentation and a Summary and Critique of a Code of Ethics” written paper (details below). ***You must email me a grade for each of your groupmate’s contributions to each assignment (0-5 with 5 being the highest and 0 being the lowest). I will consider these when providing final grades for each assignment.***

**Ethics in the News (In-class group presentation)**  
Each group will be responsible for making a presentation on a contemporary ethical dilemma or issue and then leading an in-depth discussion. The presentation should take approximately at least 15-20 minutes and the discussion should take at least another 15-20 minutes. You must choose a topic that has an ethical dimension to discuss (the case should be from the past ten years), submit one or more readings in advance about the topic (via email to me), having 3-5 statements/questions to prompt class discussion (consider using statements like: ‘who wants to argue that…’), facilitate the ensuing discussion, and summarize your own position. *Your grade will be determined by the quality of the material, actual presentation (in the form of a Prezi or PowerPoint) and ability to successfully stimulate a discussion*. **Each group must submit 10 questions from their presentation to be included on exams before the following class (2 per person).** Half of the questions must be multiple choice and the other half must be True/False **(must provide questions, answer options and indicate the correct answer).** The questions must also be written in complete sentences and free from grammatical/spelling errors.***You will lose points if your group’s questions don’t adhere to the above guidelines or are too easy, poorly written, etc.***Students who are not presenting must submit 1-page papers about each presentation **before the following class.** You must summarize the topic, state your opinion on what’s right or wrong about it and why (using ethical principles/codes to justify your thoughts). You must also include your opinion on how well the group presented and facilitated the discussion (rate them on scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best). These must be free from spelling/grammatical errors, written in paragraph form and submitted via Sakai. I will **NOT** remind you to do these and will **NOT** accept papers submitted after the start of the next class – **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

**Summary and Critique of a Code of Ethics” (group written paper)**  
Working in groups, you will write a summary and critique of one of the following codes of ethics. In your paper, address the main tenets of these codes, the ethical framework (if provided), justifications for the guidelines (if provided), any shortcomings, gaps, or problematic statements that your group perceives, and any means of holding people or organizations accountable that these codes provide. Once you discuss these things, provide at least one real-world example of a violation of the ethical code and explain a) why it constitutes a violation, b) what your group would have done differently, and c) what accountability should look like. Papers should be 12-15 pages double-spaced and free from grammatical/spelling errors (each group member must contribute about 2-3 pages).

*American Advertising Federation*: <http://www.aaf.org/_pdf/aaf%20website%20content/513_ethics/iae_principles_practices.pdf>  
*Buzzfeed:* <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/shani/the-buzzfeed-editorial-standards-and-ethics-guide>  
*The New York Times:* <https://www.nytimes.com/editorial-standards/ethical-journalism.html#pursuingTheNews> including the Social Media Policy*:* <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/13/reader-center/social-media-guidelines.html> *Edelman:* <https://www.scribd.com/document/96444691/Code-of-Ethics>  
*Global Alliance PR:* <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/code-of-ethics>  
*Public Relations Society of America:* <https://www.prsa.org/about/prsa-code-of-ethics>   
*Society for Professional Journalists:* <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

**Midterm Exam - (25% of total grade)**  
The midterm exam will be a test of everything learned from the book, my lectures, guest speakers and in-class discussions to that point.   
  
**Final Exam – (25% of total grade)**The final exam will be a test of everything learned from the book, my lectures, guest speakers and in-class group presentations since the midterm.

**TOTAL SEMESTER GRADING BREAKDOWN**  
Class Participation – **15%**  
Research Requirement – **5%**  
Midterm – **25%**  
Group Work Projects (Presentation/Paper) **– 30%**  
Final Exam - **25%  
Total = 100%**

**GRADING DETAILS**  
Grading guidelines Dec be found here: <https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>. Grades follow a typical pattern: A = 94-100, A- = 90-93, B+ = 87-89, B = 84-86, B- = 80-83, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66 and F = below 63.  
 **COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)**\*Please see [UNC academic calendar](https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-calendar/) for the Spring 2021 schedule.   
\*\* Subject to change due to COVID-19  
**January**19 - Intro; syllabus/textbook/assignments breakdown; ***read Chapter 1 (and cases)***  
21 - Starting Chapter 1; groups announced and meet in breakout rooms  
  
26 – Groups announce names, Continuing with Chapter 1;   
28 - **Guest Speaker on Ethical Issues in the Newsroom – Professor John Robinson; *read Chapter 2 (and cases)***  
  
**February**2 – Finishing Chapter 1 and Starting Chapter 2;  
**4 – Guests from Park Library on News/Media Literacy and Library resources; Groups meet to plan Research**   
  
9 – Finishing Chapter 2;  
**11 - Guest Speaker on Ethical Issues in Strategic Communication and with Technology – Professor Gary Kayye *;read Chapter 3 (and cases)***  
  
**16 - NO CLASS (WELLNESS DAY)  
18 -- Guest Speaker on Ethical Issues with Diversity in the Media/News – Professor Trevy McDonald**   
  
23 -Chapter 3;   
**25 - Group 1 presents   
  
March  
2 - Group 2 presents   
4 -  Group 3 presents  
  
9 -** **Group 4 presents; *read Chapter 4 (and cases)*11 - NO CLASS (WELLNESS DAY)**  
**16 - MIDTERM**  
18 **-** Lecture on Chapter 4**; *read Chapter 5 (and cases)***   
  
**23 - Guest Speaker (TBD)**  
25 - Lecture on Chapter 5; ***read Chapter 6 (and cases)***   
  
30 - Lecture on Chapter 6 **April**  
**1 - Guest Speaker (TBD); *read Chapter 7 (and cases)***  
  
6 - Lecture on Chapter 7**8 -** **Group 5 presents; *read Chapter 8 (and cases)***   
  
13 -Lecture on Chapter 8**15 - Group 6 presents; *read Chapter 9 (and cases)*  
  
20 -** Lecture on Chapter 9; ***read Chapter 10 (and cases)*  
22 - Group 7 presents; *read Chapter 11 (and cases)***   
  
27 - Lecture on Chapters 10 and 1129 - **Group 8 presents**

May  
4 - **Final exam review; Summary and Critique of a Code of Ethics” (group written paper) Due**  
  
**FINAL EXAM SESSION** - **Friday, May 7th at 12:00 pm**  
Final exam times are based on the University final exam schedule. Exams are scheduled according to the day and start time of the first meeting of the course each week and held in the regularly assigned meeting room unless the instructor is otherwise notified.

If you are unable to hold your final at the assigned time, contact [Dr. Tuggle](mailto:catuggle@unc.edu) to check rescheduling options.