

COM 345: Communication Law & Ethics
Shippensburg University, Fall 2017
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 – 1:45 p.m., Rowland Hall 209

<p>Professor: Kyle Heim, Ph.D. Office: Rowland Hall 123 Office hours: Tue. & Thu., 2 – 3 p.m. Wed., Noon – 3 p.m. or by appointment</p>	<p>Professor's email: krheim@ship.edu Office phone: (717) 477-1152 Course website: http://d2l.ship.edu</p>
--	--

Course description

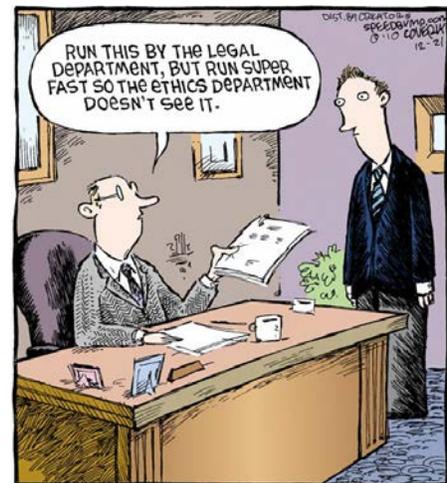
This course focuses on the theories and concepts of mass communication law and media ethics, two areas of importance for communication professionals. It explores the changing nature of mass communication law and the impact of ethical decision-making as it affects journalism (print, broadcast and Internet), public relations and advertising.

Course objectives

There are a number of objectives that this course will attempt to meet, and at the end of the course students will have been introduced to and understand a variety of legal and ethical concepts and theories.

The primary course objectives are:

- Introduce students to the legal concepts of the First Amendment
- Develop an understanding of the legal and philosophical underpinnings of the First Amendment and the importance of the First Amendment in a democratic society
- Develop an appreciation and understanding of the impact of the First Amendment on their profession
- Recognize defamation and develop skills to identify and prevent it in their professional work.
- Understand the legal issues of privacy, copyright, access (FOIA, open meetings, shield laws), obscenity, free press/fair trial, broadcast regulation, and commercial speech
- Understand the fundamental principles and theories of ethical decision-making
- Develop tools for ethical decision-making to be used throughout their professional careers
- Learn to apply the Potter Box and/or Sissela Bok's SAD ethical decision-making frameworks in their future professional careers



Required texts

- *Communications Law: Liberties, Restraints and the Modern Media*, John D. Zelezny, 6th ed. ISBN: 978-0-495-79417-2
- *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases*, Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins, 8th ed. ISBN: 978-0-07-352624-9

Professional values and competencies for C/J majors and minors

The Communication/Journalism Department faculty sets the goal of developing within each student the following core professional values and competencies as defined by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) [competencies addressed in this course are in **bold**]:

- 1. Understand and apply First Amendment principles and laws of freedom of speech and press appropriate to professional practice.**
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- 3. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.**
- 4. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.**
5. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- 6. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.**
- 7. Think critically, creatively and independently.**
- 8. Conduct research and gather information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.**
- 9. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.**
10. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
11. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
12. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Class format

Class periods will be a combination of lecture, class discussion and student-led presentations.

Major subject areas

1. The U.S. legal system
 - The First Amendment and its impact on communications
2. Understanding defamation
 - Recognizing and avoiding defamation
3. Understanding privacy law
 - How does privacy law affect what communicators can do
4. Access to information
 - What are we allowed to publish or broadcast and what information are we allowed to gather
5. Licensing and restrictions
 - Why are electronic media treated differently than the print media
6. Obscenity and indecency
 - Why we can't say those words on live TV or radio
7. Understanding the scope of commercial speech and its protections
 - Why advertising and promotional publication are covered by the First Amendment
8. The underpinnings of ethical decision-making
 - What are media ethics and why do they matter
9. Understanding the tools we use to make ethical decisions
 - The Potter Box and Bok's SAD model
10. Applying ethical decision-making
 - Testing theories and ourselves

Attendance and missed/late work policy

- **Students are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. IN-CLASS QUIZZES AND EXAMS MISSED BECAUSE OF AN UNEXCUSED ABSENCE CANNOT BE MADE UP.**
- Absences due to illness; a funeral or extended illness in the immediate family; or involvement in an official SU sports team or extracurricular activity that requires you to miss class for a game, competition, performance, or conference may be excused if you have a signed doctor's note or official notification from the Dean's Office, Athletic Department or other SU office/department. You are still responsible for material that is covered in class.
- If your absence is excused, you are permitted to make up an assignment or quiz **if you contact the instructor IN ADVANCE to confirm the excused absence and any work you must complete**, but the work is due **by the next class** you are able to attend. Quizzes or exams will be made up in office hours during a time that suits the student and instructor.
- In the event of an unexcused absence, you will not be allowed to make up a quiz or exam and will earn a grade of zero. If an assignment is due on the day of an unexcused absence, you will not receive extra time to complete the assignment. You will be penalized for submitting the assignment late.
- Tardiness is rude and disruptive. Make every effort to be on time so as not to miss anything or disrupt the class. **If you miss a quiz because you are late to class, it cannot be made up.**
- Deadlines are important in any media-related profession. Deadlines are not merely guidelines; they are final dates for submitting assignments. Assigned work is due on the deadline date. **Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of a full letter grade for each day past the deadline**, unless they are late because of an excused absence. Extensions are granted at my discretion and may require documentation of extreme circumstances, such as illness or an emergency. All extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

Email and D2L

Please be sure to check your Shippensburg email account and D2L before class. I frequently use email and D2L to communicate important class information to students, including any class cancellations due to illness, inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

Course projects and assignments

1. Exams (total of 210 points)

- There will be three exams (worth 70 points each) during the semester.

2. Reading quizzes (total of 30 points)

- Pop quizzes (worth 6 points each) will be given at the start of six randomly chosen class sessions. Each quiz will cover the assigned reading for that day. The quizzes may include a mix of multiple-choice, short-answer, and true-or-false formats. You may use any handwritten or printed-out notes that you have taken, but you cannot use the readings themselves (or photocopies of them) or any electronic devices. Your top five quiz scores will count toward your course grade, and your lowest quiz score will be dropped. If you come to class late, you will not be given extra time to complete the quiz. In the event of an unexcused absence, you will not be permitted to make up the quiz.

3. Case study paper and presentation (60 points)

- Students will be assigned ethical cases to analyze and present to the class. This will include a group presentation and the submission of an individual paper.

4. Research project (100 points)

- Students will produce a paper based on research exploring the differences between the freedom of expression in the United States and other countries. The details will be discussed in class.

Grading and evaluation

I am the instructor of record for this class. Only the instructor of record can properly grade coursework and issue midterm and final grades.

A total of **400 points** are available during the semester. Point totals at the end of the semester will be converted to letter grades using the following scale:

Point Total	Grade	Point Total	Grade	Point Total	Grade
372 – 400 (93%)	A	320 – 331.5 (80%)	B-	0 – 239.5	F
360 – 371.5 (90%)	A-	300 – 319.5 (75%)	C+		
348 – 359.5 (87%)	B+	280 – 299.5 (70%)	C		
332 – 347.5 (83%)	B	240 – 279.5 (60%)	D		

Grades will be recorded on the course D2L site. It is your responsibility to monitor your grades. Questions regarding assignment grades should be raised when an assignment is returned, not at the end of the semester.

Classroom etiquette policy

- Be on time. Be prepared. Be engaged.
- Inappropriate, rude or disrespectful language or behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes (but is not limited to) talking or not paying attention during a lecture; using inappropriate language; being disrespectful to your instructor or fellow classmates; texting/tweeting/snapping, listening to music, or other cell phone use during class; sleeping; and tardiness.
- Because of the nature of this course, we will often discuss topics that are sensitive, controversial or even offensive. Please be respectful of those whose opinions differ from your own and be willing to consider different perspectives before forming a judgment.
- **Unless instructed otherwise, use of cell phones and laptop computers in the classroom is not permitted.** Cell phones are to be turned off or on vibrate and put away during class.
- All email correspondence must be courteous and professional. **Please include a specific subject line and mention that the email is regarding Comm Law.** Please do not email me at the last minute or late at night and expect an immediate response. **Please allow 24 hours for a response or 48 hours on weekends. I'm happy to answer a question, but please check the syllabus and our course schedule here and on D2L first to see if it can be answered there first.**

Academic dishonesty policy

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in this course and will be handled according to the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy found on pages 38-40 of the 2015-2017 Shippensburg University Undergraduate Catalog (<http://www.ship.edu/catalog>). *All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department, Dean's Office and Office of Student Affairs.* Penalties for violation of the AD Policy include grade reduction, assignment of a failing grade for the course, suspension and expulsion from the University.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) statement

Students with disabilities are not required by law to identify themselves to SU and the Office of Disability Services; however, if a student desires accommodations, he or she is obligated to complete the necessary forms and provide disability documentation at the time other requests are made. It is the policy of Shippensburg University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law, and the University's commitment to equal education opportunities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services at the *beginning* of the term (120 Horton Hall; 717-477-1329).

Commitment to a safe learning environment

Shippensburg University faculty support a safe campus environment for all. No one on this campus has the right to threaten you or make you feel intimidated in any way. More specifically, unwanted advances, harassment, aggressive or violent behavior, and sexual assault will not be tolerated. A comprehensive list of reporting options and support services, including confidential resources, can be found at http://www.ship.edu/no_more/.

Shippensburg University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project. Faculty members are obligated to report allegations of sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred. Such reporting must be made to the Shippensburg University Police at 477-1444, the Department of Human Services (DHS) at 800-932-0313, and the University's Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs at 477-1308. Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence can be found at: www.ship.edu/No_More/Sexual_Misconduct/Sexual_Misconduct_Information/

Learning Center resources

If you feel you need extra help to improve your academic performance in this course or any of your other courses, please consider making an appointment with a tutor or learning specialist in the Learning Center (LC). The LC is located on the lower level of Lehman Library, right below Starbucks, and can also be reached at 717-477-1420.

Tentative Course Schedule

The timeline for this course will need to be adjusted for severe weather events or other unforeseen circumstances. Changes will be announced in class and via email or D2L. All reading and homework must be completed by the date on which it is listed.

Communication law and ethics: An introduction

Tue. 8/29 – Introduction to the course

Thurs. 8/31 – Introduction to the U.S. legal system

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 1 (NOTE: If you have not yet been able to purchase the textbook, this chapter will be posted as a pdf file on the course D2L site.)

Tue. 9/5 – Introduction to ethical decision making and ethical theories

Read: Patterson & Wilkins, Chapters 1 and 11 (NOTE: If you have not yet been able to purchase the textbook, these chapters will be posted as a pdf file on the course D2L site.)

Thurs. 9/7 – Loyalties and the Potter Box

Read: Patterson & Wilkins, Ch. 4

The mass media's rights and responsibilities

Tue. 9/12 – The First Amendment

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 2, pp. 34-59

Thurs. 9/14 – The First Amendment (cont.)

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 2, pp. 59-85

Tue. 9/19 – Risks to public safety

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 3

Thurs. 9/21 – Social responsibility and media economics

Read: Patterson & Wilkins, Ch. 7

Tue. 9/26 – EXAM 1

Truth and reputation

Thurs. 9/28 – Defamation

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 4, pp. 116-156

Tue. 10/3 – Defamation (cont.)

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 4, pp. 156-175

Thurs. 10/5 – Truth telling and information ethics

Read: Patterson & Wilkins, Ch. 2

Tue. 10/10 – Watch and discuss “Shattered Glass”

Thurs. 10/12 – Watch and discuss “Shattered Glass” (cont.)

Tue. 10/17 – NO CLASS (Fall break)

Privacy and access

Thurs. 10/19 – Privacy law

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 5

Tue. 10/24 – Privacy ethics

Read: Patterson & Wilkins, Ch. 5

Thurs. 10/26 – Privacy ethics (cont.)

DUE: Research project (Critical analysis paper on freedom of expression)

Tue. 10/31 – Access to information; media and the justice system

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 6, pp. 230-259; Ch. 7, pp. 268-285, 302-311

Special considerations: Broadcast media, PR and advertising

Thurs. 11/2 – FCC licensing and regulation; electronic media content

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 9, pp. 377-391; Ch. 10, 414-433

Tue. 11/7 – EXAM 2

Thurs. 11/9 – Commercial speech

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 12, pp. 489-520

Tue. 11/14 – Ethics of public relations and advertising

Read: Patterson & Wilkins, Ch. 3

Artistic and creative work

Thurs. 11/16 – Creative property

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 8, pp. 318-361

Tue. 11/21 – Obscenity and indecency

Read: Zelezny, Ch. 11

Thurs. 11/23 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Tue. 11/28 – Obscenity and indecency (cont.)

Thurs. 11/30 – Ethics Case Study Group Presentations – Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4

Tue. 12/5 – Ethics Case Study Group Presentations – Groups 5, 6 and 7

Thurs. 12/7 – Ethics Case Study Group Presentations – Groups 8, 9 and 10

DUE: Ethics Case Study Papers

Week of 12/11 – 12/15 – EXAM 3 (Date and time to be announced later)