

MEJO 141-4 Media Ethics

Tu & Th 4:45– 6:00 pm | Remote Learning | Final Exam: 4:00 pm Nov 21

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Remote Learning: Course content will be delivered through Zoom. You can access all classes through <https://unc.zoom.us/j/99975291347> (Meeting ID: 999 7529 1347)

Office hours: M&W 4:30– 5:15 pm via the Zoom link <https://unc.zoom.us/j/95906193906> (Meeting ID: 959 0619 3906); or by appointment through Zoom or email.

Course Goals

Media professionals talk a lot about doing the right thing, but they're often criticized for ethical and moral shortcomings. We're here to learn media ethics and discuss the ethical dilemmas that have confronted professionals in print, in broadcast, online, on social media, and in person. This class explores – both in class discussions and in 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.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. This course is required for MEJO majors, and it meets a requirement for a minor in social and economic justice and the General Education requirement for philosophical and moral reasoning (PH). That means, during the semester, you will complete at least 10 pages of writing. There will be a few writing assignments that, together, meet this stipulation.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this class is to help you make effective ethical decisions within your profession. By semester's end, you should be able to:

- Integrate ethical foundations and apply those ideas to professional situations.
- 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.

Textbook

(Required) *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases* (9th edition) by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins.

The text will be supplemented by articles or other readings and videos.

Sakai Tour



-Syllabus: You know, this thing you should check every now and then... This semester, the weekly class schedule is subject to change in COVID-19.

-Lessons: The most updated and specific class schedule for each lecture. When in doubt, visit the specific lesson (e.g., Lecture 1) under the lessons tab to find readings, assignments and slides for each class.

-Forums: Yes, participation in Sakai forum discussions counts as class participation. Continue and/or spark class discussions at any time – even if it's a topic area that we've covered.

-Gradebook: I or my TA will post grades. If you have a question about a grade, please wait 24 hours after receiving the grade and inform me of your concern within two weeks of it being posted via Zoom or email (rather than waiting until the semester ends).

Help with COVID-19

- CV19 Student Care Hub: <https://keeplearning.unc.edu/> includes FAQs about academic, financial and wellness issues.
- This DTH article provides *Top 10 tips to stay successful and sane while learning online* <https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2020/05/top-10-tips-to-stay-successful-and-sane-while-learning-online>
- And, *please* let me know how I might help you! Student hours are my official meeting times, but I will work with you to e-meet at other times, too. We got this!!

Basic Guidelines

- Please attend the Zoom class on time – it's a matter of professionalism, responsibility, and mutual respect (all major themes within this course).
- Be respectful – we need to hear what everyone has to say. Participation and discussion are keys to this course. We all may not agree on certain issues, but I do request that you be respectful in your disagreement.
- Be Curious— 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. Resources I like include [The Skimm](#) and [Google News](#); you may have others. Find out what ethical issues face professionals in your field by taking a look at the trade journals available in the [Park Library](#). See something interesting? Bring it to the Zoom class or post it on Sakai! Operating in the professional world involves keeping up with what is going on in the world around you.
- Communication is key – 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.

About the content

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).

GRADING COMPONENTS

- **Participation (15%)**
 - Participation in the discussion 10%
You will receive 10% of the total grade if you actively participate in the lectures, engage your other classmates in presentations and discussions, visit my virtual office hour to ask questions, and act professionally with your peers.
Note that you need to respond to at least four EITN presentation topics in class or in Sakai – otherwise 4% will be taken off in participation grade.
 - Research participation 5%

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 summaries – due Nov 17, 4:30 p.m. Each summary counts for 1 hour of research participation.

(a) write assessment (two pages each) of a study topic in Journalist's Resource 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, Public Relations Journal (online), and Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media.

Option 3: Combo - 1 research study and 1 assessment

- **Assignments 50%**

- Homework 15%

There will be up to four times of homework throughout the semester. The homework helps you grasp the important ideas in the lecture and readings. See Sakai for the details and deadlines.

- "Ethics in the News" presentation video 15%

You'll form a group of approximately 4 students. One group will be responsible for locating a news item dealing with media ethics. You'll create a presentation video explaining the item to the class. The video can be 5-10 minutes. You are expected to post the video to Sakai before the class and lead a discussion in a viable mode. The schedule and a detailed rubric for the EITN presentations will be posted on Sakai.

- Interview assignment 20%

For this assignment, you will interview a professional in your field of interest with professional experience for at least two years. Ask them about the ethical dilemmas that arise in their job. Specifically ask them to tell you about an ethical dilemma they have personally faced, the decision-making process they went through to address the dilemma, and the ultimate outcome of the situation. Ask if they would do anything differently if a similar situation would arise again. Turn in a 300-400 word summary of the interview, along with the person's name and either e-mail address or phone number. This assignment is due on Tuesday, Oct 20.

- **Quizzes and Exams 35%**

- Quizzes 10% (lowest dropped)

There will be three times of quizzes throughout the semester, based on the lecture and reading assigned on that week. This is to make sure you are keeping up with the class. A quiz may have multiple choice, true or false, or short answer.

- Final Exam 25%

The final exam will test your understanding of the material covered in lectures, assigned readings, and class presentations. Exams will include multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, true/false and short-answer questions. The final exam will test your knowledge of the material from the entire semester.

Points	Grade	Descriptions
93-100	A	Mastery of course content at highest level; Excellent attainment.
90-92.9	A-	
87-89.9	B+	
83-86.9	B	Strong performance; Good attainment.
80-82.9	B-	
77-79.9	C+	
73-76.9	C	Average performance; Satisfactory attainment of the subject.
70-72.9	C-	
67-69.9	D+	
60-66.9	D	Passing performance; Marginal attainment.
59 or below	F	Failed performance; Unacceptable attainment.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

DIVERSITY

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined on the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office's webpage (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>). UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Resources & Services site at <https://ars.unc.edu/>.

Honor Code

You are expected to conduct yourself within the guidelines of the University honor system. 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. You may retrieve the full document, The instrument of student judicial governance, [here](#).

Accreditation

*Please look at the list of competencies [here](#) and choose those that best fit your class.

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://hussman.unc.edu/accreditation>. No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. The values and competencies associated with this course include being able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientations and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- 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.

Tentative Weekly Class Schedule*

**Subject to change due to COVID-19. See Sakai "Lessons" for updates, all readings, and assignments*

Date	Topic	Textbook/EITN Seq
Aug 11, Tu	Intro Syllabus Sakai	<i>Personal survey due by 11:55 pm</i>
Aug 13, Th	Why ethics? Case discussions	
Aug 18, Tu	Ethical foundations I	Ch 1
Aug 20, Th	Ethical foundations II	
Aug 25, Tu	Moral development	Ch 11
Aug 27, Th	Standpoint theory	Ch 9 <i>EITN Group 1</i>
Sept 1, Tu	Guest Speaker: Richard Griffins	
Sept 3, Th	Decision-making techniques	pp. 5-8 (Bok model) & pp. 105-109 (Potter Box)
Sept 8, Tu	Professionalism and codes	
Sept 10, Th	More on professionalism and codes	<i>EITN Group 2</i>
Sept 15, Tu	Digital media	
Sept 17, Th	Plagiarism	<i>EITN Group 3</i>
Sept 22, Tu	Diversity & inclusion	
Sept 24, Th	Sensitive Subjects	<i>EITN Group 4</i>
Sept 29, Tu	Telling the Truth	Ch 2
Oct 1, Th	Guest speaker: Erik Brooks, Doctoral Candidate on Partisanship and misinformation	
Oct 6, Tu	More Telling the Truth	<i>EITN Group 5</i>
Oct 8, Th	Objectivity & Frames	See Sakai, ch. 2, pp. 26-31
Oct 13, Tu	More frames	See Sakai, <i>EITN Group 6</i>
Oct 15, Th	No class - Un-Fall Break	
Oct 20, Tu	Interview assignment due	
Oct 22, Th	Persuasion	Ch 3, <i>EITN Group 7</i>
Oct 27, Tu	Advertising and PR	See Sakai
Oct 29, Th	Photo and visual issues	Ch 8, <i>EITN Group 8</i>
Nov 3, Tu	Privacy	Ch 5
Nov 5, Th	More on privacy	see Sakai <i>EITN Group 9</i>
Nov 10, Tu	Big data and AI	See Sakai, <i>EITN Group 10</i>
Nov 12, Th	Loyalties	Ch 4, <i>EITN Group 11</i>
Nov 17, Tu	Wrap-up/ Final Exam Review	
Nov 24, Sat	Final Exam at 4:00 pm on Nov 24	