

MCOM 3318 – Media Law and Ethics

Online - Asynchronous

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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. Device to complete course requirements – computer, tablet, phone, etc. capable of playing videos, accessing Canvas and email, downloading or viewing media content, accessing media content, and typing assignments for submission in the appropriate format (no screenshots of notes from your phone, PDFs, etc. are permitted).
3. Internet access – this is an online course so you must be able to get online to complete the requirements. It is an asynchronous course, however, and you will not be attending Zoom lectures, so it does not matter where you access the course from.

Evaluation and Grade Calculation -

Assignments (Discussions, knowledge checks)	70%
Exams	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 (SLOs 1 – 7)** During the semester, students will complete a variety of discussions and knowledge checks. The purpose of the discussions is to give students an opportunity to explore their personal thoughts on mass media and society and compare/contrast their thoughts to those of their classmates. Each discussion post and required responses will be required to be of a minimum length, utilize sources, and adhere to the posted topic. The purpose of the knowledge checks is to give students a final opportunity to review the weekly material and test their understanding of the material before moving onto the next topic.
- 2. Exams (SLOs 1 - 7)** Students will have a mid-term exam and a final exam that they must complete. The purpose of the exams is to allow students to revisit material they have covered throughout the semester, test their knowledge of that material, and reinforce the material in the memory before completing the class. Both the mid-term exam and final exam will be open note/open book and students will be allowed to utilize any posted course material for the exam. Neither exam will be timed and students will have one week to complete the exam.

Classroom Policies and Expectations

- 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.
- Participate – you must be an active part of the course to succeed.
- Treat each other with respect and display common classroom courtesies.
 - 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 classmates with respect, you will receive a zero on your discussion assignments.
- 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 though, failing to illustrate an understanding of the material, etc. will result in your grade being lowered.

- 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.
 - 1. It is highly recommended that you download the Canvas application and adjust your settings to allow for notifications.
- F. Communicate - If you have a problem with anything throughout the semester, whether that is completing your assignments, accessing material in a timely manner, etc., talk to me about it. I cannot help you or fix the problem if I am unaware of it.

Attendance Policy

- A. This course is an asynchronous, online course. This means that we will not have scheduled meeting times each week, but you are required to log into Canvas throughout the semester. If you have not spent time on Canvas before the census date (January 26), your attendance will be recorded as “not attended.” Additionally, you are required to complete the course requirements according to the schedule provided. This includes watching/reading posted content and completing assignments by the listed due dates.

Assignment Policy

- A. Assignments do 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 deduction in points. 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. I will not accept assignments that have been posted in the “comments” section of the submission.
- E. 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.
- F. 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.
- G. 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.

- 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.
 - i. In addition to UT Tyler’s Student Conduct and Discipline policy, plagiarism/cheating includes:
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. Utilizing blank posts or random lines of text on discussion posts to gain access to the thread before creating your original post.
 - 4. Utilizing sources outside of Canvas to complete knowledge checks and exams.

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.
 - a. 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).
 - b. Students may not use AI to generate/create work for submission. All work submitted must come from the student. Assignments are designed so that students explore their own thoughts and understanding of the content, not the thoughts and understanding of the AI platform.
 - c. 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 incorrect or incomplete. It will not be accepted as a source of information.

Course Schedule

Week One: Intro to Law and Ethics, Monday 1/12 – Sunday, 1/18	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read course syllabus & schedule2. Read “Introduction to Media Law and Ethics”3. Read Ch. 1 in <i>Mass Media Law</i>4. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 1/18 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Syllabus quiz2. Discussion: Introduction3. Knowledge check #1
Week Two: The First Amendment, Monday, 1/19 – Sunday, 1/25	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Ch. 2 & 3 in <i>Mass Media Law</i>2. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 1/25 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: The First Amendment2. Knowledge check #2
Week Three: Defamation, Monday, 1/26 – Sunday, 2/1	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Ch. 4, 5, & 6 in <i>Mass Media Law</i>2. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 2/1 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Discussion: Defamation4. Knowledge check #3
Week Four: The Potter Box of Moral Reasoning, Monday, 2/2 – Sunday, 2/8	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read “Introduction: Ethical Foundations and Perspectives” in <i>Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning</i>2. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 2/8 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: Potter Box analysis2. Knowledge check #4
Week Five: Research Week #1, Monday, 2/9 – Sunday, 2/15	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read article or other academic source of your choosing	Due by Sunday, 2/15 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: Personal research #1
Week Six: Privacy, Monday, 2/16 – Sunday, 2/22	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Ch. 7 & 8 in <i>Mass Media Law</i>2. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 2/22 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: Privacy2. Knowledge check #5
Week Seven: Midterm Prep Week, Monday, 2/23 – Sunday, 3/1	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Catch up on reading / reviewing material2. Prep for midterm next week	None
Week Eight: Mid-Terms, Monday, 3/2 – Sunday, 3/8	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete Mid-Term Exam	Due by Sunday, 3/8 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mid-term exam
Week Nine: Spring Break, Monday, 3/9 – Sunday, 3/15	

<p style="text-align: center;">Spring Break – No Module Requirements</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Ten: Persuasion and The Tares Test, Monday, 3/16 – Sunday, 3/22</p>	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Ch. 15 in <i>Mass Media Law</i>2. Read <i>The TARES Test: Five Principles for Ethical Persuasion</i>3. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 3/22 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: TARES Test analysis2. Knowledge check #6
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Eleven: Violence and Obscenity, 3/23 – Sunday, 3/29</p>	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Ch. 13 in <i>Mass Media Law</i>2. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 3/29 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: Violence and Obscenity2. Knowledge check #7
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Twelve: Research Week #2, Monday, 3/30 – Sunday, 4/5</p>	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read article or other academic source of your choosing	Due by Sunday, 4/5 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: Personal research #2
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Thirteen: Copyright and Trademark, Monday, 4/6 – Sunday, 4/12</p>	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Ch. 14 in <i>Mass Media Law</i>2. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 4/12 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: Copyright and Trademark2. Knowledge check #8
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Fourteen: Media Accountability, Monday, 4/13 – Sunday, 4/19</p>	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review posted material	Due by Sunday, 4/19 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discussion: Mixed-method analysis2. Knowledge check #9
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Fifteen: Finals Prep Week, Monday, 4/20 – Sunday, 4/26</p>	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Catch up on reading / reviewing material2. Prep for final next week	None
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Sixteen: Finals Week, Monday, 4/27 – Friday, 5/1</p>	
Module requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete Final Exam	Due by Friday, 5/1 by 11:59 p.m. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Final exam