
COM 345: Media Law

Shippensburg University, Spring 2022

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:45 p.m., Rowland 209

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NOTE: Because of the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, adjustments may need to be made to the syllabus and course schedule. Some class sessions may be held online via Zoom. Check the course D2L site (<https://d2l.ship.edu>) and your Ship email account for announcements and updates.

University COVID-19 mask policy

Students must wear a face mask at all times in class and in campus classroom buildings. This includes covering of **BOTH** the nose and mouth. Students who fail to comply with this policy may be asked to leave the class. Student violations also will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. More information about the individual's responsibility to protect the health and well-being of the entire campus community can be found on the university's website at <https://raiderrespect.ship.edu/>.

Office hours

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11 a.m. – noon

Wednesdays, noon – 3 p.m.

Schedule an appointment at <https://calendly.com/krheim/officehours>.

Don't hesitate to meet with me in my office (Rowland 123) or via Zoom if you need help or have course-related questions. Sign up for an appointment at the link listed above. If none of the available times works for you, please email me, and we can arrange a different time.

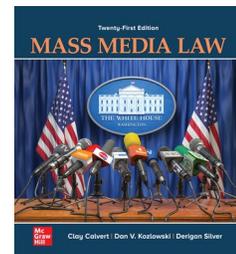
Course description

This course familiarizes students with the laws and regulations governing the mass media in the United States. The course deals with fundamental legal topics, including libel, privacy, obscenity, free press/fair trial, copyright, and the regulation of broadcasting and advertising. Students will explore seminal U.S. Supreme Court and lower court rulings that have had an impact on the application of the First Amendment and the rights and operations of the mass communication professions as well as society at large.

Required textbook

Mass Media Law, **21st edition**, Clay Calvert, Dan V. Kozlowski and Derigan Silver. (2020). McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 9781260514513.

NOTE: You will need the textbook right away and throughout the semester. Make sure to purchase or rent the latest (21st) edition.



Course learning objectives

The primary objectives of this course 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, information access, obscenity, broadcast regulation, and commercial speech.

Professional values and competencies

The Communication, Journalism and Media Department 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 the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Conduct research and gather information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

A special caution about this course

Court cases involving the mass media often center on speech or conduct that is controversial, politically charged, sensitive or offensive. Learning about media law means you will encounter some words and ideas that you find disagreeable. Healthy debate is central to understanding and discussing the law, but it is important to keep the discussion focused on legal principles and civil in tone, not personal or partisan.

Attendance policy

- **Attendance is mandatory**, and students are expected to arrive on time. An attendance sheet will be circulated at the start of class each day. It is your responsibility to sign the sheet. The attendance sheets will serve as the official record of attendance. If you come to class late, after the attendance sheet has circulated, you may be marked absent that day.
- **An absence will be excused ONLY** if you (1) notify the instructor of the absence via email **before** class, **AND** (2) provide official written documentation of the reason for the absence (e.g., an official signed, dated note from a doctor, coach, lawyer, other instructor, etc.) **on the day you return to class**. If you know you will miss more than one class due to illness or a family emergency, it is recommended that you notify the Dean's Office, which will notify all your instructors of your absences (NOTE: Notifying the Dean's Office does not automatically excuse an absence. You still must provide the appropriate documentation when you return to class.)
- Leaving class early, refusing to wear a face mask, sleeping during class or not participating in class activities may count as an unexcused absence for that class period.
- **Students are permitted no more than 3 unexcused absences during the semester**. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final course grade as follows:
 - **4 or 5 unexcused absences** = final grade lowered by a **half-grade** — for example, from an A- to a B+ or from a C+ to a C. NOTE: Ship does not use C- or D+ grades, so a C would be lowered to a D.
 - **6 unexcused absences** = final grade lowered by a **full letter grade** — for example, from a B to a C.
 - **7 or more unexcused absences** = student automatically **fails the course (grade of F)**, regardless of his or her performance on exams, quizzes and assignments.

- Prolonged or repeated absences will make it difficult to pass this course. In such situations, please meet with me so that we may discuss the situation and consider options such as withdrawal from the course or a leave of absence from the university.

Class participation and etiquette

- You are expected to be an active, engaged participant in the class and make thoughtful contributions to class discussions.
- Inappropriate, rude or disrespectful language or behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This may include (but is not limited to): refusing to wear a mask; talking or not paying attention during a lecture; using inappropriate language; being disrespectful to your instructor or classmates; texting, emailing, listening to music or other use of electronic devices during class; sleeping; and tardiness.
- **Unless instructed otherwise, the use of cell phones, headphones or earbuds, and other electronic gadgets in the classroom is not permitted.** Cell phones are to be turned off or set to vibrate and put away during class.

Email communication

- I frequently use email to communicate important class information. Check your Ship email account regularly. 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. Always mention that the email is regarding COM 345 (Media Law).** 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.

D2L site, reading and quizzes

D2L site: Course materials (including assignment handouts and quizzes) will be posted to the course D2L site (<https://d2l.ship.edu>). **It is your responsibility to check D2L regularly to make sure you are completing all work and meeting deadlines.**

Weekly content modules: Clicking “Content” in the menu bar at the top of the D2L site will bring up a vertical listing of modules, organized by week. (NOTE: You will not see the modules for the full 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.

Assigned reading: Most weeks will include assigned reading in the *Mass Media Law* textbook. The reading load is intense, and some of the legal material is quite complex. Pay close attention to the key concepts and terminology, as well as the names, decisions and significance of the key court cases mentioned in each chapter. You are strongly encouraged to take notes as you read.

Reading quizzes on D2L: Most weeks will include a quiz **assessing your understanding of the assigned reading for the week.** Make sure that you complete the week’s assigned reading before you take the quiz. Each D2L module will contain a link to the week’s quiz. **Quizzes will be available following Thursday’s class and must be completed by the end of the day (11:59 p.m.) on the following 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 12 multiple-choice, true-or-false, and fill-in-the-blank questions. The quizzes are open-book and open-notes, but you will have only 20 minutes to complete them.** If you exceed the time limit, you will receive a score of zero. You must complete the quiz in its entirety after 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). There will be a total of 11 quizzes during the semester. **Your 10 highest quiz scores will count toward your semester grade, and your lowest quiz score will be dropped.** 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.**

Exams and freedom of expression group project

In addition to the weekly work described above, you will take two exams and complete a group project examining freedom of expression in the United States and in other countries around the world.

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 meet on Zoom, and members will take turns presenting their findings and accompanying slides during the Zoom meeting. This will be followed by a group discussion. More details and instructions will be provided in class and on the D2L site. The tentative due date is Thursday, March 17.

Two exams: You will take two in-class exams during the semester. The exams are closed-notes and closed-book. They will cover the textbook reading and class lectures and discussions, including any audio/video material presented in class. The exams will contain a combination of multiple choice, true-false, and short-answer questions, as well as essay questions asking you to apply what you have learned to hypothetical legal cases. The exams are **NOT** cumulative. The first exam (on Tuesday, March 1) will cover the material from the first half of the semester, and the second exam (during finals week at the end of the semester) will cover the material from the second half of the semester.

Deadlines and course progress

It is your responsibility to make sure that you are completing all work and meeting deadlines. **If you run into problems affecting your progress in the course or your ability to meet deadlines, let’s chat.** Please email me or meet with me during office hours so that we can discuss the situation.

Quizzes must be completed by the set deadlines. Failure to take a quiz by the deadline will result in a score of zero. Only in the most extreme of situations will I reopen a quiz after the deadline has passed, and my definition of “extreme situation” is probably much narrower than yours. (Forgetting to take a quiz is not an extreme situation. Computer problems are not an extreme situation.)

The freedom of expression project must be completed by the due date. Late submissions will be penalized with a 10% point deduction (approximately a full letter grade) for each day past the deadline.

Grading

A total of **400 points** are available during the semester, broken down as follows:

Top 10 reading quiz scores (12 points each)	120 points
Freedom of expression group project	120 points
Exam 1	80 points
Exam 2	80 points
TOTAL	400 points

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
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		

Reminder: More than three unexcused absences during the semester will result in the lowering of your final course grade (see “Attendance policy” above for details). Incompletes will be issued only in emergency situations as defined in 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 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:

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

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

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 Tuesday, March 29.** 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 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.

Title IX - Commitment to a safe learning environment

Shippensburg University and its faculty are committed to ensuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to comply with the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the University's commitment to offering supportive measures in accordance with the 2020 regulations issued under Title IX, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator at title9@ship.edu or by calling (717) 477-1161. The **only exceptions** to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student **during**: 1. A classroom discussion; 2. in a writing assignment for a class; 3. or as part of a University-approved research project. Faculty members are **obligated** to report 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 to the person designated in the University protection of minors policy found here: <https://www.ship.edu/globalassets/no-more/su-protection-and-supervision-of-minors-on-campus.pdf>. Information regarding the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence are set forth here: <https://www.ship.edu/life/resources/womens-center/resources/> and reporting processes and resolution can be found here: <https://www.ship.edu/globalassets/administration-finance/policies/701-002-sexual-misconduct-policy.pdf>

Tentative Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. The timeline for this course may need to be adjusted due to unforeseen circumstances. Changes will be announced via email or D2L. Always view each week's D2L module (on the D2L course site under "Content") for the full list of materials for the week and any revisions to the schedule.

WEEK 1 (Jan. 18, 20)

Introduction to the course

- **READING:** Chapter 1 (The American Legal System)
 - **QUIZ** (on D2L by end of the day Monday, Jan. 24)
-

WEEK 2 (Jan. 25, 27)

Introduction to U.S. legal system

- **READING:** Chapter 2 (The First Amendment: The Meaning of Freedom)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, Jan. 31)
-

WEEK 3 (Feb. 1, 3)

The First Amendment (Part 1)

- **READING:** Chapter 3 (The First Amendment: Contemporary Problems, pp. 88-105, stopping at "Problems for College Journalists," AND pp. 113-137, beginning at "Time, Place and Manner Restrictions" and stopping at "The First Amendment and Election Campaigns")
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, Feb. 7)
 - **ASSIGNMENT:** Freedom of Expression Group Project – due Thursday, March 17
-

WEEK 4 (Feb. 8, 10)

The First Amendment (Part 2)

- **READING:** Chapter 4 (Defamation: Establishing a Case) AND Chapter 5 (Defamation: Proof of Fault, pp. 181-202 only – stop at "The Meaning of Fault")
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, Feb. 14)
-

WEEK 5 (Feb. 15, 17)

Defamation (Part 1)

- **READING:** Chapter 5 (Defamation: Proof of Fault, pp. 202-217, beginning at "The Meaning of Fault") AND all of Chapter 6 (Defamation: Defenses and Damages)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, Feb. 21)
-

WEEK 6 (Feb. 22, 24)
Defamation (Part 2)

- **NO READING OR QUIZ THIS WEEK.** Use this week to work on the Freedom of Expression project and to study for next week's exam.
-

WEEK 7 (March 1, 3)

- **EXAM 1: In class on Tuesday, March 1**
 - **READING:** Chapter 7 (Invasion of Privacy: Appropriation and Intrusion)
 - **NO QUIZ THIS WEEK**
-

SPRING BREAK (Week of March 7-11)

NO CLASSES 😊

WEEK 8 (March 15, 17)
Invasion of privacy (Part 1)

- **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION PROJECT due Thursday, March 17**
 - **READING:** Chapter 8 (Invasion of Privacy: Publication of Private Information and False Light)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, March 21)
-

WEEK 9 (March 22, 24)
Invasion of privacy (Part 2)

- **READING:** Chapter 9 (Gathering Information: Records and Meetings)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, March 28)
-

WEEK 10 (March 29, 31)
Access to information

- **READING:** Chapter 14 (Copyright and Trademark)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, April 4)
-

WEEK 11 (April 5, 7)
Intellectual property and copyright

- **READING:** Chapter 15 (Regulation of Advertising)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, April 11)
-

WEEK 12 (April 12, 14)

Regulation of advertising

- **READING:** Chapter 16 (Telecommunications Regulation)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, April 18)
-

WEEK 13 (April 19, 21)

Regulation of broadcasting

- **READING:** Chapter 13 (Regulation of Obscene and Other Erotic Material, pp. 503-517, stopping at “Regulation of Nonobscene Erotic Material”)
 - **QUIZ** (by end of the day Monday, April 25)
-

WEEK 14 (April 25, 27)

Obscenity and indecency; course wrap-up

- **NO READING OR QUIZ THIS WEEK.** Use this week to study for the final exam.
-

FINALS WEEK (May 2-6)

- **EXAM 2 (date and time to be announced)**