

COMMUNICATION 3404 Media Ethics and The Law

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Course Overview

At its core, this course will review the media's role in a constantly evolving world and the ethical decisions journalists and publishers face on a day-to-day basis. We will review historic approaches to a variety of ethical quandaries and simultaneously review how modern media companies are handling these issues.

Along the way, we will try to answer a few core questions:

- Does/should the media have any specific obligation to ethical behavior that ordinary citizens do not?
- What even qualifies as 'the media' in a landscape that includes everything from the New York Times and Fox News to YouTube influencers and Facebook algorithms?
- To what extent should/do media purveyors bow to financial obligations or social pressure?
- Should media members have a strict code of ethics and who would have to follow it?

Text

There is no formal textbook for this class. Instead, articles and other reading material will be posted to Carmen for each class.

Grading & Assignments

Grading for this class will be based on four overall categories - your participation in class, outlet updates, a midterm paper, and a final paper (percentages outlined below).

Participation in class will be based on your involvement in our group discussions and bringing new articles or ideas to the class.

Outlet updates are based on your choice of two different press outlets that each cover the same basic topic(s). You will be expected to monitor both outlets from week to week over the course of the semester. On Jan. 27 you will need to turn in a initial paper indicating what outlets you have chosen. That paper will also cover why you chose those outlets. On Feb. 10, & 24, and Mar. 16 & 30, you will need to turn in your outlet updates, which are 500-600-word papers comparing how your chosen outlets covered a specific story/event.

The midterm and final papers will each be a minimum of ten pages in length (double-spaced) and will answer your choice of one out of several possible questions. The questions for the midterm will be provided on January 27, 2020 and the questions for the Final will be provided March 16, 2020.

This class also offers extra-credit of up to 10% for participating in in-class debates. Students who wish to participate in a debate must sign up during class hours and must do so at least one week before their scheduled debate.

Outlet Updates	20%
Class Participation	20%
Midterm Paper	30%
Final Paper	30%
Extra Credit	10%

Attendance

This course has a mandatory attendance policy. The readings and assignments in this class are meant to supplement our in-class discussion. If you are not present, you will miss out on the majority of what this class is intended to offer. Worse still, your voice and your ideas will not be included in our discussions.

Each student is allowed one unexcused absence. Any further absences must be excused for acceptable reasons. Those reasons include a university-sanctioned athletic or academic events, extended illness, religious observance, or familial or other emergencies. Any further unexcused absences will result in a loss of two percentage points on your final grade.

Attendance will be taken through a class roster that will be passed around at the start of class beginning in our second week of the semester.

Classroom Etiquette and Expectations

The following ground rules have been developed out of respect for both the students and the instructors in this class.

- **Coming to class on time:** Coming to class late interrupts the flow of our discussions and distracts the rest of the class. You are expected to come on time and be seated and attentive when class begins. If you must be late for a legitimate reason, please inform me in advance.
- **Once class starts:** Put away any distractions. Although you're not expected to be completely silent during the class, you are expected to keep your thoughts on the subject and your comments at least related to the topic.
- **Leaving early:** If you must leave early for a legitimate reason, please let me know in advance.
- **Laptop computers:** Laptops can be used during this class.
- **Other electronic equipment:** Texting is not allowed during class time. Cell phones should be turned off or set to silent.

In addition to these rules, by taking this class you also agree to the following terms with respect to our interactions with others:

- We agree to treat everyone with respect, civility and fairness;
- We agree to treat everyone without bias based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation;
- We agree to treat everyone courteously and with a goal toward resolving any conflict in a non-threatening and constructive manner;
- We agree to be prepared and to offer our best effort regarding the discussion and presentation on any topics covered in the class;
- We agree to always analyze and offer the most reasonable argument we can think of that goes against our own feelings or intuition on a topic.

Class Schedule/Outline

Date	Topic
6-Jan	Intro to Media - A History of Storytelling & The Modern Landscape
13-Jan	Bias Training & Ethics
20-Jan	NO CLASS
27-Jan	What is Newsworthy and The Role of the Press.
3-Feb	What are Facts & Should We Care?
10-Feb	The 1st Amendment, The Courts, and The Public's Right to Know
17-Feb	Sources, Public Information, & Under Cover Reporting
24-Feb	Social Media, The Internet, & The Press
2-Mar	Midterm Week - No Class
9-Mar	NO CLASS
16-Mar	Covering Politics
23-Mar	Empathy and Diversity in Reporting and Reporters
30-Mar	Reporting on Difficult Issues - War, Terrorism, Shootings, Suicide, & Others.
6-Apr	A Day on Conspiracy Theories
13-Apr	Focus on the Future
20-Apr	Movie Night - Spotlight

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Misconduct: Cheating and plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3325-23-04) defines academic misconduct as "any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process" (p. 2). Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with

examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). If COAM determines you have violated the University's Code of Student Conduct, the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me or visit <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>.

Written and oral assignments: Your written and oral assignments should be your own original work. In formal assignments, you should follow APA style to cite the ideas and words of your research sources. Any time you use the words of others, this must be indicated as a direct quotation with a citation to the source and page number(s), using APA style to clearly indicate the words in the direct quote. To use the words of others while providing a citation, but without indicating that there is a direct quote from the cited work, still is plagiarism. Simply changing a few words from a source does not make the words your own, and such use can also be considered plagiarism. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in--but no one else should revise or rewrite your work.

Reusing past work: In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with me.

Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Diversity: The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Title IX: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Student Academic Services: Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

Student Services: The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu> Writing Center: All students, especially those who have difficulty writing, are encouraged to visit the OSU

Writing Center. Their web address is <https://cstw.osu.edu/writing-center> and their phone number is 688-5865.

ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu ; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu ; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

DISCLAIMER The information provided in this syllabus constitutes a list of basic class policies. I reserve the right to modify this information when deemed necessary for any reason. You will be notified in class, via email, and/or on Carmen if and when any changes occur.