The course overview and goals

This course is developed around five instructional goals integral to any ethics course: recognizing moral issues, developing analytical skills, tolerating—as well as resisting—disagreement and ambiguity, stimulating the moral imagination, and eliciting a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility. This course aims for you to:

- Recognize the moral dimensions of issues in journalism and other forms of mass communication—including the understanding that not every controversy is a moral one.
- Develop critical thinking skills that will move you beyond the surface of an issue and into the broader ramifications of events and decisions.
- Appreciate the distinctions between moral philosophy and moralizing, and differences between law and ethics.
- Understand and apply a wide range of decision-making skills to “doing ethics” in media practice.
- Discover ways to use the “wisdom of the ages” to discuss and justify decisions.
- See how moral development, values, and loyalties affect decision-making in media practice.
- Recognize that diversity, civility, and civic engagement are vital issues in media ethics.
- Engage in the ongoing quest for personal and systemic professionalism and accountability in media (and life.)
- Use your writing and presentation skills to express your ideas, opinion and understanding of ethical principles.

The course content addresses all five of the learning goals of the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication. These are listed below, with the most relevant objectives emphasized:

1. Law & Ethics Learning Goal

Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in real space and cyberspace, and demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and their historical development.

Learning Objective 1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history of the First Amendment and awareness of the rights protected by the First Amendment in different media contexts.
Learning Objective 2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the main areas of media law, including libel, invasion of privacy, obscenity, commercial speech, intellectual property, and the freedom of the press.

Learning Objective 3. Students will demonstrate an ability to anticipate and recognize ethical issues when they arise and to reason through them taking multiple perspectives and contexts into account.

Learning Objective 4. Students will demonstrate an ability to explain their ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse group of people.

2. Media Literacy Learning Goal

Understand the principles of media literacy and develop the skills necessary to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains.

Learning Objective 1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the basic tenets of media literacy and how media literacy relates to their personal media habits and professional development.

Learning Objective 2. Students will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.

Learning Objective 3. Students will learn how to create and disseminate media messages in various forms.

2. Writing and Storytelling Learning Goal

Understand that clear, concise, correct writing is at the heart of journalistic expression and that reporting and communicating it effectively requires a knowledge and achievement of the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work.

Learning Objective 1. Students will demonstrate the ability to gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences.

Learning Objective 2. Students will display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.

Learning Objective 3. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.

3. Multiculturalism Learning Goal

To demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups (including communities defined by gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation) in a global society in relationship to communications.

Learning Objective 1: Students will demonstrate an ability to produce media that serve the needs and interests of diverse communities and reflect their voices and experiences.

Learning Objective 2: Students will demonstrate sensitivity to and understanding of the cultures, histories, perspectives, and socio-economic and political situations of diverse groups.

Learning Objective 3: Students will demonstrate an ability to work with members of diverse groups to engage publicly over issues of community interest.

4. Media History Learning Goal

Understand the history of media in the context of industries and identify transformations in audiences, engagement, and business practice over time. Grasp the significance of advances in mass communication technology for cultural production in domestic and global media markets from the printing press to the latest digital platforms. Trace the production of cultural meanings across historical periods as well as connections between business models and news consumption.
Learning Objective 1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of technological innovations in print and electronic communication and their impact on media publishing industries for mass audiences, showing an awareness of their distinct political, social, and economic contexts and uses.

Learning Objective 2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of media cultures, particularly the construction of meaning through methods and devices such as media framing.

Learning Objective 3. Students will demonstrate historical reasoning in approaching media history by way of contexts and analogy, particularly in terms of convergence culture and spreadable digital media.

This course also supports all the standards of the Iowa Dozen, the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication's 12 principles for excellence in journalism education, which include: learning to write correctly and clearly; to conduct research and gather information responsibly; to edit and evaluate carefully; to use media technologies thoughtfully; and to apply statistical concepts appropriately; valuing First Amendment principles; a diverse global community; creativity and independence; truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity; and exploring mass communication theories and concepts, media institutions and practices, and the role of media in shaping cultures.
texts required

Copies of the textbook are available at the reserve desk of the Main Library and the Journalism Resource Center (350 A JB). It is also available as an e-book through the UI Libraries at:

The book has an online site with student resources. This can be found at:
http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/black/ and is also linked to the ICON website.

In addition to the textbook, class readings will be posted to the ICON course website.

accommodations for disabilities

The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which include but are not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/

I can only make accommodations for students who have been evaluated by SDS, following that office's specific recommendations.

electronic communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

course web site

The class has an ICON site that students can access using their Hawk IDs. First and second drafts of all stories must be uploaded to this site on or before the deadlines in the syllabus.

The site is password protected. Each student has access to his/her grades on this site, as well as all the course information that is online (syllabus, course calendar, etc.)

To access the ICON site, go to:
icon.uiowa.edu  (please note that there is no “www” at the beginning of this URL)

log on to ICON using your Hawk ID and password [Note: The login ID for each new account will be your HawkID. If you don't know your HawkID, you can find out what it is by calling the Customer Information Desk (384-0800), looking it up in WebISIS (http://isis.uiowa.edu/) or calling the ITS Help Desk (384-4357)].

Select the appropriate semester. Click on the course name/number.
Most course readings will be under the “Modules” link the navigation bar on the left.

To upload your files once you are in the course web site:
Click on “Modules” in the navigation bar at the left.
Click on the appropriate date/assignment.
The system will allow you to upload a file.

FYI—The topic will be locked after the deadline on the syllabus! Also, all uploaded stories are time and date-stamped by the computer, which is another way I can keep track of deadlines.

If you have any difficulties with ICON, please call ICON help at 335-5194. But technical problems are not an acceptable reason for late work! Please plan on uploading your final paper at least an hour before the deadline so that there are no hiccups!

general expectations

General expectations for all students include consistent class attendance, adequate preparation for in-class and out-of-class assignments, constructive participation (especially during article workshops), and completion of all reading and writing assignments on deadline. For purposes of class communication and fulfillment of assignments, you’ll need an email account and regular access to a computer and printer.

**Important note:** Deadlines are absolutely sacred in this class (as they are in the “real world” of professional media)! Late work will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per hour. No make-up work will be allowed, except in the case of an excused absence (see the policy on absences, below). In addition, final grades of “Incomplete” will not be given unless in exceptional and dire circumstances.

**Other important notes:** Remember that printers break, computers crash, and dogs eat homework, so plan ahead. This is both professional and courteous, and it will also save you a lot of trouble.

Be sure to back up your work, for the same reasons. Many students have lost their only copies of final projects at the very last minute, so be smart and back up.

And, finally, cell phones and other communication devices must be turned off during class.

academic honesty

Follow basic academic and journalistic ethics. Be original, be creative, and be true to your values: show me that you are a person of integrity and principle. Your writing will reflect who you are as a person. Remember that we will form lasting impressions of each other this semester.

The only real crime in this class would be cheating. It is expected that all work submitted for a grade in this course reflects the original work of the student submitting it. Keep in mind that if you borrow an idea from someone else, you must cite the source, even if it is based on a conversation or correspondence. Also, inventing sources/quotes constitutes plagiarism.

Plagiarism and any other activities that result in a student presenting work that is not his or her own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is reported to the departmental DEO and then to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who deals with academic fraud according to these guidelines: [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml)

All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's [Code of Academic Honesty](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml): “I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow
students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty.” Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Any student who does not fully understand the standards of academic honesty should speak to me in advance of submitting coursework.

clas final examination policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. **No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes.** All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

understanding sexual harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. 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 sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

making a suggestion or complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

reacting safely to severe weather

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety web site.

student classroom behavior

The ability to learn is lessened when students engage in inappropriate classroom behavior, distracting others; such behaviors are a violation of the Code of Student Life. When disruptive activity occurs, a university instructor has the authority to determine classroom seating patterns and to request that a student exit the classroom, laboratory, or other area used for instruction immediately for the remainder of the period. One-day suspensions are reported to appropriate departmental, collegiate, and Student Services personnel (Office of the Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students).

The guidelines for civility extend to written work, as well. Please avoid gratuitous obscenity and racist, sexist, and other discriminatory language in your writing, unless there are exceptional circumstances where such content is essential to the story. Communicate clearly with your instructor about such circumstances.
course requirements

class participation (5% of final grade):

Class participation is an important part of this class, especially with regard to discussing the case studies in the assigned readings. You will be encouraged to voice your ideas and thoughts and to contribute to the discussion of every topic. Even the shy ones will be given an opportunity to speak and interact with their classmates and the professor. Respect for others’ feelings, beliefs and values are essential to the success of the class, so please be considerate of your classmates’ different backgrounds and experiences as you discuss various points of view.

Those who are usually silent in class, or whose participation is unrelated to the readings or conceptual terms discussed in the class, will not earn the portion of the grade that is based on class participation.

attendance and compliance with deadlines (5% of final grade):

Attendance will be taken in every class and will count toward your class participation grade. Excused absences are granted only for the following reasons: serious illness (which must be documented with a doctor’s certificate), a death in the family (again, documentation is required), or, in very rare cases, a school-related event that requires your presence and that you have arranged with the professor well in advance (e.g. an out-of-town university competitive event in which you are required to participate, a religious holiday, or a job interview), a mandatory religious obligation, or a circumstance beyond the student’s control. In order for an absence to be excused, documentation must be provided (a note from a coach, letter scheduling the interview, etc.).

The following types of situations are NOT considered excused absences: social events, meetings of Greek or service organizations, entertaining out-of-town visitors, holiday plans, going to weddings or to visit relatives, or any other circumstance that is extracurricular and at which your attendance is optional and secondary to your schoolwork.

A note on Thanksgiving and Spring Break: The University generously offers a full week for each of these scheduled breaks. Class is officially in session before and after this designated week. If you choose to extend your break, you cannot have extensions on deadlines, nor can you make up the missed work. The choice to extend a break is a choice to accept the grade penalty.

Regarding deadlines, see the note above.

reading responses (10% of the grade)

Prior to every class period, you will be asked to respond to the assigned readings. You will receive a handout or in-class instructions explaining how you should formulate your response. Responses are due at 9 a.m. the day of class. Upload your responses as text files (Word or PDF) to the “Assignments” section of the course website. The folder will be locked after the deadline.

Reading responses are basically pass/fail: points are given for submitting the response. However, exams are based on the readings, and your responses will serve as study aids for the tests. The level of detail and rigor you put into the responses will be factors in your performance on the tests.

If you have questions about the readings, please note them in your responses and bring them up in class. Explanations and clarifications will be provided in class, and these will help you to prepare for the exams.
group presentations (15% of the grade)

This is a journalism class, so your group presentations will involve both research and reporting. During the semester, groups of students will be assigned to make presentations to the class on selected topics related to media ethics. Prior to the presentations, group members will (a) research the topic, with special attention to real cases that have involved the ethical issue at stake, and (b) interview three credible expert sources about the topic and record video that can be shown in class. The professor must approve the interview questions and research topics beforehand. After this, the group will do an in-class presentation on the assigned date; the presentation will cover various aspects of the ethical topic and discuss the experts' positions. Presentations will be graded on the depth of the research, the quality of the interviews, and the professionalism of the presentation.

midterm and final examinations (30% and 35% of the grade)

The midterm examination will be held on October 19, 2016. This date is marked in the syllabus. Make-ups will not be given except in rare cases where the student provides a serious, documented reason (please see the attendance policy above).

The final exam will be scheduled by the UI Registrar's Office during the week of December 12. The date will be announced in mid-September 2016. Students are required by university policy to take the exam on the stipulated date, unless there is a documented conflict with another exam or a documented illness or other serious situation.

Grades of incomplete cannot be given in this class unless the situation conforms to the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences policy on grades: https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-grading-system-and-distribution
course schedule
Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are on the class ICON website under “Modules.” All other readings are from the textbook.

week one
Monday, August 22—Overview of class; syllabus; news values and codes of ethics
Assignment for 8/24:
Read the two assigned readings. Write study notes for the Horner chapter and upload your notes under “Assignments” as a Word or PDF file.
Find a media organization's code of ethics, print it out, and bring it to class
Readings for 8/24 (reading notes due online in “Assignments”):
*Boyle, Christina. (June 11, 2015). British phone hacking scandal was a low point for Murdoch. Los Angeles Times.

Wednesday, August 24—
Discussion of readings; questions from notes
Analysis of “outing” case using codes of ethics
Readings for 8/29 (reading notes due online; see handout):

week two
Monady, August 29—
Discussion of the Rubin and Cooke stories and their ethical implications
Readings for Wednesday (no response due):

Wednesday, August 31—
Sarah Bulmer
Readings for September 7 (from the textbook); reading notes due online in “Assignments”:
Black & Roberts, Doing Ethics in Media: Introduction: Welcome to the media ethics environment (pp. 1-15), and Chapter 1: Ethics and moral reasoning (pp. 16-35)

week three
Monday, September 5 — Labor Day holiday

Wednesday, September 7
Discussion of concepts and cases in the textbook chapters.

Readings for Monday (responses due online):
week four

Monday, September 12
Ken Starck

Reading for Wednesday (response due online):


Wednesday, September 14
Group presentation #1: Applying codes of ethics

Reading for Monday (response due online):
Black & Roberts, Chapter 4: Moral development and the expansion of empathy (pp. 105-139)

week five

Monday, September 19
Discussion of concepts and cases relating to morality and empathic media practice

Readings for Wednesday (responses due online):

Wednesday, September 21
“The control room”
Readings for Monday (responses due online):

week six

Monday, September 26—
Group presentation #2: The girl in the surf and other dilemmas of empathy
Reading for September 28 (responses due online):

Wednesday, September 28
Kevin Ripka, visual communication ethics

Readings for Monday (responses due online):
Black & Roberts, Chapter 6: Personal and Professional Values (pp. 172-198)

week seven

Monday, October 3—
Trina Roberts on “Them: Images of Separation” (diversity, representation, ethics)

Wednesday, October 5—
Group presentation #3: The Alar case and other conflicts of interest

week eight

Monday, October 10— Review for midterm

Wednesday, October 12— No class; study for midterm
week nine

Monday, October 17— Midterm examination

Wednesday, October 19— Midterm exam recap, discussion

Reading for Monday:

week ten

Monday, October 24— Rachael Horwitz, former Director of Tech Communications at Facebook.

Readings for Wednesday (responses due online):

Wednesday, October 26— The public’s right to know

Readings for Monday (responses due online):
Black & Roberts, Chapter 8: Privacy and public life (pp. 238-265)

week eleven

Monday, October 31— Concepts and cases from the readings

Wednesday, November 2— Group #4 presentation: Privacy and the media

Readings for Monday (responses due online):
Black & Roberts, Chapter 7: Truth and deception (pp. 199-237)

week twelve

Monday, November 7
“A fragile trust: Plagiarism, power, and Jayson Blair at The New York Times”

Wednesday, November 9—Truth and deception: Concepts and cases

week thirteen

Monday, November 14— Group presentation #5: Media fabrications

Readings for Monday (responses due online):
Black & Roberts Chapter 9: Persuasion and propaganda (pp. 266-303).

Wednesday, November 16—David Supp-Montgomerie

Readings for November 28:
Black & Roberts: The Fifth Question: Who’s whispering in your ear? And Chapter 10: Consequentialism and utility (pp. 305-336)

week fourteen

Thanksgiving Break — happy turkey/Tofurkey day!

week fifteen

Monday, November 28— Consequentialism and utilitarianism
Readings for Wednesday:
Black & Roberts, Chapter 12: Virtue, justice and care

Wednesday, November 30—Group presentation #6: Caring for and caring about in media practice
Reading for Monday: TBA

week sixteen
Monday, December 5—Travis Vogan: Sport, scandal, and media credibility
Wednesday, December 7—Review for final exam; course evaluations.

The final exam will be scheduled by the UI Registrar’s Office during the week of December 12. The date will be announced in mid-September 2016. Students are required by university policy to take the exam on the stipulated date, unless there is a documented conflict with another exam or a documented illness or other serious situation.

Be sure to take your moral compass with you wherever you go from here . . .