

MEJO 141 MEDIA ETHICS

Summer 2021 SYLLABUS

Instructor:

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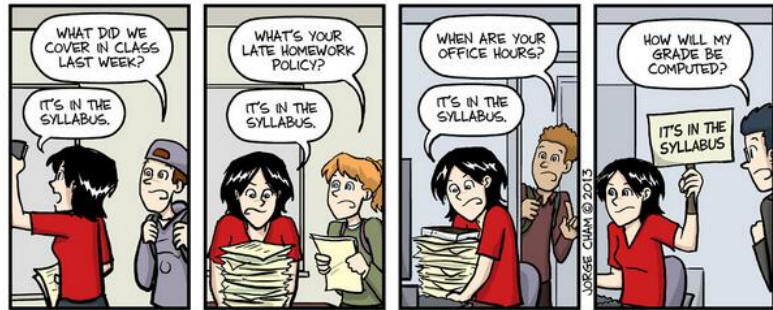
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IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

Course Goals and Objectives:

Welcome to MEJO 141! We're here to learn about media ethics. Media

professionals talk a lot about doing the right thing, but they're constantly criticized for ethical and moral shortcomings. We're going to look at the relationships of ethics, ethical dilemmas, and ethical practices within a variety of media professions including entertainment media, journalism, visual communication, public relations, and advertising.

This class explores – both in class discussions and written assignments – what constitutes ethical practices, what interferes with ethical practices, and what emerging ethical issues may challenge you as the future leaders of the media and journalism fields.

Here are the specific course objectives:

- Integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas to professional situations
- Critically analyze current mass communication professional practices through reading and discussing communication topics found in trade journals and other media
- Compare ethical standards of mass communication professions and examine how similarities and differences help or hinder their professional relationships
- *Develop, defend, and apply* your own set of guidelines to tackle ethical situations.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course is conducted online due to COVID-19. That being said, we will be conducting class asynchronously. I think that will be the easiest thing for everyone.

Everything we do will be on **Slack**. I have a few reasons for this:

- It gives us a good way to communicate that is accessible from mobile devices in the event that not everyone has sufficient tech at home.
- It facilitates one-on-one communication with me and with one another without having to share personal contact information.
- Slack is often used in professional settings, so it's good to get used to it now.
- Sakai is the worst and I'm sure we could all use a break from Zoom. Outside of turning in assignments and taking exams, Sakai will rarely be utilized.

Here's how things will work day-to-day:

- I will post the day's lecture on the #slides channel. Sometimes, this will include a full recorded lecture.
 - When it's a full video, you have to watch the lecture. I'm going to be checking the analytics.
- You will be expected to engage with the material and/or one another in the #discussion forum.
 - I'll start the discussion with prompts to make it a little easier.
 - You don't have to comment every day, but you should be doing it more often than not.
 - Please interact with one another. You don't have to have groundbreaking feedback or comments, but I also don't want to see too much of "I agree with what so-and-so said. Allow me to say the same thing in a slightly different way so that I get credit for contributing!"
 - I'm going to want to see evidence that you've watched the lecture and that you've done the reading. You don't need to be citing page numbers or anything - nor do you have to reference both in every comment - but I want to see that you're engaging with both.
- I'll pop into the discussion twice a day: once around 2pm (eastern) and once around 5pm. I'm not going to be able to keep it open all day and respond throughout (nor would I expect that of you).

My teaching style for this class is super interactive. We usually work through cases and ideas together and I pull your responses and personalities into the lectures.

Given that we're all in this together, here's my plan:

- I need to keep discussion as a part of your grade because it's too important to the nature of the course.
 - That said, I promise to be very open with you about how participation is going. If I think you're not doing enough (etc.) I'll let you know.
 - Let's try it out this way for a few days, and if we find that it's not working, we'll figure out a new plan.

ABOUT THE CONTENT AND CLASS

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. 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 \(CAPS\)](#).

Basic guidelines:

- **Be respectful** – We need to hear what everyone has to say. Participation and discussion are keys to this course, and I hope we have some intense discussions. In other words, we don't all have to agree, but I do request that you be respectful in your disagreement.
- **Communication is key** – Many, many misunderstandings, issues, problems, or situations can be solved by communication. If I don't know there is a problem, I can't help to solve it. In essence, please come talk to me when you have concerns about the class or anything else that you think I can help with.

Professional values and competencies: The School of Media and Journalism'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://bit.ly/2b2FoBB>. 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:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, 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
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- 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
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Think critically, creatively and independently
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes, they serve
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

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 now meets the philosophical and moral reasoning (PH) requirement of General Education. That means, during this semester, each student will complete **at least 10 pages of writing**. As you'll see in the schedule, there are a few writing assignments that together meet this stipulation.

Accommodations: If you may require reasonable accommodations to ensure that you have equal access to this course, you are encouraged to self-identify with either of the following offices, depending on your individual needs. Please notify the program at (919) 843-9471 as well.

Department of Accessibility Resources & Service
(919) 962-8300
accessibility.unc.edu

The Learning Center
(919) 962-7227
learningcenter.unc.edu

Diversity: The University's policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined [here](#). In summary, UNC 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, bring it to the attention of the instructor or The Office of the Dean of Students, dos@unc.edu or (919) 966-4042.

Honor Code: You need to know and follow UNC's policies regarding academic honesty in this class. I will enforce all these rules. All participants in this course are expected to complete their own work and there will be no leniency for cheating. Anyone in this course who has concerns about the Honor Code or the role it plays in this course are encouraged to meet with the instructor, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Students Charlie Tuggle, or a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

You can learn all about the UNC Honor System and expectations for student behavior here:

<https://studentconduct.unc.edu/>

Attendance: This is asynchronous so attendance will not be taken.

Make-Up Policy: Exams may be made up in the event of a medical emergency that is documented with a doctor's note. Make-up exams will be given at the end of the semester.

THINGS TO DO

- 1.) **Purchase the book:** The required text for this course is Media Ethics: Issues & Cases (9th edition) by Patterson, Wilkins, and Painter.

The text will be discussed in length and used in every class. All assigned readings are expected to be completed. If you cannot afford the text, there are two copies available in the Park Library to read as well as my personal copy you can peruse by appointment.

- 2.) **Sign up for a Slack Account under "SS1-21 MEJO 141" [Invite Link Here](#)**

We will use this site to communicate with one another. You can also use it to aid in discussion with your classmates and as the primary way to ask me questions.

- 3.) **Sign up for the ONE week you choose to do your Ethics in The News assignment on Sakai under Sign-Up**

- 4.) **Sign up for TWO chapters to do your Reading Response papers on Sakai under Sign-Up**

- 5.) **Fill out the [personal survey!](#)**

This is help me get to know you and save us all a lot of time and effort.

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments should be turned into the appropriate Sakai assignment as Word documents. Please double-space all written assignments using 12-point Times New Roman and 1" margins. The tone for all writing can be conversational but should also be professional. Late work will result in a full letter grade deduction. Assignments more than 24 hours late will not be accepted and a grade of 0 will be recorded.

Ethics in the News - 10%

You will be asked to identify a news item dealing with a mass media ethics-related event that has been in the news sometime in the last two weeks on the ethics in the news channel on Slack (#eitn). You'll explain the item to the class (a short synopsis of the story) and prompt a discussion. The discussion of the news item could be on how the story was written (i.e. the ethical choices made in its story structure and word choice), how it was presented (i.e. the ethical choices in the headline, accompanying photos, front page vs. non-front page), or of the story existence (i.e. why was this made? Why now?). ***NOTE:** You are not criticizing the story itself. We do not want to have a classroom of angry students complaining that [example company] got [example merger] but rather the deeper underlying decisions that were made for the story being its current version that we are reading today! The assignment consists of two components: the information you provide via Slack to educate your fellow students on your topic (news items, videos, links etc.) and how you identify appropriate ethics codes to consider in how the news item came to fruition. Some good places to find topics are [Poynter's Everyday Ethics Column](#) and the [iMedia Ethics](#) website.

To sign up for your week, go to Sakai's Sign-Up sheet by the end of the first week of classes or else I will personally assign you a week.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate your project:

1. Is the topic timely (within the two-week time frame), and does it involve an issue of ethical concern to mass media professionals?
2. Do you clearly explain the situation? Do you clearly outline the ethical issue(s) the situation presents?
3. Do you apply the appropriate ethics codes to analyze the situation and help inform your proposed response?
4. Do you effectively help guide class discussion, responding as appropriate to classmates' comments and questions?
5. Do you submit all of your materials on time?

DUE DATE: Please have your information posted to the appropriate Slack channel by *end of day FRIDAY* of your chosen week.

Writing Assignment – 10%

You will be given *one* writing assignments throughout the semester. This can be found on Sakai along with a grading rubric.

DUE DATE WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1: Upload on Sakai by end of day, June 3rd

Reading Responses- 20% (10% each)

Each student will discuss a topic from the assigned reading **TWICE** during the semester. The student will turn in a 1.5 to 2-page response paper. This assignment allows you to reflect on your assigned reading. It is an opportunity to "think out loud" about issues that interest you and that are connected to the reading. You may talk through a new idea arising from your reading, contemplate what confuses you, argue an inconsistency, defend an idea represented in the reading, offer an alternative view, elaborate/apply via a personal experience, etc. Turn in your written paper to the

Sakai assignment section.

DUE DATE READING RESPONSE 1: Upload on Sakai by *end of day, June 3rd*

DUE DATE READING RESPONSE 2: Upload on Sakai by *end of day, June 21st*

Slack Participation- 10%

When not primarily responsible for your ethics in the news presentation, each student will present **TWO** discussion points and/or questions **PER WEEK** on Slack. Prepare two questions (open-ended rather than yes/no) or discussion points to facilitate discussion of the assigned readings, topic, or EITN presentation. You will need to ask different questions than those that are already posted, so if someone has already posted your question or made your point, come up with something new!

DUE: Discussion points will be counted on Slack per week on *May 29th, June 5th, June 12th, and June 19th*

Reading Quizzes- 10% (5% each)

There will be two single-question quizzes that will be provided to assess your comprehension of the material and its implementation in hypothetical scenarios. The question will be based off the reading of that week, and you will be given one hour to answer. You can find the reading quiz on Sakai in the Tests & Quizzes section.

DUE DATE READING QUIZ 1: Complete on Sakai by *end of day, June 3rd*

DUE DATE READING QUIZ 2: Complete on Sakai by *end of day, June 21st*

Midterm/Final Exam – 10% and 20%, respectively

Two quizzes will test your understanding of the material covered in lectures, assigned readings, and class presentations. The first exam will test material up until that date, while the final exam is comprehensive. Exams may include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, and short-answer questions to test your understanding of the material covered in lectures, in-class activities, assigned readings, and in-class presentations.

Midterm will be conducted on *June 4th*

Final will be conducted on *June 23rd and 24th*

Grading: Course grades will be calculated using the following percentages:
The final course grade will be calculated using the following scale:

Ethics in the News Discussion	10%
Assignment	10%
Two Reading Responses	20%
Slack Participation	10%
Reading Quiz 1	10%
Reading Quiz 2	10%
Midterm Exam	10%
Final Exam	20%

A	=	93-100
A-	=	90-92.9
B+	=	87-89.9
B	=	83-86.9
B-	=	80-82.9
C+	=	77-79.9
C	=	73-76.9
C-	=	70-72.9
D+	=	67-69.9
D	=	60-66.9
F	=	59 or below

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I follow the University's Grading Standards, as adopted by 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.

Please Note: Although grades are not negotiable, I will give every consideration to any concerns you have about an assignment grade if the concern is identified **promptly**.

If you have questions about or dispute a particular grade, this needs to be taken care of **within a two class days of receiving that particular grade**. The only grades that will be discussed at the end of the semester are those assignments you complete at the end of the semester. Final averages are not rounded; to receive an A- for the class, for example, you must earn a 90 percent final average. A final average of 89.6 is a B+.

MEJO 141 Media Ethics Tentative Weekly Schedule

This schedule is subject to change

- May 19-21 Syllabus overview and the Subject of Ethics
Introduction to Ethical Decision-Making (Chapter 1)
- May 24-28 Entertainment Media: Standards and Practices, MPAA, FCC, etc.
Television Media: History of Ethical Development and Ratings
The Ethical Dimensions of Art and Entertainment (Chapter 10)
The Ethics of Photo and Video Journalism (Chapter 8)
- Mon, May 31 MEMORIAL DAY
- June 1-3 Information Ethics: A Profession Seeks Truth (Chapter 2)
- June 3rd Midterm Review
- June 4 MIDTERM – ON SAKAI**
- June 7-11 Loyalty: Choosing Between Competing Allegiances (Chapter 4)
Privacy: Looking for Solitude in the Global Village (Chapter 5)
Mass Media in a Democratic Society: Keeping a Promise (Chapter 6)
- June 14-18 Strategic Communications (Chapter 3)
Informing a Just Society (Chapter 9)
Media Economics: The Deadline Meets the Bottom Line (Chapter 7)
Becoming a Moral Adult (Chapter 11)
- June 21st Final Exam Review**
- June 23-24 FINAL EXAM – ON SAKAI**

Dates To Note

***** Please note: We highly encourage completing assignments BEFORE their due dates so as to not be overwhelmed by the work. These are deadlines but you are more than capable of completing all of these requirements at your earliest convenience *****

- Ethics in the News Discussion – Friday of your chosen week (Check Sakai Sign-Up)
Slack Participation – checked every Saturday
Assignment by June 3rd
Reading Quiz 1 by June 3rd
Reading Response 1 by June 3rd
Reading Quiz 2 by June 21st
Reading Response 2 by June 21st
Midterm Exam on June 4th
Final Exam on June 23rd and 24th