

**MCOM 3318 – Media Law and Ethics**  
**T/Th 11:00 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.**  
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**Office Hours: M/W 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., and by appointment**  
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**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 -**

Assignments (Discussions, reflections)	70%
Group final project	30%

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Total	100%
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<b>Percent</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
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 reflections. 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.

### **Class Policies and Expectations**

#### **1. Classroom Policies and Expectations**

- A. Work hard - 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.
- B. Participate – you must be an active part of the course to succeed. You will also have to give effort outside of class.
- C. 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.
- 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, checking social media, view/work on material for another course, or simply browse the internet during class times.
  1. If you must take a phone call, please leave the classroom before you

answer the phone. If you must respond to a message, do it quickly and discreetly. Abuse of this will result in you losing this privilege.

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.

## 2. Attendance Policy

- A. Attendance in this course is crucial to student success and students are expected to attend class each time it meets.
1. Ethics challenge days are required and make up a portion of your points in the reflection assignments. If you miss an ethics challenge day, you will not receive the points for the day and you will not be able to fully complete your reflection assignment. The only exception to this is when your absence is considered excused.
  2. **Excused absences include:**
    - a) Illness supported by a doctor's note.
    - b) Death in family
    - c) Documentable emergencies (i.e., car trouble / invoice from mechanic)
    - d) Religious event that the student has given notice for.
    - e) School sponsored event that the student has given notice for.
    - f) Other situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
  3. **What is not considered an excused absence:**
    - a) Work
    - b) Trip out of the area
    - c) Oversleeping
    - d) Appointments that are made after the start of the semester and are not for life/health-threatening reasons.
    - e) Running errands for yourself or someone else
    - f) Completing work for or participating in another on-campus organization
    - g) Forgetting that you had class
    - h) Anything else that isn't a documentable emergency.

## 3. 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. All assignments will be checked by plagiarism and AI detection software.
  - I. 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:
      - i. Self-plagiarism - the use of papers or other materials previously submitted elsewhere. I expect you to submit work created specifically for this class during this semester.
      - ii. AI generated content – the purpose of my assignments is for you to explore your understanding of the material on a deeper level, not have a computer explore it for you.
- 1. UT Tyler AI Statement**
- A. UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools’

ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler’s Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler’s Academic Integrity Policy.

1. Students can use AI platforms to help prepare for assignments and projects (i.e., brainstorming) and to revise and edit their work (i.e., identify flaws in reasoning, spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs, or correct citations).
2. Students may not use AI to generate/create work for submission. All work submitted must come from the student. Any work generated by AI will receive a zero.
3. While AI can be a good starting point for research, the AI platform utilized does not count as an academic source because it can be incorreced or incomplete. It will not be accepted as a source for citing information.

### Course Schedule

Date	Agenda	Due today
<b>Week One</b>		
Tu 1/14	<u>Course introduction</u> : Syllabus, schedule, etc.	
Th 1/16	<u>Topic</u> : Introduction to media law and ethics <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #1</u> : Media law and ethics due Thursday, 1/23	
<b>Week Two</b>		
Tu 1/21	<u>Topic</u> : Introduction to media law and ethics	
Th 1/23	<u>Topic</u> : Media regulation and the first amendment <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #2</u> : The First Amendment due Thursday, 1/30	<u>Discussion #1</u> : Media law and ethics
<b>Week Three</b>		

Tu 1/28	<u>Topic:</u> Media regulation and the first amendment	
Th 1/30	<u>Topic:</u> The ethics of truth telling and the Potter Box of Moral Reasoning <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #3:</u> Media and truth telling due Thursday, 2/6	<u>Discussion #2:</u> The First Amendment
<b>Week Four</b>		
Tu 2/4	<u>Topic:</u> The ethics of truth telling and the Potter Box of Moral Reasoning <b>Assign:</b> <u>Ethics challenge #1:</u> Truth telling and media framing in class on Thursday, 2/6 and Tuesday, 2/11	
Th 2/6	<u>Ethics challenge:</u> Truth telling and media framing <b>Assign:</b> <u>Reflection #1:</u> Truth telling and media framing due Tuesday, 2/18	<u>Discussion #3:</u> Media and truth telling
<b>Week Five</b>		
Tu 2/11	<u>Ethics challenge continued:</u> Truth telling and media framing	
Th 2/13	<u>Topic:</u> Privacy <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #4:</u> Social media and privacy due Thursday, 2/20	
<b>Week Six</b>		
Tu 2/18	<u>Topic:</u> Ethical persuasion and the TARES Test <b>Assign:</b> <u>Ethics challenge #2:</u> Privacy and data mining in class on Thursday, 2/25 and Tuesday, 2/27	<u>Reflection #1:</u> Truth telling and media framing
Th 2/20	<u>Ethics challenge:</u> Privacy and data mining <b>Assign:</b> <u>Reflection #2:</u> Privacy and data mining due Tuesday, 3/4 <u>Major:</u> Group / individual survey due Thursday, 2/27	<u>Discussion #4:</u> Social media and privacy
<b>Week Seven</b>		
Tu 2/25	<u>Ethics challenge continued:</u> Privacy and data mining	

Th 2/27	<u>Topic:</u> Violence and obscenity <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #5:</u> Violence and obscenity due Thursday, 3/6	<u>Major:</u> Group / individual survey
Week Eight		
Tu 3/4	<u>Topic:</u> Violence and obscenity <u>Discuss:</u> Major paper and presentations <b>Assign:</b> <u>Major:</u> Ethics challenge pitch due Thursday, 3/13 <u>Major:</u> Ethics challenge paper and presentation due Tuesday, 4/15 <b>by the start of class</b> (subject to change)	<u>Reflection #2:</u> Privacy and data mining
Th 3/6	<u>Topic:</u> Media Accountability – The Narrative Paradigm, Stakeholder Theory, and Social Responsibility Theory <b>Assign:</b> <u>Ethics challenge #3:</u> Entertainment and true crime in class on Tuesday, 3/11 and Thursday, 3/13	<u>Discussion #5:</u> Violence and obscenity
Week Nine		
Tu 3/11	<u>Ethics challenge:</u> Entertainment and true crime <b>Assign:</b> <u>Reflection #3:</u> Entertainment and true crime due on Tuesday, 3/25	
Th 3/13	<u>Ethics challenge Continued:</u> Entertainment and true crime	<u>Major:</u> Ethics challenge pitch
Week Ten – Spring Break		
Spring Break - Tu 3/18 & Th 3/20 – No class meetings		
Week Eleven		
Tu 3/25	<u>Topic:</u> Copyright and trademark <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #6:</u> Copyright and trademark due Tuesday, 4/1	<u>Reflection #3:</u> Entertainment and true crime
Th 3/27	<u>Topic:</u> Copyright and trademark	
Week Twelve		

Tu 4/1	<u>Topic:</u> Defamation <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #7:</u> Defamation due Tuesday, 4/8	<u>Discussion #6:</u> Copyright and trademark
Th 4/3	<u>Topic:</u> Defamation	
<b>Week Thirteen</b>		
Tu 4/8	<u>Topic:</u> Media and AI <b>Assign:</b> <u>Discussion #8:</u> Use of AI in media due Tuesday, 4/22	<u>Discussion #7:</u> Defamation
Th 4/10	<b>Workday for final project – no class meeting</b>	
<b>Week Fourteen</b>		
T 4/15	Final project presentations or workday (pending final # of presentations)	<u>Major:</u> Ethics challenge paper and presentation due by the start of class (subject to change pending # of presentations)
Th 4/17	Final project presentations	
<b>Week Fifteen</b>		
Tu 4/22	Final project presentations	<u>Discussion #8:</u> Use of AI
Th 4/24	Final project presentations	
<b>Week Sixteen</b>		
Finals Week: T 4/29 – Th 5/1		