

# MEJO 141 SYLLABUS

Media Ethics  
Fall 2021

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## About This Class

**Classroom:** Carroll 033; **Time:** MW 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.  
& <https://unc.zoom.us/j/93167077196>, PW: 30618

**Instructor:** Sydney Nicolla  
**Office:** 366 Carroll  
**Email:** [snicolla@live.unc.edu](mailto:snicolla@live.unc.edu)  
**Phone:** (910) 228-8148



**Office Hours:** M 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. & by appointment

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## Communication Policies

The best way to reach me is email. Please allow 24 hours on weekdays for a response. Emails sent on weekends will receive a response on Monday. If the email pertains to your group members, please copy them.

If it is an emergency, you are welcome to text.

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## Course Goals

In this course, we'll talk about professional ethical practices within a variety of media and communication professions (including journalism, visual communication, public relations, advertising, and the intersections of these occupations). Students will engage via discussion and written assignment in an exploration of ethical expectations, dilemmas and challenges for professional communicators.

Ultimately, students should conclude this course with a strong foundation of professional ethics and feeling prepared to make ethical decisions in the communicative workforce.

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## Course Objectives

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

- Apply ethical foundations and decision-making strategies in professional communication situations.
- Critically analyze current events and media practices based on understandings of professional ethics.
- Understand competing ethical standards for different media and communication professions and how these standards influence professional relationships.
- Navigate ethical challenges by adhering to a set of ethical guidelines for communication suited to your professional industry.

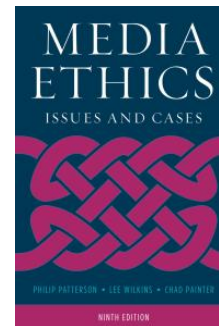
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## Required Course Materials

Textbook\*:

"Media Ethics: Issues and Cases"  
by Phillip Patterson, Lee Wilkins  
& Chad Painter; 9th Edition

\*Limited quantity available from  
Student Stores, also available on Amazon,

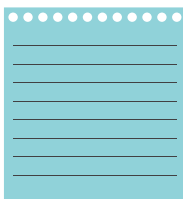


Additional Readings:

Will be provided via Sakai In the *Resources* folder.

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## Assignments & Grading



Readings are expected to be completed by the beginning of the designated class periods. All assignments should be submitted by the indicated due date and time. Late assignments will receive a 0 unless we have discussed an extension prior to the deadline.

NOTE: I will accept one rewrite and re-submission for each written assignment\*. The grade for the rewrite will replace your previous grade for that assignment. Rewrites must be submitted *within one week* of receiving feedback on the assignment. *Hint:* this means it is much better to submit something than nothing.

\*This policy does not apply to examinations.

All assignments should be submitted via Sakai as PDF or Word.

Your final course grade will be made up of the following:

Research Requirement	5%
Participation (in class and/or on Sakai)	10%
In-Class Exercises	10%
Current Events Papers	25%
Group TARES Project	25%
Final Exam	25%

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

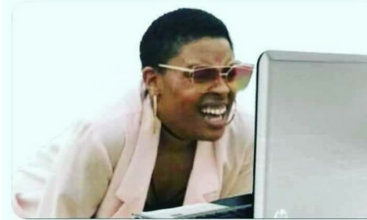
F = <60

Note: +/- awarded as appropriate.

I will not award extra credit.

Please inform me of any grading concerns via email **within one week** of receiving an assignment grade.

When you check your grades and the only "A" you have is in your name.



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## Participation (10%)

Attendance in this course is an expectation. *Participation is a requirement.* In addition to regularly being present for our class times, your participation grade will depend on your active participation in discussion. There are **two ways** to participate in this Media Ethics course:

1

Ask questions, answer questions, and participate enthusiastically in discussions during class time.

2

Engage online via Sakai forums that will be available for discussion about each class topic.

*Participation is required in one (or both) of these formats for each class period. You'll earn the associated participation grade based on your ability to meet the following criteria:*

**Excellent (9-10%):** Consistently participates in each class period and/or online.

**Good (7-8%):** Participates often, but not always, in-class and/or online.

**Acceptable (5-6%):** Occasionally participates in-class and/or online.

**Unacceptable (<4%):** Does not participate in-person or online.

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## Research Requirement (5%)

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

**First,** you can participate in two hours of academic research studies in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive first hand 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](mailto:joe.bob.hester@unc.edu)).

**Second,** you can write two, two-page summaries and critiques of academic research articles. Each review counts for one hour of research participation. 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 via email by Dec 1, 2021.

### Grading for research participation requirement:

→5% = Completing both studies/ both article reviews

→2.5% = Completing 1 study or 1 article review

→0% = Completing 0 studies/0 article reviews

NOTE; You may also do a combination of the two (e.g. 1 study and 1 article review). Research study participation and/or article completion is **due by Dec. 1, 2021 (LDOC)**.



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## Current Event Papers (25%)

You will choose recent content (published within the last 6 months) from the news media that you find ethically ambiguous or ethically exemplary. This can be any type of media: news articles, advertisements, PSAs, branding efforts, social media content, etc. If you can explain why it is subject to the standards of professional ethics, you can choose it.

You will write a 1-page, single-spaced paper discussing why you chose this piece of content, why you believe it is problematic or inspiring, and making suggestions for improving or lessons learned from the content. You will complete and submit **4 current event papers**, at your leisure, before the last day of class (Dec. 1).

Requirements:

- 1-page, single spaced paper
- Provide screenshot or link to content you are critiquing (does not count towards your one page)
- Include at least one reference to course reading materials and cite according to APA style (does not count towards your one page)

Grading:

These papers are designed to encourage you to think critically and will be evaluated based on how well you convey and justify your thoughts. Papers that earn an A will be well-organized, thoughtful, concise, and effectively describe and defend your position on the ethical implications of the content in question.

Neglecting to complete one or more papers will impact the maximum grade you can earn in this course.



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## Group TARES Project (25%)

You will be assigned to a group with 5 other students. As a group, you will evaluate a recent social media campaign according to the TARES principles for professional persuasion. Each group should submit their selected social media campaign to the instructor for approval **before** starting work on the project.

Groups should produce an 8-page, double-spaced paper critiquing the campaign on the basis of each of the 5 TARES principles, ultimately deciding whether the social media campaign passes or fails the TARES test. Groups should also provide a brief summary describing what each individual group member contributed to the project, signed and approved by all group members. All materials should be submitted via Sakai by **midnight on Wednesday, Oct. 20.**

### Requirements:

- Social media campaign selected by group and approved by instructor by **Sept. 22nd.**
- 8-page, double-spaced paper critiquing the campaign with evaluations based on each of the 5 principles of the TARES test; concluding with whether the campaign passes the TARES test
- Brief summary, signed and approved by group members, describing each group member's contributions to the project

### Grading:

Grades will be assigned to the group for the overall project, except in extreme cases (if work contributed is equitable based on your summary, your grade will be identical to the rest of your group members). The expectation for these papers is that they: (1) have a clear argument and critique based on each of the TARES principles, (2) have an appropriate and well-explained conclusion about the campaign's overall TARES status, and (3) provide unique and interesting critiques that are not repetitive. Papers that earn an A will include each of these components, be well-organized, written, edited, and grammatically flawless.



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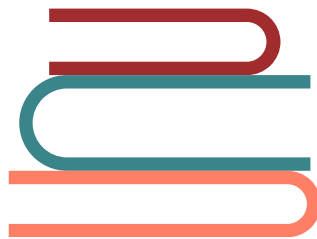
## Final Exam (25%)

You will complete a final exam consisting of multiple choice, T/F, and short answer questions to demonstrate your understanding of course materials and professional communication ethics. Please be prepared to answer questions about information covered in book chapters and other readings assigned this semester, along with information covered during class.

The final exam is scheduled for **Dec. 10 at Noon**. Please let me know as soon as possible if you need to make an adjustment to this exam date.

Requirements:

- Be prepared, on time, and ready to rock your final exam!



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## In-Class Exercises (10%)

We will occasionally complete in-class exercises that will be graded for completion. Please come to class and learn alongside your peers and you won't need to worry about missing points here!

**Note:** In-class assignments will not count against your grade if we have spoken about your absence.

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## Honor Code

I expect that each student will conduct themselves within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean C. A. Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

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## Attendance

### *University Policy:*

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

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).

Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence.

(source: <http://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/>)

### *Class Policy:*

We will practice flexibility and compassion in this class. Please communicate anticipated absences with me as early as possible. Absences communicated in advance are much easier to provide accommodations for (like alternatives for in-class assignments, remote attendance, etc.) Extensive absences without prior approval or explanation may impact your grade.

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## Title IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – [titleixcoordinator@unc.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).



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## Diversity & Inclusion

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on prohibiting harassment and discrimination. 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. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies



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## Accessibility Resources

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

(source: <https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement>)

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## Syllabus Changes

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

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## Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.



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## Policy on Non-Discrimination

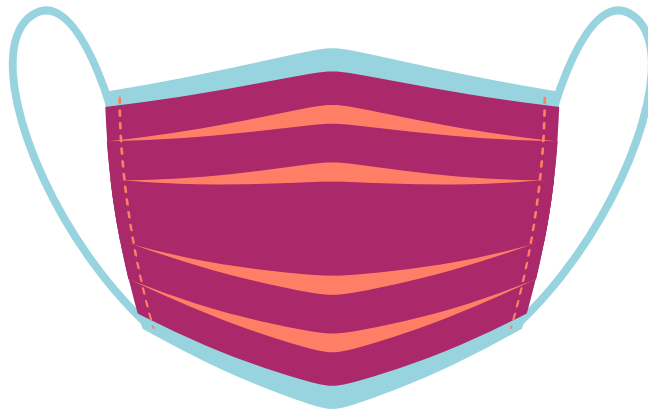
The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at [safe.unc.edu](https://safe.unc.edu)) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

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## Mask Use

All enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community -- your classmates and me -- as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see <https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/university-guidelines-for-facemasks/>.



## Weekly Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignments & Readings
8/18	<b>Welcome!</b> Who are you?	
8/23	<b>Case Studies Discussion:</b> What were they thinking?	<b>READ:</b> Case Studies (on Sakai)
8/25	<b>Ethical Foundations I</b>	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 1 (textbook) & review handout (on Sakai)
8/30	<b>Ethical Foundations II</b>	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai
9/1	<b>Truth-Telling</b>	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 2 (textbook); Additional readings on Sakai
9/6	<b>Labor Day Holiday: NO CLASS!</b>	
9/8	<b>Objectivity</b>	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai
9/13	<b>Objectivity (continued)</b>	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai
9/15	<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>READ:</b> pg. 5-8 (Bok Model), 104-109 (Potter Box); Additional readings on Sakai
9/20	<b>Decision-making (continued)</b>	<b>READ:</b> pg. 70-75; Additional readings on Sakai
9/22	<b>Moral Development</b>	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 11; Additional readings on Sakai <b>ASSIGNMENT DUE:</b> Group Project Campaign Selection; Wednesday, Sept. 22 at midnight
9/27	<b>Moral Development (continued)</b>	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai

## Weekly Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignments & Readings
9/29	Diversity & Inclusion	<b>READ:</b> Readings and videos on Sakai
10/4	Diversity & Inclusion (continued)	<b>READ:</b> Readings and videos on Sakai
10/6	<b>Guest Speaker:</b> Richard Griffiths	<b>READ:</b> TBD
10/11	Professionalism and Ethics Codes	<b>READ:</b> Review professional ethical codes (on Sakai)
10/13	Professionalism and Ethics Codes (continued)	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai
10/18	Midterm Project Group Work Day	
10/20	<b>Guest Speaker:</b> Riley Davis	<b>READ:</b> TBD <b>ASSIGNMENT DUE:</b> Midterm Group Project Papers; Wednesday, Oct. 20 at midnight
10/25	Photo and Visual Ethics	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 8
10/27	Photo and Visual Ethics (continued)	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai
11/1	<b>Happy (late) Halloween:</b> No Class	
11/3	Persuasion	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 3
11/8	Persuasion (continued)	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai
11/10	Loyalties	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 4; Additional readings and video on Sakai
11/15	Democracy	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 6; Additional readings on Sakai

## Weekly Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignments & Readings
11/17	New Media	<b>READ:</b> Readings on Sakai
11/22	Privacy	<b>READ:</b> Ch. 5; Additional readings and video on Sakai
11/24	Ethics in Entertainment	<b>READ:</b> Ch.10
11/29	Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS!	
12/1	<b>LDOC!</b> Final Exam Review	<b>ASSIGNMENTS DUE:</b> 1. ALL Current Events Papers; Wednesday, Dec. 1 at noon. 2. Research Participation or paper alternatives; Wednesday, Dec. 1 at noon.
12/10	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> 12:00 p.m. (NOON)	