



Mass Media and Society

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
College of Journalism and Mass Communications

Course: JOMC487, Section 001

Semester: Fall 2015

Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m., Room 15, Andersen Hall

Office hours: 2 to 5 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment.

Instructor: Sue Burzynski Bullard, associate professor

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Course Description

This course examines relationships between mass media and society. We'll look at myriad ethical issues facing journalists, broadcasters, advertising and public relations professionals. We'll talk about broader issues of ethics in society as we discuss current events. We'll focus particularly on the question of whether media practitioners have a special responsibility to society. Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano said: "I am grateful to journalism for waking me up to the realities of the world." This class aims to wake you up to the realities of ethical decision-making. It will provide you with the foundation you need to address ethical choices in your careers and lives.

As aspiring media practitioners, you must understand the power your decisions can have on audiences. The media's ethical decisions often play out publicly. Think of the reaction to the now-discounted Rolling Stone story about rape on the UVA campus. Or consider the backlash when CNN used a police mug shot of the victim in its initial stories on the death of an unarmed black motorist in Cincinnati this summer. Is there bias in media coverage? Does the media promote stereotypes? Or think about the ethical choices public relations people must make in sticky situations. After an American dentist killed a famous African lion this summer, social media shaming was intense. Would you represent the dentist if you were working in PR or does that violate your own ethical code? Do Calvin Klein's new sexting ads for jeans cross a moral line?

Ethics is highly personal. Often we have gut reactions when making ethical decisions. We *think* we know what's right, but we aren't really sure how we know it. It may be something our parents instilled in us. Or we may simply rely on past practice: *That's not how we do things*. Or that just

sounds so *wrong*. In this class, we'll go beyond gut feeling and easy decision-making. Ethical decisions often come down to choosing between right and right, not right and wrong. Decisions are complicated because ethical principles can conflict. Critical thinking and the ability to go beyond the easy way out are required. Understanding how and why you make decisions will help you become a more thoughtful media professional and consumer. Seeing how philosophers, scholars and media professionals have wrestled with ethical questions should help you better understand your own ethical and moral codes.

We each see the world somewhat differently and make judgments accordingly. In this class, we must sometimes agree to disagree. You'll be expected to respect each other, to be comfortable expressing your reasoned opinions, to listen to others and to handle differences civilly.

Student Learning Outcomes

ACEJMC Competencies

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) accredits the College of Journalism and Mass Communications. The mission of ACEJMC is “to foster and encourage excellence and high standards in professional education in journalism and mass communications.”¹ ACEJMC recommends that all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies. After this course, students should:

- 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.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

Course Outcomes

By completing this course, students should be able to:

- Recognize moral issues in journalism and mass communication.
- Understand how decisions of mass communicators affect people and society.
- Develop an understanding of ethical approaches that contribute to mass media decision-making.
- Consider how to use ethical theories as frameworks for decision-making.
- Understand how biases and stereotypes affect journalists and other media practitioners.
- Understand how culture and cultural values influence media decisions.
- Evaluate current and past ethical cases and the decisions communicators made.
- Understand and apply a wide range of decision-making skills to “doing ethics” in media.
- Understand how values and loyalties affect ethical decision-making.
- Become more thoughtful consumers and producers of media.
- Develop a set of principles that determine how you evaluate and make decisions ethically.

ACE Outcome

¹ Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, Journalism and Mass Communications Accreditation, 2008-2009

UNL's Achievement-Centered Education Program (ACE) is built on student learning outcomes that answer the fundamental question: "What should all undergraduate students – irrespective of their majors and career goals – know or be able to do upon graduation?" This course is ACE-certified to meet student-learning outcome No. 8: *Explain ethical principles, civics and stewardship and their importance to society.*

Opportunities to learn: Students will learn about ethical principles through discussion, debate, reading, quizzes and case study analysis.

Opportunities to demonstrate: Students will demonstrate the achievement of the outcome with a graded case analysis research paper, graded in-class Ethical Challenges, graded quizzes and a graded debate.

Prerequisites

Senior standing or approval of the instructor.

Required reading and tools

"Media Ethics Issues & Cases," by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins (eighth edition), ISBN: 978-0-07-352624-x, McGraw Hill.

"Overcoming Bias A Journalist's Guide to Culture & Context," by Sue Ellen Christian, ISBN: 978-1-934432-20-4, Holcomb Hathaway.

Other course readings will be posted on Blackboard under the Week-by-Week tab. Many of these will be based on news events so we can debate issues that are current.

You also will need to register for PollEverywhere with both your email address and cell phone number. We'll use this polling app in class for participation. Instructions on how to register will be posted on Blackboard.

Expectations

Be prepared to embrace some ambiguity in this class, just as you will have to in real life. Journalists and other media professionals make plans with the understanding that plans may change. News happens. So, too, we may change direction as events warrant. Expect updated assignments and schedule changes. This syllabus is subject to change as well.

What I expect from you

- **Blackboard and communication:** Log in to Blackboard daily to view announcements. My primary communication on changes in the schedule or other assignments will be via Blackboard announcements or email.
- **Syllabus and Week-by-Week Assignments:** These are tools that will help you stay on track. Read the syllabus carefully. Check the weekly modules on Blackboard, which will be updated throughout the semester. It's your responsibility to know what's due.
- **Manage your time:** This is a three-credit course, but we only meet for 2.5 hours in the classroom each week. As mentioned earlier, you will be assigned a lot of reading and other work outside of class. In addition to the books required for the course (which we will use and you will be quizzed on), you will be assigned readings that I will post to Blackboard (also fodder for quizzes).
- **Assignments and due dates:** All assignments are due on the date/time stipulated. No late work will be accepted (no exceptions).
- **Class discussion:** Class discussion should be robust and provocative. The experience of the class depends on the interaction of everyone in it. It won't be the same experience if you don't contribute. And contributing doesn't just mean talking; it means adding insight

to the discussion. That means you must arrive having read the assigned material so you can demonstrate your thinking about whatever concepts we're covering. You also need to bring a cell phone, tablet or laptop to every class so you can take part in PollEverywhere polls during class time. Note: At times, I will call on you randomly to answer questions. Be prepared. 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.

- **Professional conduct:** Please do not be disruptive. Arrive on time and stay until class is dismissed. People arriving late or leaving early interrupts discussion and is rude. We'll shut the doors to Room 15 when class starts. **If you can't make it on time, please don't bother coming unless you've made arrangements with me because of extenuating circumstances before class begins.** Chatting with your neighbor, text messaging, checking Facebook and other inappropriate behavior is also rude and disruptive. If I have to tell you to knock it off, I'll be annoyed and you'll be embarrassed. If I have to tell you more than once, you'll be asked to leave the class. The class is too big to tolerate rude behavior. You **will need** to bring a cellphone, tablet or laptop to class to participate in certain assignments including in-class polls other work. But use those devices only as specified. **Turn all devices off when we are having a discussion or we have a guest speaker.** You may think you can multitask, [but studies have shown you can't](#). In fact, cruising the Web, texting etc. likely often lowers your grade. You should bring your "Media Ethics" book to class; you may need it for discussions of cases.

What you can expect from me

As your instructor, I am committed to providing a quality learning experience through thoughtful planning, implementation and assessment of course activities. I want you to learn as much as you can about the role of ethics in mass media and society. Ethical decision-making skills you learn in this course will be helpful as you navigate real world dilemmas.

- During office hours and by appointment (or just stop by my office to see if I'm in).
- By replying to questions via email within 48 hours.
- By returning graded course work promptly.

Procedures & Organization

This course is organized in Week-by-Week Assignments on Blackboard. Each module explains what we hope to cover in a particular week, including assignments and reading/viewing materials. Modules will be added / updated as events occur. Watch deadlines carefully. Late work will not be accepted.

When you access the course on Blackboard you will notice a series of buttons on the left side of the screen: Announcements, Instructor, Getting Started, Syllabus & Other Tools. A separate section marks the content area consisting of the Week-by-Week Assignments, Discussion Board, Groups. The final area includes tabs for accessing your grades, sending email, and using general Blackboard tools.

Getting Started: Read this first, please. It provides a number of tutorials and tools you'll need for

navigating the course.

Instructor: You'll find my email and cellphone number. You'll also find contact information for Dan Zhao, the graduate assistant for the course.

Syllabus, Books & Other Tools: You can access or download the syllabus. You'll find the required books listed here. You'll need to read the books to pass the quizzes in the course. You also will find instructions on using Poll Everywhere. You must register for my course on Poll Everywhere.

Announcements: I will post any updates in this area, which you also will receive as an email.

Week-by-Week Plan: Each module breaks down the week's readings, assignments and due dates. Note: Some of the assigned readings (not in the books) will be posted here.

Discussion Board: You'll find a Question Forum in the Discussion Board. If you need clarification about assignments or course materials, post your questions here. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers and help each other. If you have a question that pertains only to you individually, please send me an email directly.

Assignments: Most assignments will be uploaded directly to Blackboard here.

My grades. This section of Blackboard is where you'll be able to see your grades and the running weighted total throughout the semester.

Send email. You can use this link to send a message to me or to your fellow students in the class.

Blackboard tools. More detailed information on using all of Blackboard's tools is available here.

Grading Process

Your grade will be based on: Quizzes, Taking Sides (a group debate project), in-class Ethical Challenges, a case analysis paper and Participation.

Grading scale for the class

97-100 = A+
94-96 = A
90-93 = A-
87-89 = B+
84-86 = B
80- 83 = B-
77-79 = C+
74-76 = C
70-73 = C-
67-69 = D+
64-66 = D
60 -63 = D-
Under 60 = F

How Your Grades Will Be Weighted

Quizzes _____ 25%
Debate _____ 25%

Analysis Paper _____	25%
In-class Ethical Challenges _____	15%
Participation _____	10%

Overview of assignments: Detailed directions and rubrics for the assignments will be posted in Blackboard under Assignments.

Quizzes: Quizzes will be based on class readings, in-class lectures and discussions, or speaker comments. So you must do the assigned readings before class and listen closely in class to succeed on quizzes. Take notes and think about the reading material. Usually, you'll find reading guides on material covered in the textbooks. They will help you with both quizzes and class discussion. You will take the quizzes outside of class on Blackboard. Each quiz will be open for about 56 hours (check the Weekly Schedule) in Blackboard. You'll have 15 minutes to finish the quiz once you start taking it so you won't have time to look up each answer. You'll need to do the reading before starting the quiz to succeed.

Taking Sides: A Debate: Each of you will be assigned to a debate team on a variety of ethical issues. One team for each debate will argue in favor of a concept; the other will argue against. You will need to research your topics thoroughly beforehand so that you can make the best case possible for your side. You must back your arguments with facts and data. Each team also will turn in a research paper outlining its arguments on the day they are scheduled to debate. You will also evaluate the member's of your team in this assignment. Your grade will be based on both your individual performance and your group's performance.

Ethical Challenges: At various times during the semester, you'll break into groups in class. Each group will analyze an ethical challenge and answer questions posed in the challenge. Groups will submit a typed paper briefly explaining their answers and conclusions. The papers will be written in class in the time allotted. Groups also will discuss their answers in class. I'll drop one low grade from an Ethical Challenge – so if you miss one class where we've done these, you won't be penalized. But if you miss more than one, you'll lose points. You'll also get one grade in the Ethical Challenges based on your peers' evaluation of your performance in the Ethical Challenge groups during the semester. So if you show up but haven't done the reading or haven't added to the discussions, you'll lose points.

Case Analysis Papers: You will each write a paper individually during the course of the semester. The paper will be an analysis of a case study (you'll be able to choose your case from a list I'll provide). You'll need to back up your analysis with research, using examples of similar situations to support your view. Detailed directions on the format for the papers will be listed under Assignments.

Participation/Attendance: You will get four grades for participation throughout the course of the semester. Two grades will be based on One-Minute Reflection papers and Poll Everywhere participation during class. One grade will be your participation in the first half of the semester; the second will be for the last half of the semester. At the end of some classes during the semester, you will be asked to quickly write a short (One-Minute) reflection on the biggest takeaway from that day's class. At other times, you'll be asked to participate in a Poll Everywhere in-class poll. Two of your participation grades will be based on your reflection papers and your participation in polls. The second two participation grades will be based on your actual contribution during class discussions. If you never speak up during the course of the semester, you'll get a zero for this part of your participation grade. If you thoughtfully add to the discussion, ask questions of speakers or answer questions when asked, you'll earn points for the second half of your discussion grade. You'll get two grades for this part of participation – one in the first half of the semester and one in the second half. We have a fair number of guest speakers planned for the semester; make sure you prepare questions. Be forewarned: I also at times will randomly ask

questions in class by drawing names. If you aren't there to answer the question on the day your name is drawn, you'll lose participation points.

More details on each of these assignments will be provided in the Assignment section of Blackboard. Most of the assignments also have a rubric associated with them. Check these closely before you get started on your work so you understand the expectations for grading.

Important Policies

Attendance

Attendance in this class is critical to learning. Although I won't take attendance in each class, you will have graded assignments (ethical challenges, One-Minute Reflections, Discussion Questions, Poll Everywhere polls) in **almost every** class. If you miss many classes, your grade will suffer quickly. **No makeup work is allowed if you miss an assignment done during class.**

I will drop one low grade on an ethical challenge if you've missed a class on the day we have done these in-class group challenges. In other words, if we do five challenges only the highest grades for four will count. I'll also drop one grade for the One-Minute Reflections or Poll Everywhere Participation Polls in each half of the semester. So, for example, if we do six of these during the first half of the semester, you can miss one with no penalty. But if you miss more than that, you'll start losing points. (The key here is that missing more than two classes will affect your grade). And if I've called your name for a discussion question, you'll simply lose participation points unless you've been an active participant other times throughout the semester. After all, if you're not there, you aren't participating.

Deadlines

Deadlines are critical in journalism and the real world. Deadlines will be spelled out in the Week-by-Week Plan on Blackboard. You must take the quizzes on the day assigned in the amount of time allotted or you will not be able to take them. You must turn in your case analysis and your group debate paper on the day it is due. **Late assignments will not be accepted and will earn an automatic F.**

Assignments

Read the directions and the rubrics for assignments carefully. If you read these before you tackle the assignment, you'll have a good idea of what it takes to earn a good grade. If you're confused, please ask questions ahead of time.

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 (including something you wrote in high school) 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 are encouraged to 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.

Week-by-Week Schedule

Check Blackboard under Week-by-Week Plan for a breakdown of what's due and what to expect in class. Remember: These plans will be updated as the semester progresses so expect change.