

COMM 2254 MEDIA ETHICS, Section 101
Monday and Wednesday 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm / Douglasville Campus

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor	Dr. Brian Bentley
Office	Douglasville Campus
Office Hours	Virtually by appointment (schedule by email)
Telephone	404 907-3581
E-mail	bbentley@westga.edu (Please email me through the course in CourseDen, preferred).

TEXT

1. Day, L. A. (2006). *Ethics in Media Communications: Cases and Controversies* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
2. Additional, required reading may be assigned

COURSE OVERVIEW

Through class lectures & discussions, class exercises, online videos, brief written article analyses, team chapter presentations, and group mock trials of case studies, we will explore ethical issues in the media. Much of the quality of the class will depend on the effort put into class preparation by all of us.

Ethical questions in a variety of contexts will be considered – for example, is it ever ethically acceptable to lie to a source, your boss, your client, your employee, or your reader/viewers? How much information should the mass media provide about the private lives of public figures? What is and should be the influence of competition and the profit motive on news?

We also will explore classical ethical theory from a philosophical and applied perspective as well as from the discipline of psychology and moral development (how one grows to become a moral adult). The general trend of the course will be to move from individual ethical choices to a view of how the media – and individual journalists – ought to behave within a larger social and political framework.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will know some of the major classical and contemporary ethical philosophies and be able to apply those theories to practical ethical decision-making.

2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of various ethical decision-making models.
3. Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze case studies and employ appropriate creative problem-solving skills to ethical problems.
4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the manner in which different publics including industry, business and society in general are affected by media decision-makers.
5. Students will analyze real-world ethical dilemmas and arrive at a course of action and justification for news audiences.

GRADING POLICY

Grading	Class Exercise I	7 percent
	Class Exercise II	7 percent
	Assignment I – Article Analysis	8 percent
	Assignment II – Article Analysis	8 percent
	Exam I	11 percent
	Exam II	11 percent
	Chapter Presentation (Group)	12 percent
	Mock Trial Project	11 percent
	Final Exam	15 percent
	Attendance & Participation	10 percent
	Total 100	

Grading Scale	A	90-100
	B	80-89
	C	70-79
	D	60-69
	F	59 and below

For any errors with an assignment or test grade or if you need clarification about a given grade, please see me within one week of receiving the grade. No grade changes will be considered after this deadline.

Extra Credit: Will be given at professor's discretion.

Make-ups, Late and Missed Deadlines This is journalism, and the one thing we value most after truth telling is meeting deadlines. Therefore, it is required that all assignments are submitted on the day they are due. Any make-up work or late assignments will be administered at the instructor's discretion. If a late assignment is deemed acceptable, it will suffer a letter grade deduction penalty for each class day it is late. Please upload ALL assignments in the Assignment Dropbox and **NOT** through email. If for whatever reason you are having issues with uploading to the dropbox, please see the IT department or Distance Learning in order to have the problem resolve.

ATTENDANCE

Your attendance and participation count as 10 percent toward your final grade. You are expected to attend and participate in all regularly scheduled class

sessions. For class sessions in which we do not physically meet, there will be a discussion board assignment that will count for attendance that particular week. It is also YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to take notes and take exams as scheduled, especially if you are a graduating senior.

It is critical that everyone attends class regularly and punctually. Missing class can cause issues with projects and assignments especially for assignments related to group work. As a group, each of you will depend on each other to carry out specific tasks for class projects, so PLEASE BE HERE. If you are absent for a presentation, this will adversely affect your grade.

Frequent absences (including tardiness) may result in additional penalties: such as withdrawal from or failure of the course.

Excused absences: Absences may be excused when due to unavoidable situations substantiated with documentation or University sponsored events with proper documentation. Acceptable situations include a serious incapacitating illness or a death in your family, among others. Requests for excused absences will not be considered unless made in writing prior to the absence in question unless there are extreme circumstances that did not allow for a prior request.

Presentations: If you miss your group presentation, you will receive ZERO points for the assignment so do your very best to be present. If you miss other groups' presentations, 5 points will be deducted from your final grade for each presentation you missed (unless you have an approved excused absence). It is important to support your peers in their work.

CLASS DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPATION

Preparation You will need to complete each assignment before the scheduled class session. You need to read carefully and critically, take notes and be prepared to intelligently discuss and apply the material in class discussion and activities.

You are encouraged to take detailed notes in class from PowerPoints and lecture.

Communications You are encouraged to e-mail me through CourseDen for all class-related correspondence. I will try to respond within 24 hours, though messages sent during weekends (or Friday afternoons) may not receive such a prompt response until the next business day. You may also schedule office hours.

TESTS

There will be **three exams (including the final exam)** based on lectures, class discussions, and assigned readings and viewings. The format of the tests may be a combination of objective (multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank).

Early and make-up tests are administered ONLY in cases of absence due to unavoidable situations substantiated with appropriate documentation. Requests for make-up tests must be made within two hours of the test. Make-up tests must be completed during the current semester at a time determined by the instructor.

Test Material

All exams will be given online. When taking an online exam, please make sure that you have a reliable working computer with standard and updated software. It is highly suggested that you take your exams in an area with reliable internet such as the campus library or a trusted coffee shop or fast-food restaurant. I strongly advised to avoid taking online exams on smartphone devices and tablets. If for whatever reason, your internet malfunctions, then do your best in taking a screenshot of the image for proof of failed internet connection or activity. But please do not make it a habit of always reporting a problem with the internet. As mentioned, reliable internet connection is advised.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

All the work you do must be your own. Do not present the work of another as if it were your own. Use quotation marks to indicate the exact words of someone else, and cite the source. Cite sources of ideas that are not your own, even if you did not use their exact words. Summarizing is OK – it is considered paraphrasing, but do not just rearrange a sentence or change some of the words. Still, each time a source is paraphrased, a credit for the source needs to be included in the text.

University Policies

The following link contains the common language for ADA, the email policy, the credit hour policy, and the Honor Code. **You are responsible for reading and understanding the policies set forth in the link.** Include the Common Language for Course Syllabi link in your syllabus:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf (201.01)

The link also addresses Academic Dishonesty.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty will NOT be tolerated.

- Your first attempt will result in 50% grade deduction on assignment or exam.
- Second attempt will result in failure of the assignment or exam as well as possible disciplinary sanction(s) as stipulated by university rules.

The University of West Georgia Student Conduct Code defines academic dishonesty as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating or allowing academic dishonesty in any academic exercise.

Basically, if you are caught cheating, borrowing information without proper citation, plagiarizing in any way, you will more than likely FAIL this course and face whatever disciplinary sanction(s) the university policy states. Remember, plagiarism and passing/failing this course are TWO different consequences, requiring two different disciplinary actions. An example of plagiarism/cheating is: Taking your online exam with a partner(s) and/or sharing answers.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS and COMMON LANGUAGE

I will make special arrangements for students with special needs. If you need special accommodations for tests, let me know early, not a few days before the test. I am here to facilitate your learning, but I need to be informed to do so. Please follow the link for University policies http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf. It is your responsibility to read the information contained in the link.

BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

You are expected to participate in class discussions. Feel free to speak your mind during class, no matter how outrageous your comments may be. I expect, however, that you will show respect to your classmates. If you disagree with their points of view, please express that disagreement in a way that is not offensive.

Turn off all cell phones. If a phone rings, I reserve the right to ask you to leave the classroom. With regard to texting, web surfing, emailing, sleeping or doing other non-class related activities during class, I will apply the 3-strikes-out rule. I will give you a warning the first two times, but you will need to leave the classroom if you get a third warning and lose privilege to use a laptop in class. Each warning will be counted as an absence of the day.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(The class schedule and assignments are subject to change. If so, the Professor will inform students.)

Jan 11	Mon	Introduction to course including both syllabus and class schedule overview. For next class period, students will conduct class exercise regarding ethical and non-ethical decisions made by members of the media. Instructor will determine if exercise will be individual or a group exercise.
Jan 13	Wed	Class Exercise 1 takes place on ethical/non-ethical decisions made by various members of the media.
Jan 18	Mon	MLK Holiday (No Class)
Jan 20	Wed	Continuation of Class Exercise I on media ethics Next class period, discussion of Chapter 1: Ethics and Moral Development
Jan 25	Mon	Lecture and class discussion on Chapter 1: Ethics and Moral Development Next class period, Class Exercise II on Chapter 1.
Jan 27	Wed	Class exercise II takes place on Chapter 1. Next class period, discussion of Chapter 2: Ethics and Society.
Feb 1	Mon	Lecture and class discussion on Chapter 2: Ethics and Society Next class period, class will view video of functions of the media in an ethical system along with moral duties of the mainstream media. Assignment I – Article Analysis: Locate an article---newspaper, magazine, or online, of how a particular media source caused negative harm to a certain company, individual, or other entity along with society’s view of the outcome. Answer the following questions in at least three sentences: 1. What tactics did the media source use in reporting the story which caused harm to the entity or individual? 2. How did the entity or individual respond to media source’s report? 3. What was society’s reaction to the story or report? Submit in Assignment Dropbox by beginning of next class period.
Feb 3	Wed	Assignment I – Article Analysis Due in Assignment Dropbox at start of class. Class will view video of the functions of the media in an ethical system along with moral duties of the mainstream media and complete discussion board assignment. (No physical class meeting on this day.)
Feb 8	Mon	Lecture and class discussion on Chapter 3: Ethics and Moral Reasoning. Next class period: Exam I – Chapters 1 – 3 takes place online. Starting Wednesday Feb. 15th, Group Presentations will take place for a total of

		five class periods. Instructor will distribute information regarding presentations and the selection of groups.
Feb 10	Wed	Exam I – Chapters 1 – 3 takes place online. Class will NOT meet due to exam.
Feb 15	Mon	Group 1 chapter presentation on Ch. 4: Truth and Honesty in Media Communications
Feb 17	Wed	Discussion Board Assignment
Feb 22	Mon	Group 2-chapter presentation on Chapter 5 The Media & Privacy
Feb 24	Wed	Discussion Board Assignment
Mar 1	Mon	Group 3-chapter presentation on Ch. 6 Confidentiality and the Public Interest
Mar 3	Wed	Discussion Board Assignment
Mar 8	Mon	Group 4-chapter presentation on Ch. 7 Conflicts of Interest Next class period: Exam II – Chapters 4 – 7 takes place online.

Mar 10	Wed	Exam II – Chapters 4 – 7 takes place online. Students will not report to class due to exam. (no class)
Mar 15	Mon	(springbreak)
Mar 17	Wed	(springbreak)
Mar 22	Mon	Group 5-chapter presentation on Ch 8 Economic Pressures and Social (Selection of groups for mock trial).
Mar 24	Wed	Discussion Board Assignment. Read chapter 11. (no physical class meeting).
Mar 29	Mon	Assignment II – Article Analysis: In reference to the content found in chapter 11, evaluate media messages and their effect on juveniles. Choose ONLY ONE of the following and discuss the content in it that can be offensive to juveniles: a television commercial aired in a timeslot of children’s programming, an on-air personality’s monolog or dialog on a Top-40, Hip-Hop or other radio station format directed to a teen audience, an album cover and/or popular rap or rock song, a children’s book containing words and/or pictures, a television program catered to a teen audience. Write a short essay on your findings, one paragraph to a full page in length. Submit in Assignment Dropbox by beginning of next class period. (no physical class meeting)
Mar 31	Wed	Assignment II – Article Analysis Due in Assignment Dropbox. (no physical class meeting)
Apr 5	Mon	Class Project: Mock Trial of the Century In two separate groups, students will choose one of the case studies from any of the chapters and perform a mock trial hearing with a judge, jury, defendant, defense and prosecution teams, etc. with the jury acting as moral agents. Groups will have class time to work on this activity.
Apr 7	Wed	Class time spent on mock trial project. Students may choose positions during this period. (no physical class meeting)
Apr 12	Mon	More class time spent on mock trial project. (no physical class meeting)
Apr 14	Wed	Discussion board assignment and completion of mock trial prep. (no physical class meeting)
Apr 19	Mon	Group 1 performs its mock trial project.
Apr 21	Wed	Group 2 performs its mock trial project.
Apr 26	Mon	Discussion board (no physical class meeting)
Apr 28	Wed	Discussion board (no physical class meeting) – Prep for Final Exam review
May 3	Mon	Final exam (review)

May 5	Wed	Final Exam will be online. Exam portal will be open ALL DAY on May 5th.
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