ACM/Com/Jour 460: Media Ethics

Spring 2008 T 1:30-4:15 p.m. Post 127 Office: CR 204
Prof. Tom Brislin, Ph.D. Hours: Daily 10:30-11:30
E-Mail: tbrislin@hawaii.edu Phone: 956-3788
<www2.hawaii.edu/~tbrislin/ethics>

This course satisfies the E-Focus requirement for Manoa General Education


RECOMMENDED READING & RESOURCES:
• CyberEthics (2nd ed.) by Terry Halbert and Elaine Ingulli (Thomson: 2005)
• “Film and Ethics,” in Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures by Noel Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Blackwell: 2006)
• The Moral Premise: Harnessing Virtue and Vice for Box Office Success by Stanley Williams (Michael Wiese: 2006)
• Living Ethics Across Media Platforms by Michael Bugeja (Oxford: 2008)
• Media and Ethics: Principles for Moral Decisions by Elaine Englehardt and Ralph Barney (Wadsworth: 2002)
• Images That Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media (2nd ed.) by Paul Lester and Susan Ross (Praeger: 2003)
• Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach (2nd ed.) by Larry May et. al. (Prentice: 1998)
• The Journal of Mass Media Ethics. Available in the School of Communications Library

INTRODUCTION: Aloha. Welcome to the study of Media Ethics through a critical analysis of principle–based decision-making for professional communicators. In this class, we will use the media to study the media. We will watch films and videos, and read academic and literary texts as the basis for class discussions, tests and writings. The basics of regular coursework will be respected: attendance, participation, assignments completed on deadline, etc., supporting the purpose of the course: Critical thinking through the study and process of decision making in professional media communication and the principles upon which we base those decisions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Through successful completion of course readings, viewings, tests and assignments - and through active participation in class discussions - you will have the tools to identify and analyze ethical issues through:

• An understanding of the underlying ethical theories and guiding principles that apply to mass communication.
• The ability to apply various decision-making strategies to ethical problems.
• The knowledge of the ethical norms of journalism and mass communication.
• The application of ethical standards to professional situations.
ACADEMY FOR CREATIVE MEDIA STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES: ACM stresses the interdisciplinary nature of media production and study within an Arts & Sciences foundation that reflects the development of academic, technical, creative and critical thinking skills. All ACM courses reflect a combination of our Student Learning Objectives across the curriculum. They include: Critical Thinking, Writing, History & Aesthetics, Professional Skills, Creativity, Responsibility and Student-Centered Learning.

This course will emphasize the skills of Critical Thinking, Writing, Professional Skills, Responsibility and Student-Centered Learning through lectures, discussions, in-class exercises, assignments and tests.

READ THIS TWICE: Attendance and Participation are required.

Critical Note: ONLY ONE unexcused absence is allowed. With a second unexcused absence and/or a pattern of late arrivals, points are deducted from the final score that can reduce your grade by an entire level. Obviously one can’t participate if one is excessively absent, or regularly late for class, so that portion of the grade will fall as well. The rule is: "Below Average" performance in attendance and on-time arrival will result in a "Below Average" Grade.

Testing: There will be regular tests at the start of most classes covering the required reading for that week. There will be 10 chapter tests and one mid-term. They are noted in the Course Calendar.

Writing: We’ll be doing a healthy bit of writing, some in class and some outside assignments. (See last page describing Commentaries and note their due dates in the weekly schedule.) They’ll take the form of analyses of contemporary news coverage, mass media campaigns and film portrayals; case studies; and personal, reflective pieces. A key part of ethical decision-making is the ability to publicly articulate our reasoning. Writing helps. A lot.

Course Grading:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Tests</td>
<td>100 Points (10 @ 10 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essays</td>
<td>15 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentaries</td>
<td>55 Points (2 @ 15 points; 1 @ 25 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>20 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10 Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Possible</strong></td>
<td><strong>200 Points</strong></td>
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A: 186-200 Points   B: 166-185 Points   C: 140-165 Points   D: 120-139 F: Below 120

Website Resources: A special web page has been created with numerous resources to help you understand the underlying philosophical principles of this course, to help you find ideas and reference materials for commentaries, and to connect you with online sources for film, journalism and professional communications. You'll find it at: www2.hawaii.edu/~tbrislin/ethics

The "Open Door Policy:" In addition to office hours, I will be happy to meet with you individually to discuss readings, commentaries, other assignments, or any class matter. Feel free to call me at my office, 956-3788, or e-mail me at tbrislin@hawaii.edu. If it’s urgent, you may call me at home, 487-7625, up to 10 pm.
Advice:

- Do the required readings - come to class with readings completed so you can discuss and apply them.
- Begin now to consider commentary options. Make time for research.
- Don't wait for due dates to write your assignments. Give yourself time to think, draft, edit, redraft.
- Don't be shy. If you have a question, concern, suggestion, or a criticism, please feel free to share it with me -- the sooner, the better!
- Use ACM/Com/Jour 460 as an opportunity to develop your own ideas about the role of media in society, and your role in the profession, especially a sensitivity to ethics and standards of performance. Enjoy the opportunity to reflect on what kind of professional you’re going to be.

Course Calendar: (Subject to revision to accommodate current events and extended discussions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics/Textbook Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>Introduction; Everyday Ethics; Read Ch 1</td>
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| 2    | 1/22 | NO CLASS: Read Ch 2; Research and Write 3 short essays, **due Thursday: Noon**  
See Writing Assignments/Commentaries on Page 4 |
| 3    | 1/29 | Ethical Triumvirate; Test on Ch 1 & 2 |
| 4    | 2/5  | Research for Commentary #1 |
| 5    | 2/12 | Self & Social Responsibility. Test on Ch 3 |
| 6    | 2/19 | Ethical Principles: Egoism; Read, and Test on, Ch 4  
**Due Thursday Noon: Commentary #1** |
| 7    | 2/26 | Ethical Principles: Utilitarianism; Read, and Test on, Ch 5 |
| 8    | 3/4  | Ethical Principles: Deontology; Read, and Test on, Ch 6 |
| 9    | 3/11 | Ethical Principles: Social Justice; Read, and Test on, Ch 7 |
| 10   | 3/18 | Image Ethics |
| 11   | 3/25 | NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK |
| 12   | 4/1  | Fault Lines; Virtue Theories; Read Ch 8 |
| 13   | 4/8  | Fault Lines; Virtue Theories; Read Ch 9; Test on Ch 8 & 9 |
| 14   | 4/15 | Professional Applications  
**Due Thursday: Noon: Commentary #2** |
| 15   | 4/22 | Professional Applications; Existentialism & Authenticity; Read, and Test on, Ch 10 |
| 16   | 4/29 | Professional Applications; Feminist Ethics; Read and Tests on Ch 12&13 (counts 2x) |
| 17   | 5/6  | Wrap-up; **Commentary #3** Written in Class |
Format: 12pt Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins all around. Papers with excessive errors in spelling, grammar & usage will be returned ungraded. NOTE: No assignments by email or attachments. Hard copy only. Deliver to CR 210 (ACM); CR 320 (School of COM); or CR 204.

Short Essays. 15 points. Due Week 2. Min. Length 3 pages each
1. Biographical Sketch – What’s Your Story?
2. Personal Ethical Dilemma
3. Survey the Media Landscape: Newspapers, Magazines, TV News, TV Shows, Films, for stories with ethical themes or that deal with ethical issues. Be specific on what you surveyed and what you found.

Commentary #1. Select ONE of the following. 15 points. Due Week 6. Min. length 4 pages
a. For Film/Video/Scriptwriting students: Watch “Brokedown Palace” (1999; Dir: Jonathan Kaplan; DVD 0955 in Sinclair Library). Compare and contrast with “Return to Paradise,” screened in class. How are the stories, characters, dilemmas, resolutions same/different?

b. For Journalism students: Analyze a week’s worth of newspaper cover stories in BOTH Hawai’i dailies (for The Advertiser, pages A-1 and B-1; for the Star-Bulletin, A-1 and A-3). Use Maynard’s concept of “Fault Lines” to analyze the subjects and sources for news stories <www.maynardije.org/programs/faultlines>. How are they represented in terms of ethnicity, gender, social class, generation and geography? Is there over- and/or under-representation? Who’s included and who is marginalized? While individual stories may be accurate, what does this tell you about the accuracy of how newspapers represent the community? Are fault lines bridged or breached?

c. For Mass Communication students: Analyze a local or national advertising campaign. (A campaign consists of multiple advertisements by a company or product reinforcing a single message.) Use Maynard’s concept of “Fault Lines” to analyze the advertising content <www.maynardije.org/programs/faultlines>. What do they tell us about ethnicity, gender, social class, generation and geography? Who’s included and who is marginalized? Are fault lines bridged or breached? What values are being reinforced about how one needs to look, behave and interact in society? What would a society look like if it was composed of only people in advertisements?


Declare your primary professional communication interest (journalist, filmmaker, public relations practitioner, etc.). What are the top three ethical concerns in this field as reflected in its professional literature you research online and in the library (hints: course website, reference librarian). Give practical examples that illustrate these concerns. Analyze them using the ethical theories we’ve learned. Use them as a “lens” to show how each theory might see the concern differently. **What guidelines can you create that would help a professional in this field face those concerns?** How are these guidelines grounded in the ethical principles we’ve learned in class? How would they satisfy the “3 tests?” What ethical principle do you think should guide professionals in this field to bring about a more just, equal and fair society?

Commentary #3. 15 points. Will be written on final class day. Your opportunity to integrate your knowledge of ethical theory and to apply decision-making strategies to a real-world dilemma.
What Does a Grade Mean in Media Ethics?

ACM instructors never “give” grades. Students earn grades, according to standards set in each course. ACM grades are “additive,” not “subtractive.” That means each student earns and accumulates points or credits throughout the semester that add up to the final grade.

ACM curriculum is “incremental.” Each assignment or lesson is a foundation for the next one, just as each introductory course is a foundation for the intermediate courses, which are in turn foundations for the advanced courses. In that respect, students should expect to receive a final grade based on the consistency of their performance throughout the semester. One shouldn’t expect to miss assignments, deadlines, or otherwise underperform in the first part of the semester and attempt to overcome it in a flurry of activity at the end.

Students should also keep in mind that we are graded not on what we already know, but on what we learn. Even the most accomplished filmmaker or scholar can’t expect an A or B without a consistent and continual growth and improvement in knowledge, skills, and critical thinking.

Here are how grades in ACM are defined:

**C** The grade of C signifies the level of performance or accomplishment expected of a university student in the state’s premier and nationally ranked institution of higher learning. A grade of C recognizes that the student met the expectations of the course: regular attendance, completion of all assignments, tests and exams, meeting all deadlines, and participation in all class activities. A grade of C rewards the academic behavior and performance expected of a UHM student. The student earning a C has grasped the basic concepts of the course and can apply them with adequate skill to assignments and/or projects. The student is able to accept feedback in the direction and correction of her/his work and incorporate it in her/his learning to demonstrate improvement. In courses involving group projects, the student offered solid and adequate support and contributions to the group’s outcome. A course where the common grade is C carries no negative reflection on either the students or the instructor. It is not a penalty grade – it is the norm. A grade of C (NOT C-) in a pre-requisite course is required to continue in the higher-level course(s).

**B** The grade of B signifies an increased level of effort AND performance by the student. The student earning a B has not only met expectations of student performance (attendance, assignments, etc.), but has exceeded many in significant, measurable ways. The student has consistently improved throughout the semester as demonstrated by increased quality and quantity of work reflected in assignments, projects, tests, exams, participation, etc. The student’s work requires some direction and correction, but she/he can then exercise independence in taking it to higher levels and improved outcomes. In courses requiring group projects, the student was able to assume full responsibility, often assuming multiple roles and duties, to making significant contributions to the group’s success. There is no “B for effort” alone. It is not a reward for simply “trying hard.” The grade of B is NOT “the new C.”

**A** The grade of A signifies the highest level of performance and accomplishment, exceeding ALL expected course outcomes. The student earning an A has taken responsibility for her/his learning, independently accumulating knowledge and improving skills beyond the classroom. The A student’s work requires minimal direction and correction and results in outcomes that can serve as a model of student achievement for the course. In courses requiring group projects, the student has exercised leadership, often assisting others in realizing their full potential to contribute to the group’s success.

**D** The student has performed below the expectations of the course. Many factors can contribute to this minimal passing grade including poor attendance, poor performance in assignments, projects, tests and exams, lack of participation and cooperation with others. Any behavior that interferes with the learning of others, including frequent lateness, class disruptions, and lack of contributions to group projects, can result in a grade of D regardless of other levels of individual performance. Any incident of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, can result in an automatic D or F.

**F** The student has not completed a sufficient level of quantity or quality of work to earn a passing grade. The student earning an F has not met a significant number of course expectations.

**+/-** Individual instructors may utilize the plus and minus system to further define or elaborate on these standards.