

MCOM 380 – MASS COMMUNICATION ETHICS - Fall 2005

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Course Description:

This course will examine the moral principles and social responsibilities of journalism, public relations, advertising, and mass entertainment programming. The course will explore classical modes of moral thought and apply these principles to ethical dilemmas.

Objectives:

1. To become familiar with contemporary issues and controversies of mass media ethics.
2. To develop an understanding of underlying ethical theories and guiding principles which apply to mass communication.
3. To reason critically and systematically through ethical problems to make principle-based moral decisions regarding communication via the mass media.
4. To improve ethical reasoning skills by expressing, discussing, and defending ideas to others, both in writing and orally.

Course Format:

This course is designed around a combined lecture and seminar format, with substantial emphasis on student presentations and discussion.

Required Text:

Louis Alvin Day. Ethics in Media Communications: Cases and Controversies. 5th ed. Belmont, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006. (ISBN: 0-534-63714-0).

Evaluation:

Course grades will be determined by class participation, two briefing papers and presentations of textbook case studies, and two examinations.

The weighting of the requirements of this course, as a percentage of the final grade, is as follows:

Briefing Paper and Presentation #1 = 20%
Briefing Paper and Presentation #2 = 25%
Mid-Term Examination = 25%
Final Examination = 30%

Grading for this course will be determined by the following scale:

- 90 - 100 % = A Extraordinary Effort. All criteria are performed with a high degree of excellence and enthusiasm. The student demonstrates active participation and high-quality work.
- 80 - 89 % = B Honorable Effort. All criteria are performed with considerable endeavor and energy. The student solidly participates and demonstrates a desire to achieve more than basic requirements.
- 70 – 79% = C Average Effort. All criteria are performed satisfactorily, though with some room for improvement. The student demonstrates that he or she is fully engaged with the class.
- 60 - 69 % = D Minimal Effort. The criteria are performed with considerable room for improvement. The student falls short of being fully engaged with the class, but demonstrates a basic effort to pass the course.
- 59% and below = F Unsatisfactory Effort. The student fails to meet the criteria and displays little or no effort to pass the course. This is usually accompanied by poor participation and minimal attendance.

Grades may be discussed at any time throughout the term during the instructor's office hours, by appointment only. Final grades will not be posted or otherwise distributed before they are made available by the University Registrar.

Briefing Papers and Presentations:

Each student will submit written briefing papers for two case studies, selected from the offerings in the textbook, to be followed by an oral presentation of the paper to the class, along with a short period for discussion. One briefing paper and presentation for each student will be before the mid-term examination and the second set will be in the later portion of the course.

The briefing papers and presentations are intended to evaluate the student's understanding of the assigned readings and his or her ability to apply theory to practical situations. Each paper and presentation must place the assigned case study within the context of material presented in the course. Each student's individual perspectives must be informed by his or her readings and all conclusions must be supported.

Evaluation of the assignments will be based on 1) the thoroughness of analysis, 2) relating accurately to underlying ethical theories and guiding principles, 3) properly supported arguments and positions, 4) originality of thinking, and 5) lucidity and organization of the oral and written presentations.

Professional presentation is expected for both the written briefing paper and the in-class oral presentation. The briefing paper will be graded on content and clarity, as well as on the mechanics of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage. The in-class presentation will likewise be evaluated on content and clarity, as well as on public speaking mechanics. The oral presentation should be well prepared and rehearsed, and must not be a mere reading of the written paper.

The written briefing paper must be submitted to the course instructor's office no later than 10:00 a.m. on the date of the assigned presentation. Early submissions are permissible and late submissions will not be accepted. Electronic paper submissions will not be accepted. The student should retain a separate copy of the briefing paper for his or her own use.

Each briefing paper must be typewritten, double-spaced, on 8½- by 11-inch paper using 12-point type. Top, bottom, and side margins must be one (1) inch each. Each briefing paper must be no less than four (4) complete pages and no more than six (6) pages long, exclusive of the bibliography.

The use of research materials beyond the textbook is expected, including library materials, professional or academic journals, Internet sources, and popular media. Citations of the writings of others must be properly credited through appropriate footnotes or endnotes and each briefing paper must include a complete bibliography in standard style, such as APA or MLA.

The first oral presentation must be seven (7) to eight (8) minutes in length, followed by two (2) to three (3) minutes of questions and discussion. The second oral presentation must be ten (10) to twelve (12) minutes in length, followed by three (3) to five (5) minutes of questions and discussion

The class discussion following the presentation of each briefing paper will be based on the informed opinions of all members of the class; therefore, each student must come to class having completed the appropriate readings. A student's final course grade might be raised from his or her calculated average based on effective and thoughtful class participation. Such participation will include courteous listening – and not talking – when others speak. Each student is expected to be attentive, engaged, and constructive during classroom presentations and discussions and to take and review notes on all presentations. Select material from the oral presentations will appear on the examinations.

Examinations:

Examinations will be based on textbook readings, lectures, student presentations, and discussions. The format of the examinations will emphasize essay questions, but may also include true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. Make-up examinations will only be allowed with an official University excuse (see "Attendance" below). Make-up examinations must be administered before the first regular class meeting following the student's return to school. Students missing examinations because of University activities must arrange to take the examination before the scheduled examination date. The Final Examination will contain a comprehensive element.

Plagiarism:

Each student must do his or her own work and must appropriately attribute the works of others. The University forbids plagiarism, and provides for penalties for students violating this policy (Refer to the "Cheating and Plagiarism" section of the University's Student Policy Manual). In any case of copying, both the copier and the lender will be penalized.

Attendance:

As required by University policy, attendance will be taken each class session. The University regards class attendance as an obligation as well as a privilege, and defines as "excessive" absences of ten percent (10%) or more of the total class sessions for any course; for this particular course a total of three (3) absences is considered excessive under that University policy. Your attendance and participation in discussions is vital to the class as a whole.

Each student is allowed a maximum of two (2) absences without penalty. Such absences shall include any excused absences. Further unexcused absences will result in the lowering of the student's final course grade by one (1) full letter grade for each absence. Absences for lecture meetings scheduled immediately prior to or following holidays will be double-weighted.

Acceptable excuses for absences are listed in the University's Student Policy Manual: 1) authorized trips away from the University or absences resulting from special duties at the University, 2) confinement in a hospital or other in-patient facility or doctor's excused absence, or 3) a death in the immediate family. Each student should make every effort to ensure medical appointments do not conflict with the class schedule. Excuses must be presented for the instructor's consideration within three (3) class meetings of the student's return to class. Students participating in University activities, whose names appear on the Authorized Class Absences list from the Academic Affairs office, should specifically notify the instructor. Absences do not excuse you from performing with the rest of the class.

Tardiness is disturbing to the class; habitual lateness is viewed unfavorably. Be considerate to your colleagues and be punctual to each lecture. Tardiness counts as one-half (½) of an absence. Likewise, a student leaving class early is disruptive and disrespectful of colleagues.

Pagers, cellular telephones, and other devices must be switched to silent mode during class time.

Drop Policy:

Any student who does not withdraw from this course, and who otherwise fails to complete the requirements of this course, will automatically receive a final grade of "F."

Students with Special Needs:

A student with special needs seeking reasonable individual assistance or accommodation to achieve the objectives of this course must immediately file a Special Needs Accommodation Form with the Counseling Center (Refer to the University's Student Policy Manual).

Schedule:

The anticipated sequence of topics to be discussed for this course is detailed below; however, adjustments to this preliminary schedule may become necessary. As such, students are advised to be prepared for alterations in this schedule, discussions, and examination dates.

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Lecture Topic:</u>	<u>Reading:</u>
Aug 23	Course Introduction	
25	Ethics and Moral Development	Chapter 1
30	Ethics and Society	Chapter 2
Sep 1	Ethics and Moral Reasoning	Chapter 3
6	Truth and Honesty in Media Communications	Chapter 4
8	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 4)	
13	The Media and Privacy: A Delicate Balance	Chapter 5
15	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 5)	
20	Confidentiality and the Public Interest	Chapter 6
22	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 6)	
27	Conflicts of Interest	Chapter 7
29	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 7)	
Oct 4	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 7)	
6	<i>Fall Holiday – No Class</i>	
11	Mid-term Examination (Chapters 1-7)	
12	<i>Mid-term Grades Posted Online on ARROW</i>	
13	Exam Review	
18	Economic Pressures and Social Responsibility	Chapter 8
20	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 8)	
25	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 8)	
27	TBA	
Nov 1	<i>Drop/Resignation Deadline</i>	
1	The Media and Antisocial Behavior	Chapter 9
3	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 9)	
8	Morally Offensive Content: Freedom and Responsibility	Chapter 10
10	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 10)	
15	Media Content and Juveniles: Special Ethical Concerns	Chapter 11
17	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 11)	
22	Stereotypes in Media Communications	Chapter 13
24	<i>Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class</i>	
29	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 13)	
Dec 1	Briefing Paper Presentations (Chapter 13)	
6	Final Examination (8:00-9:50 a.m.)	