

# **JOUR 608 - Ethics and Professional Practice**

## **Fall 2019 Syllabus**

3:00 - 04:15 PM

[WES 4018](#)

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The American news media has seldom been held in lower esteem by the public. This partly comes from a sense that professional standards have dropped. The digital age, where publishing and broadcasting information have proliferated 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.

We stand at a moment when the journalistic ethical codes that American society has known for decades are now under tremendous pressure, as the underlying business model continues to erode, news and information are increasingly consumed in personalized ways on commercial platforms, and every journalistic story must compete for attention amid an overwhelming sea of what is generically being called “content.”

Meanwhile, the number of U.S. editorial workers has been nearly cut in 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 easy 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 chief 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 important principles to concrete reporting situations of all kinds, both old and new.
- Learn the news gathering rights afforded to journalists as well as the laws that both protect and constrain journalistic practice.

We will take on some interesting and tough 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.
- 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 knowledge of important 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 is designed to build toward a final project in which students demonstrate a thorough grasp of ethics issues in journalism.

The class will meet using a hybrid strategy. We will meet in person face to face (F2F) on Mondays in Wescoe 4018 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 may be asked to do your own research.

## Readings

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

Additional readings may be assigned from some or all of these additional resources. In most cases, specific links will be provided to materials so 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

Ethical situations are at the heart of some of the best cinema of the past decades. Twice during the semester, you will be asked to view a film and write a reaction blog to share with your peers.

Additional films will be added to this list to provide a range of topics, themes and messages for students in the class, regardless of major or media specialization.

- “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 (Amercent 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)
- "Thank You For Smoking" 2005 (Room 9 Entertainment et al)
- "The Jonses" 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 Corpotation" 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)

## **Policies and Procedures**

You are responsible for your own level of 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**

Because this course is about the ways people make decisions, share ideas, and how differences of opinion may affect the truthfulness of their statements, some of our conversations and course materials may not meet the same standards of taste, political allegiances, or other attitudes you personally 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 of anyone in this class, please let the instructor know as soon as possible so the situation can be addressed.

## **Participation and attendance**

### **Your attendance at each class meeting is required!**

If you anticipate a valid absence, you must notify me by email, preferably BEFORE the class meeting. Be sure to put "JOUR608 ABSENCE" in the subject line of the email message.

You may call my cell number 410 818-4227 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 are expected to view the videos posted as well as read the listed chapters and linked material by the date indicated on the course schedule. Traffic data on the video site is recorded. A failure to attend to this course material will seriously hurt your learning in the course and have a negative impact on your discussions.

**You will not receive full value for the attendance and participation grade element if you have any unexcused absences.**

## **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 10 percent per day, unless a deadline extension is granted by the professor PRIOR to the original deadline.**

Do not plan to submit everything on the last day. A grade of INCOMPLETE will be assigned only in accordance with University of Kansas policy.

NOTICE !!! All course work must be completed in assigned sequence. They will not be accepted out of sequence. If this is not possible due to serious illness, you are expected to inform me of the reason for your absence as soon as possible. I will be happy to work with you to make up work missed during an excused absence.

## **KU Blackboard**

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

## **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 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.

## Technology Access

You will be required to have access to all technology required for viewing on line lectures, for completion of assignments, and participation in on line discussions. This class requires the use of computers capable of running, up-to-date web browsers. Firefox, Chrome or Safari are recommended for all class work. Broadband access to the internet is assumed and required.

KU Libraries and the School of Journalism provide computer labs and facilities for course work. You should make yourself familiar with the location and availability of those computer facilities.

Not having adequate access to the required technology is not an excuse for missing deadlines or poor work. If you are unable to provide your own 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 presentation. 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.

## 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.

## Additional Resources

- Link to Diversity and Equity website: <http://www.diversity.ku.edu/>
- Link to IOA website: <http://www.ioa.ku.edu>
- Links—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 pertaining to anti-discrimination:  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html>

## **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 will always be expected to use your own imagination, images, and information. The highest levels of ethical conduct and integrity expected of working professionals apply to you in this course. You are expected to use your own imagination, images, and information. 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.

## **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 and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.



## **Inclement weather**

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). Because this class is completely on line, this will only affect deadlines scheduled for days when the campus is closed. If such 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 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 accepted excuse.

I have my email program set to filter JOUR 608 messages to a priority folder. When sending 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.

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.

## **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 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.

## Grading

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

### **Response papers - 30% of grade**

This paper will align with topics discussed, readings, or viewing of videos or movies. An essay of 500 - 1000 words in Blackboard will be due approximately every other week. The specific details of each assignment will be shared in class and posted in the Assignments tab in the Blackboard sidebar.

### **Midterm and Professional Code - 20% of grade**

A written midterm exam covering material presented or assigned during the first seven weeks of the term will be taken following Fall Break. This exam will include your completion of a Personal Code of Ethics prior to the exam and the application of this Code in response to elements of the exam. Specific details for this assignment and its relationship to the exam will be discussed prior to Fall Break.

### **Team Case Study Presentation - 15% of grade**

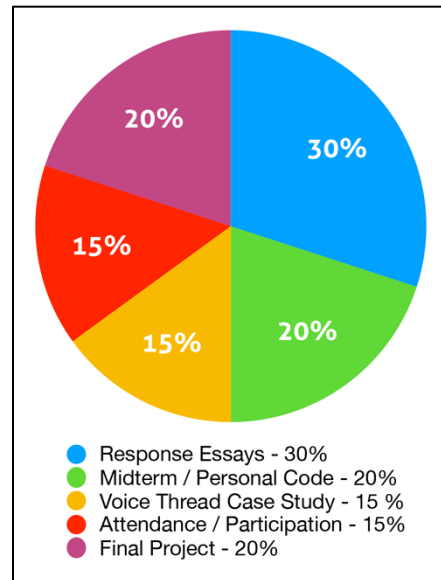
Following Fall Break, we will explore the ethical dilemmas faced by professionals in the variety of media occupations we cover in the J-School. Each of you will find a class partner and work to produce a presentation for publication on the class Voice Thread location. These case presentations will include 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 prior to Fall Break.

### **Attendance and Participation - 15% of course grade**

Because this course is 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 in at least one during the term. You will also be required to provide Voice Thread responses to at least two of the Team case study postings during the last half of the semester.

### **Final Project - 20% of grade**

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.



# Course Schedule Subject to revision

WEEK	DATES	CONTENT FOCUS Monday (F-2-F Class Wescoe 4018)	READING, VIEWING, SHARING Wednesday (Online Work)	DUE THIS WEEK
<b>1</b>	Aug. 26 Aug. 28	Introductions, expectations, operations	<b>NOTE: F2F meeting</b> Truth, ethics & credibility	
<b>2</b>	Sept. 2 Sept. 4	<b>LABOR DAY - No Class</b>	<b>NOTE: F2F meeting</b> The big ethical philosophies and their application to life situations	<b>R1 - Due</b> 2/8 11:59 pm
<b>3</b>	Sept. 9 Sept. 11	Ethical decisions - The importance of reason Ethical philosophies and their application to life	Watch Democratic Party Debate(s) Media Ethics Chapter 1, 2	
<b>4</b>	Sept. 16 Sept. 18	Plagiarism and fabrication Skepticism, plausibility and purpose	Media Ethics Chapter 3	<b>R2 - Due</b> 2/22 11:59 pm
<b>5</b>	Sept. 23 Sept. 25	Professional Codes and Policies Discuss movie assignment	Media movie viewing Choose from list in syllabus	
<b>6</b>	Sept. 30 Oct. 2	Rights, Social Justice Right to know and questions of privacy	Media Ethics (ME) Chapter 4, 5	<b>R3 - Due</b> 10/6 11:59 pm
<b>7</b>	Oct. 7 Oct. 9	Discuss Assignments: Personal Code, Partner Case Discoveries, and Final Project	<b>PREPARE PERSONAL CODE -</b> Will be submitted with Midterm exam next week	
<b>8</b>	Oct. 14 Oct. 16	<b>FALL BREAK - No Class</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM - Online</b> <b>Personal Code Due</b>	<b>Due 10/20</b>
<b>9</b>	Oct. 21 Oct. 23	Ethics in Advertising <b>Read before class</b> - ME Chap. 6, 7, 8, 9	<b>A Teams Cases (VT-A)</b> Cases Due - 5pm 10/25 Responses - Due 11:59 pm 10/27	
<b>10</b>	Oct. 28 Oct. 30	Ethics in Public Relations <b>Read before class</b> - ME Chap. 10, 11, 12, 13	<b>B Teams Cases (VT-B)</b> Cases Due - 5pm 11/1 Responses Due - 11:59 pm 11/3	
<b>11</b>	Nov. 4 Nov. 6	Assignment of Final Project Discussion of requirements and due dates	<b>Prepare Final Project Proposal</b> <b>See assignment requirements</b>	<b>Project Proposal</b>
<b>12</b>	Nov. 11 Nov. 13	Ethics in Media - Online and Entertainment <b>Read before class</b> - ME Chap. 14, 15, 16 17	<b>C Teams Cases (VT-C)</b> Cases Due - 5pm 11/15 Responses Due - 11:59 pm 11/17	
<b>13</b>	Nov. 18 Nov. 20	Dealing with Hot Topics, Political Issues and Campaigns - From the News perspective	<b>D Teams Cases (VT-D)</b> Cases Due - 5pm 11/22 Responses Due - 11:59 pm 11/24	
<b>14</b>	Nov. 25 Nov. 27	<b>Final project peer reviews</b> <b>Bring print of project draft to class!</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>	<b>Final Project Draft Due</b>
<b>15</b>	Dec. 2 Dec. 4	<b>Final project production</b> <b>Individual meetings with Instructor</b>	<b>Final project production</b> <b>Individual meetings with Instructor</b>	
<b>16</b>	Dec. 9 Dec. 11	<b>Final project production</b> <b>Individual meetings with Instructor</b>	<b>Online course evaluations</b> <b>Individual meetings with Instructor</b>	
<b>Final Projects due to Blackboard on or before 5 pm, Thursday 12/19/19</b>				