



MMJ 445 Media Ethics, Spring 2020
Dr. Tony DeMars ~ Faculty Office: JOUR 126
Office Email: Tony.DeMars@tamuc.edu
Office Hours: TR 12:45 – 1:45 & Tues. 3:30 – 4:30 pm

COURSE INFORMATION

Required text: *Media Ethics*, 2nd Edition, Patrick Plaisance. ISBN-13: 978-1452258089

Course Description:

This is a course using ethical issues raised by contemporary mass media practices to explore moral reasoning and thinking. The issues to be discussed relate to media content, news, advertising, and public relations. Students will learn to recognize and analyze problem situations in terms of a framework of ethical principles in a societal context shaped by the libertarian traditions of enlightenment thought. Communitarian challenges to those traditions will be studied and their impact on media ethics and practices explored. Prerequisite: Junior or Senior standing."

Student Learning Outcomes. By the end of the course, you should:

- Understand historical and contemporary ethical issues in media and journalism
- Recognize ethical controversies in the media and your own interpretations of them
- Have learned the terminology and concepts of ethics and media
- Have developed critical thinking through the study and analysis of media content
- Have improved oral communication skills through in class discussions and presentations
- Be able to make critical arguments based on an understanding of ethics theories

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

GRADES:

Your final course grade will be based on:

1. Four tests, 100 points each for a total of 400 points.
2. Six short writing & reporting assignments, 50 points each for a total of 300 points, with the grade based on both the writing quality of the assignment and a recorded presentation.
3. The average of your quiz grades in D2L over assigned reading.
3. Your online contributions to ethical discussions for the class—see below—at 100 points.
4. A final ethical analysis presentation with an outline, applying an ethical decision—at 100 pts.

GRADING SCALE: A = 900-1000 points B = 800-899 points C = 700-799 points
D = 600-699 points F = 599 points or less. **WARNING:** It is not my practice to round up. There is no curve. Discussion questions are not accepted for credit late.

TESTS:

There will be four closed book tests during the semester, including the final, as listed on the course

outline. Approximately 50-75 short answer and some possible discussion questions over sections of material covered in the class, as Sectional Exams, with the final one done at the Final Exam time. **No make-ups for exams except for rare, unavoidable, unexpected events and only if the instructor is contacted in advance. Make-ups exams would involve fill in the blank and essay type questions. There is no guarantee of ever being able to make up missed work, regardless of cause. Any accepted late work has significant grade penalty. For authorized university functions you must make arrangements with the instructor in advance to be allowed any make-up work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

On the days marked on the schedule I will electronically (via MyLeoOnline) give you questions based on media ethics. You will write a two-page answer on each assignment to be turned in on the same day the following week, or create a related PowerPoint, narrated—uploaded to D2L before 10 p.m. the day the paper / presentation is due. Working at deadline creates a risk of missing the deadline. Late in submitting the paper / PowerPoint is late. Do not expect to have your work accepted late. Your typed answers must be double-spaced with about two pages plus a citations page for each question (about 850-950 words). Don't write more than that; I will not read beyond three pages for each assignment. Use 1-inch margins, 12-point type, and Times New Roman font. Put your name, CWID, and the assignment due date, single-spaced, at the top of the first page. No title page. No colored pages. No two-sided copies. No exotic fonts..

Some extra research beyond the textbook will be necessary to write these assignments. Cite each source you use in APA style, with the 3rd page as a References list. Answer the question in your own words. The answer and writing must be your own. Cite all sources properly. Plagiarism -- of published material or another student's work -- will be investigated in accordance with university regulations. For more on academic integrity and plagiarism, see the Academic Honesty information below. In online class discussions, you must be able to demonstrate personal knowledge of content of what you submit. Similar content among multiple students in submitted papers will be evaluated for possible plagiarism. Correct APA style required. Significant points lost for citation errors.

Seven question-projects will be assigned during the semester. Your grade will be based on the best six assignments you turn in. You may complete all seven assignments and use the six best grades, or you may complete only six and use those grades. No late work will be accepted. If special circumstances arise, talk to me as soon as possible. If you disagree with your grade on an assignment, you can ask for an explanation. The first step is to talk with the instructor within one week after the assignment grade is posted. If you want a formal re-evaluation of your grade considered, write a short (one paragraph to one page) explanation of why you think a higher grade is warranted. Be specific; provide evidence. If you wait longer than a week, your paper will not be reviewed. Papers cannot be rewritten for a higher grade.

Student Contributions Grade: Your contributions grade will be based on a subjective evaluation by the instructor of your D2L activity log, plus your overall and regular engagement and participation discussing each other student's report. You must also submit two media ethics issues each date marked on the course outline, then be ready to lead the class discussion about them. Specifics will be made available on the course D2L web site. Our intent is to make arguments about ethical situations based on critical thinking and sound reasoning.

Academic Honesty: It is a violation of the University Academic Honesty Policy if you pay someone to do your work for you. If you turn in work that is plagiarized, or take any action that violates TAMU-Commerce Academic Honesty policies, you will fail the course. All TAMU-Commerce students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the Student Guide Handbook for the University Academic Honesty Policy. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work as your own and/or failing to properly cite sources. Work submitted will be checked via an Internet search including www.turnitin.com for each submission. Using a report you did not create or having someone else do any of your work violates Academic Honesty guidelines.

Academic dishonesty subjects you to failure of the class and referral to the department head and/or other university officials for disciplinary action.

One definition of plagiarism: "A piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work." This is as true of a sentence as it is of an entire paper. It is plagiarism to copy an entire article – or any part of an article – from the internet and present it as your work. It is plagiarism to use work created for another course, either by you or someone else as the work in the current course. Plagiarism includes taking verbatim sections from a textbook without attributing the material to the author. Also, "sharing" work with another student (presenting another student's writing as your own) is plagiarism.

Most of the time, it is remarkably easy for professors to spot plagiarism. You are much better off doing your own work, both from the standpoint of your grade and what you learn. Suspected plagiarism may also be checked electronically via the Internet. It is as easy for the professor as it is for you to find the 'how to cheat' web sites, but also to access web tools for uncovering academic dishonesty. If you rob someone, expect to go to jail; if you cheat in college, expect the consequences to be equally uncomfortable.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Faculty / Student Commitment:

- To accomplish the course objectives, the instructor will be regularly engaged with the class, prepared to guide each student's learning. Students should also be engaged with the class every week, committed to benefiting from the class time by being prepared, engaging with others, and staying involved the full 15 weeks of class time.
- If at any time you are doing your part to do well in this course, but are having difficulty, please arrange a time and speak with me in my office. I cannot discuss your course status, grades or other information about your work or activities in the course via phone or e-mail.
- The keys to success in this class: Commit to learning the material we cover, read the required reading, take good notes in class and while reading, study the material as we go through it, ask questions about things you do not understand, and do the assigned work and turn it in on time.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Online Attendance: The participation component of the grade is the instructor's subjective assessment of each student's involvement and contributions to the class. Each late or non-submission of assigned work will count as a class absence. The D2L system tracks each time you are engaged with our class and the amount of time spent—if you have less than six hours of class activity in any given week of the semester you will have an absence marked for the class. In addition to points lost from the late or non-submitted work, an additional 20 points will be deducted from your online contributions grade for each occurrence noted above. Students who are counted absent more than six times may fail automatically or be dropped from the course.

STANDARD UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE POLICY

13.99.99.R0.01 Class Attendance – “Students are responsible for learning about and complying with the attendance policy stated in the catalog, Student’s Guidebook, and/or faculty syllabus. Faculty members will provide details on requirements and guidelines for attendance in their classes in their course syllabi.” Students are responsible for reviewing remaining university attendance policy elements.

Courtesy Rules regarding Cell Phone and Computer Use (not applicable to an online class)

Cell phones: As a courtesy to your teacher and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that your cell phones are silenced and put away. Any texting or similar behavior in taking out your phone without explicit advance approval during class will result in you being counted absent for the day and loss of points to your course grade.

Laptops and tablets may only be used in class on days we will need to work on computers.

I will let you know ahead of time what days you can bring a laptop or tablet. All other days, you should take notes by hand. Studies show that students who take notes by hand remember more and have a deeper understanding of the material than students who use a computer to take notes.

No use of any electronic device during class. Any electronic device (computer, cell phone, iPad, etc.) brought to class must be turned off and stored off your desktop during class. Each time you check your phone, your phone rings, you load a web page, or any other activity that has not been approved, up to 100 points is subject to being deducted from your course grade.

Classroom Policies: Students are expected to keep up with assigned reading and be prepared to answer questions in class--be sure you have done all required reading by the date noted on the course outline. Do not come to class if you have not done the required reading for the day as shown on the online course outline.

Deadlines: Work not turned in on time will be late regardless of the reason—it is your responsibility to meet the deadline regardless of technical or other problems. Deadlines are specific on D2L—when the folder closes, the deadline is past. Work submitted incomplete will be marked as not submitted. Any missed deadline causes a loss of 50% up to 100% of points each time.

Behavior: “Students are expected at all times to recognize constituted authority, to conform to the ordinary rules of good conduct, to be truthful, to respect the rights of others, to protect private and

public property, and to make the best use of their time toward an education.” -- Texas A&M University System Student Rights and Obligations . “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct) -- Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures,12.01.99.R0.05 Guidelines for Content and Distribution of Syllabi: Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty

Incompletes. Receiving an incomplete as a course grade with the work being completed later is very unlikely, and considered only when a student has something occur beyond his or her own control and the instructor deems it as an appropriate option. A completion contract must be signed.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Gee Library Room 132. Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835. Email: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

EARLY INTERVENTION FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS: Early intervention for freshmen is designed to communicate the University’s interest in their success and a willingness to participate fully to help students accomplish their academic objectives. The university through faculty advisors and mentors will assist students who may be experiencing difficulty to focus on improvement and course completion. The process allows students to be knowledgeable about their academic progress early in the semester and will provide faculty and staff with useful data for assisting students and enhancing retention. Grade reports are mailed by the end of the 6th week of the semester.

COURSE EVALUATION APPEAL: Students with concerns regarding their courses should first address those concerns with the instructor in order to reach a resolution. Students who are unsatisfied with the outcome of that conversation or have not been able to meet individually with their instructor, whether in-person, by email, by telephone, or by another communication medium, should then schedule an appointment with the Department Head or Assistant Department Head by completing a Student Grievance Form (available in the main office, HL 141). Students should also consult University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05 (“Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation”).

CAMPUS CONCEALED CARRY STATEMENT: Campus Concealed Carry - Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to (<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedure/s/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Planned Reading & Assignments Schedule

note reading quiz assigned dates as listed on the D2L version of this outline

1/13-17.....Theoretical Foundation overview. Critical Reasoning.
1/20-24Read Chapter Introduction and Chapter One. *Ethics Issue 1 due.
1/27-31.....Read Chapter Two. Paper 1 Assigned Monday.
2/3-7Read Chapter Three. Paper 1 Due Monday (class discussion due).
2/10-14Test 1 as scheduled: Intro and Chaps. 1-3. Paper 2 Assigned Monday.
2/17-21Paper 2 Due Monday (+discussion). Read Chapter Four..
2/24-28Read Chapter Five. Paper 3 Assigned Wednesday
3/2-6.....Test 2 as scheduled: Chaps. 4-5. Read Chapter Six. Paper 3 Due Wed. (+discussion).
3/16-20.....Paper 4 assigned Monday. *Ethics Issue 2 due Thursday.
3/23-27..... Read Chapter Seven. Paper 4 due Monday.
3/30-4/3.....Paper 5 Assigned Wednesday. Read Chapter Eight.
4/6-10.....Test 3 as scheduled: Chaps. 6, 7, 8. Paper 5 due Wednesday (+discussion).
4/13-17.....Paper 6 Assigned Monday. Read Chapter Nine.
4/20-24Paper 6 Due Monday (+discussion). Read Chap. 10. Optional paper 7 assigned.
4/27-5/1.... Read Chap. 11. Complete discussions.
5/4-8..... Finals -- Test 4: Chaps. 9, 10, 11 at Final Exam time

* tests always cover content from chapters plus any content assigned to the class