

9-2013

## JRNL 400.02: Ethics and Trends in News Media

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### Recommended Citation

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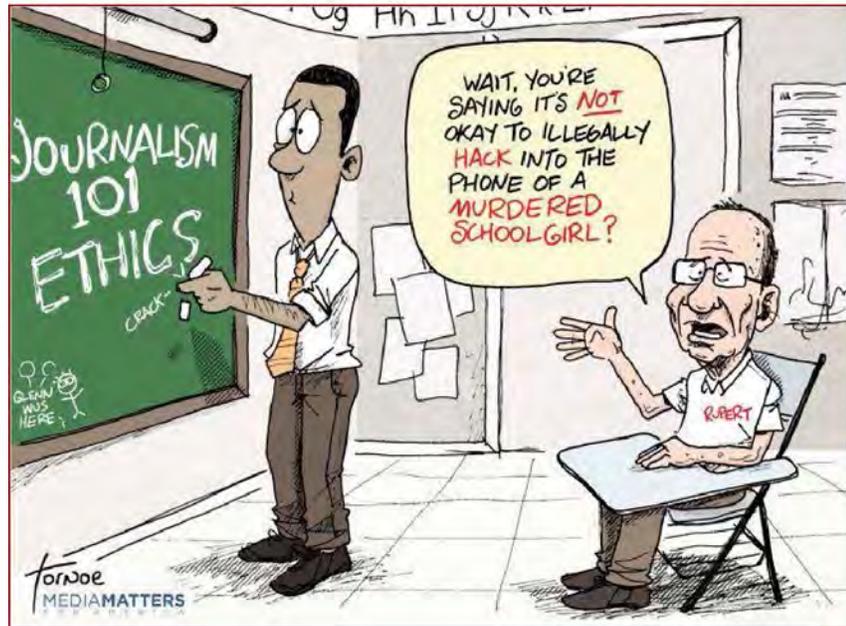
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# JRNL 400 Ethics and Trends in News Media

Section 2, Fall 2013

**Instructor:** Dennis Swibold, 243-2230, [dennis.swibold@umontana.edu](mailto:dennis.swibold@umontana.edu)  
**Office hours:** 11 a.m. to noon, T-Th, or by appointment  
**Class meetings:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:40-11 a.m., DAH 210

## GOALS AND OUTCOMES



This course aims to help students function ethically and successfully as journalists. By the course's end, successful students should have a more nuanced understanding of the key ethical issues facing the evolving news media and be able to develop a framework for making ethical decisions. They should also have a deeper awareness of the economic and cultural environments in which today's journalists operate.

## HOW WE'LL WORK

We will follow key ethical debates and study particular cases that reveal how journalists wrestle with those questions. Students are expected present cases and participate vigorously in class discussions. I expect you to stake out positions and test each other's assumptions. The class will also feature a sprinkling of guests, and will give us an opportunity to do some final academic advising for seniors.

## REQUIREMENTS

**1. Attendance and participation** – Seminars can't succeed without your involvement. You are expected to attend every class and participate in every discussion. I'll be tracking that.

You are allowed one unexcused absence, but not on your presentation day. Doing work for other classes is not a worthy excuse. If you are sick, notify me by voicemail or email before class begins. Two unexcused absences means a deduction of one letter grade. Be on time. If you are late consistently, your grade will suffer.

Check your official UM email regularly for reading assignments and other communications.

**2. Daily reading:** Read the Poynter's MediaWire site every. It's a great place for news about ethical problems and business trends. You can get it delivered by email. <http://www.poynter.org/category/latest-news/mediawire/>. Much of the class discussion will center on current ethical lapses, and here's where you'll find the latest. Expect the occasional quiz on those issues. (By the way, the Poynter Institute's site is a great first stop for researching ethics cases, too.)

**3. Ethics presentation:** Each of you will be assigned an ethical case to research and present to the class. You will research to topic, make a 20-minute class presentation and lead the class discussion that follows. I'll post a schedule of presentation dates.

The presentation will include a four-page paper outlining the incident, the response and your opinion on how the problem should have been addressed. The paper must also include discussion questions you intend to pose and sources you have consulted. The paper is due to me by email on the Friday before your presentation.

**4. Research paper:** You must have an approved topic for your research paper no later than **Oct. 4**. It can be about ethics, but it need not be restricted to that topic. If it is about ethics, the paper must be about an ethical situation other than the one you presented to the class. Start pitching me ideas by email.

Pick a topic that involves a trend in news media, one that is complex enough to merit a paper of at least 3,000 words. *The paper must include your assessment of the situation.* It also must include a list sources consulted, either in footnotes or a bibliography at the end. It should contain some original research (primary sources), not just a rehash of what others have written or said. That means you'll have to interview sources with have first-hand knowledge of the subject (probably not your friends or professors.)

This paper is a work of journalism. It must reflect the level of research, thinking and writing expected of a senior. If you criticize people, you must seek comments from those critiqued, be they local or national figures. In other words, it must show that you understand the topic thoroughly.

*The deadlines:*

*I'll expect a first draft of the research paper in my office and by email by **5 p.m., Friday, Nov. 1.***

*A hard copy and an email version are due in class on **Tuesday, Dec. 3.** The final draft will include entire paper, along with footnotes and endnotes citing your sources.*

## **GRADING**

I'll grade you on participation, quizzes, your ethics presentation and your research. For the *participation grade*, I'll take attendance and monitor your contribution to class discussions. The in-class *quizzes* will be in multiple choice or short-answer form and will reflect how well you follow Poynter's MediaWire blog. My grades for the *presentation* and *paper* will be based on the quality of your research and presentation. More about that later.

Here's how I'll calculate a final grade:

• Class participation	15 percent
• Quizzes	15 percent
• Ethics presentation, including short paper	35 percent
• Research paper	40 percent

## **PLAGIARISM AND OTHER DIFFICULTIES**

If you plagiarize, you will get an F for the course, which means you'll have to retake the course next year to graduate. I promise you I will be scrutinizing your work, so attribute any instance in which you use someone else's words or ideas. You can do it with attribution or with footnotes or endnotes. Also, Wikipedia is not an acceptable source.

You may not submit for this course any assignment that has previously or will be concurrently submitted for another class unless you receive prior approval from me. To do so without permission will result in an "F" for the assignment and could result in an "F" for the course.

## **AFTER-HOURS ACCESS**

For after hours access to Don Anderson Hall, complete and submit this form online: <http://jour.umt.edu/after-hours/> by Friday, August 31. Complete only one request form per semester – be sure to list all courses you are taking. Codes will remain active until the last day of the semester. Any forms not submitted by Friday, September 7, will not have access – no exceptions.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities can request reasonable program modifications by consulting with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services Web site at [www.umt.edu/dss/](http://www.umt.edu/dss/)