

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SYLLABUS IS PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS  
THE SEMESTER PROGRAM IS FINALIZED**

# Journalism Ethics

JMC4805 (3). 019:168:EX6.

Fall 2013

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Please refer to the University of Iowa policy on email use. E-mail will be responded to within 24 hours. University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu).

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CIMBA Undergraduate Program

University of Iowa

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Directory information for Dr. Dominic Standish can be found here:

<http://tippie.uiowa.edu/people/profile/profile.aspx?id=410221>

## **Course objectives:**

This course is an examination of ethics and the ethical decision making process for media practitioners.

## **Course goals:**

1. To provide you with models for analyzing ethical dilemmas.
2. To increase your capacity for clear and critical thinking by applying the various models to case studies.
3. To consider different cultural perspectives on ethics.
4. To analyze how to use statistics ethically in media work.
5. To understand how media claims are constructed.

## **Course Materials:**

Textbooks:

‘Damned Lies and Statistics. Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists,’ by Joel Best (2001), Edition 1, University of California Press, 0520219283.

‘There is No Such Thing as a Free Press: and We Need One More Than Ever’, Mick Hume, Societas, 2012, Ed.1, ISBN-10: 1845403509 ISBN-13: 978-1845403508

‘Venice in Environmental Peril? Myth and Reality’, by Dominic Standish (2012), Edition 1, University Press of America, 978-0-7618-5664-1.

The course pack has explanatory material, supplementary articles, the models and the cases.

## **Requirements:**

### **Attendance & Participation:**

This small class means you won’t be able to “hide” in a large group. I expect you to be prepared for class and participate. Failure to prepare and participate will quickly reduce your grade.

The program requires attendance, as outlined in the CIMBA Academic policy below:

# **CIMBA Academic Policy**

- Classes and CIMBA events are mandatory
- 3 unexcused absences is grounds for dismissal from the program
- We may have Saturday classes during the semester
- Our official policy is below.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Attendance at all classes and CIMBA sanctioned activities is MANDATORY. All unexcused absences will have the following consequences:**

- a. **1st absence will result in a loss of a 1/3 of a letter grade in that class**
- b. **2nd (cumulative) absence will result in a loss of an entire letter grade in that class**

c. **3rd (cumulative) absence will result in a dismissal from the program**

**Absences due to illness require a note from the CIMBA Undergraduate Office Staff and/or the Istituto Filippin medical staff. If a student is sick and cannot attend class, he/she must inform the CIMBA Staff immediately. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.**

### **Group work:**

Students will be assigned to groups. Each group will produce five case studies. Note that the case study is the product of group discussion and analysis. An explanation and sample of a written case study is in the course packet. Each group will present its case and model to the class. The presentations should last 15-20 minutes and we will have discussion following each one.

### **Report on ethics codes:**

You need to go on line (or elsewhere) to find two ethics codes of recognized journalism or mass communications organizations. You then need to examine, compare and contrast them. Every student must examine two different examples. Write up a brief report examining their usefulness. This report should be a minimum of **1,000 words and a maximum of 1,500**. Please state your total number of words at the end of your paper.

### **Report on ‘There is No Such Thing as a Free Press’:**

This report will examine international cases of restrictions on free speech. The report should be a minimum of **1,500 words and a maximum of 2,000**. Please state your total number of words at the end of your paper.

### **Report on the ethical use of statistics in the media:**

For this report, you will need to consider our discussions about Best's book and how claim makers influence the treatment of statistics in the media. To illustrate this, you should find two examples of how claim makers have framed a media story through their own construction of statistics. Every student must examine two different examples. These should be your own assessment of bad statistics, not a presentation of someone else's analysis of poor statistics. In conclusion, you should think about whether media use of statistics can be objective or whether public perception of objectivity is sufficient for statistics to become reality. Best's recommendations in his final chapter should also be assessed. The report should be a minimum of **1,500 words and a maximum of 2,000**. Please state your total number of words at the end of your paper.

All written assignments must be typed, printed and emailed to the instructor on the same day the printed copy is turned in.

**Exam:**

There will be a final written exam, covering the books, the models and other classroom discussion topics. Excellence in the exam can be achieved by answering set questions completely and through in-depth analysis of set texts.

**Final Grades:**

Final point scale: Final grades will be by percentage, following customary scales. 98.00+ = A+; 92.00 – 97.99 = A; 90.00 – 91.99 = A-; 88.00 – 89.99 = B+; 82.00 – 87.99 = B; 80.00 – 81.99 = B-; 78.00 - 79.99 points = C+; 72.00 – 77.99 = C; 71.99 - 70.00 = C-; 68.00 – 69.99 = D+; 62.00 - 67.99 = D; 60.00 – 61.99 = D-. F = below 60 points.

Please note: showing up for class, participating in discussion, having good, error-free papers and presentations is average (“C”), not excellent work. “B” work requires evidence of above-average effort, above-average understanding of the material and above-average depth of thought. “A” work will truly separate itself from the rest of the class.

Course grades will be approximately distributed according to the recommended guidelines:

**Grade Distribution Chart**

	A	B	C	D	F	Average
Elementary courses	15%	34%	40%	8%	3%	2.50
Intermediate courses	18%	36%	39%	5%	2%	2.63
Advanced courses	22%	38%	36%	3%	1%	2.77

**Point Breakdown:**

<b>Case Studies:</b>	<b>250 points</b>
Written Case Study & Presentation #1	50 points
Written Case Study & Presentation #2	50 points
Written Case Study & Presentation #3	50 points
Written Case Study & Presentation #4	50 points
Written Case Study & Presentation #5	50 points

<b>Report on Ethics Codes:</b>	<b>100 points</b>
<b>Report on Ethical Statistics in the Media:</b>	<b>150 points</b>
<b>Report on Free Speech</b>	<b>150 points</b>
<b>Final Exam:</b>	<b>350 points</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,000 points</b>

*Ways to lose points:*

*Attendance* (see CIMBA Academic Policy above).

*Late assignments.* 30 points will be deducted every time an assignment is not brought with you to class and turned in at the start of the class session (printed out). Be aware of printing queues. Arriving at class while your document is still printing means it is late.

You may do them in advance. If an assignment is late, do it eventually and submit it by the time points are assigned. 50 points will be deducted for each assignment not turned in when the assignments are graded.

Late assignment (not brought to class by the assigned date and time).....30 points

Each assignment not turned in by the time grades are assigned.....50 points

### **Learning Disabilities:**

PLEASE NOTE: If you have a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or any other class requirement, please let me know as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Similarly if you have any emergency medical information about which I should know, or if you need special arrangements in the event the building must be evacuated, please let me know. Please see me after class hours or during my scheduled office hours or schedule an appointment.

### **Academic Misconduct:**

It is my sincere hope that no student in this class submits work which is not his or her own. However, it seems prudent to clarify

in advance the policy on cheating. If I determine that any assignment was not written solely by the student whose identification number appears on the project, the student will receive a zero (0) for the project and may receive an "F" for the class.

All incidents of cheating will be reported to the Associate Dean of the Tippie College of Business and the student may be placed on disciplinary probation for the remainder of his or her undergraduate work at the University of Iowa.

In general, the decision of the Professor may be appealed to the College of Business' Judicial Board, then to the Associate Dean for the Undergraduate Program. The Honor Code for the Tippie College of Business will determine the appropriate appeal process.

### **Sexual Harassment:**

The Tippie College of Business and the University of Iowa are committed to providing students with an environment free from sexual harassment. If you feel that you are being or have been harassed or you are not sure what constitutes sexual harassment, we encourage you to visit the University website, <http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu/index.php>, and to seek assistance from department chairs, the Dean's Office, the University Ombuds Office, or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Student concerns regarding this course should first be discussed with me, the faculty member teaching this course. If we can't resolve the complaint, you may contact the DEO of the Journalism & Mass Communication Department: David Perlmutter at [david-perlmutter@uiowa.edu](mailto:david-perlmutter@uiowa.edu).

If you cannot resolve the complaint by speaking with the DEO, you may contact the Associate Dean of the Undergraduate Program in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions

may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

### *Accommodations for Disabilities*

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) for more information.

### *Academic Honesty*

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "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).

### *CLAS Final Examination Policies*

The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. 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 dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site.

### *Making a Suggestion or a 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).

### *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 [Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment](#) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

### *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 [Department of Public Safety website](#).

This course supports 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 communications theories and concepts, media institutions and practices, and the role of media in shaping cultures.

Please note that I will be happy to communicate with you about any issue related to the course. If you wish to meet with me briefly before or after class please email or ask me for an appointment. In addition, I will have office hours for appointments with students. I will be available in the faculty office between 12 noon and 1 pm on every day we have class. Please note that this time is for pre-arranged appointments only. I will be in the smaller of the two faculty offices for these appointments.

### **Schedule:**

(Subject to change after semester program is finalized)

Week 1	Introduction; form groups Examine models. First assignment: Professional codes of ethics <i>Readings: 'The Timid Corporation,' Hunt – The rise of ethics (packet)</i>
Week 2	Bad media statistics <i>Readings: Best - Introduction</i>

Philosophers and ethics codes  
Discussion of *Bertrand Russell and course pack on philosophers and media ethics*

- Week 3                      Reports on ethics codes due; presentations/discussion
- Week 4                      The importance of statistics in the media  
*Readings: Best - Chapter 1*  
  
Case 1 due; group presentations/discussion
- Week 5                      Travel week
- Week 6                      Unethical facts  
*Readings: Best - Chapter 2*  
Filming ethics of local and international media in the former Yugoslavia  
  
Case 2 due; group presentations/discussion
- Week 7                      Free Speech  
*Readings: There is No Such Thing as a Free Press: and We Need One More Than Ever*  
  
Free Speech  
*Readings: There is No Such Thing as a Free Press: and We Need One More Than Ever*  
  
Case 3 due; group presentations/discussion
- Week 8                      Methods for mangling numbers  
*Readings: Best - Chapter 3*  
  
Free Speech

*Readings: There is No Such Thing as a Free Press: and We  
Need One More Than Ever*

Inappropriate comparisons  
*Readings: Best – Chapter 4*

Week 9                      Travel week

Week 10                    Ethical use of statistics in the media  
*Readings: Best – Chapter 5*

Case 4 due; group presentations/discussion

The critical approach  
*Readings: Best – Chapter 6*

Week 11                    Reports on Ethical use of statistics in the media due  
presentations/discussion

How activists construct social problems  
*Readings: Standish – Chapter 5*

Week 12                    Case 5 due; group presentations/discussion  
The construction of media claims  
*Readings: Standish – Chapter 6*

Final exam