Instructor: Tom Bivins  
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Instructor's Office hours: T/R 12:45-1:45, or by appointment, 311-B Allen Hall. In addition, if you email me at any reasonable hour, I'll do my best to respond. I'm also available to chat before class, if you want to come early. Of course, you may always email the Graduate Assistants with questions or concerns.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS: These fine people will often be your primary contact. Along with me, they will be grading your written assignments and answering questions about them. They will also hold weekly office hours during which you may drop by and complain about me, among other things. Everything you say to them is confidential, unless I bribe them to tell me—but that would be unethical.

GRADUATE Assistants’ Office Hours: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore the origins of ethical behavior and actions within the media. We will look at both classical and contemporary approaches to ethical decision making and apply them to modern media practices. At the same time, we will ask whether the media today are acting appropriately as regards ethical practice, and if not, why not. We will not only critique media practices, we will also search for suggestions that will most positively affect both the media institutions and the publics with which they interact and upon which they rely for their livelihood. Among the questions we will be explore:

• Do the media have a special obligation to ethical behavior that we, as ordinary citizens, do not; or, do they have a special waiver of the basic moral tenets that the rest of us must accept in order that we might have access to a “free marketplace of ideas”?

• Are the media inclusive in their obligations to a diverse society, or are they exclusive in the sense of serving a niche of already “convinced” constituents?

• To what extent do the purveyors of modern media bow to the obligations of functionality over morality?

• Is there a “right” way for the media to act? If not, is anything at all considered wrong?
These are just some of the questions we must ask ourselves if we are to be the future moral agents of the mass media.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, you should:

- Understand the major ethical approaches that have affected moral decision making in the media today, as well as the role of professionals in shaping those decisions.
- Understand the complex relationship between technological, social, cultural, and economic effects on the media and how those impact moral decision making.
- Understand how to make complex moral decisions as a media practitioner by considering all affected parties, and especially the difference between functional and moral obligations and how to order your priorities.

These goals will be accomplished primarily through assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. They will be tested in case studies, homework assignments, and on the midterm and final. Your work in this class will draw on your understanding of media ethics, as learned through lectures and readings, as well as your skill as writers and researchers gained in previous classes. You will also be asked to think about ethics in a way that, hopefully, will make moral philosophy not just an arcane study, but a real and necessary component of your professional and personal character.

**HOW GRADES ARE DETERMINED**

Graded work for the course will consist of the following:

- **Two formal case studies** (approximately 1000-1200 words each)—These two case studies utilize different approaches in order to test your knowledge of various ethical theories and how to apply them to real-world situations. They must be posted to Canvas by the dates on the course calendar. (See the actual assignment on the course calendar for directions): The first essay is worth 20% and the second 30% for a total of 50%.

  **NOTE ON WRITING:** There will be a brief style guide attached to each written assignment. You are expected to follow all the suggestions on this style guide. If you are an international student or a student who has problems with grammar, please seek advice from the Teaching & Learning Center (http://tlc.uoregon.edu). They will help you with organization and editing of your work for grammar and style.

- **Exam 1** over all work up to that time (readings, lectures, videos, audio): 20%
- **Exam 2** exam over work covered after the midterm (readings, lectures, videos, audio): 30%
- **6 in-class case studies** for which you will bring in a 1-page, double spaced (approximately 350 words) computer printout of your answers to the questions, with your name on it, to be turned in after class. 15%

Grades are determined by weighted percentages as outlined above, NOT total points or a simple average. The "Total" column on Canvas will always reflect your current standing in the class based on assignments that have been graded and entered into the Grade Book at that point. Once all assignments are entered, including the Final Exam, that column will represent your final grade in the class based on the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of graded work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 1..........................20%</td>
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<td>Case Study 2..........................30%</td>
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<td>Exam 1....................................15%</td>
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<td>Exam 2....................................20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class case studies...............15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>98-100 = A+    78-79 = C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>92-97 = A      72-77 = C</td>
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<td>90-91 = A-     70-71 = C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>88-89 = B+     69-60 = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>82-87 = B      59-↓ = F</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>80-81 = B-</td>
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</tbody>
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**YOU'RE GONNA WANT TO READ THIS NEXT PART OVER & OVER AGAIN THROUGHOUT THE TERM, ESPECIALLY AT THE END WHEN YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR GRADE IS SO LOW.**
ATTENDANCE:
This class, like all SOJC classes, has a mandatory attendance policy. The main reason to come to class regularly is because it creates a better classroom environment for all of us, making the class more interesting and fun. And of course, you will need the lecture and discussion material for the exams. Students who do not attend class may be dropped. Students who stop attending and fail to do the assigned work will receive a final grade of F. You are expected to be in class unless you have a documentable reason not to be here.

Roll taking: Roll will be taken for every class period beginning the second week. A class roster will be passed around. You are to legibly PRINT your name on this roster. If we can’t decipher your name, you will be counted absent. If you forget to sign in, you will be counted absent. If you sign in for another student, both you and the other student will be counted absent and both will be brought up on academic misconduct charges which can result in being expelled from the Journalism program and possibly even the University.

PENALTY FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: You are allowed a maximum of 3 absences during the term (15 percent of the class). These can be for any reason: illness, weekend trips out of town, athletic event participation, or just laziness. Every absence, beyond 3 will result in a one percentage point reduction of your final grade. So, if you have 80% (B-) at the end of the term and you have been absent 5 times, you will lose 2 percentage points off your grade, which would result in 78% (C+). If you have reached your limit on absences, you will need a documentable excuse for any absence beyond that.

The ONLY acceptable absences are:
- Participation in University-sanctioned athletic or academic events (requires a note from the event coordinator),
- Extended illness (requires medical verification),
- Religious observances (requires verification through the UO Affirmative Action Office),
- Family or other emergencies (requires notification from the office of academic advising).
- You must e-mail the instructor or the Grad Assistants about your absence AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS POSSIBLE in order to be excused.

HERE’S HOW WE’RE GONNA TELL WHETHER YOU COME TO CLASS OR NOT

I FORGOT TO EMAIL THE INSTRUCTOR THAT I HAD A TERRIBLE HEADACHE THIS MORNING AND WOULD MISS CLASS. ... AND I THOUGHT THIS WAS PAINFUL.
Grading Criteria for Written Work
Essays, Research Papers, Homework, and Other Assignments.

**F**—Reveals you really have no clue what is going on, or are so carelessly inattentive to matters of style as to write an incomprehensible response.

**D**—Reveals less than adequate understanding of theory, concept, or other relevant information. Answer may also misapply concept, use an inappropriate or weak example in attempting to clarify an explanation, or may ramble on in the hope that something will eventually hit the intended target. Answer also may be more or less on target, but carelessly or sloppily written/proofed.

**C**—Provides an on-target recitation of the correct material from the text or other sources being consulted. Answer meets the basic expectations with respect to number of outside sources, or other conditions of a specific assignment. The writing, while clear and comprehensible, is otherwise non-exceptional, or gives evidence of inattention to basic matters of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

**B**—Is not only on-target, but is written in a clear, well-organized style, with few errors (and indicates attention given to correcting spelling or punctuation mistakes). In addition, examples illustrate thought beyond recall or recitation of a text’s commentary and adds to the overall understanding of the theory, concept, or other materials being evaluated. There is evidence of having gone beyond the text to consult other sources of information that might be relevant.

**A**—Goes beyond that required for a "B" response to indicate critical analysis, offering evidence of a cogent, well-reasoned defense of a position or argument that is advanced relative to the object under consideration. In other words, the answer reveals a clear authorial voice in command of the material. In addition, the style is elegant, indicating careful attention to presenting a well-constructed, well-thought-out response that advances understanding, stimulates thought or is otherwise evidence of exceptional thinking.

**Note:** These standards apply as general guidelines for the evaluation of assigned papers, essays, etc. [for speeches, simply read as if one were presenting report orally]. As should be clear, inattention to matters of style/format will result in a corresponding decrease in a grade, even when content is otherwise clear and on-target. As a further explanation of these criteria, consider the following comments:

(1) A "C" answer is a good answer—it simply does not do any more than is being asked.

(2) A "B" answer is a better answer, but does not reveal depth of analysis that would be required to be considered exceptional.

(3) An "A" is an exceptional piece of work. Simply understanding the material is not the equivalent of an "A."

It’s as easy as walking your dog.
CLASS POLICIES

Participation: Participation means more than just showing up for class. You should come prepared to listen attentively to lectures, ask questions, and take part in discussions.

Late work: Work turned in after the due date posted on the schedule will lose 10% of the total points available for the assignment per calendar day that the work is late. It will not be accepted at all after three calendar days. Exceptions only with documentable excuse (such as doctor’s note or athletic excuse.) Missed exams may be made up only with documentable excuse. The final in this class is scheduled by the Registrar’s Office a year in advance. Early finals are rarely available. Acceptable reasons for an early final are the same as those listed above under Absences (excepting personal illness). **DO NOT MAKE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR A DATE PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM.** Unless exempted from a portion of the course, you must do all assigned work in order to pass.

Questions about assignments: If you have a question about an assignment, contact either the Grad Assistants or the instructor for clarification BEFORE the assignment is due.

Discussing grades: The Grad Assistants will be grading many of your assignments and will be happy to discuss your grades during their office hours. I’m happy to discuss your grades, but only with individual students, and I prefer this be done in person, not via e-mail. If you need to discuss your grade, you should first see the GTF responsible for a particular assignment. If that doesn’t satisfy you, come to see me during my office hours or make an appointment.

PLEASE NOTE: It is in your best interest to check your grades on Canvas after each assignment. Any errors or corrections will need to be taken care of **NO MORE THAN ONE WEEK** after that assignment grade was posted. After that time, we will not change a grade.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:

The following ground rules have been developed out of respect for both the students and the instructors in this class. Inhibiting the learning process of those seriously interested in this subject will be considered rude and immature.

Coming to class on time: Coming to class late interrupts the flow of the conversation and distracts the rest of the students. You are expected to come on time and be seated and attentive when class begins. If you must be late for a legitimate reason, please inform the instructor or the Grad Assistants in advance.

**Once class starts:** Put away any distractions. Although you’re not expected to be completely silent during the class, you are expected to keep your thoughts on the subject and your comments at least related to the topic.

Leaving early: If you must leave early for a legitimate reason, please let the instructor or Grad Assistants know in advance. This class is an hour and 20 minutes long. Unless you have a medical problem, please visit the restroom prior to class and refrain from leaving for that purpose during class.

This stuff is probably more important than the rest of the syllabus, because it has to do with the conduct of the class. The extent to which you follow these guidelines may determine your final grade in this class.
Laptop computers: Notes for most of the lectures are available online. Please read the explanation by a colleague on why I restrict laptop use in this class. If you feel you need to use a laptop in class, you must see me in person and explain your need, and you must sit in the first two rows and restrict your use to course-related work.

Other electronic equipment: Texting is not allowed during class time. Cell phones must be turned off or set to silent. They must be put away and not visible to the instructor or Grad Assistants. We mostly follow Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules here. Imagine you’re flying. Don’t forget to return you seat backs and tray-tables to their full, upright positions before we land. Once on the ground, you may reactivate your approved electronic devices.

A word about free speech and civility: Everyone in this class in entitled to speak freely their thoughts and offer their opinions. However, we must keep in mind that speech may offend, and opinions can sometimes denigrate their opposites. When we offer our thoughts and opinions in class, we must do so with respect for those who might disagree, and with a level of civility expected of intelligent citizens operating within an environment that fosters learning.

There’s a lot of other stuff about cheating (don’t do it), special help for those who need it, how to be safe around campus, who to complain to if you don’t like the instructor (wait, forget that one), and enough to fill another entire syllabus with things you won’t read anyway. Just in case, here’s some of it.

- [https://blogs.uoregon.edu/ellenherman/resources-for-students/brief-guide-to-plagiarism/](https://blogs.uoregon.edu/ellenherman/resources-for-students/brief-guide-to-plagiarism/)
- [http://aec.uoregon.edu](http://aec.uoregon.edu)
- [http://safe.uoregon.edu/](http://safe.uoregon.edu/)
- [http://admissions.uoregon.edu/open/resources](http://admissions.uoregon.edu/open/resources)
- [https://studentlife.uoregon.edu/mental-health](https://studentlife.uoregon.edu/mental-health)
- [https://studentlife.uoregon.edu/inclusion](https://studentlife.uoregon.edu/inclusion)
- [http://dos.uoregon.edu](http://dos.uoregon.edu)