

**MCOM 3318.001 – Media Law & Ethics
Syllabus – Spring 2015**

I. Faculty Information

A. Dr. Marsha Little Matthews

1. HPR 266
2. Office Hours: W 1:00-4:00 p.m., and by appointment
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II. Course Description

- A. 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.
- B. 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.

III. Course Objectives

A. Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of and be able to apply the First Amendment and other legal principles for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.
3. Distinguish between legal rules and ethical guidelines through readings, discussions, journal assignments, and other written assignments.
4. Knowledgeable in the areas of law that apply to media and demonstrate this knowledge through written examinations and papers.
5. Effectively analyze media issues for legal and ethical applications through readings, examinations, discussions, and written assignments.
6. Apply critical thinking skills in class and group discussions and written assignments.
7. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the history and roles of professionals and institutions in shaping the field of mass and mediated communication.

V. Evaluation and Grade Calculation

Ethics Papers	35%
Exams & Quizzes	30%
Journal Assignments	25%
Class Participation, Activities, Misc. Assignments	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

Course Requirements

A. Texts

Pember, D.R., & Calvert, C. (2014). Mass Media Law 19th Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education. (ISBN: 9781259301575)

Christians, C.G., et al (2012). Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning, 9th Ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education. (ISBN: 978-0-205-02904-4)

B. Chapter quizzes on Blackboard

C. Exams (in-class)

D. Four ethics position papers

E. Journal Assignments

F. Class participation , activities, & misc. (such as Cognitive Maps)

G. Assignment Policy:

1. Assignments will be given throughout the semester. Students are responsible for all course materials, including, but not limited to, class lectures, handouts, and textbook reading assignments.
2. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
3. Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course. This does not mean that merely completing all assignments guarantees the student will pass the course.
4. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of class.
5. ALL PAPERS MUST BE TYPED OR WORD-PROCESSED USING THE FORMAT REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT.
6. Multiple pages must be stapled or paper clipped together. It is your responsibility to see this is accomplished.

H. **Late Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the date specified.

I. **Course Withdrawal:** The last date to withdraw from one or more classes is **March 23, 2015**.

J. **Final Examination Date: Tuesday, April 28, 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. (subject to change when the University publishes the final exam schedule).**

- K. **Attendance and Tardiness Policy:** Students are expected to attend class. **Four** absences are allowed – this includes illness, university-sponsored activities, etc. A **fifth** absence will **lower the final grade by 5 percentage points**. A **seventh** absence will **lower the grade by 10 percentage points**. See the current UT Tyler catalog for the university’s policy on student responsibility for missed classes and assignments. Be familiar with the university’s drop policy. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second class meeting. **Students over 15 minutes late are considered absent. If a student must be absent the day an exam is scheduled, he/she must notify the instructor before class time. No make-up tests will be allowed if the instructor is not given a legitimate excuse before the time of the exam or presentation.**
- L. **Electronic Devices:** Turn off all electronic devices including cell phones and MP3 players. Allowing a cell phone or other device to ring during class is rude and disrupts class. No text messaging or checking the time on your cell phone during class. Keep these devices in your back pack during class.
- M. **Use of Computers in Class:** Do not use computers during class for reading/writing e-mail, surfing the Web, playing games, working on assignments for other classes, or writing letters. You may use a laptop computer only for taking class notes. If you use your laptop for any other purpose, I will require you to immediately close the computer
- N. **Academic Honesty Policy:** Students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Anyone caught cheating will earn a “0” for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. Plagiarism (the use of written and oral words or ideas of another person, including another student, without the expressed acknowledgment of the speaker’s or writer’s indebtedness to that person) will not be tolerated. This includes the use of papers or other materials previously submitted to instructors in other classes, as well as video and audio recordings. Students caught plagiarizing will fail this class and be subject to academic and disciplinary action.

VI. University of Texas at Tyler Policies

A. Students Rights and Responsibilities

1. To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:
<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

B. Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:

1. Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar> . Each semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. **(Census Date Spring 2015: January 26.)**

2. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.
3. The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:
 - a) Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
 - b) Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date).
 - c) Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade).
 - d) Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment.
 - e) Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid.

C. State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

1. Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).
2. Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

D. Social Security and FERPA Statement: It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

E. Note regarding student absence due to religious observance: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of such absences.

F. The U-T Tyler Writing Center provides professional writing tutoring for all students in all disciplines. If you wish to use the Writing Center, you should plan for

a minimum of two hour-long tutorials per assignment: the first to provide an initial consultation and drafting plan, and the second to follow up. Be prepared to take an active role in your learning, as you will be asked to discuss your work during your tutorial. While Writing Center tutors are happy to provide constructive criticism and teach effective writing techniques, under no circumstances will they fix, repair, or operate on your paper. Location: BUS 202. Appointments: 903-565-5995.

- G. **Disability Services:** In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodation must provide documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services counselor. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services office in UC 3150, or call (903) 566-7079.
- H. **Student Absence due to Religious Observance:** Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.
- I. **Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities:** If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.
- J. **Emergency Exits and Evacuation:** Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not reenter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.