MEJO 141.5 Media Ethics

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Classroom: Carroll 33

Time: MW 8-9:15 AM

Instructor: Heesoo Jang

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Office: 365 Carroll

Zoom office hours: M 12:30-1:30 PM, W 9:30-10:30 AM, or by appointment

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Welcome to FALL 2021 Media Ethics!

We’re going to look at 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, business and social interactions; public relations; advertising; and even hybrids.

We will discuss the philosophical foundations of ethics, professional codes of ethics, and new ethical concerns that are emerging as technology redefines the ways in which we interact with the world around us.

Course objectives

The purpose of this class is to help you make effective ethical decisions within your profession. To meet this purpose, we will learn the following topics:

* What goes into making an ethical decision? We will explore ethical foundations to apply in professional ethical dilemmas.
* The value of having a decision-making process! We will apply ethical codes and standards of our professions to resolve ethical dilemmas
* We will critically analyze ethical expectations and challenges in our professions through reading and discussing related topics.

Through what you’ve learned in this course, you should be able to:

* Apply ideas from ethical foundations to professional situations;
* Critically analyze current media professional practices;
* Compare ethical standards of different mass media professions and examine how the similarities and differences influence their professional relationships;
* Develop and apply your own ethical guidelines to make effective ethical decisions within your profession.

Prerequisites

None! MEJO 141 meets the General Education requirement for philosophical and moral reasoning (PH).

That means, during the 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.

Textbooks and readings

Textbook: Media Ethics: Issues and Cases by Philip Patterson, Lee Wilkins & Chad Painter, 9th edition

Additional readings: They will be added on Sakai- Resources folder at least three days before class.

*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. That’s what will make this class fun!*

Classroom policies

Contacting me

Reach out to me via e-mail. I will respond to you within 48 hours except for weekends. So, if you sent me an email at 8 p.m. on Monday, I’ll reply no later than 8 p.m. on Wednesday. Any emails that are sent on the weekend, I will regard them as they are sent on Monday 8 a.m. Keep this in mind - you don’t want to leave things until the last minute and then not be able to get a hold of me.

Don’t hesitate to contact me when anything comes up. Come to office hours, send me emails, grab me after class. Let me help you in any way I can.

Classroom etiquette

This is a discussion-based class. It needs to be a space where everyone is comfortable speaking up. This is not as easy as it seems, but there are a few things we can do to make it more attainable:

1. Don’t judge. We all come from different backgrounds and have different perspectives. Many of us may be encountering these ideas for the first time. Be patient and give yourself and others space to grow and learn.
2. Challenge your own perspectives. As college students, now is the time to question your preconceived notions and refine your beliefs. Are you positive that you stand by your values 100%? That’s great! You’re ahead of the curve. Now, work to understand the other side so you can show them empathy and learn how to work together. Or, you can just learn how to crush all of their subpar arguments.
3. Listen before you speak. Don’t just sit there waiting to say what you want to say. I find it helps to write down my point so I can be sure I don’t forget while I’m listening to others.

Keep Your Eyes Open

This is a real-world class in which we’re going to examine the challenges and dilemmas of today’s media and communication professions. Please keep up with what’s going on in the world and in your profession. Take some time each week to check out the news in papers, magazines, TV and/or online. Find out what ethical issues face professionals in your field by taking a look at the trade journals like

PR Week, Ad Age, Columbia Journalism Review, among others. See something interesting? Bring it to class! The more the merrier! Operating in the professional world involves keeping up with what is going on in the world around you. This is good practice and it comes in handy.

A Note on Content

This course may at times include topics, materials, and discussions that could be disturbing or distressing to some people. 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 are responsible for any material covered during time that you miss, and you should make arrangements to get an update from a classmate. 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 (CAPS).

Honor code

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself 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.

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.

ARS

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.

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

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.

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), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment. We’re going to look at the relationships of professional ethics, ethical dilemmas, and ethical practices within a variety of media professions t 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) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

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.

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/.

Professional values and competencies

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media’s accrediting body outlines values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. No single course could possibly give you all these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. This course touches on a number of the values and competencies, with an emphasis on (1) demonstrating an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity; (2) thinking critically, creatively and independently; (3) demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications; and (4) demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society. You can learn more about it here: http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps.

Attendance & Participation

This is primarily a discussion-based class and is designed as an in-person class. Therefore, it is imperative that you are here and that you are engaged with the content. In addition to class twice a week, I expect everyone to be active participants in the class and small-group discussions– ask questions, offer your opinions, and challenge. I think you’ll find it makes learning easier and even more fun. Yes, it’s a large class, but we can make the community interactive and ethical decision-making more effective through dialogue. Join the fun!

I will not penalize you for not coming to class if you communicate the circumstances ahead with me. I don’t want you to come to school when you are sick or feel like having symptoms of COVID-19. However, please note that you are responsible for any material covered during classes, and an absence on a due date does not justify a late assignment. Also, you will lose credit for any in-class assignment completed during classes you do not attend unless you make arrangements with me ahead of time. We are in uncertain times, please communicate with me to help you make the best out of this course.

\*\* NOTE: For university approved absences, please communicate with me as early as possible. Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University Approved Absence. University Approved Absences include:

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).

Laptops

For this class, laptops are required for in-class activities. Please bring them to class.

Assignments

All homework assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class period (aka, 8 a.m.). Late papers (8:01 a.m. and later) will receive a reduced grade unless you and I agree before the assignment is due that it can be late. No assignment will be accepted if it is turned in more than 24 hours after its deadline – it will get a zero.

**In-class assignments (20%)**

In-class assignments are just that – you’ll work on them in class and turn them in within TWO DAYS via Sakai. Credit for completing in-class assignments will be based on a simple rubric: (0) not turned in (1) turns the exercise in, but responses are incomplete or hastily done and are not corrected (2) exercise is turned in and responses are thorough and complete. Missing an in-class assignment constitutes a zero for that item, unless you make arrangements with me ahead of time. You will have a total of 10 in-class assignments.

**Ethics in the News Presentation (20%)**

You will be assigned to a group and asked to identify a news item dealing with a mass media ethics-related event that has been in the news sometime during the previous two weeks. You’ll explain the item to the class (15 minutes) and lead a short discussion (15 minutes).

Each group member will receive the same grade for the assignment, unless a member does

not show for the presentation or is demonstrating a clear lack of participation in the project. The assignment consists of three components: the information you provide to educate your fellow students on your topic prior to class (news items, videos, links etc.), your in-class presentation (using effective visuals such as a few PowerPoint slides); and your assistance guiding the discussion in class. You will be responsible for helping lead/manage the discussion in class, which is where we’ll discuss the ways (and there will be multiple; remember, these decisions aren’t black and white!) we might address the dilemma.

Some good places to find topics are Poynter’s Everyday Ethics Column and the iMedia Ethics

website.

Please have your information posted to Sakai by at least 2pm TWO DAYS before your assigned presentation day. This gives your fellow students time to review the information you provide and to create their discussion points and questions. You should submit your in-class presentation (PowerPoint, handouts, etc.) to me via email before class on the day of your presentation.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate your project:

* Is the topic timely (within the two-week time frame), and does it involve an issue of ethical concern to mass media professionals?
* Do you clearly explain the situation? Do you clearly outline the ethical issue(s) the situation presents? Do you apply the appropriate ethics codes to analyze the situation and help inform your proposed response?
* Do you effectively present your topic in class, using appropriate and effective visual aids (presentation slides, etc.)?
* Do you effectively help guide class discussion, responding as appropriate to classmates’ comments and questions?
* Do you submit all your materials on time?

**Response Papers (30%)**

You will be given three writing prompts throughout the semester and asked to respond. These will be found on Sakai Assignments tab along with a grading rubric. They will also be discussed in class and you are encouraged to review the material early to ask questions about it. The prompts will be available at least one week in advance of the due date. Each response should be no less than 450 words, but not more than 550 (approximately a page and a half double-spaced).

\*\*NOTE: All response papers should be saved and turned in as a Word or PDF document.\*\*

**Research participation (5%)**

You are expected to engage with academic research two times this semester. This can be done in three different ways:

Option 1: 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!

Option 2: Write article assessments – due Dec 1, 8 a.m. Each assessment counts for 1 hour of research participation. \*\* saved and turned in as a Word or PDF document.\*\*

(a) write assessment (two pages each) of a study topic in Journalist’s Resource(https://journalistsresource.org/type/article/) with ethical ramifications; and/or

(b) write two-page summary/critique of an academic research article no older than 2 years. Among the journals to consult: *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Media Ethics, Mass Communication and Society, Journal of Public Relations Research, Public Relations Review, and Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media.*

Option 3: Combo! 1 research study and 1 assessment

Need assistance? Set an appointment with Park Library director extraordinaire Stephanie Brown (<https://parklibrary.mj.unc.edu/>).

**Extra points**

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

\*\*First extra point opportunity!: Please answer this survey by August 24 (Tuesday) noon.

[Survey: Tell me about yourself](https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9LzcFWNOkiHEZAW)

<https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9LzcFWNOkiHEZAW>

Grading

Your final grade will be based upon…

* In-class assignments (20%)
* Ethics in the news presentation (20%)
* Response papers (30%)
* Mid-term exam (10%)
* Final exam (15%)
* Research participation (5%)

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| Percentage | Grade |
| 100 - 94 | A |
| 93 - 90 | A- |
| 89 - 87 | B+ |
| 86 - 84 | B |
| 80 - 83 | B- |
| 79 - 77 | C+ |
| 76 - 74 | C |
| 73 - 70 | C- |
| 69 - 67 | D+ |
| 66 - 60 | D |
| 59 and below | F |

I 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 they 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 disciplines; 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 reason, 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.

Grades will be posted on Sakai for all assignments.

Class schedule

Please note:

1. This schedule may be changed depending on guest speaker’s schedules, severe weather, covid-19, etc. I will advise.
2. Additional readings will be posted online throughout the semester.

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| Dates | Topics | Assignments  (due that day) |
| August 18 (W) | Introduction to the course |  |
| August 23 (M) | Ethical foundations (1) | Textbook: read Ch1 |
| August 25 (W) | Ethical foundations (2) |  |
| August 30 (M) | Moral Development (1) | Textbook: read Ch11 |
| September 1 (W) | Moral Development (2) |  |
| September 6 (M) | Labor day |  |
| September 8 (W) | Standpoint, DEI, Social justice (1) | Textbook: read Ch9 |
| September 13 (M) | Guest speaker 1 (Madhavi Reddi) |  |
| September 15 (W) | Standpoint, DEI, Social justice (2) |  |
| September 20 (M) | Guest speaker 2 (Michele Myer) | Response paper #1 due |
| September 22 (W) | Decision-making techniques (1) | Textbook:  Read pp.5-8, pp. 104-109, pp. 70-75 |
| September 27 (M) | Decision-making techniques (2) |  |
| September 29 (W) | Decision-making techniques (3) |  |
| October 4 (M) | Guest speaker 3 (Richard Griffiths) |  |
| October 6 (W) | Midterm review |  |
| October 11 (M) | Midterm exam |  |
| October 13 (W) | Professionalism & Codes of ethics |  |
| October 18 (M) | Guest speaker 4 (Bridget Barrett) |  |
| October 20 (W) | Truth (1) | Textbook: read Ch2 |
| October 25 (M) | Truth (2) |  |
| October 27 (W) | Objectivity & Neutrality (1) | Textbook: revisit pp.26-31 |
| November 1 (M) | Objectivity & Neutrality (2) | Response paper #2 due |
| November 3 (W) | News in Ethics (Team-1 & Team-2) |  |
| November 8 (M) | News in Ethics (Team-3 & Team-4) |  |
| November 10 (W) | News in Ethics (Team-5 & Team-6) |  |
| November 15 (M) | Visual/Photo challenges | Textbook: read Ch8 |
| November 17 (W) | Persuasion | Textbook: read Ch3 |
| November 22 (M) | Flexibility day |  |
| November 24 (W) | Privacy | Textbook: read Ch5 |
| November 29 (M) | Loyalties | Textbook: read Ch4 |
| December 1 (W) | Final exam review | Response paper #3 due  Research participation due |
| December 3 (F) | Final exam |  |