

MDAR 201
Ethical Issues in Media

SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES
Elmwood Campus
TULANE UNIVERSITY

Fall 2007

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Program Director – Media Arts/Journalism

WELCOME TO ETHICAL ISSUES IN MEDIA

You have chosen to embark on a learning journey about ethics. This class is designed to encourage you to use your analytical skills, experience and a systematic approach to making informed moral judgments about issues in all media. During the semester, we will use the aforementioned systematic approach to examine conflicts, dilemmas and challenges confronting media professionals in print and broadcast journalism, as well as in the disciplines of advertising and public relations. Almost every time we meet, you will be asked for your opinions and judgments as we explore specific case studies that require ethical and moral judgments.

Although ethics is not a fixed set of rules or laws, as you might find in other disciplines such as mathematics or chemistry, there are specific guidelines designed to help us reach the proper ethical decisions. There are not always "right" or "wrong" answers, but there is a definite system to assist us in our quest to find an answer. Early in the course we will spend our time learning the process of wading through the many controversial issues facing media. Once we have fully explored the process that evolves in trying to settle ethical issues in media, we will deal each week with case studies.

Do public figures have the same right to privacy as we do? Is it acceptable for cigarette companies to advertise a product known to lead to illness and death? If a classic novel contains evidence of racism or other exclusionary slants, should it be allowed on the shelves of an elementary school library? Are a presidential candidate's transgressions from adolescence fair game for journalists? Should television networks be allowed to broadcast executions of prisoners?

Issues similar to these are the reason we study ethics; to determine the standards of our culture and to maintain them is the focus of ethics. We will rely heavily on the textbook, *"Ethics in Media Communications--Cases and Controversies,(Fifth Edition)* by Louis A. Day, available in the campus bookstore.

Your participation in class discussion is vital to the lively exchange that the study of ethics often produces. Your opinions and your viewpoint are encouraged and needed.

I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to say about media issues which affect each of us every day.

Paul A. Greenberg
Program Director – Media Arts & Journalism

Note: Please feel free to contact me throughout the week between class sessions, via email.

My email address is:
Pgreenbe@tulane.edu

If you do not have access to email, you may call me at (504) 247-1672.

Office hours Tues./Wed. 3-5PM Uptown Campus

Thanks...now let's get started.

MDAR 201: General Course Information

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

*All class sessions in "Ethical Issues in Media," MDAR 201 are interdependent upon each other. One week's session leads directly into the following week's discussion. You need to be present to succeed in this class. While I encourage you to contact me between class sessions if you need assistance, I do not lend my own class notes or offer any outside tutoring on material you may have missed. It is your responsibility to be in class each week and keep up with the subject matter.

***The following are attendance requirements: 1) If you miss three class sessions during the semester, your final course grade drops one letter grade. 2) If you miss six class sessions during the semester, you will receive a failing grade.**

*If you have an emergency that prevents you from turning in a test, there is a possibility of scheduling a make-up within one week of the original test date. A legitimate written excuse will be required.

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES:

***Deadlines and due dates for assignments and exams are not negotiable. These dates will always be specifically communicated to you and will be adhered to. Late assignments will not be accepted. Every assignment and test counts toward your final grade in this course, and everything must be completed. No exceptions.**

BASIC REQUIREMENTS:

*All assignments must be turned in typed or computer generated. **Do not hand in handwritten work.** All materials must be turned in on standard 8.5" x 11" white bond, one-sided, black print, double-spaced with a minimum of 12 pt. type.

***Writing proficiency counts in this class. Basic grammar, spelling and punctuation are to be correct on all assignments.**

*It is my goal for you to derive as much information and knowledge as possible in the time we have allotted this semester. As such, you are expected to do ALL of your own work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. You are encouraged to use as many sources as possible to gather information, and then present it in your own style and words.

*PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS CLASS. Together we will make informed, ethical and

moral judgments, which require intense discussion and debate. Part of the learning experience in this course has to do with these discussions. Come to class each week having read and studied the cases we plan to discuss and let your viewpoints be heard. Plan to be a part of the action.

MDAR 201: HOUSE RULES, REGULATIONS AND REQUESTS

- 1) Be on time to class every week. Entering the classroom late disrupts the activity and is disrespectful to your fellow students**
- 2) All assignments will be collected at the conclusion of the class period on the date they are due. Requests for changes in deadlines will be considered, but rarely granted.**
- 3) Everyone in this class has a right to be heard. It is a rule of my classroom that every person is to be afforded respect in the course of class discussion. No one's opinions or comments are to be belittled, and no offensive language will be tolerated.**
- 4) Only one person will speak at a time in the classroom. Please do not interrupt others or talk while someone else is speaking. Listening in this class is as important as speaking. Please refrain from making any excessive noise or causing any unnecessary disturbances.**
- 5) You are allowed to use tape recorders and/or laptop computers in this classroom.**
- 6) My office hours are: Tuesday and Wednesday: 3PM – 5PM. Please call in advance to schedule an appointment – 247-1672.**
- 7) If for any reason you will need to miss a class session or leave a class session early, please let me know in advance. If you are on a Tulane athletic team and will be absent due to game schedules, you are required to inform the instructor in advance and make all arrangements to get your assignments and turn in your homework on time. NO EXCEPTIONS AND NO EXCUSES WILL BE CONSIDERED.**

MDAR 201 SPECIFICATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

READINGS

GRADING

MDAR 201/FALL 2007

GRADING SCALE AND FINAL GRADE BREAKDOWN

Each student will be required to complete seven written assignments, a mid-term exam, and a final exam.

Percentages for Final Course Grade

Homework Assignments = 40%

Mid Term Exam = 30%

Final Exam = 30%

IMPORTANT: PLEASE BE AWARE OF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY, AS STATED IN PAGE THREE OF THIS SYLLABUS, AS IT CAN AFFECT YOUR FINAL COURSE GRADE.

MDAR 201-FALL 2007 WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Most reading assignments for MDAR 201 will come from the text, "*Ethics in Media Communications -- Cases and Controversies*, (Fifth Edition) by Louis A. Day, available in the campus bookstore. Supplemental readings will be handed out periodically. Additionally, all students are encouraged to read a daily newspaper, at least one news magazine (*Time, Newsweek, US News and World Report, etc.*) and one popular culture magazine (*People, Self, Vibe, Vanity Fair, Essence, etc.*) regularly throughout the term. Students who find stories relevant to course material are encouraged to bring them to class to share with everyone. Students may also bring relevant videotapes, sound recordings or visual arts. Also, please be aware the web site blackboard.Tulane.edu will be used extensively in this course. You will need a valid Tulane University email address to use the site.

9/4 **INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS IN MEDIA**
Course content, review of syllabus, explanation of assignments, tests and grading system.

Topics/terms: **The three branches of Ethics**
The difference between ethics and morals
Why society needs a system of ethics
The functions of media within the ethical system
Moral agents, moral duties, requirements of a system of ethics

Readings for *Chapter 1,2, 3, Text.*
9/11

9/11 **ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING**
Definition of and skills needed for Moral Reasoning

Topics/terms: **Six philosophical foundations of moral theory**
Three ethical theories in moral reasoning
Critical thinking in moral reasoning
The "SAD FORMULA"
Applying the SAD formula to a case study

Readings for *Chapter 4, Text*
9/18:

9/18 TRUTH IN MEDIA COMMUNICATION

Is "truth" a relative term?

Topics/terms: **The emergence of "infotainment" in media**

Is truth an essential element of advertising?

Is deception the same as lying?

Four arguments for the importance of truth in media.

Applying truth telling to moral reasoning.

Case studies involving Truth in Media Communication

Assignment #1 Due 9/18: Q & A: "Ethics and Moral Reasoning"

Readings for 9/25: Chapter 5, Text

9/25 THE MEDIA AND PRIVACY

Topics/terms: **Special problem areas regarding privacy and media**

Establishing standards of privacy in media

Privacy as a moral value and a legal concept

Public figures/private lives

The case of the dead baby photo on the front page

Kennedys and Clintons: The ethics of reporting tragedy and scandal

Case studies in the area of Privacy in Media

Assignment #2 Due: "Truth in Media-Case Study"

Reading for 10/2: Chapter 6

10/2 MAKING A CASE FOR CONFIDENTIALITY IN REPORTING

Topics/terms: **When is confidentiality justified in media?**

Three types of essential confidential relationships

Case studies in Confidentiality in Media

Assignment #3 Due: "Privacy in Media – Case Study"

Reading for 10/9: Chapter 7

10/9 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Topics/terms: **Gifts, perks and special relationships between reporters and subjects**

Journalists as celebrities

Checkbook journalism

Case studies in Conflicts of Interest

Readings for Chapter 13

10/16

NOTE: TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM WILL BE HANDED OUT ON OCTOBER 9, AND DUE ON OCTOBER 16

10/16 STEREOTYPES IN MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

Topics/terms: **Portrayal of ethnic minorities in media; female roles and participation in media; elderly and disabled persons in media.**

Creating media content for a diverse audience

Case studies in Stereotypes in Media Communications

Readings for

10/23: Special handout on Ethics in Entertainment

10/23 ETHICAL ISSUES IN ENTERTAINMENT

Topics/terms: **Violence; Profits, Wealth & Public Trust; Media Scope & Depth; Censorship.**

Case studies in entertainment ethics

Assignment #4 Due: Confidentiality in Media – Case Study”

Readings for 10/30: Chapter 9

10/30 THE MEDIA AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Topics/terms: **Media influence on antisocial behavior; the media and civility; the influence of media on behavior.**

Case studies in The Media and Antisocial Behavior

Assignment #5 Due: Stereotypes in Media – Case Study

Readings for 11/6: Chapter 10

11/6 MORALLY OFFENSIVE CONTENT: Freedom and Responsibility

Topics/terms: **Shocking and/or disturbing visuals; four principles that limit liberty and issue moral limits; the case against moral limits.**

Case studies in Morally Offensive Content

Readings For 11/13: Chapter 12

11/13 MEDIA PRACTITIONERS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Topics/terms: **Principles and concepts of justice; social justice and ethical decision making**

Case studies in Media Practitioners and Social Justice

Assignment #6 Due: Morally Offensive Content – Media Viewing Assignment

Readings For 11/20--Special handout: ETHICAL ISSUES IN ADVERTISING

11/20 ETHICAL ISSUES IN ADVERTISING

Topics/terms: **Cigarettes, beer and consumer persuasion; media's arbitrary decisions about advertising; infomercials--can anyone really be this rich, beautiful or thin?; advertising on the internet--should there be legal standards?**

Case studies in Ethics in Advertising

11/27 THE ETHICS OF NEWS REPORTING

Assignment #7 Due: Advertising

12/4 SEMESTER WRAP-UP AND CLOSING COMMENTARY

NOTE: TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM WILL BE HANDED OUT ON DECEMBER 4, 2007

12/11 FINAL EXAM DUE – 6:00 PM