

MEJO 141.003 – Media Ethics

Spring, 2023

Meeting Time: Tuesday & Thursday, 2 pm to 3:15 pm

Classroom: 58 Carroll Hall

Final Date and Time: Tuesday, May 2nd at noon.

Instructor: Daniel Malmer (You can call me Dan. I use he/him or they/them pronouns.)

Office: 347 Carroll Hall

Email (preferred): malmer@unc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 1 pm to 1:45 pm, and by appointment.

Class Zoom: <https://unc.zoom.us/j/97576593405>

Course Description

Explore what constitutes ethical practices, what interferes with ethical practices, and what emerging ethical issues may challenge the newest generation of professional communicators.

Cases involve print, broadcast, and Internet news media; photojournalism; graphic design; public relations; and advertising.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Read, understand, and articulate professional codes of ethics.
- Explain the ethical foundations behind professional ethics.
- Critically analyze scenarios involving media from an ethical standpoint.
- Recognize situations that may be ethically treacherous.

- Assess, articulate, and defend ethical values.
- Have productive discussions with others about complex ethical issues.
- Devise strategies for dealing with potential ethical lapses.

Expectations

This class will be heavy on discussion and group participation. Therefore, it is vital that you come to class prepared and ready to collaborate with your classmates. Please have any assigned reading for the day done before the start of class.

You should always take [The Honor Code](#) seriously, but doubly so for this class! As we will discuss in class, many factors can lead to ethical lapses, including stress, pressure, and time constraints. If you have any concerns that circumstances may compromise your work, please speak with me, and we can work it out.

As a rule of thumb, for every hour in class, college students spend approximately 2–3 hours on out-of-class reading or assignments. If you spend significantly more than six hours a week on this class, please consider speaking with me either in class or privately. It may well be that I am underestimating the level of effort.

An essential part of this class is discussing topics that reasonable people may disagree on. Remember that differences of opinion are usually a result of different perspectives rather than ill intent. Please be respectful of your classmates' opinions, especially when disagreeing.

Class Attendance Policy

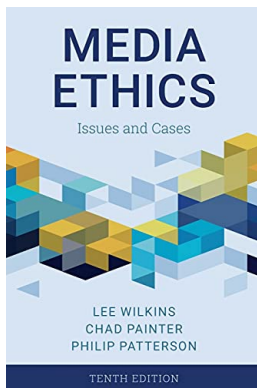
This is an in-person class. It will be highly interactive and involve many group discussions as a class and in smaller groups. Therefore, attending class in person is important, not just for your benefit but for the benefit of your classmates. Students cannot participate by Zoom except by prior arrangement (for example, someone quarantined but feels healthy enough

to attend virtually). However, we can't anticipate all possible circumstances. If a situation prevents you from attending class regularly, please speak with me, and I'll do my best to accommodate you. You are allowed two unexcused absences. Two points will be deducted from your class participation score for each subsequent unexcused absence. Remember that you are bound by the Honor Code for excused absences, including sickness.

Covid

As of the start of the semester, the [Covid standards](#) at UNC are: stay up to date with your vaccines; optional mask use; practice healthy habits and be respectful. These standards may change, and students are expected to adhere to whatever guidelines are in place. I will mask while interacting with students but may not while lecturing. If any student prefers that I mask while lecturing, I'm happy to do so. Please stay home if you are experiencing any symptoms or believe you have been exposed. Although class participation is an important part of this class, your health and the health of your classmates are more important.

Required Texts



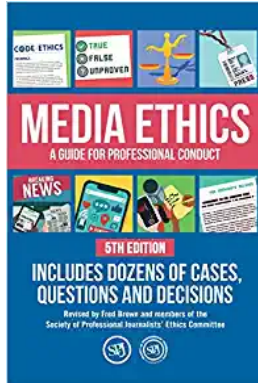
Media Ethics: Issues and Cases, 10th Edition (Patterson & Wilkins)

This is the standard text used across all sections of MEJO 141. New and used copies are available in the bookstore. It's available in digital form, as well. This is vital because we'll be reading the entire book for class.

In addition, we will be reading chapters from a number of books available digitally through the UNC library. These books include *Algorithms of Oppression* by Safiya Noble; *Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadow of Social Media*, by Sarah Roberts;

Weapons of Math Destruction by Cathy O’Neil; *Speech & Harm: Controversies Over Hate Speech*, edited by Maitra and McGowan; and *Propaganda*, by Edward Bernays.

Suggested Text



Media Ethics: A Guide for Professional Conduct, 5th Edition (Brown)

This is a collection of case studies published by the [Society of Professional Journalists](#). About half of them are [available on their website](#) for free. None of the book-only case studies will be required readings, but they may be helpful for assignments. You should be able to find new, used, and digital copies for under \$20.

Assignments

As a course that satisfies the general education requirement, all students will write at least ten pages, deliver a presentation, and work on a group project. Instead of one group project, you will do weekly group discussions of case studies. Rubrics for all assignments will be available on Canvas.

Papers should be formatted using [APA standards](#): one-inch margins, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. Page counts do not include the title page, figures, or references. Any citations should also follow [APA guidelines](#). Please turn in papers in either Word or PDF format. Please use Grammarly or a similar spelling and grammar checker. This should go without saying, but do not submit work generated by large language model tools like ChatGPT for reasons we’ll discuss in class.

Class Participation (15%) This is a highly interactive, collaborative class, so participation is vital to your learning experience. Your participation grade will consist of your in-

person attendance, your preparation, your class participation, your interactions with your classmates, and your use of electronic equipment during class.

Case Study Presentation (10%) Students will each present one case study to the class and lead discussion. You may use cases from either *Media Ethics* book (*Issues and Cases* or *A Guide for Professional Conduct*) or a topic of your choosing (please check with me first). Your presentation should be ten minutes long with five minutes for Q&A. A signup form will be available on Canvas.

Self-reflection Paper (15%) You will write a self-reflection on your characteristics or circumstances that might put you at risk of an ethical lapse and what strategies you might take to mitigate those risks. Length is 4–6 pages (about 1,000–1,500 words). **Due Friday, February 10 at 11:55 pm.**

Midterm Exam (15%) Questions will consist of true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The midterm exam is closed-book and will be held in our regular classroom on **Tuesday, February 28.**

Ethical Lapse paper (25%) Document in detail a (preferably well-known or high profile) lapse in professional ethics. Your paper should include the facts of the case, the consequences, what led to the lapse, and what could have prevented it. Length is 6–8 pages (about 1,500–2,000 words). **Due Friday, March 24th at 11:55 pm.**

Final Exam (20%) Closed-book. Questions will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. Our final exam time is **Monday, May 1st, at noon.**

Extra Credit: Research Participation (2%) Students can participate in two hours of research studies at the Hussman School of Journalism and Media for two extra credit points. You should get instructions from Professor Joe Bob Hester on how to participate before the end of

January. If you have questions, please contact Professor Hester (joe.bob.hester@unc.edu). If you choose to participate, I will receive notice of your participation near the end of the semester. You may notify me of your participation if you want to be doubly sure. **Research participation must be completed by UNC's last day of class, April 28th.**

Late Submissions

Deadlines for your two papers have a four-calendar-day grace period, no questions asked. After that, one point will be deducted from your maximum score for each additional day late.

Grading

Your final grade will be determined using the following scale:

Points	Grade
93–100	A
90–92	A–
87–89	B+
83–86	B
80–82	B–
77–79	C+
73–76	C
70–72	C–
67–69	D+
60–66	D
59 or below	F

Schedule (Subject to Change)

Date	Topics	Assignments Due Today
Tue 1/10	Welcome, introductions, and class overview	None
Thu 1/12	Introduction to Ethical Decision Making	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 1.
Tue 1/17	Information Ethics	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 2.
Thu 1/19	Information Ethics case studies	Read Chapter 2 case studies.
Tue 1/24	Privacy	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 3.
Thu 1/26	Privacy case studies	Read Chapter 3 case studies.
Tue 1/31	Loyalty	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 4.
Thu 2/2	Loyalty case studies	Read Chapter 4 case studies. Group 1 presents
Tue 2/7	Mass Media in a Democratic Society	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 5. Group 2 presents
Thu 2/9	Mass Media in a Democratic Society case studies	Read Chapter 5 case studies. Group 3 presents
Fri 2/10		Self-reflection paper due at 11:55 pm.
Tue 2/14	Well-Being Day: No Class	
Thu 2/16	Informing a Just Society	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 6. Group 4 presents
Tue 2/21	Informing a Just Society case studies	Read Chapter 6 case studies. Group 5 presents

Thu 2/23	Strategic Communication	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 7. Read <i>Propaganda</i> , Chapters 1–3. Group 6 presents
Tue 2/28	Midterm: 58 Carroll	
Thu 3/2	Strategic Communication case studies	Read Chapter 7 case studies. Group 7 presents
Tue 3/7	Visual Communication	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 8. Group 8 presents
Thu 3/9	Visual Communication case studies	Read Chapter 8 case studies. Group 9 presents
Tue 3/13	Spring Break: No Class	
Thu 3/15	Spring Break: No Class	
Tue 3/21	Media Economics	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 9. Group 10 presents
Thu 3/23	Media Economics case studies	Read Chapter 9 case studies. Group 11 presents
Fri 3/24		Due Today at 11:55 pm: Ethical Lapse Paper
Tue 3/28	Arts and Entertainment	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 10. Group 12 presents
Thu 3/30	Arts and Entertainment case studies	Read Chapter 10 case studies.

		Group 13 presents
Tue 4/4	Becoming a Moral Adult	Read <i>Media Ethics</i> Chapter 11. Group 14 presents
Thu 4/6	Well-Being Day: No Class	
Tue 4/11	Harmful speech: hate speech, misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories	Read <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> , Chapter 3. Read <i>Speech & Harm</i> , “On ‘Whites Only Signs’ and Racist Hate Speech.” Group 15 presents
Thu 4/13	Algorithms	Read <i>Weapons of Math Destruction</i> , Chapter 1. Read <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> , Chapter One. Group 16 presents
Tue 4/18	Social media harms, content moderation, and platform policy	Read <i>Behind the Screen</i> , Chapter 2 Group 17 presents
Thu 4/20	Slack for guest speakers, class cancelations, etc.	Group 18 presents
Tue 4/25	Slack for guest speakers, class cancelations, etc.	
Thu 4/27	LAST DAY OF CLASS Course review	Skim <i>Media Ethics</i> .
Mon 5/1	Final at noon: 58 Carroll	Due Today: Extra credit research participation

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.

Attendance Policy

University Policy: As stated in the University's [Class Attendance Policy](#), 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](#) (EOC).

Class Policy: Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), instructors determine their own approach to missed classes and make-up assessment and assignments.

University Approved Absence Office (UAAO): The [UAAO](#) website provides information and FAQs for students and faculty related to University Approved Absences.

Note: Instructors have the authority to make academic adjustments without official notice from the UAAO. In other words, it is not required for instructors to receive a University Approved Absence notification in order to work with a student. In fact, instructors are encouraged to work directly with students when possible.

Honor Code

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC Honor Code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate the Honor Code, please see me or consult studentconduct.unc.edu.

Optional Mask Use Statement

UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to the well-being of our community – not just physically, but emotionally. The indoor mask requirement was lifted for most of campus on March 7, 2022. If you feel more comfortable wearing a mask, you are free to do so. There are many reasons why a person may decide to continue to wear a mask, and we respect that choice.

Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University’s technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University’s mission. In the context of a class, it’s quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others’ intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full [Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#), which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property.

Additionally, consult the University website “[Safe Computing at UNC](#)” for information about the data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Accessibility Resources and Service

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, including mental health disorders, 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.

Counseling and Psychological Services

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The [Heels Care Network](#) website is a place to access the many mental resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX Resources

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, 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 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, 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 value 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. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate suggestions.

Undergraduate Testing Center

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit <http://testingcenter.web.unc.edu/>.

Learning Center

Want to get the most out of this course or others this semester? Visit UNC's Learning Center at <http://learningcenter.unc.edu> to make an appointment or register for an event. Their free, popular programs will help you optimize your academic performance. Try academic coaching, peer tutoring, STEM support, ADHD/LD services, workshops and study camps, or review tips and tools available on the website.

Writing Center

For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's Writing Center. Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit <http://writingcenter.unc.edu>.

Grade Appeal Process

If you feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss with me. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our departmental director of undergraduate studies or appeal the grade through a formal university process based on arithmetic/clerical error, arbitrariness, discrimination, harassment, or personal malice. To learn more, go to the [Academic Advising Program](#) website.