

MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Instructor: Professor Peter Przytula

MASS MEDIA ETHICS

Office hours to be announced in class

Summer Semester 2020

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July 2020

All students are expected to be familiar with all of the content of this syllabus.

Course description:

The purpose of this course is to offer a review of ethical and moral considerations relevant to mass communication practice i.e. photojournalism, news gathering and dissemination, advertising, public relations, media research and media management.

We will study metaethics, normative ethics as well as applied ethics. A considerable amount of time shall be devoted to the discussion of classical ethical theories -- both deontological and teleological -- and the examination of their strengths and weakness, as well as their applications. Alternative ethical approaches, principles and rules, such as situation ethics or relativism, will also be covered in detail. Above all, however, we will be involved in discussions/analysis of numerous cases in mass communications.

In the fast-paced media world, important decisions have to be made in a very short time, frequently, in just a few minutes or , on occasion, in just a few seconds. More often than is commonly recognized, let alone admitted, moral aspects are involved in majority of those decisions. It is crucial that -- while making such decisions -- we keep in mind their ethical/moral dimensions and that the final determinations are made NOT by reflex, or on impulse, but by reflection, no matter how short it may be. This course shall assist you in recognizing the presence and the significance of the aforementioned ethical dimension involved in "doing' mass communication.

Grading System (tests, quizzes, written and oral assignments)

Indicator	Unacceptable F (2 points)	Poor D (4 points)	Average C (6 points)	Good B (8 points)	Excellent A (10 points)
<i>Ability to describe economic structure and political economy of mass media in a consumer society and analyze the roles of media professionals in shaping public culture and democracy</i>	Student is largely ignorant of specific issues related to the economy of mass media and the role they play in the democratic process.	Student is aware of some issues related to the economy of mass media and the role they play in the democratic process; however, understanding of specific issues is largely superficial and incomplete.	Student possesses some knowledge of specific issues related to the economy of mass media and the role they play in the democratic process.	Student is highly knowledgeable about specific issues related to the economy of mass media and the role they play in the democratic process	Student makes extra effort to understand specific issues related to the economy of mass media and the role they play in the democratic process and is very knowledgeable about all the implications of the above issues.
<i>Ability to reflect upon diversity in relation to communication, culture, and democracy in American society and mass media</i>	Student does not understand that stereotyping and other biases may be present in today's mass media and may affect American society and the entire mass media industry. Student internalizes implicit, biased media messages about other cultural groups.	At a general level, student somewhat understands that stereotyping and other biases may be present in today's mass media and may affect American society and the entire mass media industry; however, he/she is not sensitive to the impact of prejudice or to biased media messages about other cultural groups.	Student somewhat understands the effects and dangers of stereotyping and other biases in mass media; he/she is aware of and sensitive to issues of racism and prejudice, and sometimes recognizes biased media messages about other cultural groups.	Student mostly understands the effects and dangers of stereotyping and other biases, is sensitive to issues of racism, sexism, ageism, discrimination, and prejudice and is fairly cognizant of biased media messages about other cultural groups.	Student fully understands the effects and dangers of stereotyping and other biases, is very sensitive to issues of racism, sexism, ageism, discrimination, and prejudice and is highly cognizant of biased media messages about other cultural groups and how that affects our democratic process.
<i>Ability to define and synthesize key concepts and theories in mass communication and think about</i>	Student fails to define key theories and concepts in mass communications and is unable to provide any	With a few exceptions, student fails to define key theories and concepts in mass communications	With guidance, student is cognizant of some key theories and concepts in mass communications but is unable to	Student has a basic appreciation of and is able to define key theories and concepts in mass communications	Student has a deep knowledge and appreciation of key theories and concepts in mass communications and is fully able to

<i>them critically</i>	critical assessment of them	and is unable to provide any critical assessment of them; student only occasionally offers fragmented knowledge of these concepts.	provide any critical assessment of them	and provide some critical assessment of them	provide critical assessment of them drawing from other classes as well.
<i>Ability to deliver A concise, coherent, and interesting oral presentation and communicate information effectively</i>	Student does not exhibit any ability to present material, does not show familiarity with the assigned material.	Student presents the material but is unable to develop a critique of its content.	Student presents the material and offers a critical assessment of its content but is unable to develop and argument reflecting his/her own position	Student presents the material, offers an in-depth critique of its content, develops good questions generated by the material	Student presents the material, offers solid critique of the content, builds his/her own arguments, asks good questions and draws from some additional information from other sources.

Texts:

OPTIONAL TEXTS

Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning 11th Edition

by [Clifford G. Christians](#) (Author), [Mark Fackler](#) (Author), [Kathy Brittain Richardson](#) (Author), [Peggy Kreshel](#) (Author) ; Routledge 2020

Media Ethics: Issues and Cases Ninth Edition

by [Philip Patterson](#) (Author), [Lee Wilkins](#) (Author), [Chad Painter](#) (Author)
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Ninth edition (August 10, 2018)

Assignments:

1. 18 case presentations/writeups
3. Major paper on the topic announced in class. It will be a critique of a couple of articles.
The guidelines for the critique are at the end of this syllabus.

- A. Read the guidelines for a critique. These are intended for the final critique but all guidelines spelled out there (other than length) apply to your five mini critiques informed by the sets of assigned articles.
- B. Submit your case writeups without missing deadlines.
- C. The course will require a nice sustained intense effort, so be sure to keep this in mind.
- D. Sets of 2 cases for each writeup are shown in the calendar below.
- E. EMAIL EACH CASE WRITEUP IN A WORD DOCUMENT, NO PDF OR GOOGLE SHARING ETC. JUST A SIMPLE WORD ATTACHMENT

Please, notice that case presentations are a crucial part of your final grade. So, be sure to be active and meet the deadlines for case submissions.

Case presentations

Each student will be assigned to 18 case presentations. These will be delivered in writing and sent to the instructors email AS WORD ATTACHMENTS.

Here are the July dates when you will email cases presentations to the instructor: 15; 17; 20; 22; 24; 27; 29; 30; 31.

Case presentations must include presentation of all relevant facts of the case, Potter's Box analysis, application of different ethics theories, and an extensive discussion of each case. Presentations should be not shorter than 600 words (FOR BOTH CASES TAKEN TOGETHER) and not longer than 900 words.

In each case, you will make sure that TWO COMPLETELY opposite views are expressed. So, you will have one Potter's box for each case but the use of ethical theories and the order of priorities will be different for decision A (eg to publish something) and separately decision B (eg not to publish something). This may mean that you will present both your own real views but you will also present the views from the other side that at times is referred to as devil's advocate. Be sure to manage to present both arguments for and against.

Following each presentation, you will also offer a list of 4-5 discussion questions that you would pose to the class, if we covered the cases in a live session. You will be free to introduce new elements into a case and ask students how they would act, how they would justify their particular decision and what aspects of the case are most important to them.

ALL WRITEUPS CAN BE PROVIDED IN BULLET FORM. IT IS NOT AN ESSAY AND/OR A PAPER.

All students are expected to be familiar with all of the content of this syllabus.

BOOKS ON MEDIA ETHICS

Media Ethics: Issues and Cases by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins (9th edition, 2018)

Ethics in Media Communications: Cases and Controversies (with InfoTrac) by Louis A. Day (Mar 1, 2005)

Digital Media Ethics by Charles Ess (Second edition, 2014)

The Ethics of Emerging Media: Information, Social Norms, and New Media Technology by Kathleen German and Bruce E. Drushel (Mar 17, 2011)

Lost in Media: The Ethics of Everyday Life (Minding the Media: Critical Issues for Learning and Teaching) by Tony Kashani and Benjamin Frymer (May 15, 2013)

Ethics of Media by Nick Couldry, Mirca Madianou and Amit Pinchevski (Jul 19, 2013)

Living Ethics: Across Media Platforms by Michael Bugeja (Aug 23, 2007)

[Media Ethics](#) by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, Oxford Press, 2011

Media and Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice, Sage, Partick Plaisance(Second edition, 2014)

[Ethics in Human Communication](#) by [Richard L. Johannesen](#), Kathleen S. Valde and Karen E. Whedbee (Six edition, 2008)

[Communication Ethics \(Critical Intercultural Communication Studies\)](#) by Ronald C. Arnett and Kathleen Glenister Roberts (Aug 6, 2008)

[Media Ethics at Work: True Stories from Young Professionals](#) by Lee Anne Peck and Guy S Reel (Sep 11, 2012)

[Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference](#) by [Ronald C. Arnett](#), Janie Harden Fritz and Leanne M. Bell (Aug 4, 2008)

[Communication Ethics and Universal Values](#) by Clifford Christians and Michael Traber (Jan 28, 1997)

Mass Communication Ethics: Decision Making in Postmodern Culture (2nd Edition) by Larry Z Leslie (Jul 11, 2003)

[Just a Job?: Communication, Ethics, and Professional Life](#) by [George Cheney](#), Daniel J. Lair, [Dean Ritz](#) and Brenden E. Kendall (Nov 12, 2009)

[Communication Ethics, Media, and Popular Culture \(Popular Culture & Everyday Life, Vol. 9\)](#) by Phyllis M. Japp, Mark Meister and Debra K. Japp (Jul 1, 2005)

[The Handbook of Communication Ethics \(ICA Handbook Series\)](#) by [George Cheney](#), Steve May and Debashish Munshi (Dec 3, 2010)

[Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice](#) by Patrick L. (Lee) Plaisance (Oct 3, 2008)

[Media Ethics at Work: True Stories from Young Professionals](#) by Lee Anne Peck and Guy S Reel (Sep 11, 2012)

[Practicing Communication Ethics: Development, Discernment, and Decision-Making](#) by [Paula S. Tompkins](#) (Jan 17, 2010)

[The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics](#) by Lee Wilkins and Clifford G. Christians (Jul 23, 2008)

Guidelines for a Critique

The article for the critique is going to be emailed to you by our librarian, Ms Lidia Wojcicka

1. DON'TS

- a. don't summarize the article
- b. don't quote too much
(all quotations taken together must not exceed 8 lines)
- c. don't try to address all the ideas in the article, rather choose 3 or 4
- d. **don't write fewer than 3000 words with a one inch wide margin on each side**
- e. don't repeat the ideas expressed in the article in a very lengthy manner
- f. count title page as number 1, it is number 0, while the first page of references is number 7 or 8 depending on the length of your critique
- g. use any typeface than New Roman Times, size 12
- h. include any full names and/or titles of articles
- i. include the references at the very end
- j. write more than 4000 words
- k. do not use words/phrases "personally" and "at the end of the day"

2. DO'S

- a. pick out 4-6 ideas from the articles, present them in detail and elaborate on them
- b. BE SURE TO USE SUCH PHRASES AS "I THINK" "IN MY OPINION", "I DISAGREE WITH MERILL/DENNIS WHEN..." "I FULLY AGREE WITH MERILL WHEN HE.."
- b. use at least 5 DIFFERENT sources from the readings for the course plus any additional ones
- c. include references on the last page; your name and the title of your critique are on page 0.
- d. express your own opinion on the ideas in the article and its general angle/bias
- e. examine the article through the prism of the content of the set of assigned articles
- f. make frequent references to the articles you are to critique
- g. justify the text by selecting justification icon
 - i. write down the number of words of the entire critique at the bottom of the last page (exclude page zero and page with references in this final count)

Attention:

- **Late critiques will not be accepted.**

- **Submission of a poorly written critique or shorter than the stated minimum (3000 words, one inch margins, 1.5 spacing and New Roman Times 12 font) is automatically going to result in 0 points.**

In order to avoid any problems with the length of your critique, you are expected to number the pages and at the end provide the exact number of the words that you have produced. PLEASE, BE SURE TO DO THAT.

Also, remember that a line with your name and/or title of the course or your critique does not count as a line of the actual text. You are expected to provide a minimum of 3000 words of the actual text.

**Yes, it is quality that counts above all BUT the quantity counts, too.
AT THE END OF YOUR CRITIQUES, YOU WILL PROVIDE THE WORD
COUNT.**

The explanation of the term “poorly written”:

- **The word "MEDIA" is a plural, so we write/say "Media are," and "A medium is," while medias or mediums simply don't exist!!* Also, check on split infinitives. If you don't understand what they are, go to the Write Place, Riverview.**

Keep in mind the following sentence to understand the proper use of the word “**media**”:
“American **media are** entertaining but critics look at **them** and say that most of the time **they** lack serious content. However, the **media are** not too critical of **themselves** as ratings (rather than seriousness of content) are **their** main concern.”

Please remember the difference between **its** and **it's** and **avoid split infinitives as well as double negatives.**

*The plural form “mediums” can only be used to describe people who supposedly communicate with spirits. Also, Domino Pizza can offer you 2 mediums for \$12 in some of their promotional campaigns. Other than that, using the word mediums is not acceptable and constitutes a major writing mistake.

CALENDAR OF CASES

NOTICED THAT THE CALENDAR GETS PRETTY BUSY TOWARD THE END OF THE COURSE. SO, YOU MAY WANT TO WORK ON SOME OF THOSE CASES A BIT EARLIER. HOWEVER, PLEASE BE SURE TO SUBMIT ALL CASES AS THEY ARE SCHEDULED.

July 15

CASE 5-2A

1.-----

2.-----

CASE 9-4A

1.-----

2.-----

July 17

CASE 5-4A

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 6-1

1. _____

2. _____

July 20

CASE 5-6A

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 5-3A

1. _____

2. _____

July 22

CASE 9-2A

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 9-6A

1. _____

2. _____

July 24

CASE 6-5

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 10-5

1. _____

2. _____

July 27

CASE 4-9A

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 4-4

1. _____

2. _____

July 29

CASE 6-2A

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 4-3A

1. _____

2. _____

July 30

CASE 4-8

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 8-5A

1. _____

2. _____

July 31

CASE 11-4A

1. _____

2. _____

CASE 4-2A

1. _____

2. _____
