

# **Ethics and Professional Practice**

Journalism 608

2019-2020

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Office Hours: No set office hours. But I can be contacted most any time. E-mail is best. You can also call and, typically, we can talk right away or, if not, arrange a time to talk.

## **Required Textbook**

Kidder, Rushworth M., (1995) *How Good People Make Tough Choices*.

You will be required to read and discuss the assigned weekly materials. Take good notes and be prepared to discuss in class. I do not want to see books open in class. If you fail to participate in the discussions, it diminishes your attendance/participation grade.

## **Web site**

KU Blackboard <http://courseware.ku.edu/> has this syllabus and other course documents. Your grades will be posted there, and I will contact you through your KU email account.

## **Course packet**

The course packet containing all of the case studies for this course is available on Blackboard.

## **Course Description**

Once upon a time, in the not too distant past, there was real news. That was joined, on cable television, by cable news such as Fox and MSNBC, often with a strong ideological slant. We later got satirical news with “The Daily Show,” “Stephen Colbert” and others. Now we have intentional fake news alongside a Republican-led U.S. House of Representatives whose first course of business in 2017 was to try to get rid of the office on ethics. Be mindful, too, of a 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Donald Trump, who routinely casts the media as the “lying media.”

Understanding the ethics and rules that guide legitimate journalism is as important now as it has ever been. A truthful press is one of the pillars of the U.S. Democracy, set down by the Founding Fathers. This course will encourage you to examine and evaluate not just ethics in the press, but also your moral and ethical development and the role development plays in ethical decision-making, particularly as you prepare for your career in media.

This course is designed to assist students:

- ☐ Develop a sense of their moral and ethical values.
- ☐ To identify, evaluate and understand ethical pressures in the media workplace.
- ☐ To employ a rational and defensible ethical decision-making philosophy.
- ☐ To understand and implement the various moral and ethical philosophies.
- ☐ To understand the current journalistic landscape and how to divine between real, legitimate news you can count on, as opposed to news that, like propaganda, is designed to mislead or force a particular point-of-view.

## **The Rules**

**Rule 1:** Attendance is mandatory. You are expected to be in class on time. **DO NOT** arrive late. Class will begin promptly at 4 p.m. Please be on time. Because we only have 15 classes, each class is the equivalent of two classes – or about 5 percent of the total semester time. **YOU GET ONE ABSENCE without it affecting your grade. Afterward, each additional will automatically mean a reduction in grade of 5 percentage points.**

**Rule 2:** Participation is mandatory. Class interaction is essential. Be prepared to interact.

**Rule 3:** Technically, any assignments turned in late will be given a zero. One minute late, zero. Deadlines are supposed to be absolute. That's the rule throughout the J-school. **BUT**, I do understand that life sometimes intervenes and makes perfection difficult. So, I have implemented my own 10 PERCENT Rule. Assignments lose 10 percent for each one-to-10 minute late period. In others words, an assignment will lose 10 percent for the first 1 to 10 minutes late; 20 percent for 11 to 20 minutes late, 30 percent at the 21 minute to 30 minute late mark and so on. That is **BEFORE** actual grading of the paper begins. You will be provided ample information regarding deadlines. Please adhere to those deadlines. Students are expected to use AP style and proper grammar, and edit carefully. Poor grammar and spelling/typographical errors will result in a grade reduction.

**Rule 4:** No do-overs or make-ups. That includes assignments, quizzes, exams, extra credit for missed classes, etc. If you miss an assignment or quiz, you will not receive credit. Sorry.

**Rule 5:** Do your own work. There might be some group exercises where you will have an opportunity to extract knowledge and information from others. However, many of the assignments are individual activities, and as such, should be conducted by individuals.

**Rule 6:** All assignments must be typed and double spaced. No hand-written assignments accepted. Use 12-point type and a font that is legible, preferably Helvetica or Times.

**Rule 7:** Learn something. You're here. I'm here. Your classmates are here. Why not learn something this semester? You are investing in your future. Make the most of it. What you learn now can be put into practice later. See it as an investment opportunity. And as with any investment opportunity, high interest is good.

## **Grading & Assignments**

**The course:** Ethics and Professional Practice is your course, and as such, it is dependent upon you to make it interesting. This course will not rely heavily on professor lectures. Instead, group work and class discussion will assist you in applying philosophical approaches to ethical decision making. First, we will become familiar with several models for analyzing ethical dilemmas. Then, those models will be applied to practical case studies.

The primary educational tool for this course will be the analysis of case studies. Case studies focus on 10 general categories:

- Truth telling
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Conflict of interest
- Economic pressures
- Antisocial behavior
- Media content
- Social justice
- What, how to advertise
- Media management

Being prepared to discuss these issues in class will be imperative to your success. And although ethical decision-making is generally a solitary process, it is not usually conducted in a vacuum. The decisions you make as a professional oftentimes occur in a group setting. Group work in this class will assist in preparing you for ethical decision-making in the workplace.

**Group work:** This is actually a misnomer. Although you will be assigned a group, there is no actual mandatory out-of-class group work. The group will meet in class to discuss the assigned cases. Several times this semester your group will be assigned to present a case.

Groups will be formed the first full week of class. We have 30 students. We will break into three groups, each containing 10 members. Group members might change during the course of the semester. If you do your work, the group cannot affect your grade. Each group will have at least five members.

**Case analysis:** Three groups will be responsible for one case presentation each week. The group will be responsible for presenting the case, discussing the ethical dilemmas and proposing solutions/resolutions. You will have 30 minutes to discuss the case and its implications.

Although individually you only have to write about one case, you need to be prepared to discuss all cases assigned each week.

You will turn in your analysis of the case at the end of class (2-3 pages; details to come).

Case studies are worth **100 points**

**Grade breakdown for the semester: This is fluid. Some additional assignments might be created; some might be deleted. In general, you can most likely count on:**

- One or two exams: 100 points
- Three case presentations/papers: 100 points each (300 points, depending on how many we do)
- News Quizzes: We will have one each week, with each counting for 25 points.
- Moral Temptation paper – 100 points.
- Ethical Dilemma paper – 100 points
- Rules of Journalism Paper- 100 points
- Veil of ignorance paper – 100 points
- History of Journalism and Ethics paper – 100
- Final project – 100 to 200 points
- Attendance/participation: As attendance is mandatory, absences can only hurt you (absence = minus 5 percentage points from final grade)
- Participation: Again, it is expected. Put it this way: If you have a borderline grade and, by the end of the semester, I barely recognize your voice or face or input, don't expect a lot of leeway. That said, being a chatterbox for the sake of grade-grubbing won't help either. The idea is to promote thoughtful, intriguing and perhaps controversial discussion – emphasis on thoughtful.
- **Total: Range about 1,350 points or more**

Grade ranges: Yes they are higher than in other classes, perhaps even other ethics sections your friends are taking. That's primarily because I tend to be a rather easy touch on some of these assignments. If you want I can be more hard-nosed in my grading, less forgiving of spelling and grammatical mistakes and just lower the range. It works the same either way.

A = 95-100% of total possible points

A- = 94-90%

B+ = 89-86%

B = 85-83%  
B- = 82-80%  
C+ = 79-76%  
C = 75-73%  
C- = 72-70%  
D+ = 69-66%  
D = 65-63%  
D- = 62-60  
F = 59% and below

## **Academic Misconduct**

### **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 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.

#### **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."

"The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which 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."

### **Inclement Weather and Special Needs**

In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 864-7669 (864-SNOW). 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.

### **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 audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes 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.

### **Use of technology in class**

If you need to use recording devices or laptop computers during class because of special needs, please make arrangements with the instructor. These devices can be disruptive to students around you and cannot be used during class time without permission. It's also important for you to learn to take notes and participate in discussions without the use of electronics. Recording lectures without permission of the instructor is prohibited. Should you not comply with this policy, you may be asked to leave class.

Cell phones also should be disabled during class time. Out of respect for other students and the instructor, please disable your cell phone before class. You may not send or receive cell phone communication, including text messaging, without permission of the instructor. If your cell phone rings during class, you may be asked to leave.

Also, I used to let students use their laptops to take notes. Forget it. No more. I don't want to see laptops open, people surfing the web, checking out Facebook, etc. So, no laptops. Use a pen and paper. Class participation counts in this class. Participation

includes efforts to be involved. Lack of involvement, and disregard of the instructor or classmates, will result in a grade reduction. See above.

**Electronic communication with instructor**

Your relationship with your instructor, whether in person or electronically, should be academically professional and respectful. The appropriate way to address an instructor or professor is by title or Mr., Mrs., Ms, Dr., Professor, etc., Phrases or words such as “hey, dude, compadre” etc. do not show appropriate academic respect. In addition, you are expected to use proper grammar and complete sentence constructions. You are training for a professional environment; it’s time to communicate professionally.