MEDIA DECISION-MAKING AND ETHICS

JMC:3180 Fall 2015

11:00-12:15 Tuesdays and Thursdays, E138 Adler Journalism Building

Instructor: Bradley K. Martin
Office Hours: Mon., 11:30-1:00; Thurs. 2:00-3:00; or by appointment, W311 AJB
Contact: bradley-k-martin@uiowa.edu; office: 335-3415; cell: 319-512-2368.

In this course, we will learn about ethical principles, consider standards of practice and behavior for media professionals – journalists and practitioners of public relations and advertising – and look at the American mass media both as they are and as we might wish them to be. (Notice that the word media is the PLURAL of medium. We have the newspaper medium (singular), the online medium (singular), the television medium (singular), etc. All together they form the news media (plural). Please don’t write “The media is . . . “)

This course will help you work out your own guiding ethical principles, both individually and by exploring ideas with others. It will equip you with a toolbox for making sound ethical judgments and provide practice in using those tools. By the end of the semester, you will have gained:

- A framework for the process of making good ethical decisions as both media professionals and citizens.
- A deeper understanding of the role of the media in a democratic society.
- Insight into the challenges facing journalists and other media professionals who seek to abide by best practices and ethical standards today, at a time when for many reasons popular trust in the media has hit a low point.

Required books and materials:

*Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice* (2d edition, 2014), Patrick Lee Plaisance; SAGE.


*Thinking Clearly: Cases in Journalistic Decision-Making* (2003), Edited by Tom Rosenstiel & Amy S. Mitchell, Columbia University Press. (Copies available on line for one penny plus shipping cost.)

Other reading, listening and viewing materials will also be assigned. Watch ICON for these assignments.
Assume that there will be a quiz on the assigned materials each morning at the very beginning of class. You need to arrive on time to be eligible to take a quiz. Combined quiz scores will amount to 30 percent of your grade. I will drop your lowest two scores from the calculations. Part of the purpose of the quizzes is to ensure your presence. If I notice you are taking the quiz and then leaving class early for unexplained or unacceptable reasons I will dock your quiz grade by half.

This course will make use of a comparatively large number of movies. Many movies, whether based on true stories or fiction, have focused on aspects of the media and offer useful lessons in practice, decision-making and ethics. We will show substantial chunks of a number of them, including full movies in some cases. You need to be present, taking notes and thinking through what you are seeing and hearing so you will be prepared to discuss both orally, in class, and on paper, when you are tested. You are NOT here just to enjoy yourself. We will not serve popcorn.

Tests and project: There will be a midterm (20 percent of your grade), a final (30 percent) and a project, to be assigned in due course (20 percent).

- **SCHOOL INFORMATION:** School of Journalism and Mass Communication, E305 Adler Journalism Building Office phone: 335-3486 (Michele Ketchum or Rosemary Zimmerman)
- **Director:** David Ryfe, E305B AJB; david-perlmutter@uiowa.edu The School is part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (www.clas.uiowa.edu), which is our administrative home. The College oversees such matters as add/drop deadlines, second-grade-only options and the like. See the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook: www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.
- **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Please refer to the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook for information about academic honesty. University penalties for plagiarism – defined in Webster's New World Dictionary as taking ideas, writings and so on from another and passing them off as one's own – range from grade reduction to dismissal from the University. The same rules apply online as elsewhere: If someone else created it, that person or organization owns it. For journalists and other public communicators, plagiarism or other dishonesty is a sin deadly to any career. Don’t do it.
- **ATTENDANCE:** Failure to attend class regularly will adversely affect your grade. If you cannot avoid missing class, you must let me know the reason for your absence within 24 hours. (E-mail is fine.)
- **“Attendance”** involves attending mentally as well as physically. During class, cell phones must be turned off and stored, and laptops or tablets may be used only for taking notes unless instructed otherwise. Please, no texting, FB, email, etc., etc. Their use in the classroom is rude, annoying and distracting.
- **E-MAIL:** University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official and class-related correspondence sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (NAME@uiowa.edu).
- **LEARNING ENABLEMENT:** If you need academic accommodation for any
disability, please register with Student Disability Services (www.uiowa.edu/~sds), then meet privately with me to make the necessary arrangements.

- **RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES:** You have a right to expect an environment that enables you to learn. You have a responsibility to colleagues and to me to help create an environment in which others may learn. If you have a complaint against any faculty member, you are responsible for following procedures in the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook. However, please try to work out a solution with those involved first.

- The University also has an explicit policy related to sexual harassment, which subverts the mission of the institution and threatens the well-being of its members. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of harassment should be reported at once.

- **SEVERE WEATHER:** If threatening weather occurs during class, seek appropriate shelter immediately. Class will continue if possible when the event is over. The Hawk Alert site (hawkalert.uiowa.edu) contains details about notification of weather and other emergencies.

- **TIME ALLOCATION:** College policy states that for each semester hour of credit in a course, students should expect to spend two hours per week in out-of-class work or preparation. This is a 3 s.h. class, which means an average of six hours a week of outside-of-class work.

THE IOWA DOZEN

The mission of our School is to educate journalism and mass communication professionals, scholars and faculty. Through professional and creative research activities, members of each of these groups enhance a continually growing and evolving understanding of the social and cultural roles, responsibilities, and contexts for communicators in a democratic society, as well as in diverse global contexts.

To accomplish that mission:

We learn to ...

1. Write correctly, clearly and well.

2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly. **

3. Edit and evaluate carefully.

4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.

5. Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value ...
6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups. **

7. A diverse global community. **

8. Creativity and independence. **

9. Truth, accuracy and fairness. **

We explore ...

10. Theories and concepts. **

11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions. **

12. The role of media in shaping cultures.

** Starred items are especially emphasized in Journalism Ethics.

ONLINE RESOURCES ABOUT ETHICS and the MEDIA

There are many excellent sites related to media ethics. Of course, there are hundreds of books and thousands of magazine articles, too. A scholarly journal (the Journal of Mass Media Ethics) is devoted to the topic, along with a bi-annual magazine (Media Ethics). Journalism reviews such as American Journalism Review (ajr.org), Columbia Journalism Review (cjr.org) and Quill (spj.org/quill.asp) cover ethics in every issue. Here are a few other good online resources, in alphabetical order:

* Accuracy in Media aim.org

Conservative-leaning media watchdog group (be aware of bias)

* BBC College of Journalism: Ethics and Values guides.lib.uiowa.edu/jmc

“BBC College of Journalism/Values” (Access BBC College from link on UI library site)

* Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting fair.org

Liberal-leaning media watchdog group (be aware of bias)

* Huffington Post: Eat the Press * Jim Romenesko

Extensive industry insider info, commentary

* Journalism Ethics in the News
Center for Journalism Ethics, U of Wisconsin

* Media Ethics
* The MediaWise Trust

Information and resources from around the world

ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/resources/in-the-news
mediaethicsmagazine.com mediawise.org.uk

* New York Times public editor (ombudsman) * Nieman Reports * NPR On the Media * Organization of News Ombudsmen

topics.nytimes.com/top/opinion/thepubliceditor/index.html
nieman.harvard.edu/reports/issues.aspx onthemedia.org newsombudsmen.org

* Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism Check “Daily Briefing” and weekly “News Index”

* Poynter Institute’s ethics info and resources

* Press Complaints Commission cases (UK):

* Regret the Error

Monitors media mistakes -- and corrections

* Society of Professional Journalists * Stinky Journalism

Journalism that smells fishy

* Personal favorites:

**

journalism.org Also: www.journalism.org/resources/ethics_codes

www.poynter.org/tag/ethics

www.pcc.org.uk/cases www.poynter.org/category/latest-news/regret-the-error

spj.org/ethics.asp imediaethics.org