



UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM

JRN 3007: COMMUNICATION LAW AND ETHICS

INSTRUCTOR:

LECTURE HOURS:

OFFICE HOUR:

VENUE:

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is divided into two parts –ethics and media law. Under ethics, students will explore what is right and good about communication and media practice and will seek to understand freedom and responsible professionalism from an ethical standpoint. The learners will also explore the origins of ethical behavior and actions within the media. The class will include a discussion of both classical and contemporary approaches to ethical decision making and apply them to modern media practices. At the same time, students will ask whether the media today are acting appropriately as regards ethical practice, and if not, why not and search for suggestions for ethical media practice

In the second part, the course will explore the social role of Journalism and the journalist from legal, historical, ethical and economic perspectives. The course will equip the student journalist with a working knowledge of media law relevant to their distinctive callings. Libel laws, trespass/privacy and government-related laws as they pertain to Kenya, will be examined. On ethics and professionalism, the course covers such perennial controversies as truth, journalism’s first obligation; who journalists work for; objectivity; independence, proportionality; monitor of power; engagement versus relevance; and the dynamic between press freedom and the protection of individual and community rights.

Prerequisite: JRN 3000

2. LINK TO UNIVERSITY MISSION OUTCOMES & TO PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

In line with the university mission outcomes, this course aims at helping students formulate and articulate ethical standards and develop leadership skills as part of their growth and development which will guide their professional and personal lives. It also helps fulfill the School of Science outcome of demonstrating a thorough understanding of effective, efficient professional and ethical leadership within the media environment.

3. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Having completed this unit the student will be expected to:

1. Identify and apply a variety of ethical approaches to a broad range of journalistic contexts
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical dilemmas and responsibilities which confront journalists and the media and how these interact with legal principles and the wider democratic process
3. Broadly explicate knowledge of the laws and self-regulatory guidelines that impact on and interact with the media.
4. Recognise and evaluate the potential liability attached to negligent mis-statement, misrepresentation, defamatory statements, breach of confidentiality and the use of intellectual property produced by others.
5. Be able to do an analysis of the laws of contempt and their applicability within the court system. The knowledge and application of the various aspects of reporting restrictions and the powers of the courts to exclude the press and the public.

4. LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

The unit employs a learning strategy which may include a range of lectures, internet supported activities, group and individual learning activities and cases.

5. ASSESSMENT

- Class attendance-10% (3 classes missed-F)
- Case study 20%
- Mid-term exam- 20%
- Presentations-10%
- In class exercises-10%
- Final exam-30%

6. ASSIGNMENTS

Case study (20%). To complete this assignment you will be required to research, organize, compose particular facts regarding an ethical situation drawn from the field of journalism to present in class. Your case may be original drawn from the African scene or you may pick one from written sources. There will be extra credit for doing an original case study. A case study is very much like a story, writing about what the problem is, what complications present themselves, and what options are available in dealing with the issue. The first and briefer part of the case will be presenting the situation and the second longer portion is your analysis of the situation. What are the ethical issues raised by the situation described in your case? What can we learn from this case about how to approach issues such as the ones you write about in this case study? What are the applications to Journalism in general? What's the take-away for the reader?

Presentation (10%). In groups, you will present your evaluation of election media coverage by gauging media practitioners adherence to *Guidelines for Election Coverage* provided by the Media Council to guide media conduct during the last elections. Each group will decide choose the media content to cover either from a particular period during the election period or focus on content from a specific media outlet.

7. GRADING

90%-100%	A	70%-73%	C
67%-69%	C-	87%-89%	A-
64%-66%	D+	84%-86%	B+
62%-63%	D	80%-83%	B
60%-61%	D-	77%-79%	B-
0%-59%	F	74%-76%	C+

8. CLASS POLICIES

Attendance. Attendance to all class sessions is mandatory. Attendance is based on being on time, participating, and staying for the duration of the class. If you have to be away, inform the instructor through the class representative the legitimate reasons for being away (e.g. illness and other emergencies for which you should be able to furnish proof)

Electronic devices. Put away your phones and ensure they are on silent or turned off during the duration of class. You may use your lap tops to make notes during class sessions. No earphones allowed.

Participation. You are expected to participate in in-class activities that include discussions and group exercises. Marks given for such exercises cannot be made up.

You also must be present for group presentations. Any member of a group who is absent when his or her group is presenting will get no points for the presentations.

Assignment Deadlines: The deadlines for your work are clearly indicated on this outline. No assignments will be accepted after the deadline. The date for the CAT is provided for in this outline. Please mark it as there will be **NO make ups** for missed CATS or presentations.

Class conduct: Professional conduct is expected. You are encouraged to come in on time. If you have to be late, it should be for legitimate reasons which can be substantiated and do not walk out of class before the session is over. Show courtesy and respect to your class mates and act in with decorum consistent of a university student and upcoming professional.

Character: Moral or Ethical Strength

Academic dishonesty: Includes but is not limited to the “giving” and “taking” of improper assistance in examinations and assignments; not adhering to correct procedures for identification of sources in reports and essays and all creative endeavors; intentional misrepresentation; cheating; plagiarism; and unauthorized possession of examinations.

Plagiarism: When a student submits any assignment for a course (written, oral, videotape, audiotape, photograph or Web Site), the student will submit entirely original work or will properly cite all sources utilized in the preparation of the assignment. Without proper citation, the student is guilty of plagiarism, which is not tolerated at USIU.

READING RESOURCES

Crone, Tom. 2002. *Law and the Media*. 4th ed. Law and the Media. Oxford: Focal Press.

Obonyo Levi and Erneo Nyamboga. 2011. *Journalists and the Rule of Law*. Nairobi: International Commission of Jurists.

*Plaisance, Patrick Lee. 2009. *Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice*. Los Angeles: Sage.

*Wilkins, Lee and Patterson, Philip (2009). *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases*. 6th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Code of conduct for the Practice of journalism in Kenya (Media Council of Kenya)

Ethical Journalism: A Handbook of Values and Practices for the News and Editorial Departments (New York Times)

Guidelines for Election Coverage (Media Council of Kenya)

Media Act 2007

Defamation Act

*on reserve

COURSE SCHEDULE

Class Days	General Topics	Assignments (Readings)	Due Dates
Week 1	Introduction to course Definition ethics	Plaisance ch. 1	
Week 2	Ethics theory - basis for making ethical decisions	*Communication ethics reading	
Week 3	Truth telling	*Case study: Jason Blair or Stephen Glass	
Week 4	Journalism ethical principles Code of Conduct MCK	*Reading: Media Ethics: A Call to Responsible Journalism	
Week 5	Ethics in photojournalism	Patterson and Wilkins ch. 9	
Week 6	Ethics in new media	Patterson and Wilkins ch. 10	Case study due June 14
Week 7	Mid-sem		
Week 8	The new constitution and media		

Week 9	Laws governing media - Media Act	Media Act 2007 Obonyo & Nyamboga ch. 2	
Week 10	Coverage of 2013 elections	*Guidelines for Election Coverage (Media Council of Kenya) Nyamboga and Obonyo ch. 8	
Week 11	Defamation and Libel	*Defamation Act Crone ch. 1	
Week 12	Defences in libel		
Week 13	Intellectual property	Crone ch. 3	Election coverage Presentation
Week 14	Course wrap up /Exam		

(Subject to Change at Instructor's Discretion)

***Readings posted on Blackboard**