

MEJO 141.01: Media Ethics

UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media
Summer Session I, 2021 (M-F, 9:45 - 11:15 a.m.)
Zoom Link: <https://unc.zoom.us/j/9662059563>

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Description

Welcome to “Media Ethics.” In this class we are going to examine 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; and even hybrids.



In the context of ethical decision-making, there are rarely clearly right or wrong answers to professional dilemmas. The aim of this course is to provide students with training in critical decision-making, a set of overarching principles and frameworks to help guide thought and action, and a familiarity with relevant cases to help them make decisions. To develop these critical thinking skills, I encourage you to constantly stay curious - just simply ask questions! - since it is one of the foundations and driving tenants of our industries. In addition to staying current, it is imperative we all remain respectful of each other and differing perspectives or opinions. While we all may not agree on issues presented in class, we should respect each other’s right to speak.

Class structure

This course will be structured **mostly asynchronously**. I’ve designed this class to help you work independently on your readings and writing. With that being said, **the bulk of the work will be completed on your own time**. Each student is expected to read the assigned material and watch/listen to the assigned videos/materials for the week, to then contribute to meaningful discussions online (both classes and Sakai posts) and complete given assignments.

We will meet synchronously six times during the semester (check the dates in the calendar). I will hold office hours daily, between 9:45 and 11:00 a.m., to help you with questions and/or assignments.

Learning goals

- Integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas to professional situations to resolve ethical dilemmas;
- Critically analyze current media professional practices through reading and discussing communication topics found in trade journals and other media;
- Compare ethical codes and standards of our professions and examine how similarities and differences help or hinder their professional relationships;
- Develop, defend, and apply your own set of guidelines to tackle ethical situations;
- Develop and enhance professional skills like classroom and email etiquette, public speaking and team work.

Readings

This book is required for this class: Patterson, P, Wilkins L., Painter, C. (2019). *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases* 9th Ed. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

Required readings and materials will be posted to Sakai. **I strongly encourage you to take notes of everything you read!** These notes will be useful for the posts to the Discussion Forum on Sakai, as well as other written assignments.

Course grade and assignments

Response papers: 30%

Throughout the semester, I will assign several small response papers that you will complete on your own. Of these papers, you will only write three (if you write more, I will drop the lowest scores.) I am not worried about citations in these papers. They will allow me to assess your critical thinking about readings and lectures. These response papers will range between 2-3 double spaced pages.

Here are the criteria I will use to grade your papers:

Does the paper include a well developed introduction paragraph, with the definition of the problem under analysis and a clear thesis statement?

Does the paper contain three or more main points well developed with supporting details of the thesis statement?

Does the paper thoroughly conclude the argument summarizing the main topics without repeating previous sentences? Are your opinions/reflections well thought out and supported?

Is the paper written and organized well?

Due dates: May 24, June 01, June 07, June 14, June 21

Ethics in the news presentation: 15%

Each student will be assigned one class day, during which he/she is responsible for informing the rest of the class about a mass media ethics-related event that has been in the news sometime during the previous fourteen days. If it's more than two weeks old, please pick another topic. You should provide

an online link for class members to read about the event, view video if appropriate, etc. You may post more than one link if necessary, but don't go overboard (remember that this is just one component of class each day.) Clearly explain the media-related ethical issues involved (and which professional ethics codes apply) and post one or two questions to get the discussion going. You will be responsible for leading/managing discussion of the topic on the discussion board throughout the day. **Please have your information posted to the discussion board by 9 a.m. on the day you're assigned. You will lose points if your materials are not posted on time (because you aren't allowing your classmates time to respond to your materials!)**

Here are the criteria I will use to evaluate your presentations:

1. Is the topic timely (within the two weeks time frame), and does it involve an issue of ethical concern to mass media professionals?
2. Is the issue clearly explained? Are the ethical concerns clearly articulated? Are the appropriate ethics codes applied to the situation?
3. Does the presenter do a good job "managing" class discussion throughout the day, regularly responding to classmates' posts and keeping the discussion on track?

Presentations: On an ongoing basis through Sakai

Summary and Critique of a Code of Ethics: 20%

For this assignment, you will work either individually or in pairs and summarize/critique the code of ethics of an organization (check Appendix 1 for a comprehensive list with suggestions). You can also choose a code of ethics of your choice, but please let me know in advance which one you have selected. In your response, 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 you perceive, 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 that demonstrates the application of those ethical principles from the organization you researched. Papers should be six to eight pages double-spaced.

Here are the criteria I will use to grade your paper:

- Does the paper thoroughly describe the main tenets of the chosen code of ethics analyzed?
- Does the paper thoroughly describe at least one real-world example that demonstrates the application of the ethical principles that the organization stated to follow?
- Does the paper include a thorough discussion of recommendations on the different means to hold the organization under research accountable?
- Is the paper written and organized well? (This includes following APA guidelines).

Research paper due date: June 17

Ethical Statement as a Communications Professional: 15%

In this assignment, you will write your own code of ethics. The purpose of this assignment is for you to apply all the knowledge that you've acquired throughout the semester in an ethical statement that will guide your work in the media and communication field. You will write this using first person (as a personal narrative). Papers should be three to four pages double spaced. [Check this rubric](#) to see the criteria I will use to grade your paper.

Due date: June 22

Class participation: 20%

As you can probably imagine, your participation in this class is very important. This course will be conducted as a seminar, and the active participation of all class members is required both when we meet synchronously, as well as for all asynchronous activities. There are five weeks during the semester, and for each one, I will provide 4 points for participation. Each week's grade will be posted to Sakai on Wednesdays (May 26, June 02, June 09, June 16, June 23). To earn full participation points per week, you will need to comment on at least three Ethics in the News Presentation of your peers. Participation in synchronous classes is also expected.

Here's an explanation of how I will grade each week's participation:

A grade of 4 will be given for a student who has commented in a timely manner to at least three presentations of their peers, and in addition, has responded more than once to others' posts. Comments are thorough and thoughtful and reflect an understanding of the assigned material. They contribute original information and go beyond simply agreeing or disagreeing with others' comments. Opinions are backed up with evidence and discussion of personal experience.

A grade of 3 will be given for a student who has commented in a timely manner to three posts of their peers' presentations that week, but has not responded to others' posts. Comments are thorough and thoughtful and reflect an understanding of the assigned material.

A grade of 2 will be given for a student who has commented on two of their peers' presentations during the week. Comments are thorough and thoughtful and reflect an understanding of the assigned material.

A grade of 1 will be given to a student who has commented on only one of their peers' presentations during the week. Comment was thorough and thoughtful and reflected an understanding of the assigned material.

A grade of 0 will be given to a student who does not post at all on any given day of the week.

****** Added on May 23, 2021: I will give one point of participation per week if a student signs up for office hours with substantive questions about the content of the course.***

Grades

Though grades are not negotiable, I give serious consideration to students' concerns about them. If you have questions about a particular grade, you will need to talk to me within a week of receiving the grade. If you dispute a grade, you will need to submit a written complaint also within a week of receiving the grade.

Technology in the Classroom

You will need a computer, tablet, or cell phone with an internet connection in order to take this class. **If you do not have access to a device with a reliable internet connection, please contact me as soon as possible.** Remember to always save a backup with all your work to the cloud, or a flash/jump drive. Save early and often. If you ever have technical difficulties, you should inform me as soon as possible.

Formatting and Writing Expectations

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.

Follow these formatting requirements for all your written assignments. Documents not meeting these standards will not be accepted and are considered late until corrected.

Font	Size	Page Margins	Page Numbers	Name	Submissions	Lines
Calibri or Times New Roman	12	1 inch all sides	All text pages	Header	Sakai	Double Spaced

Please note that all documents and assignments (excepting the response papers) need to follow APA style rules for formatting, headers and page numbers, headings and subheadings, in-text citations, and bibliography. Here you can find [more detailed information on APA style rules here](#).

Evaluation Scale

The final course grade will be calculated using the following scale:

A	=	93-100
A-	=	90-92
B+	=	87-89
B	=	83-86
B-	=	80-82
C+	=	77-79
C	=	73-76

C-	=	70-72
D+	=	67-69
D	=	60-66
F	=	59 or below

“A” Mastery of course content at the highest level that can be reasonably expected of students at a given state of development. The “A” grade states clearly that the student has shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study that he/she may be strongly encouraged to continue. (Clear and original thinking, thorough analysis, logical assertions supported by significant amounts of evidence, clear writing that is concise and grammatically correct, strong organization. Your work will be considered in relation to that of your classmates. Work that is significantly better than other work will receive a higher grade.)

“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. (Clear and original thinking, relatively thorough analysis, logical assertions supported by some amount of evidence, clear writing with very few grammatical errors, good organization.)

“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. (One or two elements of the assignment may be weak or missing, some writing errors, some weakness in organization, relatively little evidence for assertions.)

“D” A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The “D” grade states that the student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of D grades should be taken to mean that the student would be well advised not to continue in the academic field. (Several elements of the assignment are weak or missing, poor writing, poor organization, lack of evidence for assertions.)

“F” For whatever reasons, an unacceptable performance. The “F” grade indicates that the student’s performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content. (Most or all of the required elements are missing. The assignment is turned in late. Writing is so bad that it’s difficult to understand.)

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 Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

About the Content / Psychological Services

This course may at times include topics, materials, and discussions that can be disturbing or distressing. It is difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate all the directions our conversations may take. 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://studentaffairs.unc.edu/about-us/departments/counseling-and-psychological-services>

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 Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

ACEJMC Core Values and Competencies

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies. Specifically, this course is designed to help you:

- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- 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;

Calendar

Date	Topic	Readings
05/19	Synchronous: Introduction to the course	
ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS IN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION		
05/20	Introduction to Ethical Decision-Making, Part 1	Chapter 1 (Ethical Decision-Making) Check Video Lecture on Sakai
05/21	Introduction to Ethical Decision-Making, Part 2	Chapter 2 (Information Ethics) “ Fake News Can Be Deadly. Here's How To Spot It ” (NPR’s <i>Life Kit</i>)
05/24	Synchronous: Wrap up Ethical Foundations, Introduce Ethical Guidelines in Journalism Response Paper #1 Due	Case Study: The News We Desire (https://mediaengagement.org/research/the-news-we-desire/) Case Study: Objectivity in the Age of Black Lives Matter (https://mediaengagement.org/research/newsroom-objectivity-in-the-age-of-black-lives-matter/)
ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN JOURNALISM		
05/25	The Relationship Between Journalism and Democracy	Chapters 6 (Democracy) & 9 (Informing a Just Society) Adams, K. (2020). Between Trump and a Hard Place: Civil Gatekeeping and Moral Equivalence in Press Endorsements of 2016 Presidential Candidates. <i>Journalism Studies</i> , 21(11), 1531–1550. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2020.1770118 Lowery, W. (2020) “A Reckoning Over Objectivity, Led by Black Journalists”

		<p>https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/opinion/objectivity-black-journalists-coronavirus.html</p> <p>EITN: Harrison Clark</p>
05/26	The Identity of the Journalist, Part 1	<p>Chapter 4 (Loyalty)</p> <p>Davis, A. (2009). JOURNALIST–SOURCE RELATIONS, MEDIATED REFLEXIVITY AND THE POLITICS OF POLITICS. <i>Journalism Studies</i>, 10(2), 204–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700802580540</p> <p>Mills, S. (2018). Defining the Delicate and Often Difficult Relationship Between Reporters and Sources. <i>ProPublica</i>, https://www.propublica.org/article/ask-propublica-illinois-reporters-and-sources-relationship#:~:text=The%20relationship%20between%20reporters%20and,between%20reporters%20and%20their%20sources.</p> <p>EITN: Kelly Kendall</p>
05/27	The Identity of the Journalist, Part 2	<p>Richardson, A. V. (2016). Bearing Witness While Black. <i>Digital Journalism</i>, 5(6), 673–698. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1193818</p> <p>Bearing Witness While Black: Technology, Race, and Documenting the Movement for Black Lives (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHmTLVpUG5g)</p> <p>EITN: Felipe Hernandez</p>
05/28	Guest Lecture: Liz Schlemmer, Education Reporter at WUNC	<p>Check the recording of the lecture with the guest speaker, Liz Schlemmer. Also, read some of her articles listed under Resources for 05/28.</p> <p>EITN: Christian Vallat</p> <p>EITN: Fallon Maher</p>

05/31	MEMORIAL DAY - No Class	
ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION		
06/01	Synchronous: Wrap up Journalism, Introduce Ethical Guidelines in Strategic Communication Response Paper #2 Due	<p>Case Study: Advertising Ethics and Social Justice (https://mediaengagement.org/research/advertising-ethics-and-social-issues/)</p> <p>Case Study: Privacy vs Products in Targeted Digital Advertising (https://mediaengagement.org/research/privacy-versus-products-in-targeted-digital-advertising/)</p> <p>Watch Videos: Gillete’s ad and “Here’s why Kendall Jenner’s Pepsi ad is so controversial” (Sakai)</p> <p>EITN: Max Poteat</p>
06/02	Ethical Dilemmas in Public Relations	<p>Chapter 3 (Strategic Communication)</p> <p>Neill, M. S. (2020). Public Relations Professionals Identify Ethical Issues, Essential Competencies and Deficiencies. <i>Journal of Media Ethics</i>, 36(1), 51–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1846539</p> <p>“Frame Canada” (NPR’s <i>Planet Money</i>)</p> <p>EITN: Alexandra Mauney</p>
06/03	Ethical Dilemmas in Advertising	<p>(Karen) Han, J., Drumwright, M., & Goo, W. (2018). Native Advertising: Is Deception an Asset or a Liability? <i>Journal of Media Ethics</i>, 33(3), 102–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2018.1477048</p> <p>Wellman, M. L., Stoldt, R., Tully, M., & Ekdale, B. (2020). Ethics of Authenticity: Social Media Influencers and the Production of Sponsored</p>

		<p>Content. <i>Journal of Media Ethics</i>, 35(2), 68–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1736078</p> <p>“Political Ad Nauseam” (NPR’s <i>Planet Money</i>)</p> <p>EITN: Luke Linkel</p>
06/04	Guest Lecture: Fernanda Mediano, PhD Candidate, “Regulations to Food Advertising Targeted to Children”	EITN: Tatum Neff
ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA		
06/07	Synchronous: Wrap up Strategic Communication, Introduce Ethical Guidelines in Entertainment Media Response Paper #3 Due	<p>Case Study: Netflix and Kill (https://mediaengagement.org/research/netflix-and-kill/)</p> <p>EITN: Aiden Keller</p>
06/08	The Role of Entertainment Media in Society	<p>Chapter 10 (Art and Entertainment)</p> <p>Mast, J. (2016). The Dark Side of " Reality TV": Professional Ethics and the Treatment of " Reality"-Show Participants. <i>International Journal of Communication</i>, 10, 22.</p> <p>Reality check: the true dangers of reality TV ZNEWS Spotlight</p> <p>EITN: Emma Lindquist</p>
06/09	Ethical Representations in Entertainment Media	<p>Davé, S. S. (2013) “Rethinking Accents in America”, in <i>Indian Accents : Brown Voice and Racial Performance in American Television and Film</i>, University of Illinois Press.</p> <p>EITN: Heavenly Walker</p>
06/10	Guest Lecture: Madhavi Reddi, PhD Student, “Representations of Indian-Americans in Entertainment Media”	
06/11	***NO CLASS***	EITN: Hannah Griffin
ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION		

06/14	Synchronous: Wrap up Entertainment Media, Introduce Ethical Guidelines in Visual Communication Response Paper #4 Due	Case Study: Images of the Death in the Media (https://mediaengagement.org/research/images-of-death-in-the-media/) EITN: Aurora Charlow
06/15	“Seeing is Believing”: Powerful Images in Journalism and Entertainment Media	Chapter 8 (Photo and Video Journalism) EITN: Marge Seets
06/16	Conflicting Ethical Decisions as a Visual Storyteller	Miller, K. C., & Dahmen, N. (2020). “This is Still their Lives”: Photojournalists’ Ethical Approach to Capturing and Publishing Graphic or Shocking Images. <i>Journal of Media Ethics</i> , 35(1), 17-30. EITN: Kayla Bell
06/17	Guest Lecture: Matt Durning, Independent Documentary Filmmaker Summary and Critique of Code of Ethics Due	Romero Walker, A. (2021). A New Media Literacy: Using Film Theory for a Pedagogy That Makes Skills Courses More Inclusive, Representative, and Critically Media Literate. <i>Journalism & Mass Communication Educator</i> , 76(2), 241–249. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695820960631 Check some of the videos on: https://vimeo.com/durning EITN: Ashwin Punj
06/18	***NO CLASS***	EITN: Casey Meisel
06/21	Response Paper #5 Due	Chapter 11 (Becoming a Moral Adult)
06/22	It’s Time for Definitions: Your Ethical Standpoint as a Communications Professional Ethics Statements Due	
06/23	Last day of class - Final reflections (Synchronous)	

Appendix 1

Journalism:

The New York Times (Ethical Journalism Guidebook, Social Media Guidelines):

<https://www.nytc.com/company/standards-ethics/>

The Washington Post:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/ask-the-post/wp/2016/01/01/policies-and-standards/>

Associated Press: <https://www.ap.org/about/news-values-and-principles/>

NPR: <https://www.npr.org/ethics>

ProPublica: <https://www.propublica.org/code-of-ethics>

Los Angeles Times: <https://www.latimes.com/la-times-ethics-guidelines-story.html>

McClatchy, owner of N&O, The Herald-Sun and Charlotte Observer:

<https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/article239522178.html>

<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode-other.asp>

The Toronto Star: <https://www.thestar.com/about/statementofprinciples.html>

BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/>

Al Jazeera: <https://network.aljazeera.net/about-us/our-values/code-ethics>

Strategic Communication:

American Marketing Association: <https://www.ama.org/codes-of-conduct/>

Interactive Advertising Bureau:

https://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IAB_Code_of_Conduct_10282-21.pdf

American Association of Advertising Agencies: <https://www.aaaa.org/4as-standards-practice/>

Global Alliance PR: <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/code-of-ethics>

Public Relations Society of America: <https://www.prsa.org/about/prsa-code-of-ethics>

The Walt Disney Company:

<https://thewaltdisneycompany.com/app/uploads/Standards-of-Business-Conduct-Ethical-Standards.pdf>

Coca-Cola Company:

<https://www.coca-colacompany.com/content/dam/journey/us/en/policies/pdf/corporate-governance/code-of-business-conduct/coca-cola-coc-external.pdf>

Nike: <https://purpose.nike.com/code-of-conduct>

Johnson & Johnson: <https://www.jnj.com/code-of-business-conduct>