

Mass Media Ethics 412/512

Quarter: Winter 2002 **Time:** MWF 1:10-2 p.m. **Room:** Scripps 111

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Home Page: <http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~bugeja/index.html>

Course Description:

This class is geared for journalism seniors and focuses on your conduct as a future media practitioner and the impact you will have on others in particular and society in general.

Content of Lectures:

Major topics will be influence, responsibility, truth, lies, manipulation, temptation, bias, fairness, power and value systems. Each of these topics will be associated with journalism across the sequences. There will be a special emphasis on [community](#) and [diversity](#) because journalists cover community, real and virtual, in a global society.

Goals:

1. To help students build, test and improve their personal values, with special emphasis on "an informed concern for truth, accuracy, fairness, diversity, and respect," according to core competencies outlined by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication..
2. To encourage personal journal-writing about ethical and professional matters.
3. To understand the ethical aspects of the First Amendment across the sequences and especially with respect to civic virtues.
4. To create a professional document/code of ethics to help students secure employment or go on to graduate school.
5. To stimulate the thinking process and your future contributions to society.
6. To spark appropriate discussion via case studies on controversial issues.

7. To prepare students to resolve professional and interpersonal situations or disputes that exist in the business world.

Home Page and E-Mail Notice:

Home page: Check the instructor's home page for ethics-related material, including this syllabus, plus regularly updated [messages](#) concerning lectures, deadlines, presentations, and other concerns.

<http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~bugeja/index.html>

Email notices: Be advised that you will be sent email messages via your Oak account pertaining to ethics class, including but not limited to extra credit opportunities, test and exam schedules and results, and more.

Those messages also will be posted on the [messages](#) link of the home page (see above). However, if you are using another email system such as hotmail or yahoo, for instance, be sure to forward Oak messages to your active email account, to ensure that you receive email notification about ethics class.

Required Textbook:

Living Ethics: Developing Values in Mass Communication by Michael Bugeja (Allyn & Bacon, Boston). Lecture topics are analyzed in depth--read chapters for class discussions and exams; anthology ("Living Ethics") sections to be discussed in class--read them by the chapter dates specified below. **NOTE: Any royalties from the text will be donated to scholarships for Ohio University students.**

Reading Assignments: Introduction and Chapter 1 by the end of the first week of class; Chapter 2, second week; Chapter 3, third week; Chapter 4, fourth week; Chapter 5, fifth week; Chapter 6, sixth week; Chapters 7 and 10, seventh week; Chapters 8 and 9, eighth week. [Note: Be sure to read Chapter Ten before beginning your final project.]

Undergraduate Assignments & Grading:

Quiz: 150 points. (TBA)

Midterm: 300 points. (TBA)

Ethics Code: 300 points (Friday, March 1 at 1:10 p.m., Scripps auditorium. *Note: absolutely no exceptions.*)

Final: 250 points. (Friday, March 15, at 12:20 p.m. **Note: University policy prevents this exam from being given at times other than officially scheduled.**)

Undergraduate Scale: 95-100 A, 90-94 A-, 87-89 B+, 84-86 B, 80-83 B-, 77-79 C+, 74-76 C, 70-73 C-, 67-69 D+, 64-66 D, 60-63 D-, 0-59 F.

Notes:

* *This is a core course. You must earn a C or better for J-School graduation requirements.*

* *Instructor reserves the right to increase the final accumulated grade by as much as one-half grade, based on classroom participation and positive attitude/interaction.*

* *Instructor may decrease the final accumulated grade by as much as one-half grade, based on inappropriate behavior during classroom discussion and/or interaction.*

Graduate Assignments & Grading:

You will be responsible for all undergraduate assignments above plus one more: a two-page summary of your ethics journal (see page 4 for details about “Ethics Journal”). The two-page assignment is open as to content and style, providing that you do not invade your own or someone else’s privacy. It will be ungraded; however, if you fail to turn it in by the ethics code deadline above, *your final grade will be lowered by one grade.* You should include the summary in a folder with your ethics code.

Graduate Scale: 97-100 A, 93-96 A-, 90-92 B+, 87-89 B, 84-86 B-, 80-83 C+, 77-79 C, 74-76 C-, 70-73 D+, 67-69 D, 64-66 D-, 0-60-63.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is particularly important in a class such as this in which concepts are introduced, debated and analyzed. In addition, certain facts and definitions included in exams will be presented during lectures. Thus, listening, participation and note-taking are essential if you wish to earn a passing or a superior grade.

Letter Policy:

You can miss as many lectures as you like, providing that an exam or project deadline is not scheduled during that class period. Simply write a brief letter to me explaining the reason for the absence. The only requirement is that you tell the truth. Do not say you were ill if you overslept, for instance. Do not invade your own or another person's privacy in telling the truth (i.e., simply say you had to meet a medical appointment--don't explain symptoms). Put the letter in my mailbox before you miss the scheduled lecture or deliver it within 24 hours. Note: If you e-mail your excuse letter to me, title it "412 Absence" and make a printout for your files. (*E-mail is the preferred method of notification.*)

Assignment Policy:

If I am notified in advance about an illness or bonafide excused absence, as defined by and according to university policy, a make-up midterm will be provided. No make-up will be provided if you fail to notify me or if the excuse does not qualify (oversleeping, say).

Late Arrivals & Early Departures:

Although you should be in class at the start of a lecture, and leave when the lecture ends, there will be times when you will be late for class or when you need to leave early. This is acceptable, as long as no exam or deadline is scheduled for that day. However, if you arrive late or will leave early--because you have another appointment scheduled or may be feeling ill, for instance--please sit in the upper two rows on your left near the rear exit. These seats are your "freedom seats," reserved for that purpose. It is understandable if you forget about such seating during lecture and you are still allowed to come late or leave. But now you also must write a brief, appropriate letter to me within 24 hours (as required with regular absences) and leave that in my mailbox.

Failure To Follow Attendance Rules:

If you miss a class during which an exam is scheduled or a project due, and lack a bonafide excuse, you will receive no credit for the exam or project. If you miss a class without writing an excuse letter, your grade will drop by -25 points for each occurrence. If you come late or leave early, without taking a reserved seat in the back row near the rear exit--and then fail to write an excuse letter--your grade also will drop by -25 points for each occurrence. Attendance is particularly important in a

class such as this in which concepts are introduced, debated and analyzed. In addition, certain facts and definitions included in exams will be presented during lectures. Thus, listening, participation and note-taking are essential if you wish to earn a passing or a superior grade.

Ethics Journal:

At the end of each chapter in Living Ethics, you will find “Values Exercises.” Do them on your honor--a component of all ethics classes--and for yourself rather than for the instructor. A journal is a notebook of “thoughts or ideas” on a specific topic (in this case, ethics). Simply buy yourself a personal journal or log your data in a computer file. Because your thoughts about your values are private, do not share your personal entries with me. But do remember this: Now is the time to contemplate who you are, how you perceive the world, and what you need to do to sustain or assert your values in the work place or in graduate school.

Note:

You must keep a journal if you are a graduate student. The journal will remain private, but you will turn in a two-page summary with your ethics code.

Ethics Code:

You are responsible for a personal code of ethics. (Graduate students also must attach a two-page summary description of their ethics journal with their personal code of ethics.) All materials are due at the start of class on the assigned day. No late assignments accepted. If you plan to miss that day, it is your responsibility to locate a student to deliver your assignment at the appointed hour.

Purpose of Personal Code

Increasingly, employers and graduate school directors are less interested in your ambitions or professional goals and more interested in the values that you embrace to accomplish these ambitions and goals. Thus, as part of your ethics class, you have been required to conceive and design your own code of professional/personal ethics. This document is meant to accompany your clipbook, tape or portfolio.

Content and Design of Personal Code

The assignment is based on topics covered in lecture and “Values Exercises 1-10. Instructions on code-making appear on page 315-16 of *Living Ethics*. In addition, you should design your code so that you can include it with clipbook, tape or portfolio (depending on your sequence). If you are a news-ed, broadcasting or photojournalism major, you can design your code as a resume-like document, for example. If you are a magazine, public relations or advertising major, you can design it as a brochure. In sum, you should use your professional design skills to make a document or booklet that any employer or graduate school director would be eager to read.

Format: Ethics Code

Content of your personal code must be typed or printed. Handwritten projects will not be accepted (unless an element of code design). *If appropriate, put your ethics code in a folder with pockets (rather than in a spiral or plastic binder)*. Some projects will not require or fit into such a folder, depending on design considerations. Use your best judgment.

Grading:

Points: 200 for content of the code, and 100 for design of the code. See the appended “Sample Grading Sheet” for specific details about weight given to each component, including technical language use, sense of right and wrong, thoroughness, and other considerations.

Design will be evaluated according to expectations of each sequence. As such, news-editorial students will emphasize readability--a simple, direct format, say; magazine and public relations majors can design a brochure or booklet with attractive cover; advertising majors can employ more or less flair, depending on specialization--a campaign-type poster, say, for the creative people or a practical guidebook for future media-buying and/or account execs.

Deadline:

See syllabus. (No late projects accepted.)

Disabilities:

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor if special consideration is needed to complete any assignment or to attend any class.

Cheating & Plagiarism:

You don't cheat or plagiarize in an ethics class. If you do, you may receive a failing grade and/or be reported to the appropriate academic authorities.

Final Exam:

Final exams are set by university policy. The date cannot be changed to coincide with your personal schedule. Moreover, graded final projects may be returned on the final date.

Appendix

1. Study Guide for Midterm and Final Exams
2. Sample Grading Sheets

Study Guide

1. In each exam, you can anticipate five special True-False questions. They are meant to make you think rather than memorize and include statements that contain varying degrees of truth. When preparing for them, remember that conclusions are more important than premises or dates. Tackle each component of the statement and decide first whether it is true or false; then decide which component is more important. If a statement has three components, decide which ones are true and which false (i.e. 2 correct components and 1 incorrect would be mostly true; 1 correct component and 2 incorrect would be mostly false).

Analyzing such questions and ascertaining which parts are true, false or more significant than others is an important exercise in ethical decision-making, especially in the computer age of quick access. Generally speaking, definitions and dates mean less than applications of definitions or ramifications of dated events. Read each statement, identify the significance of the components, and circle the appropriate abbreviation. If a statement is entirely true, circle (T); mostly true (MT); mostly false (MF); and entirely false (F).

Example #1:

- * *The North won the Civil War (1861-1865)* [Answer: T; both the winning side and dates are correct.]
- * *The North won the Civil War (1860-1865)* [Answer MT; knowing the winning side is more important than knowing the date].
- * *The South won the Civil War (1861-1865)* [Answer MF; the winning side is wrong; the date is right, but knowing that is not nearly as important.]
- * *The South won the Civil War (1860-1865)* [Answer F; the winning side and date are wrong.]

Example #2:

- * *The invention of the printing press in 1450 marked the beginning of the literary era* [both the date and the conclusion--“marked the beginning of the literary era”--are true; thus, (T)].
- * *The invention of the printing press in 1550 marked the beginning of the literary era* [knowing dates is important, and this one is wrong; but the significance of the press’s marking the start of the literary era is the real lesson here; thus, (MT)].
- * *The invention of the printing press in 1450 marked the beginning of the oral era* [the date is correct but the conclusion is wrong; thus, (MF)].
- * *The invention of the printing press in 1550 marked the beginning of the oral era* [nothing is correct; thus, (F)].

2. For the midterm, read the introduction through chapter 4 thoroughly in *Living Ethics*. For the final, read chapters 5-10. Also scan anthology sections at the end of chapters, along with comments introducing contributors. Doing so, you will learn how professionals deal with issues presented in each chapter.

3. Pay special attention to definitions in each chapter from “values” to “power” and to concepts like “appropriate” and “inappropriate disclosure” and “the press theory of social responsibility.” There is even a definition for “ethics,” so highlight these terms when you encounter them in your reading. The purpose here is to familiarize you with ethical tools by which you can evaluate your own values.

4. Some questions will be based solely on material presented in lecture. The purpose here is to show you that absences are easily allowed via letters (except on exam dates, of course); but there are still consequences if you do not get the notes or understand how to apply key concepts.

Final Tips:

If you are using an old midterm or final to prepare for this exam, be careful. I rewrite exams each quarter with subtle changes that discourage such use; I would rather have you reading the text in tandem with this study guide. The exams are multiple choice: complex and simple true-false questions, matching, completion of sentences so that they accurately depict concepts (with my providing the sentence fragments and your circling the most correct choice to complete the fragment). Finally, there is no partial credit for coming close or making comments indicating that you know the subject matter but just cannot apply it.

Typically students study in groups for these exams--a practice I recommend. Do not phone or e-mail me to provide you with answers for exams because such practice is unfair overall to other students. The good news is that students who spend the weekend studying almost always earn grades between B- and A and constitute 85% on average of all grades. Some five students usually earn perfect scores. The bad news is that students who do not study and plan to wing it, or who have missed too many classes, usually earn grades between F and C+; however, this only constitutes about 15% of all grades.