Course Syllabus

Media Ethics

MCM 406.001

Spring 2016

Name: Dr. Gary H. Mayer
Email: gmayer@sfasu.edu
Phone: Office: 936-468-1273; Administrative Office: 936-468-4001
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
Department: Mass Communication
Class meeting time and place: 9:30-10:45 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday in Boynton 104

Course Description: A study of ethical theories and their application to ethical problems in journalism, advertising, public relations, radio/TV and the Internet. Prerequisite: advanced standing.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

1. Demonstrate the ability to write effectively across a variety of platforms appropriate to the discipline.
2. Gather, organize and analyze discipline-appropriate research and communicate information about it.
3. Understand the role of media in society.
4. Comprehend legal and ethical principles relating to media.
5. Demonstrate the application of media technology, terminology and techniques.

Journalism Concentration PLOs:

1. Demonstrate appropriate writing and editing skills across diverse multimedia platforms.
2. Gather, analyze, organize and synthesize information on contemporary topics to develop a news story.
3. Demonstrate the application of contemporary technology, terminology and techniques in the news-gathering process.
4. Understand effective visual language and how to apply it to convey messages and enhance the communication process.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will study philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant and Mill to understand how their thoughts can be used to solve problems related to media ethics.
2. Students will become familiar with issues related to media ethics such as truth and honesty, privacy, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, antisocial behavior, morally offensive conduct, etc.
3. Students will further develop writing skills by preparing a short paper.

**Text and Materials:**

2. *All the President's Men* by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein: required.
3. Handouts.

**Course Requirements:** Requirements include three one-hour examinations, a short paper (*All the President's Men*) and a semi-comprehensive final examination.

**Considerations:**

1. **Major exams** and the **final** will cover material discussed in class along with assigned readings. A number of questions will be based on information found in the text but **not** discussed in class.
2. Information will be forthcoming on the short paper.
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.

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

**Course Calendar:** attached

**Grading Policy:**

- Three one-hour examinations = 70%
- Short paper = 10%
- Semi-comprehensive final = 20%

**Attendance Policy:**

1. Each student is allowed 3 unexcused absences. Following, for each unexcused absence, 2 points will be deducted from the final course average. For most absences to be excused, they must be documented.
2. I reserve the right to enforce the above policy.
3. 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 (A9-1):** 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 Policy (A-5): 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/.

Additional Considerations:

1. Early tests (major exams, final) will not be given.
2. No one is exempt from the final.
3. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Please check with another student in the class. See me if you missed a handout, homework assignment, etc.
4. 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.**

5. Texting (text messaging) during class is crude, rude and socially unacceptable. Anyone caught doing this will be asked to leave and possibly will be dropped from the class. The same holds true for sending and checking e-mails.

6. Cell phones—or anything that looks like a 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.

7. Course feedback (returned tests) is provided throughout the semester.

8. 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 and will cover the entire semester’s work.

9. 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, dogs and cats are very, very welcome, though, alas, university policy does not permit them to attend.
NOT ATTENDING CLASS AND/OR ARRIVING LATE, ETC.

To succeed in this class, you must attend; you must not arrive late; you must pay attention and take notes. In lecture classes such as Media Law and Media Ethics it's a good idea to record lectures. However, if you are recording, also take notes.

Anyone who arrives after class has officially begun will be counted tardy. If you think your tardy should be excused, please see me after class and explain why. Three lates count as 1 absence.

You are allowed 3 unexcused absences. For every absence thereafter, your final average will be lowered 2 points. (tardies = unexcused absences)

Example: Drusilla has 5 unexcused absences. Her final average is 70. What grade will she receive? 70 - 4 = 66 (D)

Anyone who leaves during class and then returns will be counted absent. If you have a valid reason for leaving/returning, please see me immediately after class. If you leave--let's say 30 minutes after class has begun--you will be counted absent.
TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS/DISCUSSION


Thurs., Feb. 4: “The Ethics of Intentional Ambiguity and Vagueness.”

Tues., Feb. 9: Movie: Shattered Glass.


Tues., Feb. 16: TEST 1.

Thurs, Feb. 18: “Ethics and Logic.”
Tues., Feb. 23: “Ethics and Logic.”

Thurs., Feb. 25: “Privacy.”

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Tues., March 1: “Privacy.”

Thurs., March 3: “Confidentiality.”

Tues., March 8: “Confidentiality.”

Thurs., March 10: **TEST 2.**

**SPRING BREAK!!!**

Tues. March 22: “Conflicts of Interest.”

Thurs., March 24: **Holiday.**

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Tues., March 29: Movie: *Absence of Malice.*

Thurs., March 31: *Absence of Malice.*

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Tues., April 5: Catch-up. "Stereotypes."

Thurs., April 7: Walt Disney movie.

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Thurs., April 14: "The Media and Antisocial Behavior."

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Tues., April 19: **TEST 3.**

Thurs., April 21: "Morally Offensive Conduct."

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Tues., April 26: "Morally Offensive Conduct."

Thurs., April 28: "Advertising: Some Ethical Considerations."

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Tues., May 3: "Propriety/Compassion/Sensitivity."

Thurs., May 5: Catch-up.

*FINAL EXAMINATIONS!*