

Syllabus

**JOUR 5310: Media Ethics**

Fall 2009

**Course** : **Tuesday; 3:30 p.m.-6:20 p.m. GAB 204**  
**Instructor** : **Mitch Land, PhD, Interim Dean GAB 207. (940) 565-4564**  
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1. **Office Hours:** T-R 2 p.m.—3:30 p.m.
2. **Course Description and Objectives:** Media ethics seeks to promote the development of critical thinking and reasoning skills necessary to navigate the complex questions and decisions media practitioners encounter in the mass media and along the emerging information highway. The study of ethical theory in the context of rapid technological change provides a means of acquiring these analytical abilities. This two-tiered approach first examines the relationship between professional ethics and social philosophy to establish a framework for understanding the relationship between media practice and a democratic society. Pivotal to this is learning to distinguish between utilitarianism and communitarianism. Second, industry changes, organizations and their leaders and managers will be examined in cases that illustrate paths of moral reasoning (or the lack thereof). Permeating the study is the dialectic between freedom and responsibility, which is at the heart of media ethics.
3. **Text:** Mitch Land and Bill Hornaday (eds) *Contemporary Media Ethics: A Practical Guide for Students, Scholars and Professionals*. Marquette Books: January 2006. Students are under no obligation to purchase textbooks at the University Bookstore. Also, books may be purchased from online vendors or from any other source.
4. **Supplemental Texts:** Sissela Bok, *Lying*. Second edition, 1989: New York: Vintage Books. H. J. Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*. (1990). New York: Longman.

**Notice:** A student of this institution is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

5. **Books on Reserve:**

- ◆ Altschull, H. J. (1990). *From Milton to McLuhan*. New York: Longman
- ◆ Christians, CG., et al (1993). *Good News: Social Ethics*. New York: Oxford U P GN
- ◆ Lambeth, E. (1992). *Committed Journalism* Bloomington: Indiana Press. CJ
- ◆ Cooper, T. W. et al (1989). *Communication Ethics and Global Change*. White Plains: Longman. CE
- ◆ Pember, Don. (1990) *Mass Media Law*. Dubuque, IA : W.C. Brown.

National accreditation enhances your education at the Mayborn Graduate Institute because it certifies that the institute adheres to many standards established by the ACEJMC accrediting body. Among these standards are student learning outcomes, covered by journalism courses in all sequences. The following outcomes are expected from this course:

- Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.

- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

## 6. Course Requirements & Grading:

### 1). Case Studies (PowerPoint Presentation and analysis) and Learning Modules September 22 20%

Beginning with the fourth class meeting (Tuesday, Sept. 22), individual students will present two case studies via PowerPoint presentations (may include mixed-media format). The student will present the case studies, then help the class understand the case through practical exercises or learning modules. The case study must be taken from the textbook. The student will present only one case study per session.

### 2). Key concepts presentation September 8 20%

From Altschull, H. Select three subjects from the following list to present in class during the semester. You will lead the class in discussions of ideas from these scholars, statesmen and leaders:

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|---|--------|
| 1. John Milton and the Self-Righting Principle          | p. 36  |
| 2. Thomas Hobbes and Society by Contract                | p. 43  |
| 3. John Locke and the Paradox of Democracy              | p. 49  |
| 4. David Hume; the Roots of a Skeptical Press           | p. 59  |
| 5. Montesquieu: The Spirit of Laws                      | p. 72  |
| 6. Rousseau: The General Will ...                       | p. 85  |
| 7. Benjamin Franklin and the "Price of Truth"           | p. 105 |
| 8. James Madison and Free Expression                    | p. 109 |
| 9. The "Best Friend" of the Press: Thomas Jefferson     | p. 114 |
| 10. Paine, Burke, and the "Rights of Man"               | p. 127 |
| 11. Kant, Hegel, and the Counterrevolution              | p. 136 |
| 12. Radical Economics and the Rise of Capitalism        | p. 150 |
| 13. John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism Revisited          | p. 161 |
| 14. Marx and the Other Side of Synthesis                | p. 173 |
| 15. The Press and Frontier Society                      | p. 193 |
| 16. Darwin and the Optimistic Society                   | p. 199 |
| 17. Mass Society and a Mass Press                       | p. 204 |
| 18. William James: The Rise of Pragmatism               | p. 235 |
| 19. Journalists and the Age of Reform                   | p. 241 |
| 20. The Doctrine of the Right to Know                   | p. 248 |
| 21. The Muckrakers as Watchdogs                         | p. 271 |
| 22. The Doctrine of Social Responsibility               | p. 283 |
| 23. Investigative Journalism: the Conscience of Society | p. 288 |
| 24. The New Conservatives and the New Radicals          | p. 299 |

### 3). New Case Analysis Presentations begin Nov. 17 20%

Each student will identify a current media ethics issue to explain and analyze using the Point-of-Decision Pyramid. The paper should follow the example of the text's case studies. A quality paper will include an interview from the media professional(s) relevant to the case. In addition to the factual reporting based on your research, the paper will show thoughtful consideration of the issues and problems. This will result in a paper of from 10 to 15 typewritten, double-spaced pages at 12-pt. Times Roman font and an accompanying PowerPoint synopsis that will be presented to the class, beginning Nov. 17. Submit your papers one side and stapled only.

**4). Mid-term and final exams****Oct. 20; Dec. 15****40%****5). Class Schedule and Student Responsibilities****WEEKS ONE and TWO**

Introduction to course; overview of books and discussion of approaches and requirements for case studies.

Establishing an Ethical Framework -- Read Land & Hornaday, chs. 1-2; Lambeth CJ, Ch. 1; Christians, Ferre & Fackler GN. See and read references to "freedom" listed on p. 259 of the index to GN.

The Nature of Applied Ethics -- Read Lambeth CJ, Chs. 2-5; Punctual and regular attendance is expected. No late assignments or makeup exams are permitted. I do not give **incompletes**.

Establishing a Philosophical Framework -- Presentation of key concepts

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|---|-------|
| 1). John Milton and the Self-Righting Principle | p. 36 |
| 2). Thomas Hobbes and Society by Contract       | p. 43 |

**WEEK THREE** Establishing a Philosophical Framework -- Presentation of key concepts

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| 3). John Locke and the Paradox of Democracy    | p. 49 |
| 4). David Hume; The Roots of a Skeptical Press | p. 59 |

Ethical Foundations and Perspectives – Read Land & Hornaday, chs. 2-4; Christians, etc. al MECMR pp. 1-26.

Potter Box Analysis of Food Lion V. ABC PrimeTime Live

**WEEK FOUR** Establishing a Philosophical Framework -- Presentation of key concepts

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| 5). Montesquieu: The Spirit of Laws                      | p. 72 |
| Voltaire: "I Will Defend to the Death..."                | p. 77 |
| 6). Rousseau: The General Will and Social Responsibility | p. 85 |

The Media Practitioner and Duty -- Lambeth, CJ, pp. 15-22 (review); Principle of Truth Telling, CJ pp. 23-27; Sissela Bok, *Lying*, Chs. 1-6; Christians GN, Ch. 2.

Presentation of Case Study and Learning Module: "The Problem with 'All-American Girls': Coverage of slayings Brings out Best, then Worst, of Victims," by Jacque Lambiase in Land & Hornaday.

**WEEK FIVE** Presentation of Case Studies and Learning Modules:

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| 7). Benjamin Franklin and the "Price of Truth" | p. 105 |
| 8). James Madison and Free Expression          | p. 109 |

"Reporting on Environmental Activism: Ethical Considerations in Radio Interviews with Julia Butterfly Hill," by Michael S. Bruner in Land & Hornaday.

"Siege at Hanging Rock Homestead: Killers, Child Hostages and Broadcast Ratings," by David Conley in Land & Hornaday.

**WEEK SIX** Establishing a Philosophical Framework -- Presentation of key concepts

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| 9). The "Best Friend" of the Press: Thomas Jefferson | p. 114 |
| 10). Paine, Burke, and the "Rights of Man"           | p. 127 |

### The Media Practitioner and Deception

Read Lambeth, CJ, “Moulded to Murder” case, pp. 35-38; 41-44, 150; Ch. 12, “Journalism’s Tragedy of the Commons,” pp. 138-153. Review Bok LYING, pp. 3-46.

Presentation of Case Studies and Learning Modules: “Racial Justice vs. The First Amendment,” by Bill Hornaday in Land & Hornaday (eds.).

“The Perils of Local TV Investigative Reporting,” by Alan Albarran in Land & Hornaday.

**WEEK SEVEN** Establishing a Philosophical Framework -- Presentation of key concepts

11). Kant, Hegel, and the Counterrevolution	p. 136
12). Radical Economics and the Rise of Capitalism	p. 150

The Journalist and Conflicts of Interest – Read Lambeth CJ, Chs. 6-8.

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “Ethical and Cultural Issues of Reporting on HIV/AIDS in South Africa,” by Herman Wasserman and Arnold S. de Beer in Land & Hornaday (eds.)

“Outing Revisited: The Ethics of Interviewing Grieving Relatives Who are Unaware of Their Loved One’s Homosexuality,” by Elizabeth Koehler in Land & Hornaday (eds.)

**WEEK EIGHT** Establishing a Philosophical Framework -- Presentation of key concepts

13). John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism Revisited	p. 161
14). Marx and the Other Side of Synthesis	p. 173

The Ethics & Efficacy of Civic Journalism – Christians GN, Chs. 2-3 “Enlightenment Individualism,” and “Communitarian Ethics.”

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “Snuff Film or Serious Journalism? The Case of Daniel Pearl,” by Michael Nitz in Land & Hornaday.

“Patriotism and Reporting on Terrorism,” by Nitz in Land & Hornaday.

Media Law: Libel

**WEEK NINE**

15). The Press and Frontier Society	p. 193
16). Darwin and the Optimistic Society	p. 199

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “Death or Discretion: CNN and ‘The News It Kept to Itself,’” in Land & Hornaday.

Media Law: Invasion of Privacy

**WEEK TEN**

17). Mass Society and a Mass Press	p. 204
18). William James: The Rise of Pragmatism	p. 235

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “A Tale of Four Ethics: Truth Telling in an Authoritarian State,” in Land & Hornaday.

**WEEK ELEVEN**

19). Journalists and the Age of Reform	p. 241
20). The Doctrine of the Right to Know	p. 248

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “The Reporting of True Confessions: The Dallas Morning News and Timothy McVeigh’s Confession,” in Land & Hornaday.

### **WEEK TWELVE**

- 21). The Muckrakers as Watchdogs p. 271  
 22). The Doctrine of Social Responsibility p. 283

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “Texas Bonfire Traditions: The Cartoon That Came Under Fire,” in Land & Hornaday.  
 “Truth on Campus: The Anonymous David Slays the Political Goliath, But at What Cost?” in Land & Hornaday.

Media Law: Other Issues

### **WEEK THIRTEEN**

- 23). Investigative Journalism: the Conscience of Society p. 288  
 24). The New Conservatives and the New Radicals p. 299

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “Does D Stand for Decadence? Magazine Publisher Considers Limits of Provocative Fashion Ads,” in Land & Hornaday.  
 “Selling Lollipops to the Teen Market: Chupa Chups’ ‘Oral Pleasure’ Campaign,” in Land & Hornaday.

Individual Case Studies

### **WEEK FOURTEEN**

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “PETA’s GOT BEER?” Campaign: Brewing Up an Ethical Controversy,” in Land & Hornaday.  
 “Product Problem: Acting Responsibly When It’s Not Your Fault,” in Land & Hornaday.

Individual Case Studies

### **WEEK FIFTEEN**

Case Studies & Learning Modules: “A Scuffle, A Stonewall, and a Season: Football Superstar,” in Land & Hornaday.  
 “Smoke Vs. Fire: The Ethics of Client Representation in Public Relations,” in Land & Hornaday.

Individual Case Studies

### **WEEK SIXTEEN**

Individual Case Studies

### **WEEK SEVENTEEN**

**If a student requires special accommodations, s/he must contact the instructor and the Office of Disability Accommodation. I am happy to work with any special needs you may have.**

Plagiarism, in a nutshell, is using other people's written words as your own. Some people consider the use of 7-10 words in a row, copied from another source, as plagiarism. Be sure to include citations when using other people's writing, because plagiarism is a serious offense in any discipline, especially in journalism. It's a firing offense in the professional world. In this school, students face a range of penalties for plagiarism (depending on the importance of the assignment). Students may continue in the course pending the outcome of an appeals process, which is routed through the department /school and the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.