

Ethics and Professional Practice
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11–12:15, Summerfield 503

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Office
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Office Hours
Tuesday 12:30–1:30
Wednesday 2:00–3:00

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Description

Ethics for professionals examines the moral & ethical decision-making process for media practitioners. It has four themes:

1. Foundations: Philosophies and philosophers; morals, values, and principles
2. Reasoning with reality: Using decision models to resolve moral dilemmas
3. The “scene” around us: Ethical challenges and conflicts in current events
4. Forward: Your own ethical identity for the future

One concept I want you to come away with from this class is to understand the rationale of this statement: **There isn't an ethics of an act; there's only ethics — period.**

Objectives

The exercises in this course, along with the reading and writing, will help you develop as a journalist who can make decisions in the face of dilemmas. You will need to think critically, creatively and independently. You will become familiar with the language and customs of the profession, and learn to understand and when to apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to ethical decision-making in professional practice.

To achieve these goals, we will take on some interesting and tough issues. You will:

- Critically analyze philosophies, models, cases and ethics codes
- Recognize ethical issues, problems and dilemmas in all facets of communications
- Use problem-solving models effectively to resolve ethical dilemmas
- Think critically and clearly in applying models to case studies and current events
- Clearly and creatively present case studies and debates
- Ground yourself in American media standards and practices
- Participate in class and group activities

Everyone must participate. You will be part of a group and will develop presentations for case studies. You will argue cases in mini-debates call Face-Offs and do Quick Hit presentations. We will also discuss readings, various codes of ethics and current events—you need to be prepared to discuss the material of the day. Keep current with your reading for class and keep current with the news, locally and beyond.

Materials

The required book: Kidder, Rushworth M., *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*, 3rd edition (New York: Harper, 2009). When you read it, take notes and bring them to class.

I will call on students randomly and may have pop quizzes, so be prepared.

If you have books, videos, movies or other content you think would interest the class, please let me know so we can incorporate them into the course.

Download class assignments from KU Blackboard. It will have links to PDF documents, websites, assignment sheets and other course material. Stay flexible: I may update the schedule as we move forward.

Requirements

Group work

You will be assigned to groups — or you can form your own groups by sign-up sheets. Each group will produce two case studies based on group discussion and analysis. One will come from The Casebook and the other the group will create on its own.

You will partner to present three debates called Face-Offs.

Problem members of groups generally become pretty obvious to everyone. A group should not cut slack for slackers, and slackers shouldn't expect it. Each member of a group will evaluate the others, and themselves, for the contributions and participation. Those evaluations go into the Group Participation grade component, with is worth 10 percent of the final grade. In short: Don't try to take a free ride on others' work. You will pay the price.

Attendance & participation

Attendance is required, and I take roll. Attending and participating determine 20 percent of your grade. If you must miss class, notify me in advance with your reason—at least 30 minutes before class starts. If you haven't notified me and you are absent, your absence is unexcused, which has a penalty (explained in the next paragraph). Illness and bona fide emergencies count for an absence. On the other hand, vacations, leaving early for break (or coming back late), being unable to find parking and other reasons that are within your control are not acceptable, just as they wouldn't be on your first job. I may require documentation for an absence, so if you're going to the doctor ask for a note; if you're at a funeral take an extra copy of the bulletin.

Each unexcused absence reduces your final grade by 1 percentage point. If you don't show up on a day when your group presents, you lose 5 points—plus whatever penalty your group metes out for your participation (or lack of it).

Blackboard Discussion Board

You will be required to post comments throughout the semester. I will start some threads and you will start others from time to time. You are required to participate in the online discussions, so be prepared. If you don't know how, ask!

Note on social media and other distractions

Doing puzzles, watching a baseball game, texting friends or catching up on the news in class is unprofessional. Dozing off doesn't help your grade either. Take part in class. It will help your groups, and you'll learn something too.

If you're a digital addict, buy a legal pad and pen and take notes on paper. The amount you retain will amaze you. Scientific studies prove it!

Grading and assignments

This section will come soon.

Course schedule

It will be posted on the Calendar feature of Blackboard.

The Fine Print

Professionalism

Attendance: Arrive on time. In addition to its academic purpose, this class will be conducted like the professional environments where you may one day work.

If you're late, you get no extra time. Plan ahead for bad weather and limited parking. If you're absent, you don't get to make up any work missed in class, but you can keep up by getting notes from a classmate.

Deadlines: Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period unless otherwise stated. You must attend class to turn in your work. If you do not, your work is counted late and will have half its points deducted. Assignments turned in more than 24 hours late will receive zero points.

Excuses don't count here any more than they count in a professional newsroom. No editor or producer will care if you say that:

- Your source (or classmate) didn't reply to an email or text
- Your printer/wifi/jump drive/car didn't work or your dog ate your mouse cord
- You found no place to park

- Lightning zapped your drive
- The shared printer is out of toner/offline/malfunctioning
- You forgot your deadline and Blackboard was offline

Each of these headaches has a simple way to prevent it: planning ahead. Now's the time to learn how to schedule yourself so you can take responsibility for your work.

Discussions: You are expected to share your ideas and listen to others' respectfully. Disagreements, which come naturally in any newsroom worth its salt, are perfectly acceptable when they are expressed professionally.

Here on a university campus, we believe that civility and respect for the opinions of others are very important in an academic environment. It is likely you may not agree with everything that is said or discussed in the classroom, but I still expect courteous behavior and responses no matter how you feel. When you disagree with someone, be sure that you make a distinction between criticizing an idea and criticizing the person. Expressions

or actions that disparage a person's race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, gender identity/expression, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or marital, parental, or veteran status are contrary to the mission of this course and will not be tolerated.

Classroom Attendance: Journalism School Policy

No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester.

Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

Contacting me

Please come to my office for a visit. I'm in Dole Human Development Center, Room 2268. It's on the second floor, in the same suite as the Kansan newsroom and the KUJH studio. If my office hours don't work for you, I will meet you when it's convenient for both of us. Just ask!

Calling, texting and emailing are fine too. But I may not reply after dinner time, so if you have a question about a paper or an assignment ask well ahead of the deadline. In other words, a lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.

Copying or Recording

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's property. Video and audio recording of lectures without my consent is prohibited. On request, the instructor usually will permit students to record lectures, on the condition that these recordings are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

Financial Aid Policy

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. "Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid."

Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.

Misconduct

You are bound by the university rules on academic misconduct. If you have any questions about

what constitutes cheating, it will behoove you to ask BEFORE your endeavor.

Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification Policy

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence. Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for the course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor of the course.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98:

Plagiarism: Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification: Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Students with Special Needs

The Office of Disability Resources (DR), 22 Strong Hall, (785) 864-2620 (V/TTY), coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible. Please also contact me privately in regard to this course.

Weapons Policy

Any individual who is 21 years of age or older and who is not prohibited or disqualified by law and who is lawfully eligible to carry a concealed handgun in Kansas shall not be precluded from doing so on University campuses, including all facilities owned or leased by the University, except in certain areas (which do not include our classrooms).

Each individual who lawfully possesses a handgun on any of the University campuses on which concealed carry is allowed shall at all times have that handgun in the person's custody and control and shall be wholly and solely responsible for carrying, storing and using the handgun in a safe manner and in accordance with the law, Board of Regents policy and University policy. This responsibility shall include the obligation at all times to keep it secure and concealed from view when not in use for purposes provided by law.

No person shall use the fact or possibility that he or she is carrying a concealed weapon with the intent to intimidate another person except in defense of self or others.