

# **COM 345: Communication Law and Ethics** **Shippensburg University, Fall 2020**

Weekly class meetings on Zoom, Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m.

All course materials posted to the course D2L site (<http://d2l.ship.edu>)

## **Professor**

Kyle Heim, Ph.D.

## **Email**

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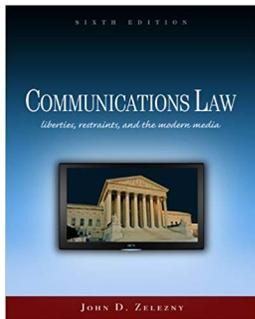
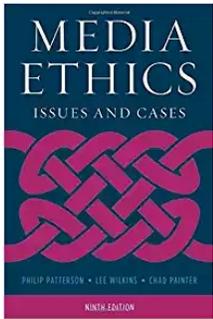
## **Office hours**

Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., via Zoom

You are always welcome to meet with me during office hours via Zoom. The Zoom link and password are posted to the course D2L site in a Content folder labeled “Office Hours.” When you click the Zoom link and enter the password, you will be placed in a virtual “waiting room.” Please be patient. I will bring you into the Zoom chat room when I am ready to meet with you.

If you are having troubles with the Zoom connection, you may reach me via my office phone number, (717) 477-1152. It is set up to automatically forward calls to my cell phone. Usually, this works fine, but sometimes there are glitches. You may get a busy signal, or your call might go straight to voicemail.

If the Wednesday and Thursday times don’t work for you, please email me, and we can set up an appointment at a different, mutually agreed-upon time.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Required textbooks</u></b></p> <p><i>Communications Law: Liberties, Restraints and the Modern Media</i>, John D. Zelezny, 6th ed. (2011). ISBN: 978-0495794172</p> <p><i>Media Ethics: Issues and Cases</i>, Philip Patterson, Lee Wilkins, and Chad Painter, 9th ed. (2019). ISBN: 978-1538112588</p>	
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## **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, public relations and advertising.

## **Course learning objectives**

The primary course objectives are for students to:

- 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 (freedom of information, open meetings and 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 framework to ethical decision-making.

## **Professional values and competencies**

The Communication/Journalism Department faculty sets the goal of developing within each student several core professional values and competencies as defined by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This course addresses the following competencies:

- Understand and apply First Amendment principles and laws of freedom of speech and press appropriate to professional practice.
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Conduct research and gather information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

## **Course format and weekly assignments**

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, COM 345 is **100% online** this semester, using the university's course management system, Desire2Learn (D2L) Brightspace (<http://d2l.ship.edu>), and Zoom online meeting software (<http://ship.zoom.us>). More information about using D2L and Zoom, including "how-to" videos, is available at <http://www.ship.edu/technology/student/resources/>.

Although the course is online, it will cover all of the same material as if it were face to face. Do not assume that online means "easy" or "less important." **This is a demanding course. It will occupy a significant amount of your time. Plan your schedule and budget your time accordingly.**

**D2L site:** All course materials will be posted to the course D2L site. **It is your responsibility to check the site regularly and make sure you are completing all work and meeting deadlines.** D2L organizes the materials using a horizontal menu bar near the top of the screen. Clicking on a menu bar item (Syllabus, Content, Quizzes, Grades, etc.) will take you to that part of the site.

**Weekly Content modules:** Clicking on "Content" in the menu bar will bring up a vertical listing of "modules," organized by week. (NOTE: You will not see the modules for the whole semester. As the semester progresses, I will make each week's module available.) Clicking on a weekly module will bring up a listing of all materials for the week.

**Zoom meetings:** Each module will include a link and the password for the week’s Zoom meeting. **We will meet live (“synchronously”) as a class Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m.** We may not meet every week, but you should always assume that we are meeting unless I notify you otherwise (via D2L and/or email). The Zoom meetings will be used for announcements, discussions (we may discuss a case study that was introduced the previous week, and I may divide you into Zoom “breakout rooms” for small-group discussion), assignment explanations, and any questions you have. The Zoom meetings will NOT be lectures. Although you are not required to share your video during the meetings, doing so is a good way for all of us to get to know one another, and it makes the meetings feel more personal. Be sure to mute your audio when you are not speaking to the class. I will keep track of your Zoom participation, which will be graded as follows at the end of the semester:

- **A (27-30 points):** Attended all (or nearly all) Zoom meetings and frequently participated by asking or answering questions.
- **B (24-26 points):** Attended most of the Zoom meetings and occasionally participated by asking or answering questions.
- **C (21-13 points):** Attended most of the Zoom meetings but rarely participated by asking or answering questions.
- **D (18-20 points):** Only occasionally attended the Zoom meetings.
- **F (0-17 points):** Rarely attended the Zoom meetings.

**NOTE:** If you need to miss a single Zoom meeting because of illness, emergency, etc., you do not need to notify me. But if a situation arises that causes you to miss several Zoom meetings (or more than a week of course material), please let me know via email so that we can discuss the situation.

**Assigned reading:** This course has a heavy reading load, and it is challenging reading. (Law and ethics are heavy topics.) Read each week’s assigned material thoroughly, paying close attention to the key concepts and terminology. You are encouraged to take notes as you read. The *Communications Law* textbook includes a list of summary points, discussion questions and key terms at the end of each chapter, which can help you review (but is not a substitute for reading the full chapter). In the *Media Ethics* textbook, you do NOT need to read the cases at the end of each chapter, only the chapters themselves.

**Lecture videos:** After you have completed the reading, please watch the lecture videos posted to the week’s module. Most weeks, there will be two or three of them. I have uploaded the videos to YouTube and embedded them within D2L. (Please let me know if a video is not playing properly.) The lecture videos will expand upon (not repeat) points covered in the reading and provide additional information, cases and examples. The lectures will include PowerPoint slides, and you are encouraged to take notes as you watch. YouTube provides captions for the videos (although the captions may have errors), and you may pause or replay the videos and change the playback speed.

**Supplemental videos or other materials:** In addition to the lecture videos, there will be other material related to the week’s topic for you to view or read (usually, a link to one or more videos from external sources). Please view or read this material because there will be questions about it on the week’s quiz, and there will likely be a follow-up discussion during the next week’s Zoom meeting.

**Quizzes:** There will be a quiz nearly every week. A link to the quiz will be posted to the weekly D2L module. **The quiz will cover the assigned textbook chapter, the lecture videos, AND any supplemental videos and materials,** so make sure that you completed all of those tasks before taking the

quiz. **Quizzes must be completed by the end of the following Monday (11:59 p.m. Monday).** Failure to complete the quiz by the end of the day Monday will result in a score of zero. **Each quiz will contain a total of 15 multiple-choice, true-or-false, and fill-in-the-blank questions. The quizzes are open-book and open-notes, but you have only 25 minutes to complete them.** If you exceed the 25-minute time limit, you will receive a score of zero. You must complete the quiz in its entirety the first time you open it, and you are not allowed to move back and forth between questions. If you leave the quiz to go to another web page, you may be locked out of the quiz. **You may not retake a quiz**, so make sure that you have a reliable Internet connection and are free from interruptions before you begin. You may not work on the quizzes with a classmate; that is a form of academic dishonesty (see “Plagiarism and academic dishonesty” below). **Your 10 highest quiz scores will count toward your semester grade, and your 2 lowest quiz scores will be dropped.** I drop the 2 lowest scores because I understand that problems such as illness, emergencies, computer glitches, etc., may arise. Because of the possibility that unforeseen problems will arise later in the semester, you should never skip a quiz. **There will be absolutely no make-up quizzes.**

### **Freedom of expression group project, ethics case study paper**

In addition to the weekly tasks and assignments described above, you will complete two larger assignments this semester: a freedom of expression group project and an ethics case study paper.

**Freedom of expression group project:** The class will be divided into small groups. Each group will be tasked with researching freedom of expression in several other countries (discussing each country’s stated guarantees, as well as the reality and effectiveness of those guarantees) and making comparisons to freedom of expression in the U.S., as protected by the First Amendment. Each group will present its findings in a recorded Zoom meeting, accompanied by slides. Each member of the group will contribute to the presentation. More details and instructions will be provided on the D2L site. The tentative due date is Monday, Oct. 5.

**Ethics case study paper:** You will be assigned a case study in communication ethics to research and analyze by applying the Potter Box framework and drawing upon ethical theories. You will present your analysis in a research paper. More details and instructions will be provided on the D2L site. The paper will be due during finals week, following Thanksgiving break (date to be announced later).

### **Email communication**

- In addition to checking the D2L site, please check your Ship email account regularly. I frequently use email to communicate important class information to students. I will contact you at your Ship email address (not your Gmail, Yahoo or other account).
- When corresponding with me by email, please **use your Ship account and include a subject line. I am teaching 3 other courses this semester, so always mention that the email is regarding COM 345.** Please allow 24 hours for a response or up to 48 hours on a weekend. I am always happy to answer a question, but check the syllabus and the D2L site to see if it can be answered there first.

### **Deadlines, course progress**

It is your responsibility to make sure that you are completing all work and meeting deadlines. In an online-only course, it is easy to fall behind or become “invisible.” **If you run into problems that are affecting your progress in the course or your ability to meet deadlines, let’s chat. Please email me or meet with me on Zoom during office hours so that we can address the situation.**

**All quizzes must be completed by the set deadlines. Failure to meet the deadline will result in a score of zero.** Only in the most extreme of situations will I reopen a quiz, and my definition of “extreme situation” is probably much narrower than yours.

The freedom of expression project and ethics case study paper must be completed by the due dates. Late assignments will be penalized a full letter grade (e.g., from B+ to a C+) for each day past the deadline, unless appropriate arrangements were made in advance. 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.

## **Grading**

A total of **300 points** are available during the semester, broken down as follows:

<b>Weekly Quizzes</b>	<b>150 points</b>
Top 10 quiz scores (15 points each)	
<b>Freedom of Expression Group Project</b>	<b>70 points</b>
<b>Ethics Case Study Paper</b>	<b>50 points</b>
<b>Zoom Meeting Participation</b>	<b>30 points</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>300 points</b>

Point totals at the end of the semester will be converted to letter grades using a percentage-based scale:

Point Total	Grade	Point Total	Grade	Point Total	Grade
279 – 300 (93%)	A	240 – 248.5 (80%)	B-	0 – 179.5	F
270 – 278.5 (90%)	A-	225 – 239.5 (75%)	C+		
261 – 269.5 (87%)	B+	210 – 224.5 (70%)	C		
249 – 260.5 (83%)	B	180 – 209.5 (60%)	D		

**NO incompletes will be issued for this course, except in emergency situations as defined by the University catalog.**

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

## **Extra credit**

Generally, I do not provide extra-credit work. However, some extra-credit opportunities may appear by surprise as “Easter eggs” during the semester.

## **Keeping copies of assignments and emails**

Keep an electronic copy of all assignments and course-related email messages. Do not delete any course-related files or emails until you receive your final grade at the end of the semester. If there are questions about assignments, you may be asked to produce the original emails and files.

## **Technology help**

I am happy to answer any questions regarding course content and assignments, but technical questions should be addressed to people who are much more knowledgeable about the technology:

**Computer and Internet access:** If you need access to a laptop or the Internet, please fill out the [University’s Request Access to Equipment form](#).

**D2L assistance:** If you need technical assistance with the D2L system, please contact the SU Student Helpdesk at (717) 477-HELP (x4357) or [helpdesk@ship.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ship.edu). After hours, you may contact D2L Technical

Support at [helpdesk@d2l.com](mailto:helpdesk@d2l.com) or (866) 832-2319. An [instructional video](#) provides details on using D2L as a student.

**Zoom assistance:** Information is available on [how to download and set up the Zoom application](#) and [how to join a Zoom meeting](#). An [instructional video](#) provides details on using Zoom as a student, and additional information is available through the [Zoom Help Center](#).

**General information:** More information about Fall 2020 technology at Ship is available [at this site](#).

### **Withdrawing from the course**

A student may drop a course within the drop/add period without ramifications to the student's transcript, but after that time frame, a withdrawal from the course will result in a W grade on the transcript. **The deadline to withdraw with a W grade is Oct. 26.** More information is available at the [Registrar's site](#).

### **Plagiarism and academic dishonesty**

Students are expected to complete individual and original work for this class. Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be handled according to the university's [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#). All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department, Dean's Office and Office of Student Affairs. Penalties for violation of the Academic Dishonesty Policy include grade reduction, assignment of a failing grade for the course, suspension and expulsion from the University.

### **Academic resources**

**The Learning Center:** If you feel you need extra help to improve your academic performance in this course or in any of your other courses, please consider making an appointment with a tutor or learning specialist in the Learning Center. The Learning Center is located in Mowrey Hall and can be reached at (717) 477-1420. Tutoring and most other services will be offered via Zoom. More information is available at the [Learning Center's website](#).

**The College of Arts & Sciences Advising Center (CASA):** Located in DHC 216, CASA is a walk-in office that offers several types of academic support, from advice and help on time management, test anxiety and study skills to discussions about what major might be right for you. Email [casa@ship.edu](mailto:casa@ship.edu) or call (717) 477-1150 to set up a time to meet with a success coach or faculty adviser.

**Student Success:** The Elnetta G. Jones University Center for Student Success and Exploratory Studies uniquely supplements and reinforces the university's commitments to serve a more diverse student population and to cultivate a learning-centered environment where students persist to graduation. We enrich the teaching and learning mission of the university by delivering specialized, high-impact academic and student enrichment services that empower students to successfully attain their educational goals. See [the Student Success Center website](#) for more information.

### **Accessibility resources**

Shippensburg University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. The University welcomes all students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs and strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) to discuss specific needs. OAR is located in Mowrey Hall 252 and can be reached by phone at (717) 477-1364 or via email at [oar@ship.edu](mailto:oar@ship.edu).

### **Preferred name policy**

In an effort to continue building a more inclusive and affirming campus climate, the LGBTQ+ Concerns Committee collaborated with APSCUF's Social Justice Committee to develop a preferred name policy at Shippensburg University. This policy was unanimously approved by President's Cabinet in September, 2017. View specific details about [Shippensburg University's Preferred Name Policy](#). Although a legal name and/or gender marker change is determined by the state in which a student, staff, or faculty resides in, the LGBTQ+ committee has worked to increase access for campus community members to utilize a preferred name in situations where a legal name is not required.

### **Title IX - Commitment to a safe learning environment**

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 faculty member's reporting obligations are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by students during classroom discussions, in writing assignments for class, or as part of University-approved research projects.

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 (717) 477-1444, the Department of Human Services (DHS) at 800-932-0313, and the University's Office of the Vice President of Enrollment Management, Student Affairs and Student Success (717) 477-1235. Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at the following link: [Equity, Inclusion and Compliance](#).

## **Tentative Course Schedule**

The timeline for this course may need to be adjusted due to unforeseen circumstances. Changes will be announced via Zoom, email or D2L.

NOTE: This is an abbreviated schedule. Please see each week's module (on the D2L course site under "Content") for due dates and the full list of tasks, assignments and materials for the week.

### **The media's rights and responsibilities**

#### **Week 1 (Aug. 17-23): Law introduction**

Zoom meeting  
Read Comm Law, Chapter 1 (full chapter)  
Lecture videos and other materials (in D2L)  
**Quiz**

#### **Week 2 (Aug. 24-30): Ethics introduction**

Zoom meeting  
Read Ethics, Chapters 1 (including the essay on Cases and Moral Systems at the end), 4 and 11  
Lecture videos and other materials  
**Quiz**

#### **Week 3 (Aug. 31-Sept. 6): The First Amendment**

Zoom meeting  
Read Comm Law, Chapter 2, pp. 34-51 and 57-74 only  
Lecture videos and other materials  
**Quiz**

#### **Week 4 (Sept. 7-13): Public safety, social responsibility and media economics**

Zoom meeting  
Read Comm Law, Chapter 3 (full chapter), and Ethics, Chapter 7  
Lecture videos and other materials  
**Quiz**

### **Truth and reputation**

#### **Week 5 (Sept. 14-20): Defamation**

Zoom meeting  
Read Comm Law, Chapter 4, pp. 116-156 only  
Lecture videos and other materials  
**Quiz**

#### **Week 6 (Sept. 21-27): Defamation (cont.) and truth telling**

Zoom meeting  
Read Comm Law, Chapter 4, pp. 156-175 only, and Ethics, Chapter 2  
Lecture videos and other materials  
**Quiz**

**Week 7 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)**

Zoom meeting

Freedom of Expression Group Project – due end of the day (11:59 p.m.) Monday, Oct. 5

**Privacy and access**

**Week 8 (Oct. 5-11): Privacy law**

Zoom meeting

Read Comm Law, Chapter 5, pp. 176-212 only

Lecture videos and other materials

**Quiz**

**Week 9 (Oct. 12-18): Privacy ethics, information access**

Zoom meeting

Read Ethics, Chapter 5, and Comm Law, Chapters 6 (pp. 230-247 only) and 7 (pp. 268-285 only)

Lecture videos and other materials

**Quiz**

**Special considerations: Broadcast media, PR and advertising**

**Week 10 (Oct. 19-25): FCC regulation, broadcast content**

Zoom meeting

Read Comm Law, Chapters 9 (pp. 377-391 only) and 10 (pp. 414-429 only)

Lecture videos and other materials

**Quiz**

**Week 11 (Oct. 26-Nov. 1): Commercial speech, ethics of PR and advertising**

Zoom meeting

Read Comm Law, Chapter 12, pp. 489-515 only, and Ethics, Chapter 3

Lecture videos and other materials

**Quiz**

**Artistic and creative work**

**Week 12 (Nov. 2-8): Creative property and copyright law**

Zoom meeting

Read Comm Law, Chapter 8, pp. 318-340 and pp. 347-361 only

Lecture videos and other materials

**Quiz**

**Week 13 (Nov. 9-15): Obscenity and indecency**

Zoom meeting

Read Comm Law, Chapter 11, pp. 446-460 and pp. 473-487 only

Lecture videos and other materials

**Quiz**

**Week 14 (Nov. 16-22)**

Zoom meeting

Ethics Case Study Paper due after Thanksgiving break

**Nov. 23-29: Thanksgiving Break**

**Nov. 30-Dec. 4: Finals Week**

ETHICS CASE STUDY PAPER DUE – due date to be announced

NOTE: There is NO final exam in this course.