

MCOM 3318 – Media Law and Ethics

T/Th 11:00 – 12:20

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Office Hours: MWF 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., and by appointment

Course Description: Media Law and Ethics includes the study of the major areas of media law, including the First Amendment, libel, privacy, regulation of broadcast media and advertising, and free press-fair trial. This course also looks at the ethical issues relating to mass media, including ethical foundations, censorship, conflict of interest, truth telling, institutional pressures, persuasion in advertising and public relations, social justice, privacy, and entertainment.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of legal principles and frameworks governing media, including First Amendment rights, media regulation, defamation laws, privacy, and intellectual property.
2. Critically evaluate ethical dilemmas in media and demonstrate sound ethical reasoning and decision – making skills by proposing constructive alternatives.
3. Analyze and discuss real-world case and ethical challenges faced by media professionals, applying theoretical concepts to practical situations.
4. Grasp the regulatory landscape impacting media organizations, including government agencies, industry self-regulation, and emerging issues in media governance.
5. Effectively communicate legal and ethical principles clearly, both in writing and verbally.
6. Develop a commitment to promoting responsible media practices, understanding the role of media professionals in upholding the public interest and fostering a sense of social responsibility.
7. Exhibit ethical leadership qualities, recognizing the impact of media decisions on society and contributing to the development of a media landscape that values integrity, accountability, and transparency.

Course Requirements

1. Readings as assigned (provided on Canvas)
2. Microsoft Office or other word processing software that allows exporting to .DOC/.DOCX (many word processors will export to this Microsoft Word format).

Evaluation and Grade Calculation

Group	Percent
Assignments	70%
Group Ethics Case Analysis	30%
	Total = 100%

Percent	Letter Grade
90% - 100%	A
80% - 89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% and below	F

Assignments Overview

1. Assignments (70%) – **SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7** - During the semester, students will complete a variety of discussions and ethics challenge assignments. The purpose of the discussions is to give students an opportunity to explore their personal thoughts on various topics regarding media law and ethics and compare/contrast their thoughts to those of their classmates. Each discussion post and required responses will be required to be a minimum length, utilize sources, and adhere to the posted topic. The purpose of the ethics challenge assignments is to give students an opportunity to examine various media cases using developed tools of analysis to determine if media actions were ethical or unethical and develop their own stance on ethical/unethical behavior in media.
2. Group Ethics Case Analysis (25%) – **SLOs 2, 3, 5, 6, & 7** - For the final project, groups will conduct a case study involving a chosen media case. The analysis will be similar to the ethics challenge assignments, but it will be on a larger scale and require deeper research and analysis. In addition to a case analysis paper, students will be required to give a presentation that details their findings and if they agree/disagree with the actions of media.

Policies

1. Classroom Policies and Expectations

- A. Work hard & participate - learning requires constant reading, researching, thinking, discussing, and working with your classmates and me. Everyone has something important to contribute. My job is to present new information and prepare a climate in which you can contribute your own special knowledge. Your job is to be prepared to contribute and give effort outside of class to complete assignments.
- B. Treat each other with respect and display common classroom courtesies.

1. You are responsible for your attitude and how you treat others. I will not tolerate name calling, fighting, students belittling each other for differing opinions, etc. I expect you to act like adults, show each other respect, and to challenge yourself and each other to learn/understand opinions you may not agree with. If you are not treating individuals with respect or are causing a distraction, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
 - C. Grading – The grading process begins with the assumption that the work is good, which earns a grade within the range of a “B.” To earn an A, you must show exceptional understanding of the material, utilizing additional sources, examples, and original thought. This means going beyond stating the obvious, the simple answer, or what Google says. Additionally, poor organization, not following assignment instructions, grammar/spelling, lack of depth and thought, failing to illustrate an understanding of the material, etc. will result in your grade being lowered.
 - D. The use of cellphones, tablets, or other device use during class times is not allowed unless the need is specified by me (i.e. during an activity). You are not permitted to use cellphones for note taking, check social media, view/work on material for another course, or simply browse the internet during class times.
 1. I understand emergencies and the need to take a call or text. If this must happen, be discreet, do not disturb others, do not let it get in the way of your learning, and DO NOT abuse this.
 2. If the only device you have to take notes on is your phone, I will provide you with a notebook to take notes during class.
 - E. I use Canvas and email to communicate, post assignments and readings, present feedback and provide a space for you to communicate with your classmates. I expect you to check both daily and stay aware of what is coming up.
 - F. Communicate - If you have a problem with anything throughout the semester... getting an assignment in on time, needing to be absent from a class, getting your book, checking out equipment, or anything I'm doing as a professor... talk to me about it. I cannot help you or fix the problem if I am unaware of it.
 - G. For classes that meet in CAS 101/102/106 - Food and drinks are not allowed in the classroom or studio. Food and drink can be left at the lab tech station or at the tables in the back room. Students are expected to clean up after themselves. If trash becomes an issue, food and drinks will have to remain completely outside in the hallway.
- 2. Attendance Policy**
- A. Attendance is not formally recorded, and there is no specific grade assigned for attendance. However, consistent attendance is essential for your success and engagement with the course material. Active participation in class discussions, activities, and lectures will significantly contribute to your understanding of the subject matter.
 - B. While there won't be a direct impact on your grade based on attendance, it's important to note that the content covered in each session is integral to your

overall comprehension of the course. Missing classes will result in a knowledge gap that could affect your performance in assignments and assessment.

- C. Please make a commitment to attend all scheduled class sessions. If you encounter unavoidable circumstances that may hinder your attendance, it is your responsibility to communicate with me in advance. This allows us to explore possible accommodations or discuss any missed content.

Assignment Policies

- A. Assignments have deadlines and these deadlines need to be met. It is your responsibility to utilize time outside of class in an effective manner so you can ensure that you submit each assignment before the due date and time.
 - a. For many assignments, not all, the submission folder will stay open for one week after the due date. Any assignments turned in after the due date will receive a point per day deduction. Specific point values that will be deducted each day can be found on the assignment overviews on Canvas. It is your responsibility to know when the assignment is due for full credit, when the assignment closes, and the number of points that will be deducted each day for late submissions. Assignments will not be accepted after this final date.
- B. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
- C. I will not accept assignments via email unless there are issues with Canvas and the email includes your assignment and a screenshot of the Canvas malfunction.
- D. Merely completing all assignments does not guarantee that you will pass the course. You must put forth effort and show an understanding of the material to earn a satisfactory grade.
- E. I will not accept screenshots of assignments. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be typed, formatted to be a .DOC or .DOCX (Pages, Google Drive, and other online word processors must be exported to this specific format), and submitted via Canvas.
- F. Assignments will be discussed in class, students will be given a course schedule, Canvas includes a syllabus function that outlines upcoming due dates, due dates can be seen listed on each assignment under the assignment tab in Canvas, assignment due dates can be added to your Canvas calendar, and each due date will be listed in the course modules. There are SEVERAL ways to determine what is coming up due in class. It is your responsibility to be aware of what is coming up due and to stay on top of your assignments.
- G. It is your responsibility to ensure that your assignments are being submitted correctly to Canvas by the due date and time. If an assignment appears to be not submitted beyond the assignment closing, it will receive a zero. If you do not regularly check your grades or check Canvas for technical errors, there is little that can be done at the end of the semester. If you do experience technical difficulties submitting assignments, you must email me before the assignment closes.

- H. Students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. A student who is caught doing either will earn a “0” for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. If a student is caught a second time, they will automatically fail the course.
- a. In addition to UT Tyler’s Student Conduct and Discipline policy, plagiarism/cheating includes work copied from sources without proper attribution/citing, AI-generated content, and papers or other materials previously submitted in my classes or other professor’s classes.

Course Schedule

Date	Agenda	Due today
Week One		
T 1/16	<u>Course introduction</u>	
Th 1/18	<u>Lecture:</u> Introduction to media law and ethics Assign: <u>Discussion #1:</u> Media law and ethics due Thursday, 1/25	
Week Two		
T 1/23	<u>Lecture:</u> Introduction to media law and ethics	
Th 1/25	<u>Lecture:</u> Introduction to media law and ethics	<u>Discussion #1:</u> Media law and ethics
Week Three		
T 1/30	<u>Lecture:</u> Media regulation and the First Amendment Assign: <u>Discussion #2:</u> The First Amendment due Tuesday, 2/6	
Th 2/1	<u>Lecture:</u> Media regulation and the First Amendment	
Week Four		

<p>T 2/6</p>	<p><u>Lecture:</u> The ethics of truth telling and the Potter Box of Moral Reasoning</p> <p>Assign: <u>Discussion #3:</u> Media and truth telling due Tuesday, 2/13</p>	<p><u>Discussion #2:</u> The First Amendment</p>
<p>Th 2/8</p>	<p><u>Lecture:</u> The ethics of truth telling and the Potter Box of Moral Reasoning</p> <p>Assign: <u>Group work:</u> Ethics challenge – Truth telling and media framing in class on Tuesday, 2/13 (grade based on attendance)</p>	
Week Five		
<p>T 2/13</p>	<p><u>Ethics Challenge:</u> Truth telling and media framing</p>	<p><u>Discussion #3:</u> Media and truth telling <u>Group work:</u> Truth telling and media framing (in class)</p>
<p>Th 2/15</p>	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Defamation</p> <p>Assign: <u>Discussion #4:</u> Defamation due Thursday, 2/22</p>	
Week Six		
<p>T 2/20</p>	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Defamation</p>	
<p>Th 2/22</p>	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Privacy</p> <p>Assign: <u>Discussion #5:</u> Social media and privacy due Thursday, 2/29</p>	<p><u>Discussion #4:</u> Defamation</p>
Week Seven		

T 2/27	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Privacy</p> <p>Assign: <u>Group work:</u> Ethics challenge – Privacy and data mining in class on Thursday, 2/29 (grade based on attendance)</p>	
Th 2/29	<p><u>Group work:</u> Ethics challenge – Privacy and data mining</p>	<p><u>Discussion #5:</u> Social media and privacy <u>Group work:</u> Ethics challenge – Privacy and data mining (in class)</p>
Week Eight		
T 3/5	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Copyright and trademark</p> <p>Assign: <u>Discussion #6:</u> Copyright and trademark due on Tuesday, 3/19</p>	
Th 3/7	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Copyright and trademark</p>	
Week Nine		
Spring Break – No class meetings Monday, 3/11 – Friday, 3/15		
Week Ten		
T 3/19	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Violence and obscenity</p> <p>Assign: <u>Discussion #7:</u> Violence and obscenity due Tuesday, 3/26 <u>Major:</u> Group ethics case analysis paper due Tuesday, April 16 by the start of class <u>Major:</u> Group ethics case analysis presentations Tuesday, April 16 – Thursday, April 25 <u>Major:</u> Group evaluations due Thursday, April 25</p>	<p><u>Discussion #6:</u> Copyright and trademark</p>
Th 3/21	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Violence and obscenity</p>	
Week Eleven		
T 3/26	<p><u>Lecture:</u> Digital media, social media, and AI</p> <p>Assign: <u>Discussion #8:</u> Use of AI in media due Tuesday, 4/2</p>	<p><u>Discussion #7:</u> Violence and obscenity</p>

Th 3/28	<u>Lecture:</u> Digital media, social media, and AI	
Week Twelve		
T 4/2	<u>Lecture:</u> Digital media, social media, and AI Assign: <u>Group work:</u> Ethics challenge – Entertainment and true crime in class on Thursday, 4/4	<u>Discussion #8:</u> Use of AI in media
Th 4/4	<u>Group work:</u> Ethics challenge – Entertainment and true crime	<u>Group work:</u> Ethics challenge – Entertainment and true crime (in class)
Week Thirteen		
T 4/9	<u>Lecture:</u> International perspectives on media law and ethics	
Th 4/11	<u>Lecture:</u> International perspectives on media law and ethics Assign: <u>Discussion #9:</u> International media law and ethics due Thursday, 4/18	
Week Fourteen		
T 4/16	<u>Major:</u> Final case presentations	<u>Major:</u> Group presentation material and paper (due by the start of class)
Th 4/18	<u>Major:</u> Final case presentations	<u>Discussion #9:</u> International media law and ethics
Week Fifteen		
T 4/23	<u>Major:</u> Final case presentations	
Th 4/25	<u>Major:</u> Final case presentations	<u>Major:</u> Group evals
Week Sixteen		
Final's Week: No class meeting		