Fall 9-1-2019

JRNL 400.01: Ethics and Trends in News Media

Lee M. Banville
University of Montana - Missoula, lee.banville@umontana.edu

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JRNL 400-Ethics and Trends in News Media

Fall 2019

3 Credits-Traditional Grading Only

Scope-This explores the ethical issues and changing realities facing in journalism and the media. It is a seminar built around in-depth research and consideration and synthesis of ethical decision-making. Students will write a research paper on an approved topic in journalism/media. Students will also participate in debates connected to ethical case studies.

Learning Outcomes: The successful student in JRNL 400 will demonstrate the following skills upon completion of the course:

- Conduct in-depth research on a topic of importance in the media
- Write about topics of ethical and journalistic concerns
- Ability to make a class presentation that demonstrates analysis of ethical questions.
- Knowledge of ethical practices in the media and demonstrated ability to engage in ethical decision-making.
- Knowledge of current trends and issues in the media.
- Ability to synthesize and assess trends within the media.

General Education/Journalism Credits: This course is required for your BA degree in journalism or a minor. It does not fulfill any general education requirements.

Frequency of Offering: This course is offered fall semester and spring semesters. It is designed to be taken in the student’s final year in the program.

Class Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays in DAH 316 from 9:30-11 a.m.

Instructor: Lee Banville, Professor, School of Journalism. Office: Don Anderson Hall Room 406
Office Hours: M 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. and Th 3:30-4:30 p.m. Other times available by appointment.
Office Phone: 406-243-2577
Email: lee.banville@umontana.edu

Required Textbooks: “The New Ethics of Journalism: Principles for the 21st Century,” by Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel. Readings will be assigned from the book and other areas at least one week ahead of class. Students may be quizzed or questioned about the readings during class time.

E-mail: Each student must have a working e-mail address that YOU CHECK OFTEN.

Attendance: You will be allowed two unexcused absence without consequence. Illness and university business absences will be excused IF you provide written evidence of your illness/travel. Please note that work for other journalism courses/activities are NOT considered an excused absence.

If you have more than two unexcused absences, your final grade will drop one letter grade. If you miss five or more classes, you will fail the course. Please arrive on time. If you are late three times, it will be considered an absence.

Academic Honesty
All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php

Same Work for Multiple Classes
You may not submit for this course any assignment that has previously or will be submitted for another class unless you receive prior approval from the professor for this course. To do so without permission will result in an “F” for the assignment and could result in an “F” for the course.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at http://www.umt.edu/dss/
Plagiarism
Plagiarism is defined as using other people’s words, ideas, data or materials and presenting them as your own. When in doubt, ASK! Be sure to include citations when using other people’s writing, because plagiarism is a serious offense in any discipline, but especially in journalism. It’s a firing offense in the professional world. In the School of Journalism, students face a range of penalties for plagiarism.

- a grade of “F” on the assignment
- a request that the student drop the class
- withdrawal of the student from the class, initiated by the professor
- an “F” in the course
- expulsion from the School of Journalism
- denial of the student’s degree
- expulsion, suspension or probation from the university.

If you need more information or have questions about exactly what constitutes plagiarism, ask me!! PLAGIARISM and all forms of cheating are treated with harsh discipline in the journalism school and by the university. Don’t do it.

Grading:
Paper 1-Ethics Brief and Class Debate 25 points
Paper 2-First Draft Research Paper 15 points
Paper 3-Final Paper 35 points
Portfolio/Resume Review 10 points
Class Participation 15 points
TOTAL 100 POINTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-90%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>87-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>69-68%</td>
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<td>67-63%</td>
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**Schedule**

Most classes will be built around a series of readings. We will tackle a different ethical issue or trend within the class period.

This is a seminar-style and so the expectation is you do the reading and come ready to discuss. Readings will ideally be set one week prior to the class and I will specifically call on people for their detailed thoughts and reactions. If I call on you and you are not there, you will be deducted class participation points. If you are there but did not do the reading, you will also lose points.

Eight times over the course of the semester we will have an in-class ethical debate based on an SPJ ethics case study. These debates will also include prepared briefs from the two teams distributed beforehand. You will be asked before and after to take a quick survey about how you would respond to the ethical question. These surveys will count toward class participation, as well.

The final 3-4 weeks of class will be made up of individual meetings with each of you to review your portfolio and resume. The sessions will last 15-20 minutes.

We will meet on the final class period of the semester to review the course and turn in your final paper.

**Research paper**

*You must send me a written proposal for your research paper via Moodle no later than class time on Sept. 12.* The proposal must include the ethical question or professional trend in news media you hope to research and an explanation of why it's a timely subject. The pitch must also include links to preliminary research you've done in choosing the topic and a list of primary and secondary sources you expect to consult in your research. (Please make sure they exist before you cite them. In other words, convince me that the answers are out there.)

The final paper should be at least 2,500 words in length. *It must include your research question, your research method, a thesis, reporting to support the thesis and a conclusion.* It also must include footnotes or endnotes. It must contain original and timely research, not just a rehash of what others have written or said. That means you’ll have to include some interviews with sources who have expertise on the subject.

*Warning: You may not use J-school profs and other students as sources.*

Your paper is a work of critical inquiry and thinking. It must reflect the level of research and writing expected of a senior. And you must be fair. If you criticize people or institutions, you must offer them a chance to respond.

Key deadlines:
• I’ll expect a first draft of the research paper in my office and by email by class time on Thursday, Nov 5. This draft will include the introduction (the research question and what makes it compelling, newsworthy, timely, etc.); a description of your method (how you intend to explore this: sources, data, studies you'll use.); a working thesis statement (a good sentence explaining your conclusion so far) and enough of the reporting for me to see that you're on the right track. I expect to see at least 1,000 words in this draft – enough to show me that you're on the right track.

• A hard copy and an email version of the final draft are due in class on Thursday, Dec. 5. The final draft will include entire paper, along with footnotes and endnotes citing your sources. Inserting both is easy in Word.

**Ethics Case Studies**

During the course of the semester we will have a series of in-class debates about ethical decisions made by newsrooms and whether the “correct” decision was made.

These debates are partly to help you understand what goes into making ethical decisions, how to considering ethical codes of behavior and how to compose effective arguments.

These cases are not black-and-white and so the idea is not to be right, but to fully consider the SPJ and other codes of ethics.

The SPJ code is a good place to start your analysis:

- Seek Truth and Report It
- Minimize Harm
- Act Independently
- Be Accountable and Transparent

More specific ideas are posted at the [SPJ Website](http://spj.org) for your reference.

**The Debates**

Eight debates: 16 teams (most are two-people and two will have three members)

Debates will use a case study from the SPJ Journalism Case Studies as a starting point. Each team will be responsible for formulating an argument for or against the decision taken by the news organization.

Your team should research the issue, broadening the argument to whether or not a group in the future should do what was done in your case study or make a different choice. You can and should research the original story and its fallout, other news organizations that
have dealt with similar stories and general consideration of the SPJ or other codes of ethics.

Each group will prepare a two-page brief that supports your argument and, to the degree possible, rebuffs the other side. This document will be prepared and distributed to the class the meeting before the debate.

**Case Studies:**

- A Congressman’s Past
- Media-Savvy Killer
- Offensive Images
- A Self-Serving Leak
- The Media’s Foul Ball
- Controversy over a Concert
- Naming Victims of Sex Crimes
- Showing Drafts to a Source
- The Sting
- Publishing Drunk Drivers’ Photos

**Debate Format**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Presentation of the “Arguments for…”</th>
<th>15 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team One</td>
<td>Presentation of the “Arguments against…”</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Two</td>
<td>Period used for preparation of responses</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team One</td>
<td>Response to issues raised by Team Two</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Two</td>
<td>Response to issues raised by Team One</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Discussion</td>
<td>Final discussion and class response</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the debate, attendees in class will complete a survey and offer feedback via an in-class form. These forms will help students understand how effective their arguments were and where the gaps were.

Completed surveys will also be used to ensure attendance by students not presenting.
Portfolio/Resume Review

As this is a class for seniors, it is important to take some time and prepare a portfolio of your work as well as a resume to circulate to potential employers or grad programs.

You will submit both to me by Nov. 8 via Moodle.

Reviews are an opportunity to think about how you are positioning your work and I will offer you detailed feedback and an edit to your resume. Although this is assignment carries 10 points of your final grade you will get full credit if you attend the review and submit your portfolio and resume on time.