MPJO-500-01: ETHICS
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS JOURNALISM
Wednesdays, 5:20 p.m. to 7:50 p.m. | Spring 2017

Associate Professor: Brooke Van Dam, Ph.D.
Downtown campus, Room C116
• Office hours are by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW
Journalists are confronted with ethical dilemmas on a routine basis that can challenge their personal and professional ideologies. This course explores the myriad of gray areas that dominate the way journalists work and live. It is designed to help students understand the ethical implications of the choices journalists make while empowering them to navigate the ever changing field.

This is a core course of the MPS Journalism program, and students must earn a “B” (83) or higher to pass the course. Please see the Graduate Student Handbook for more details.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the end of this course, students will:
• Identify the basic tenants of journalism ethics and current ethical issues in the field
• Demonstrate ways to personally apply ethics in everyday news work
• Analyze major case studies of journalism ethics
• Relate the intersection of journalism ethics and media law

REQUIRED READING
Title: The New Ethics of Journalism: Principles for the 21st Century
Author: Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel
Publisher: CQ Press
Publication Year: 2013
ISBN: 978-1604265613
Price: $34.54 (from Amazon)

Recommended readings and resources:
ATTENDANCE
As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences for classes beyond the initial two will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

This class relies heavily on attendance and participation. Punctual attendance is critical. If you have to miss a class – family emergency, medical emergency or other act of God – you must let the instructor know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

Instructional continuity: In the event of a weather emergency (or any other widespread emergency) that would close the Georgetown Downtown building, we will plan to meet virtually through online videoconferencing tools. More information will be provided on how this will work later in the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS
All assignments are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted. Journalism requires a strict adherence to deadlines. Late papers will not be accepted. If there is a potential conflict for an upcoming assignment, please let the professor know ahead of time and make arrangements.
Weekly Ethics Summaries:
For eight weeks during the semester (starred in the syllabus), students will be required to bring to class an example of an ethical issue or question raised in the course of news coverage that week. It may be an example of poor or successful handling of an ethical component or it may be simply a story that leads to an additional question about journalism ethics.

Newseum:
Each student will also be required to write a two paragraph post on Canvas with a highlight from the field trip to the Newseum which illuminates an ethical issue.

Written Assignments:
There are three written assignments required for the course. More details will be given in class, but generally the assignments are as follows:

1. Students will write a 1200-1400 word paper, double-spaced in 12-point type: Analyze the ethics involved in a news story chosen by the student. The paper must include the following:
   - What is the ethical issue?
   - How did the news organization handle it?
   - Was it the right choice? Why? Students must be able to defend their response.

2. Students will interview four professional working journalists about how they approach four different ethical issues. They will then write a 1500-2000 word essay about their responses. The four areas include: speed vs. accuracy, sourcing, conflicts of interest, and the relationship with the audience/user.

Final Project-Code of Ethics
The final project, will be a written code of ethics created by the student which will encompass all they have learned during the semester and pulls from the best ethic codes they have found from news organizations. The paper is due the final day of class where students will also present their Ethics Code to the class.

Unless otherwise noted, these three assignments should be filed by email to the instructor by the time class begins on the day the assignment is due. Please submit the papers as Word documents and attach them to your email.

Law Exam
There will also be one out of class law exam. For each, students will have a defined period of time to make demonstrate their understanding of media law as it relates to ethics.

Summary of assignments/tests and deadlines:
1. Weekly summaries of current ethical issues due in class
2. Case study analysis paper
3. Law Exam
4. Journalist Interview Essay
5. Final paper and presentation

GRADING
Your assignments will be graded on content and also the mechanics of writing. Your total course grade will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class participation:</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly ethics summaries:</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical paper:</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist Interview Essay:</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newseum:</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Exam:</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper and presentation:</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 percent</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will receive information detailing the expectations for each assignment. Each assignment will get a numerical grade, 0 to 100, which will translate to the letter grades below. Final grades will be determined by multiplying the numerical grade by the percentage outlined above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92.99-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89.99-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>87.99-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82.99-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>79.99-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>69.99-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.** The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a grade of a B- or below.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES
Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program
  202-687-4246
  [http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/](http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/)
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else’s work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as “the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another.” More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out http://www.plagiarism.org.
SYLLABUS MODIFICATION
The professor reserves the right to update the syllabus during the semester, especially as it pertains to the timing of guest speakers. In those instances, the professor will provide ample warning of any changes.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1, January 18th  THE ETHICS OF TRUTH AND SEARCH FOR IDENTITY
We will discuss what it means to be a truth teller and what the role of the journalist is (or is not) in 21st Century America
Readings: Chapters 1-2 The New Ethics of Journalism
• Walter Lippman Public Opinion Chapter 1

WEEK 2, January 25th  ETHICAL THINKING and RESEARCH
We will discuss how journalists create boundaries within their profession. We will also begin a discussion about legal issues which will be explored later in the semester.
Special Guest: Megan Hunt, Head Library, Georgetown SCS
Readings:
• “A Framework for Thinking Ethically” and “Ethical Decision Making,” Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University.
• “Ethics in a Nutshell,” Center for Journalism Ethics, University of Wisconsin.
• Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists.
• NPR Ethics Handbook.
• AP ethics code
• The Verge Ethics Policy

WEEK 3, February 1st  SOURCING, ATTRIBUTION AND RUMORS*
We will discuss creating, building and trusting sources; how to deal with anonymous sources and rumors; and when to attribute information from your colleagues.
Readings: Chapter 9, The New Ethics of Journalism
• Woodward and Bernstein on Watergate
Case Study: VA Rape in Rolling Stone
Rolling Stone story “A Rape on Campus”:
• Rolling Stone “Note to Readers”
• Washington Post on Rolling Stone rape story
• Being duped by sources- A journalist’s confession
WEEK 4, February 8th  CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND THE POLITICAL CLIMATE*
Case Study Analysis Due
This class will discuss issues of conflict that may arise for journalists during the reporting process. It also addresses the current political climate and how journalists should go about their job in a politically polarized environment.
Readings:

WEEK 5, February 15th  RELATIONSHIP WITH AUDIENCE AND PRIVACY*
We will explore the often complicated relationship that journalists have with their audience. We will look at boundaries that need to be knocked down and others that may need to be created.
Readings: Chapter 11 and 14, The New Ethics of Journalism
- The Case of Gawker v. Hulk Hogan: The New Yorker
WEEK 6, February 22nd  THE LAW*
This class gives a brief survey of the laws that journalists work under. It will also explore some of the new digital landscape where the line between legal and illegal is blurred.

Readings:

WEEK 7, March 1st  SENSATIONALISM AND SPEED*
LAW EXAM (Taken during this week)
Special Guest: Judy Kurtz, The Hill
Two of the biggest moral dilemmas for journalists today are sensationalism and the constant need to be first. This class explores those two journalistic minefields and tried to help come to some ethical guidelines journalists can work under.

Readings: The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America- Daniel Boorstein
Chapter 3, *The New Ethics of Journalism*

WEEK 8, March 15th  DEALING WITH DATA, POLLING AND HACKING*
Readings: Chapter 4 and 7, The New Ethics of Journalism
• “Data Journalism Ethics: Tricky Questions Buried in the Numbers,” Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University.

WEEK 9, March 22nd  THE BUSINESS OF JOURNALISM*
Special Guest: Steve Johnson, Boundless
This class explores the line between advertising/marketing/PR/journalism. In today’s blurry job market what are the ethical barriers journalists should create between the different aspects of a news organization. Should there be more overlap? Less?
Readings: Chapter 6 and 8, The New Ethics of Journalism
• “Native advertising and sponsored content: Research on audience, ethics, effectiveness,” Journalist’s Resource, Aug. 2015.
• The Atlantic: “Advertising Guidelines.”
• “Can Investigative Journalism Pay?: InvestigateWest and the Nonprofit Model,” Knight Case Studies Initiative, Columbia University.

WEEK 10, March 29th  PRESENTATION OF SELF
Special Class TBD
WEEK 11, April 5\textsuperscript{th}  PLAGIARISM, FABRICATION AND LIES*  
This class tries to make meaning of the ultimate betrayal in journalism-lying. It explores high-profile cases where journalists have lied to their readers and talks through how the profession and individual should’ve handled the situation.  

Journalist Interview Essay Due  
Readings: Chapter 10, \textit{The New Ethics of Journalism}  
- David Uberti, \textit{“Journalism Has a Plagiarism Problem, But It’s Not the One You’d Expect,”} Columbia Journalism Review, Nov. 2014.  
- Hanna Rosin, \textit{“Hello, My Name is Stephen Glass, and I’m Sorry,”} The New Republic, Nov. 2014.  
- Brian Williams: \textit{NY Times} and \textit{Vanity Fair}  
- \textit{Janet Cooke} Pulitzer story withdrawn  
- \textit{Jack Kelley} fabrication at USA Today  

WEEK 12, April 12\textsuperscript{th}  - NEWSEUM FIELD TRIP IN PLACE OF CLASS  
WEEK 13, April 19\textsuperscript{th}  VIDEO AND PHOTO ETHICS  
We will discuss our visit to the Newseum. This class will also explore ethical issues surrounding visual journalism.  
Readings: Chapter 5, \textit{The New Ethics of Journalism}  
- Liam Andrew, \textit{“Controlled chaos: As journalism and documentary film converge in digital, what lessons can they share?”} Nieman Journalism Lab, Oct. 2014.  
- \textit{“Best practices for documentary filmmakers and journalistic video work: Research on risks, resources,”} Journalist’s Resource, April 2015.  
- \textit{“Frontline’s "The Last Abortion Clinic": What’s Fair in a Video World?”} Knight Case Studies Initiative, Columbia University.  
- \textit{Chicago Sun-Times Will Train Staffers} on iPhone Photography Basics: Poynter  
- \textit{Photographer accused of staging photo}: Petapixel  
- The \textit{New York Post} defends its decision to publish a photo of a man on the subway tracks about to be hit:  
- \textit{Rolling Stone cover} on Boston Marathon bombing suspect:
WEEK 14, April 26th SOCIAL MEDIA
We will explore how social media changes how journalists both gather and disseminate information.

Readings: Chapter 3, *The New Ethics of Journalism*
- “Social Media,” NPR Ethics Handbook.
- “Social Media Guidelines for AP Reporters,” Associated Press.
- Mark Little, “What Social Verification Teaches about Trust” (video), Markkula Center for Applied Ethics.

FINAL, May 10TH – PRESENTATIONS and ETHICS CODE DUE