

# MEJO 141.01W: Media Ethics

## Summer Session II

Instructor: Meredith Collins, MA

E-mail: [mrcollins@unc.edu](mailto:mrcollins@unc.edu)

Office Hours: 1:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., daily

Office: Zoom (see Sakai for link)

### About the Course

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

To avoid Zoom fatigue, **our 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 complete class activities, to contribute to meaningful discussions online (both classes and Sakai posts), and to complete given assignments.

To keep us on track, **we will meet synchronously six times during the semester (check the dates in the calendar).** I will hold office hours *daily*, between 1:15 p.m. and 2:45 p.m., to help you with questions and/or assignments. Please see the calendar for the Zoom link.

### 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.

### ***These learning goals map on to the following 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;

## **Course Text, Assignments, and Grading**

### ***Readings***

**This book is required for this class:** Patterson, P, Wilkins L., Painter, C. (2021). *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases* 10th 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 Assignments***

#### Formatting and Writing Expectations for **ALL** course assignments

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.**

**One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the assignment is late.**

Font	Font Size	Page Margins	Page Numbers	Line Spacing	Name	Details Document T type	Submissions
Times New Roman	12-point	1 inch (all sides)	Upper right-hand corner All text pages	Double spaced	Cover page	Word document only	Sakai Assignments tab Due <b>11:55 p.m.</b> unless otherwise indicated

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. You can find more information on APA style [here](#).

#### 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.

#### 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!)

Presentations: On an ongoing basis through Sakai

#### Summary and Critique of a Code of Ethics: 20%

For this assignment, you will each summarize/critique the code of ethics of an organization (check Assignment 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 seven to eight pages double-spaced.**

#### 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 and please include references to at least five readings/videos/lectures from the course.**

### Class Participation: 20%

As you can probably imagine, your participation in this class is very important. This course will require the active participation of all class members, 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 6 points for participation. Each week's grade will be posted to Sakai on Fridays. Participation in synchronous classes is also expected.

### **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.

The final course grade will be given according to the following scale:

Letter Grade	Point Range	Percentage Range	Interpretation
A		93 - 100	<b>"A" Mastery of course content at the highest level that can be reasonably expected of students at a given state of development.</b> 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.  <b>Practically, this means:</b> 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.
A-		90 - 92	
B+		87 - 89	
B		83 - 86	<b>"B" Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.</b> The "B" grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.
B-		80 - 82	
C+		77 - 79	<b>Practically, this means:</b> 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		73 - 76	<b>"C" A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.</b> 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+	67 - 69	<b>"D" A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.</b> 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.
D	60 - 66	
<b>Practically, this means:</b> Several elements of the assignment are weak or missing, poor writing, poor organization, lack of evidence for assertions.		
F	59 or below	<b>"F" For whatever reasons, an unacceptable performance.</b> The "F" grade indicates that the student's performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content.
<b>Practically, this means:</b> 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.		

## Course Policies

### *Attendance Policy*

Your attendance is strongly encouraged because it is important to both your success in the course and our success as a collective learning community.

Our class has the following policy on attendance:

This is a Summer Session course that will be run primarily asynchronously. You are expected to keep up and be proactive in contacting the instructor with questions and issues. You are also expected to participate in activities each and every week.

**Finally, you are also expected to be present at each and every synchronous class meeting.** We are only having six of these, so your attendance is critical. *Missing a synchronous class meeting will result in a two-point deduction from your class participation score.*

The University has the following policy on attendance:

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

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

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

### ***Seeking Help***

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.

#### CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services):

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://caps.unc.edu/>.

CAPS is open M – F from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation or call their 24/7 support line (919-966-3658) to learn more.

#### The Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (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 or e-mail: [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

Although I aim to be understanding, please understand that, under University policies, **disability-related accommodations are not guaranteed without authorization from ARS.**

### ***Diversity, Non-Discrimination, and Equal Opportunity***

#### Diversity Statement

I value – and I expect you to do so as well – the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students, and I expect that you will treat classmates who differ from you on any of the above categories with respect and civility.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to make our classroom a more inclusive space; 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 (<http://odos.unc.edu>) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

#### 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](#) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), or [online to the EOC](#).

#### Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office

Acts of discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, stalking, and related retaliation are prohibited at UNC-Chapel Hill. If you have experienced these types of conduct, you are encouraged to report the incident and seek resources on campus or in the community. An online report can be made [here](#).

You can also contact the [University's Title IX Coordinator, Report and Response Coordinators](#) in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, [Counseling and Psychological Services \(confidential\)](#), or the [Gender Violence Services Coordinators \(confidential\)](#) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [Safe at UNC](#).

If you suspect these acts may have affected your grade in a course, you can submit an appeal by following the process outlined on the University Registrar's website under [Grade Changes and Appeals](#).

## Course Schedule

### Course Schedule

We will try to stick to the following schedule, but some changes may be made. If changes are made, they will be communicated to you in advance, via Sakai.

Date	Topic	Readings
June 20	Introduction to Ethical Decision-Making, Part 1	Chapter 1 (Ethical Decision Making), including: Cases and Moral Systems and How to Read a Case Study (p. 22 - 25)
<b>ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS IN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION</b>		
June 21	Introduction to Ethical Decision-Making, Part 1 (Synchronous)	The syllabus



Date	Topic	Readings
June 22	Introduction to Ethical Decision-Making, Part 2	Chapter 2 (Information Ethics)
June 23	The Relationship Between Journalism and Democracy	Chapter 5 (Democracy) and Chapter 6 (Informing a Just Society)
June 24	Wrap Up Ethical Foundations, Introduce Ethical Guidelines in Journalism (Synchronous)	<a href="#">NPR: "Fake News Can Be Deadly"</a> <a href="#">Case Study: The News We Desire</a>

### ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN JOURNALISM

		Chapter 4 (Loyalty)
		<a href="#">Mills, S. (2018). Defining the Delicate and Often Difficult Relationship Between Reporters and Sources. ProPublica.</a>
June 27	The Identity of the Journalist, Part 1	<a href="#">Case Study: Schefter and Mr. Editor</a>  EITN: Adalgeovany Caceres  EITN: Ty Murray
		Lowry, W. (2020, June 23). A reckoning over objectivity, led by Black journalists. <i>The New York Times</i> . Retrieved from <a href="#">ProQuest</a> .
		Watch: <a href="#">Bearing Witness While Black: Technology, Race, and Documenting the Movement for Black Lives</a>
June 28	The Identity of the Journalist, Part 2	<a href="#">Case Study: Newsroom Objectivity in the Age of Black Lives Matter</a>  EITN: Ethan Horton  EITN: Justilyn Lavapie
June 29	Wrap up Ethics in Journalism, Introduce Ethics in Strategic Communication (Synchronous)	<a href="#">Case Study: The Ethics of Unpublishing the News</a>  Response Paper #1 Due

### ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

		Chapter 3 (Strategic Communication)
June 30	Ethical Dilemmas in Public Relations	Neill, M.S. (2021). Public relations professionals identify ethical issues, essential competencies, and deficiencies. <i>Journal of Media Ethics</i> , 36(1), 51 - 67.  Listen: <a href="#">Frame Canada</a>



Date	Topic	Readings
July 1	Ethical Dilemmas in Advertising	<p>Han et al. (2018). Native advertising: Is deception an asset or a liability? <i>Journal of Media Ethics</i>, 33(3), 102 - 119.</p> <p><u>Case Study</u>: Privacy vs. Products in Targeted Digital Advertising</p> <p><u>Case Study</u>: The Ethics of Digital Contact Tracing</p>
July 4		<b>NO CLASS: HAPPY 4TH OF JULY</b>
July 5	Individual Conferences (Synchronous; Check July 1 Lesson Page for Calendar)	<p><b>EITN: Greer Pattison</b></p> <p><b>EITN: Julia Knowler</b></p> <p><b>EITN: Kaiyan Li</b></p>
July 6	Individual Conferences (Synchronous; Check July 1 Lesson Page for Calendar)	<p><b>EITN: Kamryn Dixon</b></p> <p><b>EITN: Ben Kiernan</b></p> <p><b>EITN: Shubing Liu</b></p> <p><b>Response Paper #2 Due</b></p>
July 7	Individual Conferences (Synchronous; Check July 1 Lesson Page for Calendar)	<p><b>EITN: Emma Helton</b></p> <p><b>EITN: Corinna Collins</b></p> <p><b>EITN: Liddy Wade</b></p>
July 8	The Ethics of Influencers	<p>Wellman et al. (2020). Ethics of authenticity: Social influencers and the production of sponsored content. <i>Journal of Media Ethics</i>, 35(2), 68 - 82.</p> <p><u>Case Study</u>: Advertising Ethics and Social Justice</p> <p><u>Case Study</u>: "Act like you're crying": Jordan Cheyenne and the ethics of family YouTubers</p>
July 11	Wrap Up Strat Comm, Introduce Ethics in Visual Communication (Synchronous)	<p><u>Case Study</u>: Images of Death in the Media</p> <p><b>Response Paper #3 Due</b></p>

**ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

Date	Topic	Readings
July 12	Powerful Images in Journalism and Entertainment Media	Chapter 8 (Photo and Video Journalism)  EITN: Taliajah Vann  EITN: Bryan Gill
July 13	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: Logan Jones  EITN: Katie Fuller
July 14	Wrap Up Ethics in Visual Communication, Introduce Ethics in Entertainment Media (Synchronous)	<u>Case Study</u> : One Does Not Simply Create a Meme  <u>Case Study</u> : Netflix and Kill  Response Paper #4 Due
<b>ETHICAL GUIDELINES IN ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA</b>		
July 15	NO CLASS: READING / WRITING DAY (PREPARE FOR UPCOMING DUE DATES)	
July 18	The Role of Entertainment Media in Society	Chapter 10 (Art and Entertainment)  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.  EITN: Jamal Smith  EITN: Ethan Horton
July 19	Ethical Representations in Entertainment Media	<u>Case Study</u> : Game of Thrones  <u>Case Study</u> : 13 Reasons Why  <u>Case Study</u> : Sex, Drugs, and Hijabs  EITN: Connelly Miller
July 20	Becoming a Moral Adult	Chapter 11 (Becoming a Moral Adult)  Response Paper #5 Due

Date	Topic	Readings
July 21	The Ethics of Fan Fiction (Synchronous) Guest: Dr. Ashley Hedrick	<u>Case Study</u> : The Ethics of Real-Person Fan Fiction Summary and Critique of Code of Ethics Due
July 26	It's Time for Definitions: Your Ethical Standpoint as a Communications Professional	Ethics Statement Due by 2:30 p.m. EST <b>***due to finals schedule, no late papers can be accepted***</b>