

Communication 499: Media Ethics and Social Implications

Spring 2005, Tuesday 6-9 p.m. ASC G-34

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INSTRUCTORS:

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Course Objectives:

Media ethics and social implications is a course taught through a series of lectures and topic driven discussions focusing on ethical and moral dilemmas in the field of communication. The course will address the ethical and moral dilemmas that news, advertising, public relations, and entertainment organizations face in conjunction with their professional obligations and market pressures. The emphasis will be on decision-making as it occurs in current business setting encountered in the communication field and the available to those working in these areas. Concurrently we will analyze the societal implication resulting from these ethical dilemmas.

Prerequisite:

Students are required to Communication310 prior to enrolling in this class.

[cmk1]

Requirements:

Texts: The texts for the course will primarily consist of newspapers and academic journal articles, which will be posted online. [cmk2]We will also show news clips, documentaries, and films in class to enrich our discussions.

Required Text: Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning (2005) [cmk3]USC Bookstore

Class Participation (10%): Students are required to participate vocally in class discussions, email or post articles relevant to the upcoming topic or participate in discussion threads as they are made available.

Projects and Class Assignments (20%): [cmk4]Students are required to complete a series of 5-7 short assignments over the course of the semester. Assignments may include but are not limited to reading response papers, position papers and short research assignments. These assignments are generally 2-3 pages in length and should be submitted in class on the day they are due.

Research Paper (35%):^[cmk5] Students are required to complete research paper. Specific instructions for the assignment will be posted on the course website by the third week of class. Length (8-10 pages)

Final Examination (35%): The final exam is composed of 6-8 essay questions which will be posted on the course website and due to your teaching assistant via e-mail. Specific instructions will be posted on the course website. The final exam must be submitted during the scheduled final exam period. (3-5 pages)^[cmk6]

Grading:

A: 93-100, A-: 90-92.99
B+: 87-89.99, B: 83-86.99, B-: 80-82.99
C+: 77-79.99, C: 73-76.99, C-: 70-72.99
D+: 66-69.99, D: 63-65.99, D-: 60-62.99,
F: 59.99 and below

Calendar:

Final Examination: (see schedule of classes)

Academic Integrity Policy:

The USC Annenberg School for Communication is committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic excellence. It endorses and follows the policies and procedures of the University Conduct Code as indicated in the SCampus. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, forging another student's signature on the attendance form or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself as your own. If you have any questions about these practices, confer with a faculty member.

Academic Resources:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Please submit testing accommodation form to me (or to your TA) at least two weeks prior to your exam.

Note: Due to room capacity restrictions, visitors will not be permitted without prior approval. All requests must be submitted by e mail at least one week in advance.

MEDIA ETHICS AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS
Reading and Assignments

UNIT 1 (Week 1)

Title: Introduction to Media Ethics

Issues: Where do ethical principles come from? Using ethical principles and guidelines. To whom is moral duty owed? Who Decides?

Guest: None

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) p 1-25, p36-8

Assignment: Reading Reaction Questions (Due Week 2)

UNIT 2 (Week 2&3)

Title: Covering Conflict: Vietnam (Journalism/ News Media and the role of the Documentary)

Issues: Bias in Reporting, Covering the American Military, Covering National Security

Guest: None

Film: "Fog of War"

Reading: "Painful Images of War: To Painful for Whom, When" pp 179-187 (on reserve)

Title: Covering the Conflict: Middle East (Journalism/ News Media and the Documentary)

Issues: Bias in Reporting, Covering the American Military, Covering National Security

Guest: Nick Goldberg, Daniel King, Luma Khatib,

Film: Control Room

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) p54-58, 72-76, 78-80, 116

Assignment: Reaction Paper (Due Week 4)

UNIT 3 (Week 4&5)

Title: Entertainment: Profits, Wealth and the Public Trust/ Media Consolidation

Issues: Guaranteed profits in a competitive environment \diamond effects on diversity, business practice

Guest: Whitney Green

Film(s): The Monster that Ate Hollywood

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) p 257-270

Assignment: Midterm Paper Topic Background and Outline (Due Week 5)

Title: Entertainment: Reality Television/ Ordinary People on Television

Issues: What is real about reality television? Exploitation, "Bill of Rights and Responsibilities"

Guest: Marcellas Reynolds, Tracey Finley

Film: clips from Big Brother and other reality television shows

Reading: Image Ethics in the Digital Age (2003) p 115-141

Assignment: Preparation Paper (Due Week 6)

UNIT 4 (Week 6&7)

Title: Image Ethics in the Digital Age: Digital Manipulation (Journalism/ News Media)

Guest: Larry Gross

Film: None

Reading: Introduction (vii –xxiii) (2003) Image Ethics in the Digital Age

Title: Image Ethics in the Digital Age: Violence (Journalism/ News Media)

Guest: Geoffrey Cowan

Film: None

Reading: Image Ethics in the Digital Age (2003) p. 53-69

Media Ethics: Cases in Moral Reasoning (2005) p. 239-255

UNIT 5 (Week 8)

Title: Ethical Treatment of Standards of Beauty/ Body Image

Issues: Where do standards of beauty come from? Lack of diversity (shape, size, etc of models)

Films: clips from Calendar Girls/ Mean Girls/ Breastman

Break 15 minutes

Title: Ethical Treatment of Health Care Issues (relating to standards of beauty)

Issues: Breast Implant Controversy (silicone/ saline implants)

Guest: Dr. Mary Powers

UNIT 6 (Week 9&10)

Title: Bias in Reporting (Journalism, News Media)

Guest: Robert Greenwald

Film: Outfoxed

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) p54-58, 72-76, 78-80

“Is a Documentary Filmmaker a Friend, a Journalist, or an Entertainer?” (on reserve)

Midterm Papers Due on Wednesday in TA mailbox

Title: Covering National Security and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Issues: covering nuclear weapons, testing, storage

Guest: Philip Coyle

Film: Pentagon Papers/ clips from "Fat Man and Little Boy"

Reading: Background on Nuclear Weapons Programs in the United States

UNIT 7 (Week 11, 12& 13)

Title: Persuasion in Advertising: A general overview

Issues: selling students to advertisers, what to advertise (cigarettes, alcohol and hospitals), language in advertising, infomercials, and media as gatekeepers

Guest: TBA

Film: Clips from popular advertising campaigns

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) pg. 127 – 183

Assignment: Reading and Discussion response (Due Week 12)

Title: Advertising and the Automobile Industry

Guest: Dan Neil, Los Angeles Times

Film: PBS "Drive the American Dream" (short clips)

Reading: (see above)

Title: Persuasion in Public Relations

Issues: public communication, truth telling, conflicting loyalties, social responsibility

Guest: Kevin Rivers

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) pg. 185 – 231

UNIT 8 (Week 14)

Title: Censorship: Television, Music and the Internet

Guest: TBA

Audio/Visual: Clips from television shows, movies, popular music, web content

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) pgs. 294-298

UNIT 9 (Week 15)

Title: Going Live: Getting the News Right in a Real-Time, Online World

Guest: Phillip Palmer

Film: live shots (covering 9-11, Columbine, etc...)

Reading: Going Live (2002) p1-35, 141-158

Assignment: (Due Week 16)

UNIT 10 (Week 16)[cmk7]

Title: Media Coverage of Scandal

Issues: When does an event become a scandal? How much coverage is too much?

Topics: Martha Stewart, Enron, Kobe Bryant

Guest: John Dean

Film: clips from Martha Stewart coverage/ Enron coverage/ "The Crooked E"

Reading: News as purposive behavior (1974) excerpt on scandal, Media Ethics (2005) p 58-60

ALTERNATIVE / SUBSITUTE UNITS:[cmk8]**UNIT A**

Title: Images of Jesus in Popular Media (over the past 20 years)

Guest: Rev. Madison Shockley

Film: Clips from "Passion of the Christ"/ "The Last Temptation of Christ"

UNIT B

Title: Media Coverage of Campaigns/ Elections (News media)

Guest: Tom Hollihan, Gov. Gray Davis

Film: Clips from Unprecedented / Election Coverage 2004 (Presidential Campaign)

UNIT C

Title: Media Coverage of Campaigns/ Elections (Movies/ Television Drama)

Issues: Artistic Freedom

Guest: Eli Attie/ Kevin ODonnell/ Warren Beaty

Film: The West Wing "La Palabras" or Bulworth

UNIT D

Title: Propaganda in the Media: Manufacturing Consent/ Escaping Manipulation

Film: Manufacturing Consent (1992)

Reading: Manufacturing Consent (1998) Edward S. Herman, Noam Chomsky

Supplemental Reading: The Virtuous Journalist (1987) p 180 – 207

UNIT E

Title: Ethics and Coverage of Heath Care Issues

Issues: Second hand smoke controversy, vaccinations and autism etc..

Reading: Media Ethics (2005) p 142-148

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment #1 (Due Week #2)

Reading Reaction Questions:

“Painful Images of War: To Painful for Whom, When” pp 179-187 (on reserve), Answer questions on page 187, Micro Issues #2, Midrange Issues #1,3 and 4 (1-2pgs)

Assignment # 2 (Due Week #4)

Reaction Paper

Write a brief description of the movie Control Room. What was your reaction to the movie? (4 pts) In discussion, we talked about why the American mainstream media does not show some of the photos/ images displaying the harsh realities of war (dead bodies, people suffering and dying). Do you feel that these images should be a) run on American broadcast television b) printed in American newspapers c) only available on the internet? Please respond to each and explain why or why not. Be sure to include support from the class discussion or from an article of your choice (6pts.) Define the term "spin" and give an example (2pts) (2-3 pgs)

Assignment #4 (Due Week #5)

Midterm Paper Outline and Background

Write a 1-2 paragraph description of your paper topic. Please include an outline of what your paper will cover as well as 4-6 references that you might use on your paper. The references should be cited APA style. (2-3pgs)

Assignment # 3 (Due Week #6)

Preparation Exercise

Write a brief summary about your readings on Image Ethics. Be sure to answer the following questions: What does the phrase “image ethics” mean? Why are image ethics important? What key technological advancements have made image manipulation so easy? Use examples from the reading to illustrate your understanding of the subject. (1-2 pgs)

Assignment #5 (Due Week #9)

Midterm Paper Due

Assignment #6 (Due Week #12)

Reading and Discussion Response

Write a brief summary of your reading assignment and class discussion on the ethics of advertising. Is it ethical to advertise to young children at all? Explain your response using support for the discussion and/ or the readings. (1-2pgs)

Assignment #7 (Due Week #16)

Preparation Exercise

Define the term scandal according to Molotch and Lester? Select and describe a recent scandal that you followed (newspaper, television, online, etc.) What elements of the event characterize it as a scandal? Do you think that the event deserved to be elevated to the level of scandal? Was the amount of coverage that the event received justified? Please attach an article about the scandal to your paper.