Course Objectives

This course is intended to aid students in analyzing ethical problems in news, as well as persuasive and entertainment media. Perhaps more importantly, however, this course is intended to move beyond the level of analysis and toward the goal of providing students with a moral framework for making decisions.

In an effort to meet this goal, this course aids students in examining their own values by introducing students to ethical and political theory and asking students to apply those theories to specific cases and situations. The goal of this course is not to force students to change their values, but to allow students to develop an understanding of the values that guide their lives and how those values influence their decision-making. By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1) identify ethical problems related to media practice and performance in a democratic society;
2) summarize a variety of ethical and political theories;
3) employ decision-making frameworks to make justified ethical decisions in relation to media practice and performance in a democratic society; and,
4) apply ethical and political theories to resolve moral dilemmas that confront media practitioners and citizens in how they think about the media’s role in democracy.1

1 The average student should expect to devote about 145.5 hours during the semester to this class. Please note that some students might need to devote more than that average to meet the learning outcomes. This total includes about 27.5 hours devoted to classroom learning, about 35 hours to online reading and/or listening to lecture or other material, about 4 hours engaged in discussions outside of class, about 4 hours taking exams, about 35 hours completing required assignments, and about 40 hours for course preparation and study.
GER Credit in Humanities

The course meets the basic definition for Humanities Distribution 4.2 (a) by investigating “human constructs and values.” The course investigates not only how media shape individual and societal values, but also how the values of individual practitioners and perceptions of the audience shape media performance.

The course also satisfies the following learning outcomes for the Humanities:

Outcome 1: After studying a variety of ethical and political theories, students will be able to identify the “formation, traditions, and ideas essential to major bodies of historical, cultural, literary or philosophical knowledge.” Students are also introduced to a variety of works, including ideas associated with Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, feminist theory, democratic elitism, and communitarianism.

Outcome 3: Students will apply the diverse humanistic ideas that these authors and theories represent to resolve moral dilemmas confronted in a variety of media fields.

Assessment of Humanities GER outcomes:

Humanities outcome 1 will be assessed primarily through a writing project. The project requires students to read an article by a media practitioner explaining how he/she resolved a moral dilemma. Students are required to make connections between the article and ethical and political theories discussed in class.

Humanities outcome 3 will be assessed through the student’s development of a case study. The assignment requires students to research and develop a case study on a media ethics topic of their interest and then uses ethical and political theories to develop informed and independent decisions.

UW System Shared Learning Goals:

5. Individual, Social, and Environmental Responsibility including civic knowledge and engagement (both local and global), ethical reasoning, and action. Through assignments described earlier, students will learn how to apply theories and decision-making frameworks to reach justified ethical decisions.

Texts and Readings

There is one required text for the class:


In addition, there are a number of readings for this class. All are available on the course’s D2L site. Please note that some readings might be added during the semester. If so, they will be announced at a later date. The readings are:


**Exams**

There will be a midterm exam and a final exam. (Please see the attached schedule for dates.) Both exams will be comprised of short-answer and long-answer essay questions. Both exams will be completed through D2L. The exams will be timed. Students should not plan on referring to their notes or other materials during the exam. The exams are intended to not only assess your ability to understand the information presented during the semester, but also to apply that information. Both exams will contain short case studies that will ask you to use the information presented in the class to construct an ethical response.
Paper Assignments

Students will be asked to write two short papers during the semester. The first, worth 75 points, will ask students to recognize and identify ethical theory as used in discussions about media practice. The second assignment, worth 100 points, will ask students to construct a case study in their area of interest and use theory to build a justified response to ethical questions raised in the case study.

The writing assignments will be graded on a student’s ability to make connections with concepts and ideas explored in readings and lecture, in addition to grammar and writing. More information on each of these assignments will be provided as paper deadlines near. Please be aware that no late assignments will be accepted unless approved prior to the due date.

Class Discussions

Since this is an online course, it is imperative that students develop solid work habits. In any summer session, the course becomes very difficult if you fall behind. Online courses require that you maintain a high level of individual discipline to complete the daily assignments. Class announcements will be made on the “News” page of the course D2L site.

Generally, we will try to concentrate on one topic a day. (See the attached schedule.) It might be necessary to adjust the schedule as the semester progresses. The class will function on a Monday through Thursday schedule. I have tried, where possible, to develop the schedule so that students have time over the weekends to work on writing assignments. Students will be responsible for information contained in the readings and class lectures. Class lectures (PowerPoint presentations with narration) can be accessed through the course’s D2L site. I recommend printing copies of the PowerPoint slides before listening to the lecture. It will make it easier to follow along and make your note-taking easier.

One of the goals of this class is to move the discussion of ethical and political theory, as it relates to the media, from the abstract to the practical. For us to achieve that goal, class discussion is essential. That means I expect more from you than questions, although questions are welcome anytime. I want your opinions, your ideas, and your comments. I expect you to bring possible discussion topics to the class.

As a way to encourage you to participate in class discussions, I will expect students to post at least two substantive comments to the D2L discussion forum most days of the four-week, Monday-through-Thursday summer session. By substantive comments, I mean that it has to be more than simply saying you agree or disagree with someone or something. You need to contribute to the general discussion in some way, either by adding to the discussion or by taking the discussion in a new direction. I will ask questions on a regular basis in the D2L discussion sections. Some of these questions will be directly related to online lectures; some will be introducing new, but related topics. I hope that all students post far more than two comments a day and become active
participants in the online discussions. I learn something from students every semester and online discussions give everyone an opportunity to share their experiences and views. Online discussions force us to give reasons for why we believe something and help us understand the strengths and weaknesses of our arguments. For me, discussion is a way of not only understanding what others believe, but also gaining clarity over what I believe. By joining an online class, I believe there is a responsibility to be actively involved in the discussions. If for some reason you don’t believe you can participate in these discussions, please feel free to talk with me. Please note: The class will operate on a 24-hour cycle, beginning at 8 a.m. That is, you will have access to each day’s materials beginning at 8 a.m. Discussion forum comments for each day must be posted prior to 8 a.m. the next day to earn discussion points.

Since the discussion questions build on ideas discussed in lecture, it is imperative that you listen to the day’s lecture prior to posting a comment in the discussion forum. D2L allows me to monitor whether students have opened and listened to lectures. If I determine that students have posted comments in the discussion forum without opening or engaging with the lecture materials, I will subtract points from the discussion scores.

Some of the subjects that we will be discussing are likely to generate strong feelings for some members of the class. I strive to be open to diverse ideas and comments, and I expect all members of the class to be similarly receptive. This does not mean you must agree, only that you treat people with respect and civility.

Academic Misconduct

It is essential that all work (remember, this is an ethics class) you submit for this class be your own and/or contains proper attribution. UWM’s academic misconduct policy is as follows: “The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors.”

I will refer cases of academic misconduct to the College of Letters & Science with a recommendation for disciplinary action. A more detailed description of Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures can be found in Regents Policy, UWS Chapter 14 and UWM Faculty Document #1686. Please do not let this happen. If you have questions about this policy, please contact me.

Special Accommodations

Students who need special accommodations are encouraged to talk with me as soon as possible. They should also contact the Student Accessibility Center. More information is available at this link: http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/.
Points

Points will be awarded based on the following:

- D2L daily discussion posts: 52 points (2 points for each post for 13 days)
- Midterm exam: 100 points
- Final exam: 150 points
- Short writing assignment: 75 points
- Case study: 100 points

Total points: 477 points

Letter grades will be awarded based on final point totals. Grades will generally be awarded based on the following:

- A = 100-95 percent
- A- = 94-90 percent
- B+ = 89-87 percent
- B = 86-83 percent
- B- = 82-80 percent
- C+ = 79-77 percent
- C = 76-73 percent
- C- = 72-70 percent
- D+ = 69-67 percent
- D = 66-63 percent
- D- = 62-60 percent
- F = 59 percent and below
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-25</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong>: No assigned readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lecture</strong>: “Introduction”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-26</td>
<td>Values and Institutions</td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong>: Bellah, et al.;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gardner, et al.; Epstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lecture</strong>: “Values and Institutions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-27</td>
<td>Ethical Theory</td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong>: Christians,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sandel, chaps. 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lecture</strong>: “Ethical Theory (Part 1)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-28</td>
<td>Ethical Theory</td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong>: Steiner,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sandel, chaps. 6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lecture</strong>: “Ethical Theory (Part 2)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>First paper is due in D2L dropbox by 8 a.m. Monday, Aug. 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-1</td>
<td>Political Theory</td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong>: Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lecture</strong>: “Political Theory”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-2</td>
<td>Truth, Objectivity and Ethics</td>
<td><strong>Reading</strong>: Romano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lecture</strong>: “Truth, Objectivity and Ethics”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-3</td>
<td>Reporters and Sources</td>
<td>Reading: Wasserman&lt;br&gt;<strong>Lecture:</strong> “Reporters and sources”&lt;br&gt;Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-4</td>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>Reading: Bowman; Cimarusti&lt;br&gt;<strong>Lecture:</strong> “Privacy”&lt;br&gt;Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-8</td>
<td>Economics, Competition and Ethics</td>
<td>Reading: No assigned readings&lt;br&gt;<strong>Lecture:</strong> “Economics, Competition and Ethics”&lt;br&gt;Respond to two discussion questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case study topic due by 8 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 9 in D2L dropbox.**

8-9   | Midterm exam                                     | **Exam will be available from 8 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 4, to 8 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 5** |
| 8-10  | Advertising Ethics                               | Reading: Ewen, “Consumption and Seduction”<br>**Lecture:** “Advertising Ethics”<br>Respond to two discussion questions |
| 8-11  | Persuasion and Public Relations                  | Reading: Boorstin; Ewen, “Coda.”<br>**Lecture:** “Persuasion and Public Relations”<br>Respond to two discussion questions |
# Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8-15   | Entertainment and Media        | **Reading**: Mooallem  
**Lecture**: “Entertainment and Media Ethics”  
Respond to two discussion questions |
| 8-16   | Free Speech and Ethics         | **Reading**: No assigned readings  
**Lecture**: “Free Speech and Ethics”  
Respond to two discussion questions |
| 8-17   | Second paper due               | Reading: No assigned reading  
Lecture: No assigned lecture                                                   |

*Case Study Paper is due by 1 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 18*

| 8-18   | Final exam                     | *Exam will be available from 8 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 18, to 8 a.m. Friday, Aug. 19.* |