

Ethics & Issues
JGRD 901, Fall 2015
5:30 p.m. to 8:20 p.m., Thursdays
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This course explores ethics and other issues in media and their impact on our culture and institutions. We will look at key challenges facing journalists in today's rapidly changing media environment. Although the emphasis will be on journalism, we also will explore the impact on advertisers and public relations professionals. The course is a graduate seminar that emphasizes critical analysis and rewards original thinking. It will acquaint you with the theoretical framework you need to analyze ethical issues in media. But much of its focus will be on today's media climate and finding appropriate, consistent paths to the best-informed, albeit imperfect, ethical decisions. We'll also address issues in the news that pose ethical challenges for media professionals as they arise during the semester. All of this will take place in the context of looking at the media's role in society.

Social media and a demand for immediacy in today's 24/7-news environment present ethical concerns for journalists. Among the questions we'll look at:

- How have standards changed as journalists move from reporting news in traditional formats to posting and promoting news online and with social media tools?
- What challenges to independence and accuracy do journalists face as they engage with audiences who demand immediacy?
- What role does transparency play both for journalists and for advertising and PR professionals who can easily communicate directly with their audiences?
- Do advertising and public relations practitioners function under the same or different standards than journalists?
- How do journalists balance ethical concerns with the need to make money in an environment of fragmented audiences and declining revenues?
- Have huge cuts in newsroom staffing affected quality or posed ethical concerns?
- Does a right to privacy exist today? How has our thinking about privacy changed?
- Do ethics' codes, professional societies and public editors make a difference?

Course goals and outcomes

Through readings, discussion, case studies and research, students by the end of this class will:

- Become aware of ethical issues they are likely to encounter in today's media environment.
- Develop an understanding of basic ethical standards and theories and learn to apply them to today's media.
- Develop a respect for the complex nature of ethical-decision making in analyzing ethical dilemmas faced by media professionals.
- Develop a logical and systematic strategy for analyzing ethical problems.

Course materials

You will do a lot of reading for this course. In addition to the required texts (listed below), supplemental readings will be posted on Blackboard. (Some of them are already on Blackboard; others may be added as the semester develops). You also will be expected to stay current with ethical issues in the media. One way to stay current is to regularly check out journalism websites, including [Journalist's Resource at the Shorenstein Center](#) at Harvard Kennedy the [Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism](#), [Neiman Reports](#), the [Poynter Institute](#) and Alan Mutter's [Reflections of a Newsosaur](#).

Required books

Ethics for Digital Journalists: Emerging Best Practices by Lawrie Zion and David Craig
SBN-13: 978-0415858854

Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice by Patrick Plaisance
ISBN-13: 978-1452258089
2nd Edition

Global Media Ethics Problems and Perspectives Edited by Stephen J.A. Ward
ISBN-13: 978-1405183918

The New Ethics of Journalism Edited by Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel
ISBN-13: 978-1604265613

Note: Numerous other required readings will be posted under Course Readings in Blackboard.

Course procedures

Because this class is a seminar, much of its quality depends on class preparation — not simply by the professor —but especially by the students. Significant engagement in class discussions will be critical to your success in this course.

We will use a video chat system for class sessions. None of us will be physically be in the same room, but we'll all be together digitally in the same way. This means you'll be able to join the course from anywhere — whether you live in Lincoln or elsewhere. We'll use an app called zoom.us for class meetings. You'll have to download the zoom app once, but then you can access the class meetings with a link on your desktop, laptop or even smartphone. I've will invite you to the class meetings via email. But you can access the class with this link: <https://zoom.us/j/655684458>

Please install the zoom app and test it on your computer before the first class meets. Email me if you'd like to run a test beforehand and I'll arrange a test zoom meeting with you.

I expect our class discussions to be robust and provocative. We may tackle sensitive subjects, and it's essential that everyone is comfortable sharing his or her opinion. Respect for opposing viewpoints is paramount; I have a low tolerance for unprofessional behavior.

Please note that useful discussion goes well beyond summarizing material that everyone has read. In addition to thoughts or comments on assigned readings, you must bring new information and ideas to class.

Everyone develops his or her own way of reading and preparing for discussions. Here are a couple of approaches that you may want to try:

- Read a chapter of a book or an article and set it aside. From memory, write down as many of the major ideas that you can recall. If you think you've forgotten something, look for the missing material. You might also add specific quotes or facts that you thought were compelling to your notes.

- Write down questions that were raised by the reading material and try to answer those questions.
- Underline key passages or highlight key material as you read. Review the highlighted material after you've finished a chapter and write down your reaction to it.

Beginning Sept. 10, one or two of you will be discussion leaders for each class. I've created a Google doc sign-up sheet for discussion leaders. You can access it at this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nmS3_XCadJFMXHqwj_f5xrylXfiK9-Q333dqFdrzc78/edit?usp=sharing

Each of you must sign up to lead (or co-lead) two discussions during the semester. I will give you all the ability to edit the document so you can add your name under Leaders for two sessions. No more than two leaders per class session, please. We'll do the sign-up on a first-come, first-served basis so if two people have already signed up, please move on to different choices. Make sure you've signed up by **Sept. 3** to lead discussions at two meetings.

Discussion leaders should plan enough material to engage the class for about 90 minutes.

Course work and grading

Your course grade will be based on attendance and participation in class discussions, your contribution as discussion leaders, several short response papers and a substantial research paper.

- **Attendance, class preparation and discussion (10%):** Attendance is obviously critical to participation in class discussions. You'll lose points for each class you do not attend. The purpose of class discussion is to explore a variety of ideas. Discussion participants can help leaders by engaging in every class. Ideas are always open to interpretation. You are expected to do the week's reading and review the discussion leaders' questions before class and contribute to the discussions. We may see issues somewhat differently; ethical problems are rarely black and white. As professionals, we may not always make perfect decisions, but we should strive to make decisions that we can logically defend. During class discussions, you are free to disagree with authors, your classmates or me but do so respectfully and without filibustering. Your professional and personal experiences may shape your opinions but be open-minded about other views and contribute beyond your gut instincts. Your discussion grades will be assessed based on how interesting the class would have been if you were the only participant and conversely on whether the class would have suffered if you had not participated. You'll earn two discussion grades, one at the midpoint of the semester and one at the end of the semester. Together they will add up to 10

percent of your overall grade for the course. If you rarely contribute to the discussions, you'll lose points. Some weeks, I may randomly ask you what you found most interesting or surprising in the readings. If you haven't done the readings, it will become clear and you'll lose discussion points. Review the questions posted by the discussion leaders before each Thursday's class so you can be prepared to jump into the discussion. (Questions will be posted at 5 p.m. the day before class).

- **Discussion leadership (20%):** Each week, one or two of you will be discussion leaders. You can provoke discussion in many ways — by using case studies, by asking other students to role play, by watching and commenting on media, by posing hypothetical problems for the class to consider. You will be expected to introduce supplementary material (go beyond the week's readings) to enrich the discussion. What you should NOT do is lecture. You should assume that your classmates have read the material assigned for the week before the discussion begins. Part of your responsibility as discussion leaders will be to craft questions for your peers that will prompt thoughtful discussion. If a week has two discussion leaders, the two of you should decide how to divvy up the work. You should post the week's questions for your classmates by 5 p.m. on Wednesday (about 24 hours before class begins) so your peers have time to ponder them. Ask questions that will require the class to think about the material in ways they might not have otherwise. Discussion leaders will post questions by creating a thread in the appropriate week's forum on the Discussion Board in Blackboard. You'll earn a grade for each time you serve as a discussion leader; the two leadership grades will add up to 20 percent of your overall grade. You must sign up for two leadership spots no later than Sept. 3. The sign-up sheet can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nmS3_XCadJFMXHqwJ_f5xrylXfiK9-Q333dqFdrzc78/edit?usp=sharing

If two people have already signed up for a particular topic, you must make a different choice.

- **Brief Response papers (30%):** Three short (roughly 800 to 1,000 words) papers will be assigned throughout the semester. Follow the directions specified for each paper under Assignments. You'll upload your response papers in Blackboard under Assignments. Note the dates specified for the response papers on the calendar below. Typically they are due the day before class so we can use them for part of our discussion in the next day's class. Grades will be based on clear writing, rigorous thought and coherent argument. Your work will be assessed on your ability to think critically and to present your thoughts in a logical way. Careless errors cost you credibility in the real world and will lower your grade substantially in this class. Fact-check names, spellings, locations and other details carefully. You also will lose points for grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage errors. Late papers will not be accepted. Type all assignments in 12-point type, readable font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins. You'll earn a grade for each

paper; all of the grades for short papers will account for 30 percent of your overall grade.

- **Research Paper (40%):** The largest chunk of your grade will be based on a research paper due at the end of the semester. The paper should deal with a significant media ethics issue or question of your choosing (with my approval). I'd encourage you to pick a topic related to your course of study or planned profession. As an example, if your career path is journalism, your paper might be on the ethics of using anonymous sources in reporting. If your career goal is advertising, you might choose to examine the ethics of using sex appeal in advertising. Your paper must be based on solid research and can be supplemented by interviews with professionals. It must draw and defend a conclusion about the ethical problem you have identified. Every paper must include: a brief history of the issue, a review of any significant cases that pertain to this issue, a thorough review of pertinent scholarly literature on the topic, and your own conclusions based on what you've read and learned. Watch for the Final Paper Guidelines, posted in Blackboard under the Syllabus/Final Paper tab.

- You will be graded on several pieces of this project. You must do each part by the specified due date. By splitting it up this way, I hope to keep you on track and avoid last-minute procrastination. Late papers (or the other required pieces of this project) will not be accepted. Overall, this is worth 40 percent of your grade. Each segment will be worth the following:

Topic proposal, **due Sept. 24 (15%)**

Literature review of planned topic, **due Nov. 5 (25%)**.

Final paper (which will include your final literature review), due by 5 p.m., **Dec. 3 (45%)**.

Presentation, **Dec. 10 (15%)**.

Technical requirements

During our class meetings using zoom.us, you may want to use headphones or ear buds and a mic for the best audio. You should arrange to meet with the class in a relatively quiet place. Note that zoom allows discussion leaders to share their screens – you can easily show short videos, PowerPoints or other documents. You may want to play around with zoom before the class meets so you can get comfortable with it. If you'd like to meet with me via zoom before class starts, just let me know. The link below takes you to an article on zoom system requirements — as long as you have a camera, speakers, mic and Internet connection — it should work on either PC or Mac

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-System-Requirements-for-PC-and-Mac%20%29>

I'll use Blackboard for email, grading and for posting reading material that is not in the required books. You will find deadlines and other information under the Week-by-

Week tab. You'll find readings, other than the required textbooks, under the Course Readings tab (most will also be in the Week by Week tab). You'll use the Discussion Forum for posting and reading weekly discussion questions. Most other assignments will be under the Assignment tab in Blackboard.

Academic integrity

Every student must adhere to the policy on academic integrity set forth in the UNL Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the UNL Bulletin. Students who plagiarize may receive a failing grade on an assignment or for an entire course and may be reported to the Student Judicial Review Board. The work a student submits in a class must be the student's own work and must be work completed for that particular class and assignment. Students wishing to build on an old project or work on a similar project in two classes must discuss this with both professors. Academic dishonesty includes:

- Handing in another's work or part of another's work as your own.
- Turning in one of your old papers for a current class.
- Turning in the same or similar paper for two different classes,
- Using notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining another's answers for a quiz or an examination.

Anything and everything you include in your papers that comes from another source must be attributed with proper citation. That includes ideas and opinions.

Plagiarism consists of using phrases, sentences or paragraphs from any source and republishing them without alteration or attribution. The sources include, but are not limited to, books, magazines, newspapers, television or radio reports, Web sites and other students' papers.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Diversity

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications values diversity, in the broadest sense of the word – gender, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, religion, education, geographic, physical and mental ability or disability, sexual orientation. We recognize that understanding and incorporating diversity in the curriculum enables us to prepare our students for careers as professional communicators in a global society. As communicators, we understand that journalism, advertising and other forms of strategic communication must reflect society in order to be effective and reliable. We fail as journalists if we are not accurate

in our written, spoken and visual reports; including diverse voices and perspectives improves our accuracy and truthfulness. In advertising, we cannot succeed if we do not understand the value of or know how to create advertising that reflects a diverse society and, thus, appeals to broader audiences.

Contact me

Feel free to contact me at any time. My office hours are: 2 to 5 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment. I'm also willing to arrange virtual meetings via zoom.us. My office is in Room 241, Andersen Hall. My office phone number is 402 472 7110; my cell phone is 248 842 3992. My email is sbullard2@unl.edu

Weekly schedule

Date of class	Class Topics	Assignments (for following week unless otherwise noted)
Aug. 27 Week 1	Introductions, Syllabus, Survey Discussion. Ethics examples. Explanation of Discussion Leadership.	<p>Due 5 p.m., Aug. 26: Complete Ethics Pre-Semester Survey Note – This is the day before our class meets.</p> <p>Due: Sept. 3: Read “Media Ethics,” by Patrick Plaisance, Chapter 3, “Ethics Theory, Application to Media.”</p> <p>Read “Ethics for Digital Journalists,” by Lawrie Zion and David Craig, Chapters 1 and 2</p> <p>Read ‘Global Media Ethics,’ edited by Stephen Ward, Chapter 1</p> <p>Read the following ethics codes: New York Times code, Dow Jones Code of Conduct, SPJ Code, RTNDA code, ASNE Statement of Principles, American Advertising Federation Ethics & Principles, Public Relations Society Code of Ethics, NPPA code (posted in Week-by-Week under Week 1 on Blackboard)</p> <p>Read “The Year of Personalized Journalism Ethics,” By Stephen Ward</p> <p>Read Steve Buttry on ethics</p> <p>Due by 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 2: Response Paper 1. Please go beyond summarizing what you’ve read about ethics codes. Instead, your paper should be an analysis. In your view, what makes sense? Should there be ethics codes? Are they outdated? If you crafted a code, how would it look? More detail under Assignments.</p> <p>Sign up for Discussion Leadership dates in Google Doc. Do this by Sept. 3.</p>
Sept. 3, Week 2	Ethics Codes	<p>Due Sept. 10: From now on, read Margaret Sullivan, New York Times, public editor’s blog and columns weekly.</p> <p>Read “Ethics for Digital Journalists,” Chapter 8</p> <p>Read “The New Ethics of Journalism,” edited by Kelly McBride and</p>

		<p>Tom Rosenstiel, Chapter 3: Storytelling in the Digital Age</p> <p>Read "Basic Ethics for Bloggers," and "The Food Blog Code of Ethics," both posted in Blackboard.</p> <p>Read "Media Ethics," by Plaisance, Chapters 1 and 2.</p> <p>Read 'Global Media Ethics,' by Stephen Ward, Chapter 2.</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday Sept. 9: Discussion Questions from class discussion leaders</p>
Sept. 10, Week 3	Ethics theory / Bloggers	<p>Due Sept. 17:</p> <p>Read "Media Ethics" by Plaisance, Chapters 6 and 7</p> <p>Read 'Global Media Ethics,' by Stephen Ward, Chapters 3 and 5</p> <p>Response Paper No. 2: Read the following stories on this summer's controversy at Gawker: Meltdown at Gawker</p> <p>2 Gawker editors quit</p> <p>Use the Multidimensional Ethical Reasoning and Inquiry Task Sheet (Merits) on Page 42 of "Media Ethics" by Plaisance to Response Paper 2. Answer the questions outlined in the task sheet as if you were the editor of Gawker 1) deciding whether to run the original story and 2) choosing your course of action after the executives decided to pull the story. Address both scenarios. This paper is due by 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 16.</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 16: Discussion Questions from leaders</p>
Sept. 17 Week 4	Justice /Fairness	<p>Due: Sept. 24:</p> <p>Read "Media Ethics," Loyalty – posted on Blackboard</p> <p>Read "Media Ethics" by Plaisance, Chapters 8</p> <p>Read "New Ethics of Journalism" McBride and Rosenstiel, Chapter 8</p> <p>Read "Global Media Ethics" Chapter 4</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 23: Discussion Questions from leaders</p> <p>Due by 5 p.m., Sept. 24: Topic proposals for Final Paper</p>
Sept. 24, Week 5	Loyalty + Conflict of Interest	<p>Due by 5 p.m., Sept. 24: Topic proposals for Final Paper</p> <p>Due Oct. 1:</p> <p>Read "Media Ethics" by Plaisance, Chapters 5</p> <p>Read "New Ethics of Journalism" Part 2, Pages 89-122 and Pages 139-164</p> <p>Read "Ethics for Digital Journalists," Chapters 4 and 5</p> <p>Read "When Reporters Get Personal," posted on Blackboard under Course Readings</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 30: Discussion Questions</p>

<p>Oct. 1 Week 6</p>	<p>Objectivity/Transparency</p>	<p>Due by Oct. 8: Read “New Ethics of Journalism,” McBride and Rosenstiel, Chapters 1 and 2</p> <p>Read “Global Media,” Chapters 9 and 11</p> <p>Read “Another Outbreak of False Balance,” posted in Blackboard under Course Readings.</p> <p>Read “The Distorting Reality of False Balance in the Media,” posted in Blackboard under Course Readings.</p> <p>Response Paper 3: Read “Chemical Fallout: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and the BPA Story,” posted on Blackboard.</p> <p>Due by 5 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 7: Response Paper 3. Your paper should analyze the Chemical Fallout case in the context of journalistic responsibility. What should be the role of journalists? Should they provide firm conclusions or simply provide evidence and allow readers to make up their own minds? Is it risky for a media outlet to take a stand that can be perceived as advocacy of a particular view? Use examples to back up your conclusion.</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 7 Discussion Questions (See Google Doc).</p>
<p>Oct. 8 Week 7</p>	<p>Truth/False Balance</p>	<p>Due by Oct. 15: Read “Ethics for Digital Journalists,” Chapter 7</p> <p>Read “As Print Fades, Part 1 ‘Live Journalism’ at The Times”</p> <p>Read “The Business Model that Will Save Journalism”</p> <p>Read “The Future of the News Business”</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14: Discussion Questions (See Google Doc).</p>
<p>Oct. 15 Week 8</p>	<p>Business of Journalism</p>	<p>Due by Oct. 22: Read “Stepping on a Slippery Slope”</p> <p>Read “BuzzFeed’s Fumble Doesn’t Have to be A BuzzKill”</p> <p>Read “The Wall Street Journal’s Native Approach”</p> <p>Read, “Ethics for the New Investigative Journalism”</p> <p>Read “What’s Next for Nonprofit Journalism”</p> <p>Read “Native Advertising: Separating Church and State”</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21: Discussion Questions (See Google Doc).</p>
<p>Oct. 22 Week 9</p>	<p>Advertising / Non-Profit Journalism</p>	<p>Due Oct. 29: Read “Media Ethics,” by Plaisance, Chapter 9 Read “Ethics for Digital Journalists,” by Zion and Craig, Chapters 13 and 15</p>

		<p>Read "Global Media Ethics," by Ward, Chapter 13 Read "On the Ethics of Data-Driven Journalism"</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 28: Discussion Questions (See Google Doc).</p>
Oct. 29 Week 10	Privacy	<p>Due Nov. 5: Read "New Ethics of Journalism," by Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel, Chapter 5 Read "Global Media Ethics," by Ward, Chapter 10</p> <p>Read, "Debating the Rules and Ethics of Digital Photojournalism"</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 4: Discussion Questions (See Google Doc).</p> <p>Due at start of class Thursday, Nov. 5: Literature review for final paper.</p>
Nov. 5 Week 11	Visual Ethics/More on privacy	<p>Due at start of class Thursday, Nov. 5: Literature review for final paper.</p> <p>Due by 5 p.m. Nov: 12: Read "New Ethics of Journalism," by Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel, Chapter 4 Read "Ethics for Digital Journalists," by Zion and Craig, Chapters 6, 9, 10, 14 Read "Media Ethics," by Plaisance, Chapter 4 Read "Can Newsrooms Be Ethical and Competitive with UGC"</p> <p>Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 11: Discussion Questions</p>
Nov. 12 Week 12	New challenges in digital journalism	<p>Due by Dec. 3: Read "New Ethics of Journalism," by Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel, Part 3, Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14 Read "Media Ethics" by Plaisance, Chapter 10 Read "Ethics for Digital Journalists," by Craig, Chapters 11 and 12 Read "Global Media" by Ward, Chapter 6</p> <p>Read "Why Ethics and Diversity Matter" Due 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 2: Discussion Questions Due 5 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 3: Final Papers</p>
Nov. 19 Week 13	No class meeting this week	Use this time to finish your final papers – Final Paper is due at 5 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 3
Nov. 26, Week 14	No class meeting - Thanksgiving	
Dec. 3 Week 15	Diversity/Community	Due at 5 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 3: Final paper Make sure you've done the reading assigned for today.
Dec. 10 Week 16	Final Paper Presentations	You'll each do a brief presentation on your final paper. Don't simply read your paper. Provide a summary in an interesting way.

Grading Scale

A+ 97-100

A 94-96

A- 90-93

B+ 87-89

B 84-86
B- 80-83
C+ 77-79
C 74-76
C- 70-73
D+ 67-69
D 64-66
D- 60-63
F – 59 and below