

JOUR 608 - Ethics and Professional Practice

Spring 2020 Syllabus

12:30 - 1:45 PM Monday and Wednesday

[STFL 206](#)

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Office Hours Noon - 2:00 pm Tuesday or by appointment. Please call my office phone to arrange a visit. I will be glad to respond to email questions anytime.

Personal Link <http://mikewms.com>

The American news media has seldom been held in lower esteem by the public. This problem comes from a pervasive sense that professional standards have dropped. The digital age, where publishing and broadcasting information has increased far beyond daily newspapers and radio and television stations, only complicates these dynamics of mistrust. Corrupted information and half-truths seem to be everywhere, many citizens sense, and news media outlets – like almost all large institutions in today's society – face increasing skepticism.

A crucial question, then, looms for those studying journalism and training to become reporters and editors, and professional communicators: What distinguishes the professional journalist's approach to information amid vast other digital streams of videos, photos, data, and text? In large part, the answer must be the highest of ethical standards and a commitment to the uncorrupted pursuit of truth based on verifiable facts and knowledge.

Meanwhile, the number of U.S. editorial workers dropped by more than half over the past few decades; there are now about four public relations persons for every journalist. Preserving an ethical core, and seeking to improve upon the checkered past of reporting, is no sure or natural thing for a profession that has never required a license to practice.

This syllabus presents ideas, materials, case studies, and readings that speak to this moment of change.

Course objectives

- Learn the core ethical principles that have defined the very best media professionalism.
- Know the main ethical challenges and salient failures journalism has seen in the past.
- Develop a sharp awareness of how digital technology and increased two-way engagement with audiences are changing the nature of journalistic ethical decision-making and challenging it in new ways.
- Create a language for ethical reasoning and the capacity to apply essential principles to concrete reporting situations of all kinds, both old and new.
- Learn the newsgathering rights afforded to journalists as well as the laws that both protect and constrain journalistic practice.

We will explore some critical and challenging issues. You need to:

- Critically analyze philosophies, models, cases, and ethics codes.
- Recognize ethical issues, problems, and dilemmas in all facets of communications.
- Use 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.
- Actively participate in class and group activities.

Course design

This course will acquaint students with important ethical principles and professional norms that they can employ in the practice of reporting. Students will develop their knowledge of theories and frameworks, gain an understanding of significant journalistic failures and mistakes, as well as emerging areas of professional challenge, and learn how to apply this knowledge during reporting, publication, and audience engagement processes. The course builds toward a final project in which students demonstrate a thorough grasp of ethical issues in journalism.

The class will meet using a hybrid strategy. We will meet in person face to face (F2F) on Mondays in Stauffer-Flint 206 and use our Wednesday schedule time for a variety of online work, including research, readings and viewings, small-group meetings, and individual chat sessions with the instructor.

Course materials

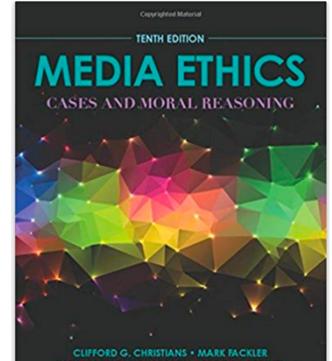
Class materials include general texts that supply a theoretical framework, book chapters, and print or online readings that apply to class topics and films. You will be guided to relevant articles and asked to do focused research.

Readings

We will have one required text - [MEDIA ETHICS. Cases and Moral Reasoning](#), 10th ed., By Patterson and Wilkins.

Additional readings will come from some or all of these resources. In most cases, specific links will be provided to materials. You will not need to purchase these texts.

- Kelly McBride, Tom Rosenstiel, *The New Ethics of Journalism*, 2014.
- Gene Foreman, *The Ethical Journalist: Making Responsible Decisions in the Digital Age, Second Edition*, 2015.
- Thomas E. Patterson, *Informing the News: The Need for Knowledge-based Journalism*, 2013.
- Sue Ellen Christian, *Overcoming Bias: A Journalist's Guide to Culture and Context*, 2011.
- Alex S. Jones, *Losing the News: The Future of the News That Feeds Democracy*, 2009.
- Patrick Lee Plaisance, *Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice*, 2009.
- Dale Jacquette, *Journalistic Ethics: Moral Responsibility in the Media*, 2007.
- David Craig, *The Ethics of the Story: Using Narrative Techniques Responsibly in Journalism*, 2006.
- Seth Mnookin, *Hard News: The Scandals at The New York Times and their Meaning for American Media*, 2004.
- Janet Malcolm, *The Journalist, and the Murderer*, 1990.



Online resources

- [Society of Professional Journalists & SPJ Ethics Committee](#)
- [Digital Media Law Project Legal Guide](#), Harvard University
- [The Poynter Institute](#)
- [Columbia Journalism Review](#)
- [Build Your Own Ethics Code](#), ONA Ethics
- [Codes of Ethics Database](#), Accountable Journalism
- [Digital Journalist's Legal Guide](#), Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
- [Nieman Reports](#), Harvard University
- [Markkula Center for Applied Ethics](#), Santa Clara University
- [Center for Journalism Ethics](#), University of Wisconsin-Madison
- [Ethical Journalism Network \(EJN\)](#)
- [Knight Case Studies Initiative](#), Columbia University
- [Ethics Cases Online](#), Indiana University School of Journalism
- [NPR Ombudsman & New York Times Public Editor](#)

Films

- "Spotlight," 2015 (Open Road Films)
- "Citizenfour," 2014 (Praxis Films et al.)
- "Kill the Messenger," 2014 (Bluegrass Films et al.)
- "Frost/Nixon," 2008 (Universal Pictures et al.)
- "Page One," 2011 (Participant Media et al.)
- "Good Night and Good Luck," 2005 (Warner Bros. et al.)
- "Shattered Glass," 2003 (Lions Gate et al.)
- "Broadcast News," 1987 (American Films et al.)
- "The Killing Fields," 1984 (Goldcrest Films et al.)
- "Absence of Malice," 1981 (Columbia Pictures)
- "All the President's Men," 1976 (Warner Bros. et al.)
- "Ace in the Hole," 1951 (Paramount Pictures et al.)
- "Wag the Dog," 1997 (New Line Cinema et al.)
- "What Women Want" 2000 (Paramount Pictures et al.)
- "Thank You For Smoking" 2005 (Room 9 Entertainment et al.)
- "The Jones" 2009 (Echo Lake Entertainment et al.)
- "The Greatest Movie Ever Sold" 2011 (Sony Pictures et al.)
- "Merchants of Doubt" 2014 (Sony Pictures et al.)
- "The Corporation" 2003 (Big Picture Media Corp. et al.)
- "How to Get Ahead in Advertising" 1989 (HandMade Films et al.)
- "Suits" 2011 (Hypnotic et al.)
- "Mad Men" 2007-15 (Lionsgate Television et al.)

Ethical situations are at the heart of some of the best cinema of the past decades. Early in the semester, you will be asked to view a film and write a reaction post to share with your peers. To expand your knowledge, you may also wish to view some of these notable films and television series. Additional movies will be added to this list to provide a range of topics, themes, and messages for students in the class, regardless of academic major or media specialization.

Policies and Procedures

You are responsible for your learning and participation in this class. That means if you do not understand any course material, assignments, or readings, it is your responsibility to bring your questions to the attention of the instructor.

I can't help you if you don't let me know you need help. You each have valuable ideas to contribute to the learning process. You should always feel free to ask questions or add your comments to the course discussions.

Diversity of ideas and attitudes

This course is about the ways people make decisions and share ideas. We will discuss how differences of opinion may affect the truthfulness of statements, and some of our conversations and course materials may not meet the same standards of taste, political allegiances, or other attitudes you hold. But because of their place in the examination of ethical standards and practices, all points of view deserve attention. You are encouraged and expected to actively participate in our discussion of all ideas expressed in the class and should feel free to share your feelings about them.

Likewise, you should be tolerant of the attitudes and opinions of others, giving them the same courtesy of free expression you would expect for yourself. We will only learn from each other if we are all willing to listen to and appreciate the opinions and ideas of others.

If you feel offended, or otherwise threatened by the comments or actions of anyone in this class, please let the instructor know as soon as possible so he can address the situation.

Participation and attendance

Your attendance at each class meeting is required! If you anticipate a valid absence, you must notify me by email BEFORE the class meeting. Be sure to put "JOUR608 ABSENCE" in the subject line of the email message.

You may call my cell number 541 598-4377 at any time before 10 p.m. to inform me of a pending absence or for other course-related matters that can't be handled through email or in person. If I don't answer, please leave a message.

Do not assume you will be allowed to make up assignments missed during an unexcused absence.

You must view the videos posted and read the listed chapters and linked material by the date indicated on the course schedule. Failure to engage with this course material will hurt your learning in the course and affect your participation in class discussions. You will not receive full value for the attendance and participation grade element if you have any unexcused absences.

Technology Access

You will be required to have access to all technology required for viewing online lectures, for completion of assignments, and participation in online discussions. This class requires the use of computers capable of running, up-to-date web browsers. Broadband access to the internet is assumed and required.

KU Libraries and the School of Journalism provide computer labs and facilities for course work. The J-School also has laptop computers available for checkout (as available). You should make yourself familiar with the location and availability of these computer facilities and resources.

Not having access to the required technology is not an excuse for missing deadlines or mediocre work. If you are unable to provide your computing technology, you will need to find a public source, or drop the course.

Mobile Technology

It is permissible in this class to take notes using electronic equipment and to use laptops and tablets for research directly related to the content of that day's lecture. The temptation to use smartphones during class is often great, but there will be very few occasions where this will be acceptable.

You will gain the most from this course by maintaining full attention to our classroom activities and NOT your phone. You should turn off and put away your phones as class begins. If this is your preferred method of taking notes, you must let me know before each class.

Using electronic equipment for other purposes during class (e.g. texting friends, doing puzzles, buying anything, watching cat videos) is rude and unprofessional. If I see it, you will be warned and may be asked to leave class. Repeated offenses will have a negative impact on your attendance grade component.

KU Blackboard

The majority of materials for this course will be accessed using Blackboard. If you are not familiar with its operation, please let me know.

Deadlines

This course has frequent deadlines throughout the term! All course work must be completed by assigned deadlines. Any work submitted after the assignment deadline will receive a grade deduction of 30 percent unless the instructor approves a deadline extension **PRIOR TO** the original deadline.

No assignments will be accepted after 5 pm, May 15. A grade of INCOMPLETE will be assigned only in accordance with the University of Kansas policy.

Journalism School Policy on Classroom Attendance

*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.***

Financial Aid Policy

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office the absence of students who have stopped attending and the 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.

Academic Misconduct

You are bound by the university rules on academic misconduct. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating, please ask **BEFORE** your endeavor.

Originality

You are expected to use your imagination, images, and information. The highest levels of ethical conduct and integrity expected of working professionals apply to you in this course. Please review the relevant policies as shown below under the Learn More label. Assignments completed with material from copyrighted sources will require appropriate attribution and/or permission for use.

J-School Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification – Adopted May 7, 2004

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 this 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(s) of this 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 recognition 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 an 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.

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 instructor 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 nor transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

Additional Resources

- Link to Diversity and Equity website: <http://www.diversity.ku.edu/>
- Link to IOA website: <http://www.ioa.ku.edu>
- Link to AAAC website: <http://www.achievement.ku.edu>
- Link to Student Handbook: <http://www.disability.ku.edu/~disability/handbook/>
- Link to the Office for Civil Rights' Reading Room that provides comprehensive links to publications about anti-discrimination: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html>

Inclement weather

In the event of inclement weather, KU officials may decide to cancel some or all classes for a specific period. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 864-7669 (864-SNOW).

Because this class is partially online, severe weather should only affect our deadlines scheduled for days when the campus is closed. If such an instance occurs, I will notify the class by email to revise the deadline.

Email

All students are **REQUIRED** to regularly check their KU (name@ku.edu) email account. Class information will be frequently sent to this account. If you use another account, please be sure your KU account is set to forward an email to that non-KU account. I will not attempt to chase you to email accounts other than your official KU email.

Not being aware of course material because of failure to use your **ku.edu** email account is not an acceptable excuse.

I have my email program set to filter JOUR 608 messages to a priority folder. When sending an email to me, please always put "JOUR 608 – your topic here" in the subject line. I will make every effort to reply to your email as quickly as possible within 24-hours of its receipt. Do not expect immediate replies to emails after 10 p.m. or before 9 a.m. I check email regularly on the weekend but, do not assume replies will be as immediate as during the workweek.

You may communicate by email with me about anything related to the course except grade revisions. I will not discuss anything related to grade changes online. If you want to discuss a review of a graded assignment or test, you may arrange an office appointment with me.

Vacations, Travel, etc.

You are expected to participate in each scheduled class day of the course. Because travel may be part of your plans for Spring Break, be sure it does not cause you to miss class activities. Leaving early for or arriving late from these breaks is not a valid excuse for missing assigned coursework or class. This includes delayed returns because of travel delays. Plan your travel to assure your return to class on the Monday following the break.

Concealed carry of weapons

Individuals who choose to carry concealed handguns are solely responsible to do so in a safe and secure manner in strict conformity with state and federal laws and KU weapons policy. Safety measures outlined in the KU weapons policy specify that a concealed handgun:

- * Must be under the constant control of the carrier.
- * Must be out of view, concealed either on the body of the carrier, or backpack, purse, or bag that remains under the carrier's custody and control.
- * Must be in a holster that covers the trigger area and secures any external hammer in an un-cocked position
- * Must have the safety on, and have no round in the chamber

Note: Tests, quizzes and concealed carry of a weapon

Instructors are allowed by Kansas Board of Regents policy, to require backpacks, purses and other bags be placed in a specific location during exams and quizzes, and as such those items may not be under the constant control of the individual. Students who choose to carry a concealed handgun in a purse, backpack, or bag must review and plan each day accordingly, and are responsible for making alternate arrangements as necessary.

The University does not provide appropriate secured storage for concealed handguns. Individuals who violate the KU weapons policy may be asked to leave campus with the weapon and may face disciplinary action under the appropriate university code of conduct.

Grading

Your grade for this course will be calculated on the total of your scores on specific assignments weighted shown in the graphic at right.

An essay - 10% of the course grade

This paper will be an informed essay about the ethical content and situations found in one of two recent major movies. You will demonstrate your ability to relate course content with popular media through discussion of specific situations and resolutions found in the film. An essay of 1,000-5,000 words will be submitted through SafeAssign by the assigned deadline. The specific details of the assignment will be shared in class and posted in the Assignments tab in the Blackboard sidebar.

Midterm - 15% of the course grade

A written midterm exam covering material presented or assigned during the first seven weeks of the term will be taken following Spring Break. Specific details will be presented in class at the time a test study guide will be provided.

Personal Code - 10% of the course grade

Prior to Spring Break, you will create a Personal Code of Ethics based on course material and your personal attitude about ethical behavior. Specific details for this assignment will be discussed in class.

Team Case Study Presentation - 15% of the course grade

Following Spring Break, we will explore the ethical dilemmas faced by professionals in the variety of media occupations we cover in the J-School. Each of you will find a class partner and work to produce a presentation for sharing in class. These case presentations will include details of a specific situation or incident and the analysis of how this was handled. We will discuss the specifics of partner selection, assignment requirements and outcomes in class.

Final Project - 40% of the course grade (Accumulated by the completion of Proposal 5%; Draft 10%; Final Project 25%)

The final assignment for this course will be an in-depth review of a significant professional incident in which ethical decision making was required. Specifics of the assignment will be presented in class before Fall Break.

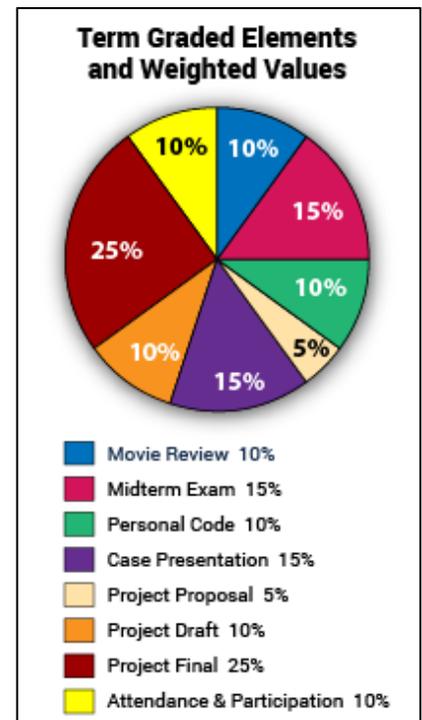
Attendance and Participation - 10% of the course grade

Because this course is taught using a hybrid pedagogy, **attendance is required at every face-to-face class meeting**. We will also, occasionally meet in small groups online using Skype or Zoom. These sessions will be scheduled throughout the semester and you will be expected to attend and participate at least once during the term.

Class Schedule

The schedule shown on the next page indicates planned topics of discussion and required readings to be completed prior to class. It also indicates the distinction of our face-to-face (F2F) and virtual (periodic) online meetings. Assignment deadlines are also shown.

This schedule is based on the intended construction of course knowledge. Student progress, current events and weather may require modifications of this schedule. Should changes be necessary, you will be notified by Blackboard email announcement and when possible, live in class. Changes to graded element deadlines will only provide longer, not shorter preparation time.



WEEK	DATES	CONTENT FOCUS MONDAY – (F2F Class SF 206)	READING, VIEWING, SHARING WEDNESDAY (Virtual Class)	DUE THIS WEEK*
1	Mon. 1/20 Wed. 1/22	MLK Jr. Day - No Class Welcome back to campus	REQUIRED: F2F meeting Truth and ethical behavior	Response 1 Due 1/26 11:59 pm
2	Mon. 1/27 Wed. 1/29	Metaethics, Normative ethics, and Applied ethics The big ethical theories and philosophers	Read before 2/3 class Media Ethics (ME) Introduction and Chapters. 1, 2	
3	Mon. 2/3 Wed. 2/5	Professional Codes of Ethics	Read before 2/10 class Items for 2/10 will be posted in Blackboard "Resources"	Watch "Shattered Glass" or "Wag the Dog"
		Ethics in the Cinema		
4	Mon. 2/10 Wed. 2/12	Ethical decision-making processes Skepticism, plausibility and purpose	Read before 2/17 class Items for 2/17 will be posted in Blackboard "Resources"	
5	Mon. 2/17 Wed. 2/19	Plagiarism, fabrication, and manipulation Text, verbal and visual ethics	Read before 2/24 class Items for 2/24 will be posted in Blackboard "Resources"	Short Essay 1 Due 2/16 11:59 pm
6	Mon. 2/24 Wed. 2/26	Right to know and questions of privacy	Read before 3/2 class Items for 3/2 will be posted in Blackboard "Resources"	
7	Mon. 3/2 Wed. 3/4	Non-Western and Indigenous approaches to ethics	Midterm Study Guide Posted	Personal Code <u>NOTE: Due Fri. 3/6 5:00 pm</u>
8	MARCH 8 – 15 SPING BREAK – NO CLASSES			
9	Mon. 3/16 Wed. 3/18	Ethics and social responsibility Awareness of Differences: Cultural, social, identity, persons with disability	MIDTERM EXAM	
			Online - Availability TBA	
10	Mon. 3/23 Wed. 3/25	Assign and discuss Final Project	Read before 3/30 class <i>ME Chap. 3, 4, 5</i>	Final Project Proposal Due 3/29 11:59 pm
		Team Assignments for Case Presentations		
11	Mon. 3/30 Wed. 4/1	Ethics in News Media	Read before 4/6 class <i>ME Chap. 6, 7, 8, 9</i>	A Teams Case Write ups due in Blackboard (Assign TA)
		Live Presentations – A Teams		
12	Mon. 4/6 Wed. 4/8	Ethics in Advertising	Read before 4/13 class <i>ME Chap. 10, 11, 12, 13</i>	B Teams Case Write ups due in class (Assign TB)
		Live Presentations – B Teams		
13	Mon. 4/13 Wed. 4/15	Ethics in Public Relations	Read before 4/20 class <i>ME Chap. 14, 15, 16 17</i>	C Teams Case Write ups due in class (Assign TC)
		Live Presentations – C Teams		
14	Mon. 4/20 Wed. 4/22	Ethics in Entertainment and Social Media	Final Project Work	D Teams Case Write ups due in class (Assign TD)
		Live Presentations – D Teams		
15	Mon. 4/27 Wed. 4/29	Final Project Work Individual meetings with instructor as desired	Final Project Work	Final Project Drafts Due 5/3 11:59 pm
16	Mon. 5/4 Wed. 5/6	Peer- to -Peer feedback of Final Project Drafts	REQUIRED: F2F meeting Course evaluation and wrap up	
Finals Week		FINAL PROJECTS DUE Final projects must be submitted to Blackboard on or before 1 pm, Friday May 15		

* Note – Content, assignments and due dates may be adjusted or modified as course progress or current events dictate. Students will be notified by email and Blackboard announcement if changes are made.