

Please note that this syllabus is provisional and subject to change as the semester program is finalized

Journalism Ethics

JMC4805 (3). 019:168:EX6.

Spring 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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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.

'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:

- **1st absence will result in a loss of a 1/3 of a letter grade in that class**
- **2nd (cumulative) absence will result in a loss of an entire letter grade in that class**
- **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 media and post-modernity:

This report will examine international cases of high-tech media spectacles. It will assess the extent to which the influence of 'post-modernism' on media is driven by the collapse of grand narratives and an attempt to recapture a sense of purpose and meaning. 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:

Case Studies:	250 points
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
Report on Ethics Codes:	100 points
Report on Ethical statistics in the Media:	150 points
Report on Media and Post-modernity:	150 points
Final Exam:	350 points
Total:	1,000 points

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

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/ 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 <i>Bertrand Russell and course pack on philosophers and media ethics</i>
Week 3	The importance of statistics in the media <i>Readings: Best - Chapter 1</i> Case 1 due; group presentations/discussion Unethical facts <i>Readings: Best - Chapter 2</i>
Week 4	Methods for mangling numbers <i>Readings: Best - Chapter 3</i>

	Reports on ethics codes due; presentations/discussion
	Case 2 due; group presentations/discussion
Week 5	Travel week
Week 6	Inappropriate comparisons <i>Readings: Best – Chapter 4</i>
	Media and post-modernity <i>Readings: Packet</i>
	Case 3 due; group presentations/discussion
Week 7	Ethical use of statistics in the media <i>Readings: Best – Chapter 5</i>
	Media and post-modernity report due – presentations/discussion
	Filming ethics of local and international media in the former Yugoslavia
Week 8	Travel week
Week 9	The critical approach <i>Readings: Best – Chapter 6</i> Ethics in film-making: Ghana and western aid
	How activists construct social problems <i>Readings: Standish – Chapter 5</i>
Week 10	Case 4 due; group presentations/discussion
	The construction of media claims <i>Readings: Standish – Chapter 6</i>
Week 11	Reports on Ethical use of statistics in the media due presentations/discussion
Week 12	Case 5 due; group presentations/discussion
	Final exam