

COMM 2220-08: Media Law and Ethics
Asynchronous | Winter 2022
William Paterson University

Prof. Birge
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Office Hours:
Tuesdays 12:30-2 p.m.
Dec. 14, 21, 28, 2021
Jan. 4, 11, 18, 2022

Office Hours | Zoom Meeting Room: <https://wpunj.zoom.us/my/profbirge>
Students will be placed in a waiting room and then admitted to the meeting

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The study of the relationship between the news media and society in the United States, with emphasis on legal and ethical issues. Press criticism is an important part of content.

2. COURSE CREDIT: 3

3. UCC DESIGNATION: None

4. COURSE PREREQUISITE: NONE

5. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- a. To examine the origins and current status of media laws/ethics.
- b. To weigh the merits of proposed solutions to ethical/legal problems.
- c. To analyze and discuss relevant case studies.
- d. To determine the role of media in American Society.
- e. To prepare you for issues you will face as a media specialist.
- f. To keep abreast of topics pertinent to media studies.
- g. To work as a class and in groups to formulate solid thinking about the role of the media.
- h. To encourage you to view newspapers and broadcasts from an analytical perspective.

5. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- a. Understand what libel and slander are, what constitutes an invasion of privacy, and what defenses are available to the media in response to those suits.
- b. Understand the sources and origins of law and the makeup of the American judicial system.
- c. Understand the historical development of the First Amendment.
- d. Understand the balancing techniques available to ensure a Free Press/Fair Trial.
- e. Discuss and understand the definition of obscenity and that impact on publishers.

f. Understand what a Shield Law is and what protections are available to the media to protect sources.

7. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER MATERIALS:

- There is no textbook.
- Readings will be posted on Blackboard, along with podcasts and videos.
- Per university guidelines, students must use their WPU e-mail accounts to communicate with me.

8. ACCOMMODATION POLICY:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations documents to share with me, please send a note to my email.

9. NUTS & BOLTS

a. Organization: The work for each class will be set up in weekly folders in Bb and the material will be listed in the sequential order you should review it. This will include video lectures, tutorials, documents, discussion boards, writing assignments, quizzes, etc.

b. Deadlines: While the class doesn't have an assigned day, it's best to think of the class as being held **on Tuesdays**. **All work for the class will be due at noon on Tuesdays in a drop box** in Bb. All new work for each weekly class will be posted by the instructor by noon on Tuesdays. I will have my online office hours on Tuesdays from 12: -2 p.m.

c. There will be work posted the week between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, 2022.

d. Blackboard: Students will submit all course assignments through Blackboard, which will be returned the same way. The submission windows close at noon on Tuesdays. All course documents from the instructor will be posted on Bb by noon on Tuesdays. If the instructor changes the syllabus for any reason, the new one will be posted on Bb and the students will be notified via their WPU email.

e. Campus Support: Students who need course learning adaptations or accommodations, please email me before the end of the first week of class so we can set up a time to talk privately.

f. Plagiarism: Any student caught plagiarizing, cheating, making up material, submitting work other than their own or engaging in any unethical behavior as outlined in the William Paterson University Student Handbook will receive an F for the assignment and may fail the course. Failing because of plagiarism is like being fired from job. In professional writing it's a stain that sticks to you throughout your career.

10. ATTENDANCE | PARTICIPATION: 15% of the final grade will come from attendance/participation/engagement. A rubric of what qualifies as full attendance and participation is at the bottom of the syllabus and on Bb under Syllabus & Documents in the left menu.

10. ATTENDANCE | ABSENCES:

1. Students are expected to engage with the material each week. Attendance is measured in this way. Did the student read all the articles, watch the video(s), listen to the podcast, etc. Students who do not engage with the material during the winter session, will be given a grade of FN (failure for non-attendance | engagement). For greater details see the document posted with the Syllabus on Blackboard.
2. Excused Absences: Because the class meets asynchronously there is no need to have an excused absence policy per se; student engagement is documented through checkpoints.
3. If there is a death in the family, if you become sick with Covid-19, or someone in your family does and you need to care for them, please notify me and the university.
 - Contact the university to report your symptoms or exposure to CHWC at COVIDCHWC@wpunj.edu.
 - Send me a note as soon as possible, in the same way you'd send a note to an employer if you weren't showing up for work and let me know what's going on.

12. LATE PAPERS AND ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES:

- a. Late papers are not accepted.
- b. All papers and assignments will be turned in via a drop box in the Assignment section of Blackboard.
- c. The drop box will be set to noon on Tuesdays. after which the window closes.

13. ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS:

To achieve basic competence in law and ethics, you will undertake a variety of assignments/exams.

- 15% Participation
- 20% Four Quizzes
- 25% Five Discussion Posts
- 40% Four response papers (10% each)

The grading scale used is as follows:

A: 94-100 points	C+: 77-79	F: 59 and below
A-: 90 – 93	C: 73-76	
B+: 87-89	C-: 70-72	
B: 83-86	D+: 66-69	
B-: 80-82	D: 60-65	

15. GRADING RUBRIC:

PAPERS

A = Outstanding, exceptional work significant effort

A thoughtful and analytical response to the question that contributes to an understanding of the subject and demonstrates the student has read | viewed | listened and firmly understands the material from the class. The response is supported by examples and brings together different threads connecting them to the question or subject. Paper is clean of spelling, grammar, punctuation errors.

B = Excellent work; exceeds expectations; shows great effort

The response shows the student has thought about the question and generally demonstrates that the class material (reading, lectures, video, etc.) has been read | viewed | listened to and mostly understood. The response shows some thought or analysis and tries to bring different threads together supported by examples. Paper has minor spelling, grammar, punctuation errors.

C = Average.

The paper is OK and makes some attempt to address the subject of the paper but doesn't demonstrate the weekly material was completely read | listened | viewed or understood. There is some attempt to pull various threads together, but there aren't enough examples to support the analysis. The paper has multiple spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.

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D = Below average.

The paper lacks focus and has no examples to support the analysis or point of the paper. May be confusing and lacks insight, little evidence that readings | lectures | videos were engaged with. Facts of material is poorly understood; paper may include errors on this point. The paper has significant spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.

F = Failure.

The paper does not address the question(s), does not demonstrate the weekly readings | lecture | video were engaged with. The response is confusing and lacks a coherent center, evidence, or examples to support content is missing. The paper is full of spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.

Discussion Board Rubric

Each weekly post is worth 20 points. This is how they'll be graded:

Contribution	Description	Points
Excellent	More than answers the prompt, contributes to furthering the discussion with ideas that draw on the week's lecture readings video. No errors of punctuation, etc.	20
Substantial	Answers the prompt, comments reflect some ideas the draw on the week's lecture readings. above. One or two spelling errors, punctuation errors; sentence structure is sound, makes sense.	15-19
Meh	Comments are obvious, don't reflect the reading lecture, no real analysis. Multiple spelling, punctuation errors.	10-14
Incorrect	Answer doesn't address the prompt; difficulty understanding sentences; does not reflect the week's reading lectures video.	5
None	No response	0

Suggestions | Write your response in a Word document first, not in the DB space. Check the post for spelling, punctuation errors using spell check and Grammarly and then post it in the DB space.

Participation | Engagement Rubric

1. First, an FYI: Attendance/Participation will be taken each week and recorded on the University's attendance software in Banner, as all faculty are required to do now by the administration.
2. There are 6 weeks in Winter 2022 and weekly attendance will be measured in points. A 100 for the week equals 16.6 or 17 potential participation points. How will you earn those points?
 - a. Engaging in the course material equals participation. If you watch the videos, listen to/read the lectures, turn in the homework and writing assignments and contribute to the discussion boards you'll earn 17 points each week. Do it for all six week and it add up to 100, which equals 15% of your grade.
 - b. Students who do only some of those things will earn only some of those points.
 - c. Students who don't engage in any way, meaning they essentially disappear and don't "show up" for the class as it's structured, will receive an FN, meaning the student will fail the course for not showing up.

Score	To nearest tenth	To nearest whole number
17	100	100
16	94.1	94
15	88.2	88
14	82.4	82
13	76.5	76
12	70.6	71
11	64.7	65
10	58.8	59
9	52.9	53
8	47.1	47
7	41.2	41
6	35.3	35
5	29.4	29
4	23.5	24
3	17.6	18
2	11.8	12
1	5.9	6

17. STANDARDS AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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Plagiarism:

“In fairness to all students, I adhere strictly to the University’s academic integrity policy (see p. 46 of the Undergraduate Catalogue). Students are responsible for creating original work with sources properly cited.

“I take plagiarism very seriously and will fail students for the assignment or the course for quoting the work of others without identifying the source(s). If I have reason to believe you have deliberately presented the work of others as your own work, I will give a failing grade for the course.

“How can you avoid plagiarism?”

- Using more than six or seven words in a row from a source means you must use quotation marks to indicate you are quoting directly.
- “Paraphrasing is highly desirable, usually preferable to lengthy quotes, but must have the source cited as if it were a direct quote (but quotation marks are not used).
- “Even if you change some of the words, if you are using the substantive language and ideas from a source, you must indicate the source it is from. If you use statistics from a source (other than your primary research), you must cite the source.
- “Communication majors need to meet the highest standards of avoiding plagiarism. Careers and reputations in our field can be lost based on one instance of plagiarism, intentional or not.

**I reserve the right to amend the syllabus as needed to achieve the objectives of the course.