



OTTAWA ONLINE
COM-40163 – Communication Law and Ethics

Course Description

This course presents the laws governing and constraining the fields within communication. It examines and applies ethical perspectives available to practitioners of the field. Students articulate a well-supported personal ethical stance. Various legal and ethical contexts such as trial consulting, advertising, public relations, broadcasting are explored.

This is a fully online, eight-week course. We will not meet face-to-face at any time.

Course Prerequisites

None

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Comprehend pivotal areas of law within the field of communication.
- Identify current trends in communication law.
- Construct an in-depth review of one area within the law.
- Explore how communication influences the practice of law.
- Describe and explain an array of ethical positions.
- Create an integrated personal ethical position from theory.
- Apply an original ethical position to examples from areas of practice within the field of communication.

Required Text

Motley, M. T. (2012). Forensic communication: application of communication research to courtroom litigation. New York: Hampton Press. ISBN: 9781612890814

Patterson, P., & Wilkins L. (2014). Media ethics: issues and cases (8th. ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 9780073526249

Pember, D. R., & Calvert, C. (2013). Mass media law (18th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 9780073526188

Course Assignment Descriptions and Schedule At-A-Glance

You will have several opportunities to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the principles taught in this course. The primary means of evaluating your work will be through practical application of the material. In the event that you have difficulty

completing any of the assignments for this course, please contact your instructor immediately. Please refer to the **Weekly Materials** section of the cyberclassroom for complete details regarding the activities and assignments for this course. The following is merely a summary.

Discussion contributions (160 points)

(three postings per discussion @ 20 points per week)

Initial Substantive Posts: Submit an initial response to each of the prompts provided each week by your instructor. Your initial post should be substantive (approximately ½ of a page in length) and must be posted by midnight, Central Time by Wednesday of each week. In your substantive post you are encouraged to use references (you may use your textbook); show evidence of critical thinking as it applies to the concepts or prompt and/or use examples of the application of the concepts to work and life. Proper punctuation, grammar and correct spelling are expected. Please use the **spell-check** function.

Required Replies: You must reply to at least two different peers per prompt. Your replies should build on the concept discussed, offer a question to consider, or add a differing perspective, etc. Rather than responding with, "Good post," explain why the post is "good" (why it is important, useful, insightful, etc.). Or, if you disagree, respectfully share your alternative perspective. Just saying "I agree" or "Good idea" is not sufficient for the posts you would like graded.

Posting Guidelines: Overall, postings must be submitted on at least two separate days of the week. It is strongly recommended you visit the discussion forum throughout the week to read and respond to your peers' postings. You are encouraged to post more than the required number of replies.

(Please review the **Policies** section of Blackboard for further details.)

Week 1	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Online Content Associated with Week 1 • Mass Media Law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: The American Legal System • Media Ethics: Issues and Cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: An Introduction to Ethical Decision Making • Forensic Communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: Musical Chairs in the Jury Box: Trial Consulting and Jury Selection • Chapter 2: Factors Influencing Jury Decision Making: Before the Trial Starts • Chapter 5: Factors Influencing Jury Decision Making: Prior to and During Deliberation • Chapter 6: Hindsight Bias, Juror Decision Making, and Courtroom Communication
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Sunday
Assignment(s)	<p>Presentation: The American Legal System</p> <p>Create a Powerpoint presentation that captures the main concepts from this week's study of the American legal system. Your presentation should focus on the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five Sources of Law Different Judicial Systems in the US Trial Courts Appellate Courts Federal Courts Supreme Court Federal Court System State Court System Judicial Review Law Suits Criminal Prosecution <p>Your presentation should be at least 15 slides long, not including the title and reference pages. Please utilize various creative strategies (animation, color, images, etc.) to create an informative and visually appealing presentation.</p> <p>Due: Midnight, CT on Sunday</p> <p>Points Possible: 25</p>

Week 2	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Online Content Associated with Week 2 Mass Media Law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2: The First Amendment: The Meaning of Freedom Chapter 3: The First Amendment: Contemporary Problems
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Sunday
Assignment(s)	<p>Essay: High School Students and Freedom of Speech</p> <p>Write an essay of 250-500 words describing why high school students should have more, the same, or less free speech/free press freedoms than they do now. Justify your answers thoughtfully paying particular attention to the Annenberg video from this week's material as well as this week's assigned Text reading.</p> <p>Be specific in your explanations. Use your own words to paraphrase information from a resource, but always cite that resource using APA form and style parenthetical references. List the full source citation at the end in a References page. Use APA form and style, including a title page (title and reference page is not included in the page count for the paper).</p> <p>Due: Sunday at Midnight, CT</p> <p>Points Possible: 25</p> <p>Journal Assignment</p>

	<p>Summarize the following positions in a half page to a whole page in your own words (150-250 words). If you use websites other than the ones below, cut and paste the address and a one sentence description of the site at the bottom of your summary. You do not need to reference the following sites that you use, but put the descriptions in your own words—do not use the exact words provided by these sources:</p> <p>John Rawls's Veil of Ignorance Joseph Fletcher's Situational Ethics (Love Thy Neighbor) Teleology (Consequentialism) Ayn Rand's Rational Self Interest Antinomianism</p> <p>To access the journals, click on My Tools> Journals in the Blackboard Menu.</p> <p>Due: Sunday, midnight CT Points Possible: 20</p>
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Week 3	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Online Content Associated with Week 3 • Mass Media Law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4: Libel: Establishing a Case • Chapter 5: Libel: Proof of Fault • Chapter 6: Libel: Defenses and Damages • Media Ethics: Issues and Cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6: Mass Media in a Democratic Society: Keeping a Promise • Chapter 7: Media Economics: The Deadline Meets the Bottom Line
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday • At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Sunday
Assignment(s)	<p>Essay: Slander and Libel</p> <p>Locate two cases from legal, news or web reports to demonstrate the difference between the two types of defamation: libel and slander. For each case:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is involved with the case? • Write a strong paragraph of their background (approx. 150-175 words). • What are the facts of the case as they were presented in court? This should be the story of what was revealed in court. (250-350 words) • If you don't have the court documents, you may construct this from credible news reports. • What was the verdict/award? This can be brief, but include everything that happened. <p>After describing and explaining what happened in both court cases, provide your description of the differences in the two types of defamation. Include any resource that may be relevant in providing the</p>

	<p>legal definition or reference the textbook in your definition – or both. Be specific in your explanations. Use your own words to paraphrase information from a resource, but always cite that resource using APA form and style parenthetical references. List the full source citation at the end in a References page. Use APA form and style, including a title page (title and reference page is not included in the page count for the paper).</p> <p>Due: Sunday at Midnight, CT Points Possible: 25</p> <p>Journal Assignment</p> <p>For this week's ethics journal, select a case study from this week's reading in the Patterson & Wilkins (2013) text. Select only one case study for this comparison exercise. Ignore the questions provided, and instead, simply ask, "how would someone with an ethical perspective of x respond in this situation?" Ask this question for the each of the 10 ethical stances, providing a strong paragraph of application for each of the positions studied so far including Kant's Categorical Imperative, Aristotle's Golden Mean, Utilitarianism, Pluralistic Theory of Values, Ayn Rand's Rational Self Interest, John Fletcher's Situational Ethics ("Love Thy Neighbor"), John Rawls Veil of Ignorance, Teleology, and Antinomianism. By using the same case study to compare decisions from each of the philosophical perspectives, you will learn the differences of each.</p> <p>To access the journals, click on My Tools> Journals in the Blackboard Menu.</p> <p>Due: Sunday, midnight CT Points Possible: 20</p>
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Week 4	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Online Content Associated with Week 4 • Mass Media Law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7: Invasion of Privacy: Appropriation and Intrusion • Chapter 8: Invasion of Privacy: Publication of Private Information and False Light • Media Ethics: Issues and Cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5: Privacy: Looking for Solitude in the Global Village • Chapter 8: Picture This: The Ethics of Photo and Video Journalism
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday • At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Sunday
Assignment(s)	<p>Midterm Exam</p> <p>This week, you should take the mid-term exam found in the Blackboard classroom for this course. The exam consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. You must complete this exam in one sitting, and in one attempt. You may complete the exam at any point this week, prior to the given due date. You should have studied the readings and support</p>

	<p>material covered in the Week 1 - Week 4 of this course prior to taking the exam.</p> <p>Due: Sunday at Midnight, CT</p> <p>Points Possible: 50</p>
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Week 5	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Online Content Associated with Week 5 • Mass Media Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 13: Regulation of Obscene and Other Erotic Material • Chapter 14: Copyright • Media Ethics: Issues and Cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9: New Media: Continuing Questions and New Roles
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday • At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Sunday
Assignment(s)	<p>Personal Ethical Stance</p> <p>In this paper, you will select two ethical positions and describe them in detail. The goal of this paper is to then combine two positions into a single, cohesive personal ethical stance. Once you have defined your personal ethical stance, you should apply it to a case related to the field of communication. This case can come from your textbooks or any other source.</p> <p>Your paper should be at least 600 words and follow proper APA format. You should use at least 2 outside sources to support the ideas in your paper. Use the Resource Room available to you to help navigate the form and style requirements of APA.</p> <p>Due: Sunday at Midnight, CT</p> <p>Points Possible: 50</p>

Week 6	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Online Content Associated with Week 6 • Mass Media Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 15: Regulation of Advertising • Chapter 16: Telecommunications Regulation • Media Ethics: Issues and Cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3: Strategic Communication: Does Client Advocate Mean Consumer Adversary?
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday • At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Sunday
Assignment(s)	<p>Journal Assignment</p> <p>After reviewing this week's assigned reading from <i>Media Ethics: Issues and Cases</i>, select one of the cases the end of the chapter. Answer all of the questions at the end of the case (Micro, Mid-range, and Macro Issues). Be sure to answer from your newly defined ethical stance, and explain why someone from your stance might answer the questions the way you do. In other words, explain how and why you are applying</p>

	<p>your stance as you answer your questions. Clearly identify which case you have selected at the top of your answer sheet.</p> <p>To access the journals, click on My Tools> Journals in the Blackboard Menu.</p> <p>Due: Sunday at Midnight, CT</p> <p>Points Possible: 20</p>
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Week 7	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Online Content Associated with Week 7 • Mass Media Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9: Gathering Information: Records and Meetings • Chapter 10: Protection of News Sources/ Contempt Power • Media Ethics: Issues and Cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4: Loyalty: Choosing Between Competing Allegiances • Chapter 8: Picture This: The Ethics of Photo and Video Journalism
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday • At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Sunday
Assignment(s)	<p>Journal Assignment</p> <p>After reviewing the assigned readings and materials for, this week write a journal entry (at least 250 words) summarizing the dilemmas faced in photojournalism and video journalism. You may use the web links, cases, and news articles to help support your ideas.</p> <p>To access the journals, click on My Tools> Journals in the Blackboard Menu.</p> <p>Due: Sunday at Midnight, CT</p> <p>Points Possible: 20</p> <p>Paper: Legal Issue in a Communications Career</p> <p>This week you will turn in an in-depth paper describing one single legal issue that may be relevant in a career area of communication which interests you.</p> <p><i>Select Legal Issue</i></p> <p>Select a legal issue relevant to the area of communication. Start with the foundations or roots of that law, how it evolved into what the current definition, interpretations, and standards of that law, and finally, where you think it will evolve to in the future. Give justifications for why you think it will change or stay the same (example political forces, economic trends, changing media models, influence of the internet, etc.).</p> <p><i>Select a Potential Career</i></p> <p>Begin by identifying a career in a field in communication that holds some appeal. You may selecting a job post found on the internet. Areas that we have studied so far include journalism, trial consulting, photography, broadcasting, advertising, publishing, etc. Identify the source of your job post. Write an essay describing how one area within the laws that we have studied so far that could be important</p>

	<p>in that career. The paper should explore a past, present, future organization in light of the legal issue.</p> <p>Your paper should be at least 750 words and follow proper APA format. You should use at least 3 outside sources to support the ideas in your paper. Use the Resource Room available to you to help navigate the form and style requirements of APA. A title and reference page should be included.</p> <p>Due: Saturday at midnight, CT</p> <p>Points Possible: 75</p>
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Week 8	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Online Content Associated with Week 8 • Mass Media Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 11: Free Press–Fair Trial : Trial-Level Remedies and Restrictive Orders • Chapter 12: Free Press–Fair Trial: Closed Judicial Proceedings • Forensic Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3: Pretrial Publicity: Influences of Media Content and Stylistic Characteristics • Chapter 4: Deception and Deception Detection • Chapter 7: Pursuing Justice for Unwanted Pursuit: Stalking Research in the Courtroom • Chapter 9: Visual Forensics: Optimizing Graphics in the Courtroom
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial post to each prompt due by midnight, CT on Wednesday • At least two replies to peers for each prompt due by midnight, CT on Saturday
Assignment(s)	<p>Essay: Jury Influences</p> <p>After reviewing the previous chapters you read in Motley (2012), and the chapters assigned this week, write an essay outlining the influences on a jury that might effect a fair trial. Incorporate from the Pember & Calvert (2013) text the laws that are designed to prevent some of these biases. The essay should be at least 500 words.</p> <p>Be specific in your explanations. Use your own words to paraphrase information from a resource, but always cite that resource using APA form and style parenthetical references. Use APA form and style.</p> <p>Due: Saturday at Midnight, CT</p> <p>Points Possible: 25</p> <p>Final Exam</p> <p>This week, you should take the final exam found in the Blackboard classroom for this course. The exam consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. You must complete this exam in one sitting, and in one attempt. You may complete the exam at any point this week, prior to the given due date. You should have studied the readings and support material covered in this course this course prior to taking the exam.</p> <p>Due: Saturday, midnight CT</p>

	Points Possible: 50
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* All online weeks run from Monday to Sunday, except the last week, which ends on Saturday.

** All assignments are due at midnight Central Time. (All submissions to the Blackboard system are date/time stamped in Central Time).

Assignments At-A-Glance

Assignment/Activity	Qty.	Points	Total Points
Weeks 1-8: Discussion*	-	20 per week	160
Weeks 2-3; 6-7: Journals	4	20	80
Week 1: Presentation: The American Legal System	1	25	25
Week 2: Essay: High School Students and Freedom of Speech	1	25	25
Week 3: Essay: Slander and Libel	1	25	25
Week 4: Midterm Exam	1	50	50
Week 5: Personal Ethics Stance	1	50	50
Week 7: Paper: Legal Issue in a Communications Career	1	75	75
Week 8: Essay: Jury Influences	1	25	25
Week 8: Final Exam	1	50	50
TOTAL POINTS			565

*Please refer to the **Policies** menu for more information about requirements for Discussions.

Grading Scale

Grade	Percentage	Points
A	90 to 100%	508-565
B	80 to 89%	452-507
C	70 to 79%	395-451
D	60 to 69%	339-394
F	< 60%	< 338

To access your scores, click on Grades in the Student Tools area in Blackboard.

Important Policies

All course-specific policies for this course are spelled out here in this syllabus.

However, additional university policies are located in the Policies section of Blackboard.

You are responsible for reading and understanding all of these policies. All of them are important. Failure to understand or abide by them could have negative consequences for your experience in this course.

Editorial Format for Written Papers

All written assignments are to follow the APA writing style guidelines for grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This online course includes information regarding the APA style under "Writing and Research Resources" in the **Resource Room** on the course menu in Blackboard.

Ottawa Online Late Policy

With instructor approval, assignments may be accepted for up to one week after the due date, but a minimum automatic deduction of 10% of the points will be assessed. The instructor also has the option of increasing this deduction percentage up to a maximum

of 20%. Extenuating circumstances may be determined on rare occasions and an extension allowed without a deduction, but only at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Discussion board postings will not be accepted for credit when posted after the close of the discussion week. There are no exceptions to this rule; however, solely at the discretion of the instructor, the student may be allowed to submit an alternative assignment to make up for the points under extenuating circumstances. If granted, this should be an exception to the rule.

No assignments will be accepted after the last day of the course (end of term) unless arrangements have been made and “approved” by the instructor at least one week in advance.

Saving Work

It is recommended that you save all of your work from this course on your own computer or flash drive. The capstone course you take at the end of your program may require you to have access to this work for culminating assignments and/or reflections.

Academic Honesty

Academic Honesty means, at the minimum, that work submitted by a student or the taking of examinations by the student is the original work of that student. Ottawa University does not condone any form of dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes cheating on examinations or assignments (including any attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise without prior authorization and due acknowledgment), using student’s original work for more than one course without prior approval from the instructor; representing the work of another as one’s own; plagiarism; the falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise; providing false information to an instructor concerning a formal academic exercise, and/or supplying false information pertaining to the student’s academic program. Penalties for cheating on examinations and plagiarism can be failure in the course in which the dishonesty has occurred and/ or dismissal from the University.

If academic dishonesty is suspected, the instructor of the course will make recommendation to the local Dean of Instruction for action. The local Dean of Instruction will work with the instructor to seek resolution of the incident, including conference with the student to review evidence and related materials. The local Dean of Instruction will make the decision concerning penalties for the student accused of academic dishonesty, which may include failure in the course, withdrawal of semester credits, and/or dismissal from the University.

Please refer to Academic Honesty in the Policies section of the online course menu for important information about Ottawa University’s policies regarding plagiarism and cheating, including examples and explanations of these issues.

Student Handbook

Please refer to your student handbook for all university regulations. The **Resource Room** on the course menu in Blackboard contains information about where to find the student handbook online for your campus.

Coursework

Coursework for accelerated courses requires 12-15 hours of independent work each week. Some students may complete coursework in fewer hours and some students may require additional hours beyond the estimate. Careful consideration should be given to this estimate when planning your personal schedule.

Please see **Policies** in Blackboard for additional university policies.

Blackboard Technical Support

The Resource Room in Blackboard contains links to student tutorials for learning to use Blackboard as well as information about whom to contact for technical support. Ottawa University offers technical support from 8 a.m. to midnight Central Time for all students, staff, and faculty at no cost. See www.ottawa.edu/ouhelp for contact information.

Ottawa University's Mission

The mission of Ottawa University is to provide the highest quality liberal arts and professional education in a caring, Christ-centered community of grace which integrates faith, learning and life. The University serves students of traditional age, adult learners and organizations through undergraduate and graduate programs.