Course Syllabus

MCM 306.001

Media Law

Spring 2016

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Office: Boynton 205
Office Hours: 10-10:50 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 3:30-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8:30-9:15 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday; and by appointment
Class meeting time and place: 12:30-1:45 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday in Boynton 104

Course Description: Communication Law. Study of communication law affecting the rights and duties of the press, including electronic media. Attention given to the First Amendment, libel, privacy, Freedom of Information, copyright and obscenity. Prerequisite: advanced standing.

Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Students majoring in journalism should be able to recognize the role and function of media in society.
2. Students majoring in journalism will be able to demonstrate understanding of legal and ethical principles relating to media.

Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will be introduced to the major areas of media law: libel, privacy, fair trial-free press conflicts, confidentiality, access, obscenity, broadcast law, advertising law and copyright. Landmark court cases will be emphasized.
2. Students will learn the importance of the First Amendment in media law.
3. Students will obtain an understanding of the U.S. legal system.
4. Students will learn why it is important to consider ethical issues related to media law.


Course Requirements: Requirements include three one-hour examinations, a book review and a semi-comprehensive final.

Considerations:

1. Major exams and the final will cover material discussed in class, along with handouts, assigned chapters in text, etc. You may expect all types of questions, including short answer and essay. A number of questions will be based on information found in the text but not discussed in class. 306 is a rigorous course. To receive maximum reward (a good grade), maximum effort is required. Generally, I lecture the entire period.

2. Information will be forthcoming on the book review.

3. The semi-comprehensive final will include everything since the third exam plus review material. A handout containing review questions will be distributed after the third test.

4. Each major exam will have a number in the upper left-hand corner. Test grades will be posted by exam numbers on the bulletin board outside my office (Boynton 205) in descending order. In other words, the highest grade will appear at the top, the lowest at the bottom. Any student who wishes to look at his/her exam may do so in my office. Final-exam grades will not be posted.

5. I do not email grades or give them out on the telephone.

Course Calendar: attached.

Grading Policy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three major one-hour exams</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-comprehensive final</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Attendance Policy:

1. No distinction is made between excused and unexcused absences. If someone is absent, no matter what the excuse, he or she has missed. Therefore, please do not bombard me with excuses. Each student is allowed two unexcused absences. Following, for each unexcused absence, 2 points will be deducted from the final course grade. For most absences to be excused, they must be documented.
2. Three tardies count as one absence. (Please see me the period you are late if you believe your tardy should be excused.) If you come in 15 minutes or later after the class has begun, you are absent. But I reserve the right to lock doors 5 minutes after class has begun.

Academic Integrity (A-9.1): Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54): Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the
semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities:** To obtain disability accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disability_services/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disability_services/).

**Additional Considerations:**

1. Early tests (major exams, final) will not be given.
2. No one is exempt from the final.
3. I have absolutely no problems with students recording lectures. In fact, given the bulk of the material, I recommend it.
4. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Please do not ask me to lend you my notes. Find another student who is willing to do this.
5. Students are expected to conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen. Such behavior as whispering, talking, reading, studying material for another class, etc., will not be tolerated. The above are grounds for dismissal. Students also are expected to remain in their seats throughout the period unless there is a dire emergency, which should be explained at the end of the period. Leaving the classroom, returning and not explaining why will result in an absence for that period.
6. Texting (text messaging) during class is crude, rude and socially unacceptable. Anyone caught during this will be asked to leave and possibly will be dropped from the class. The same holds true for sending and checking emails.
7. Cell phones—or anything that looks like a cell phone, for that matter—should be clearly placed out of sight, especially during tests. If a student is caught with a cell phone on his/her desk, she/he will be asked to leave the classroom. If this should occur
during a test, he/she will receive a zero on the test. Please turn off all cell phones.

8. Course feedback is provided throughout the semester: exam grades are posted.

9. Makeup exams are given only to students who have acceptable excuses. ("Acceptable" is defined by the instructor.) One makeup exam will be given at the end of the semester. It will cover the entire semester's work and will consist of items to define and identify, short-answer questions and essays.

10. Children are not welcome in this class, which in no way functions as a day-care center. Anyone who brings a child to class will be asked to leave with the child. On the other hand, cats and dogs are very, very welcome, although, alas, university policy does not permit them.

***Outlines: Students receive "outlines" to help them spell words, etc. In no way is an outline a complete study guide. Many, many points will be discussed that are not included on outlines. In 306, you will be held responsible for all lecture notes!!
READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: Please study entire chapters unless otherwise noted.

TEST 1:

Chapter 1: “The Rule of Law”: pp. 2-34.
Chapter 2: “The First Amendment.”
Chapter 3: “Speech Distinctions.”

TEST 2:

Chapter 4: “Libel: The Plaintiff’s Case.”
Chapter 5: “Libel: Defenses and Privileges.”
Chapter 6: “Protecting Privacy.”

TEST 3:

Chapter 10: “The Media and the Courts”
Chapter 9: “Reporters’ Privilege”
Chapter 8: “Newsgathering”: pp. 350-372
Chapter 12: “Obscenity, Indecency and Violence.”
FINAL EXAMINATION:


Chapter 14: "Advertising."

Chapter 13: "Intellectual Property."
TENTATIVE DISCUSSIONS

Please note the word "tentative." These are subject to change.


Thurs., Jan. 28: "The First Amendment." Types of speech: pure and symbolic. Speech and First Amendment protection: three levels of speech. Hate speech vs. fighting words. Selected cases.


Thurs., Feb. 11: TEST 1.

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Tues., March 8: TEST 2.


SPRING BREAK!!

Thurs., March 24: **HOLIDAY!!**

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Thurs., April 7: "Access." Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): background, key definitions, exemptions (9). Exemptions with selected cases.

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Thurs., April 14: **TEST 3.**

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FINALS!!!