COMM 4454-01W: Media Law  
Monday/Wednesday 3:30 pm – 4:50 pm  
Pafford Room 305  
Fall 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION
Instructor: Patrick D. Hadley, Ph.D.  
Office: Humanities 144  
Physical Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm; 5:00 – 7:00 pm; Fridays 11:00 am– 3:00 pm (or by appointment)  
Google Voice: (404) 919-7349  
Office Telephone: (678) 839-4931  
E-mail: phadley@westga.edu (for use only if CourseDen email is unavailable)  
CourseDen: https://westga.view.usg.edu/

Important Note: Read this entire course syllabus carefully. You are responsible for all the information contained herein. Ignorance of the policies of the class will not be an acceptable excuse.

OFFICE HOURS
I am available to address matters of concern during my office hours. If those hours are not convenient, please schedule an appointment with me or send me an email through CourseDen D2L. If you visit my office at other times, I may not be available because of other duties I must attend to.

If you have problems in the class, it is YOUR responsibility to initiate contact with me. I cannot help you if you do not communicate with me. Let me know of any problems early in the semester.

TEXT & ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

2. Additional readings from selected textbooks, newspapers, magazines and Web sites will be assigned throughout the semester as well as the viewing of or listening to various television, radio, or online programs.

*It is not possible to successfully complete the requirements of COMM 4454 without reading the textbook and additional materials.

ABOUT THE COURSE
COMM 4454 is an examination of the legal context regulating print, telecommunication, and electronic media as well as advertising and public relations industries. Emphasis is placed on libel, privacy, copyright, free press, fair trial, and obscenity law. Furthermore, COMM 4454 is a Discipline-Specific Writing (DSW) course and will require “Writing To Learn” and “Writing To Communicate” assignments to develop your communication skills. This is a CourseDen-enhanced course.

Mass Communications Program Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will be able to understand critically the origin, development and paramount economic, legal/policy, social and effects issues of mass media.
2. Students will be able to understand the critical structures and processes of mass media 
industries within economic, legal, and ethical considerations.
3. Students will develop the ability to write mass media messages with accuracy, clarity, and 
brevity on deadline and within varying style, ethical, and legal considerations.
4. Students will develop proficient use of technology to produce visual and audio messages for 
mass media within varying aesthetic, style, technical, ethical, and legal considerations.
5. Students will be able to gain practical experiences to apply and test knowledge and skills, and 
to network with professionals.
6. Students will be encouraged to engage in interdisciplinary scholarship.
7. Students will be provided a foundation for graduate study in communication.

Course Learning Outcomes:
1. The student will develop solid grounding in the U.S. Constitution, statutes, administrative 
and common law that apply to communicators in any medium.
2. The student will develop an understanding of the philosophy supporting the liberty of speech 
and the press and the legal principles that both protect and limit that liberty.
3. The student will learn practical guidelines for coping with legal problems likely to confront 
communicators in the area of freedom of speech and press, censorship, libel, invasion of 
privacy, fair trials, obscenity, advertising and copyright.

GRADING POLICY
Grades earned in this class are based solely on the following:
Test #1-100 points
Test #2-100 points
Test #3-100 points
Case Presentation (1 written case brief @ 25 pts) (Writing to Learn)-25 points
Case Presentation (1 oral presentation/discussion @ 25 pts each)-25 points
Attendance/Participation-25 points
Current Issue/Outline/Annotated Bibliography (Writing to Learn)-25 points
Research Paper (Writing to Communicate)-100 points
Total-500 points

Grading Scale:
Points needed to receive grade
A=450-500
B=400-449
C=350-459
D=300-349
F=299-below

*Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the assignments and in an effort to meet the 
objectives of the course. Ample notice will be provided if such changes are made.

ASSIGNMENTS

Tests - Three (3) tests will be administered in class during the semester. The three tests are 
worth a total of 300 points toward your final grade. There is A LOT of reading in this course. 
Begin reading the chapters immediately so you do not fall behind.
Case Briefs – You will be randomly assigned one case from a list of cases to be provided, all of which are found in various chapters in our textbook. (You are free to trade cases with a classmate after you receive your assigned case.) Some cases are major turning points in case law and others are important because of the presence of a specific factual issue or development. Your initial information should come from the textbook, but for full credit you should review the full case using the Lexis/Nexis Academic database available through the UWG Library website.

Submission format: You will post your case brief in the Discussions area of CourseDen, using the name of your case as the title of your message. Cut and paste the text of your brief into the body of the message in the Discussions area. I do not want briefs submitted as attachments to the Discussion message. To get credit you must paste the brief into the body of the message.

You will complete one case brief, worth 25 points.

Late postings: Case briefs must be posted on CourseDen by 11:59 pm the night before the brief is due to be presented. Grades are reduced by 25 percent if case briefs are not posted by 11:59 pm. If briefs are not posted by noon on the day of the presentation, the grade will be reduced by a total of 50 percent. Briefs not posted by the start of class will receive a zero grade. [Dates to be announced.]

Oral Presentations-You will prepare an oral report to present (a) the key elements of your case, and (b) the relevance of your case to the topic in the chapter. You will lose points on this assignment if you merely read your brief. Use index cards only. Be prepared to answer questions from the instructor or your classmates about your case and its relevance. Absences: Oral presentations are due on the date indicated without exception. If you will be absent on the date indicated, it is your responsibility to switch cases with another student. If you are absent and have not switched, you will receive a zero for the oral presentation portion of the assignment. [Dates to be announced.]

Current Issue/Annotated Bibliography: The other WTL assignment will be a 2-3 page document including the following:

- a description of the legal issue to be examined in your final research paper,
- an outline of the major points and subpoints to be covered in the paper, and
- an annotated bibliography of at least five scholarly sources to be included in the paper.

Team research/writing option: All students have the option of working in teams of two to conduct research and write their paper. If you are working as a team, you must submit a single copy of your issue/outline/bibliography document. Both students on a team will receive the same grade. [Due Wednesday, November 13, 2013 by 11:59 pm. The issue/outline/annotated bibliography is worth 20 points]

WTL assignments will help you realize the idea-generating potential of writing and help you focus your ideas as you prepare for your Writing To Communicate assignment (final research paper). Unless assigned in class, all WTL assignments must be typed in 12-point type using Times New Roman font with 1” margins (1.25” left and right margins are acceptable). Your name, date, page number, and assignment should be in the upper right-hand corner in the header. More complete details will follow.

Version 1.0-Aug. 26, 2013
**Research Paper:** The assignments in this course build on each other to prepare you to conduct in-depth research on a narrow topic related to Media Law. Through the research and the writing of this document you should gain skills and knowledge that will be of value to you. This Writing To Communicate project is worth **100 points.** The deadline for submission **Wednesday, December 4, 2013 by 11:59 pm** (CourseDen submission details will be provided later). Here are some of the details:

1. All students enrolled in Media Law will be required to complete a research project. The project will require extensive research and compilation of information as well as writing the paper.
2. **Team research/writing option:** All students have the option of working on the paper in teams of two to conduct the research and write the paper. Both students will receive the same grade for the assignment.
3. The paper should be between 3000 and 5000 words (roughly 12 – 20 typed pages, excluding title page and references).
4. The paper should follow the APA Style Manual (6th ed.). Links to online resources providing support and examples of APA citation style are available under “Instruction” and “Citation and Style Guides” on the UWG library home page. For tips, guides and tutorials on APA style, check the following UWG library link: [http://libguides.westga.edu/content.php?pid=10699&sid=71594](http://libguides.westga.edu/content.php?pid=10699&sid=71594)
5. Papers must be typed in 12-point type using Times New Roman font. Paper margins should be 1” (1.25” left and right margins are acceptable). You will submit a title page, paper, and reference list. All pages should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. No report covers and/or notebooks will be accepted. At the beginning of the first page of text should be the title of the paper. An abbreviated title and page number should be in the header (upper right-hand corner) for all subsequent pages. More complete details will follow.
6. Try to select a topic that you are interested in and one that you can research in the library or on the Internet. If you have access to a law library you should not have problems finding material, but our library resources are more than adequate in the area. Lexis-Nexis Academic is an excellent legal research tool.
7. Your paper topic must relate to content from this course. Glance at your textbook for possible topics. You should also consult various library databases for topics. A list of possible topics will be provided early in the semester, but it is not exhaustive. As soon as you have selected your topic, please let the instructor know. Some of the possible topics are very broad; I will assist you in narrowing the topic down.
8. **Deadline:** The deadline for electronic submission of your research paper is **Wednesday, December 4, 2013 by 11:59 pm.** CourseDen submission details will be provided later in the semester. You are free to submit your paper early, if that works better for your schedule.
9. This paper should be your own original work or the original work of you and your team member. The penalty for plagiarism will be severe. For more information on how to avoid plagiarism, click this UWG Library link: [http://libguides.westga.edu/content.php?pid=10699&sid=71588](http://libguides.westga.edu/content.php?pid=10699&sid=71588)

**ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION**

Here is the general policy for the course. To optimize your chances for success in the class, you should attend every scheduled class session. Please be on time. I will take daily attendance. You may miss up to **three (3) total classes without a documented excuse** and not lose any
Attendance/Participation points, so use them judiciously and sparingly (e.g., car trouble, minor illness, job interview). Five points will be deducted for each unexcused absence in excess of three. (For example, you will lose 15 points if you have 6 total unexcused absences for the semester.) You can lose all of the available 25 Attendance/Participation points with 8 absences.

You may not use your personal days on test days. An unexcused absence from a test will result in zero credit on the missed test. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to take notes and take tests as scheduled, especially if you are a graduating senior.

Note: It is also YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to be aware of your attendance. You should see me at any point during the semester if you have any questions about this policy or your attendance—the sooner the better. I will not entertain unsubstantiated claims at the end of the semester that an absence was incorrectly recorded during the first three months of the semester.

**Excused absences:** Absences may be excused when due to unavoidable situations substantiated with 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. I certainly understand that unforeseen things can happen to anyone. Please try to work things out with me in advance if at all possible.

**CLASS DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPATION**

**Preparation:** Not only do I expect you to be in class, I expect you to come to class prepared. The course syllabus shows your reading assignments. Adhere to that reading schedule and you should be prepared for class discussions. You may be called on at random to contribute to class discussions. Of course, on the day of your case presentation, you are expected to be exceptionally well prepared to co-lead the class discussion regarding your case.

**Class Communication:** It will be necessary to keep in contact with one another using either your myUWG email account or using the CourseDen mail tool. In addition, you will be responsible for checking our course site on CourseDen on a regular basis for class announcements, assignments, and discussion topics. If you do not use your UWG email account, make certain to have your myUWG emails forwarded to your personal email account so that you do not miss any important class announcements or information that might be delivered through that network.

**BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM**

You do not need me to tell you how to behave in a classroom environment. However, I want you to know what I expect from you in order to avoid embarrassing situations.

- You are expected to participate in class discussions. None of us will have answers to all of the issues that are raised in this course. Some of the issues are very difficult to resolve. Even the courts disagree. There will – hopefully - be a lot of debate and conflict. Feel free to speak your mind during class, no matter how outrageous your comments may be. I expect, however, that you show respect to your classmates. If you disagree with their point of view, please express that disagreement in a way that is not offensive. When one person is talking, everyone else should listen. The same goes for discussions via CourseDen.
I will frequently add material to that contained in your text and discuss topics that are not covered in your text. Keep up with your reading so that you can make an informed response when you are asked questions.

Do not ever hesitate to state your opinion on issues even when it may differ from the opinion of others. We will frequently play “devil’s advocate” with you so be prepared to defend your views.

Throughout the semester I will cross-examine individuals in class over material you should know.

Turn off all cell phones and pagers. If a phone rings, I reserve the right to answer the phone and ask you to leave class.

I will be well aware of the clock during our class meetings. Therefore, please refrain from slamming books and closing backpacks until the class is over. I will be respectful of your schedules and will not purposely keep you longer than our allotted time.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY
Academic dishonesty is NOT tolerated. It will result in failure on assignment(s) as well as possible disciplinary sanction(s) as stipulated by university rules. University of West Georgia Student Conduct Code defines academic dishonesty as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism and facilitating or allowing academic dishonesty in any academic exercise.

Cheating: using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids
Fabrication: falsification or unauthorized invention of any information or citation
Plagiarism: representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. Direct quotations must be indicated and ideas of another must be appropriately acknowledged.

Academic dishonesty in any form compromises your grade and lowers the quality of your diploma. A fellow student who cheats may actually lower your grade, sometimes causing unfair and inflated grading scales. I hope each of you values your college education enough to protect yourself from dishonest classmates. If you are aware of cheating taking place, please contact Dr. Camilla Gant, chair of the Department of Mass Communications or me and proper action will be taken. If you are not certain of the definition of plagiarism in practice, please inform the instructor before submitting your written work.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
I will make special arrangements for students with special needs. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester, outside of class if you prefer. Don’t wait until after the first test to talk with me. Don’t try and “wing it” without telling me about your particular problem or 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.

Additional information about university policies related to classes is available at the following URL: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

CLASS SCHEDULE
The class schedule and assignments are subject to change in order to accommodate guest speakers, reinforce course material, and maintain some flexibility. Additional reading, listening, and viewing assignments will be made throughout the semester. You are responsible for all material assigned.)
August

**Week One**
Mon. 26- Syllabus review

Wed. 28-Ch. 1– The American Legal System
    --Online resources on finding, reading, and briefing cases

September

**Week Two**
Mon. 02- Labor Day Holiday – No Class**

Wed. 04- Ch. 1-The American Legal System

**Week Three**
Mon. 09-Ch. 2– The First Amendment: The Meaning of Freedom

Wed. 11-Ch. 3-The First Amendment: The Meaning of Freedom

**Week Four**
Mon. 16-Ch. 3 – The First Amendment: Contemporary Problems

Wed. 18-Ch. 3 – The First Amendment: Contemporary Problems

**Week Five**
Mon. 23-Ch. 14-Copyright

Wed. 25-Ch. 14-Copyright

**Week Six**
Mon. 30- Ch. 14-Copyright

October

Wed. 02- **Test #1 (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 14 and supplemental resources)**

**Week Seven**
Mon. 07- Exam Analysis/Discussion of Research Topics

Wed. 09- Ch. 16-Regulation of Obscene and Other Erotic Material

**Week Eight**
Mon. 14- Ch. 13- Regulation of Obscene and Other Erotic Material

Wed. 16- Ch. 16-Telecommunications Regulation
**Week Nine**
Mon. 21- Ch. 16-Telecommunications Regulation

Wed. 23- Ch. 4-Libel: Establishing a Case

**Week Ten**
Mon. 28- Ch. 5-Libel: Proof of Fault

Wed. 30- Ch. 6-Libel: Defenses and Damages

**November**

**Week Eleven**
Mon. 04- Test #2 (Chapters 13, 16, 4, 5, 6 and supplemental resources)

Wed. 06- Exam Analysis/Discussion of Research Papers

**Week Twelve**
Mon. 11- Ch. 7 – Invasion of Privacy (Appropriation and Intrusion)

Wed. 13- Ch. 7 – Invasion of Privacy (Appropriation and Intrusion)

**WTL Exercise #2- Media Law Issue/Annotated Bibliography Due (by 11:59 pm)**

**Week Thirteen**
Mon. 18- Ch. 8 – Invasion of Privacy (Publication of Private Information and False Light)

Wed. 20-Ch. 10 – Protection of News Sources/Contempt Power

**Week Fourteen**
Mon. 25- **Thanksgiving Recess – No Class**

Wed. 27-**Thanksgiving Recess – No Class**

**December**

**Week Fifteen**
Mon. 02 – Ch. 10 – Protection of News Sources/Contempt Power

Wed. 04- Ch. 11- Free Press-Fair Trial Remedies and Restrictive Orders

**Final Paper Due (by 11:59 pm)**

**Week Sixteen**
Wed. 11- Final Exam (Chapters 7, 8, 10, 11) (2:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

*The reading assignments are to be completed by the date indicated on this schedule. When you come to class on that day, you should know the content of the chapter assigned, unless otherwise specified.
*Lectures and discussions in class will not always correspond to the reading assignment. You are responsible for both the chapters in the text as well as the material presented in class and on CourseDen. Don’t get behind!!!

[END OF SYLLABUS]