It is increasingly recognized that the mass media play a significant and growing role not only in the way in which society informs and communicates with itself, but more importantly in the manner in which it reproduces its social mores and reality. Students who plan on pursuing careers in the media (professional and academic) will be faced with difficult choices that carry with them potent ethical repercussions, choices that practical training does not properly equip them to approach in a critical and informed manner.

The purpose of this course is therefore twofold: 1) to equip future media professionals with sensitivity to moral values under challenge as well as the necessary skills in critical thinking and decision making for navigating their roles and responsibilities in relation to them; and 2) honing those same skills and sensitivities for consumers of media and citizens in media saturated societies.

At the end of the semester students should be able to identify a range of moral problems and issues frequently associated with the media in society as well as with careers in the media. They should be able to analyze these problems and their components, and make an informed judgments based in ethical theory.

Course Website

The most up-to-date syllabus can be found on the Blackboard course homepage, which should be consulted frequently.

Readings

This course will primarily draw on case studies to be found in the following textbook:


All supplemental readings will be in the course packet available at the copy center or, when necessary, posted on Blackboard under course documents. Any case study not taken from the textbook are typed in boldface.

Throughout the semester, students will also be asked to view certain movies in preparation for class discussion. These movies will be made available at the library at the beginning of the semester.

Requirements and Grading
This course assumes active participation on the part of all students, including turns as discussion leaders. Grades will be assigned as follows:

*Participation (35%):*
+ 100% Attendance  
+ Active Participation in classroom discussion  
+ One in-class presentation of assigned readings

2 Case Study Analyses (15% each)  
+ Students will be required to provide two, approximately 1000-word analyses of assigned case studies, which will be provided one week before the analyses are due.

Original Case Analysis (35%):  
+ Students will be required to describe and analyze a pertinent media controversy using the ethical tools of the course in approximately 2000 words. Students will be required to hand in a 500-750 word summary of the case study they plan to analyze prior to handing in the final paper.

**STANDARDS OF EVALUATION**

A = Outstanding. “A” students demonstrate commitment to class, in attendance, participation, and preparation; this means virtually perfect attendance, reading assignments fully, and showing interest during class time. They ask questions, are able to connect past learning with the present, show initiative, and aren’t afraid to be creative. Written work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of the material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Students also demonstrate skillful use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, fluent expression, and no grammar errors. Since an A student has to demonstrate exceptional qualities, you may not expect an A in this class. [A = 94-100 points; A- = 90-93 points]

B = Good. “B” students may miss class from time to time, but are generally prepared and try to participate. They have interest in the subject and have the ability to master novel material. Some students under-utilize their skills, but such students tend to improve over the duration. Written work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of the material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source materials, examples, illustrations, are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. Papers have been carefully proofread. [B+ = 87-89 points; B = 84-86 points; B- = 80-83]

C = Fair. “C” students miss class too frequently and show little interest in course readings and class discussion. They are not visibly committed to class and body language often expresses boredom. Such students may be incredibly talented, but for whatever reasons have clearly not mastered the given material. Written work is generally correct, superficial, incomplete, or expresses some significant errors or weaknesses. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, and arguments lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations.
Writing/articulation may appear vague, hard to follow, or loaded with other technical errors. [C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73]

D = A student in difficulty. “D” students miss class frequently, rarely participate, show disinterest, and have generally misunderstood almost everything we have done, said, and/or read (if they prepared or read anything to begin with). Written work demonstrates serious errors in understanding, fails to express the most rudimentary aspects of the material, and may contain little logical development in its arguments. Sources may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing/articulation appears deficient.
[D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66]

F = Failed. Work was not submitted or attempted; and the student failed to participate at every level. [63 and below]

Plus (+) or minus (-) indicates your range within the aforementioned grades.

SCHEDULE

Introduction

9/2 Overview of Syllabus, Semester

Media Ethics: Oxymoron?

9/4 Case Studies: Fabrication at The Globe, A Prostitute on Page 12
Reading: Michael Walzer, “The Problem of Dirty Hands”
Sissela Bok. Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life. (selections)

9/9 Case Studies: The Time-Warner Colossus, To Entrap a Predator?
Reading: Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of morals [1]

9/11 Case Studies: CNN in Baghdad
Reading: Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysic of morals [2]

Professional Ethics: Journalism

9/16 Case Studies: The Unabomber’s Manifesto (Osama Bin Laden Videos), Risky Foods
Reading: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics [1]

9/18 Case Studies: Judith Miller/Josh Wolf
Reading: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics [2]

9/23 Case Studies: Embedded Reporters
Reading: John Locke, “An Essay Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government”.

9/25 Movie: Absence of Malice
Reading: Sissela Bok. Secrets. (selections)

**Representation**

9/30 Case Studies: Virtual Whitewash, Yo Quiero Stereotype?
Reading: Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (selection)

10/2 Case Studies: Sexism and the World Cup, Sue Thomas, F.B.Eye
Reading: John Rawls, A Theory of Justice. [1]

10/7 Case Studies: Can-con
Reading: John Rawls, A Theory of Justice. [2]

10/9 -First Case Study Analysis Due-
Case Studies: Al Jazeera
Reading: Emmanuel Lévinas, Humanism of the Other. (selection)

**Photography**

10/16 Case Studies: Dead Body Photo, Starving Child Photo
Reading: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism. [1]

10/21 Case Studies: Abu Ghraib Photos
Reading: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism. [2]
Judith Butler, “Photography, War, Outrage”.

10/23 Movie: City of God
Reading: Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others. (selection)

**Obscenity/Violence**

10/28 -Original Case Study Summary Due-
Case Studies: Crunchy Terror in T-Rex Park; Hear It, Feel It, Do It

10/30 Case Studies: The Vagina Dialogues, Self-Regulation?
Readings: Howard Poole, “Obscenity and Censorship”.

**Professional Ethics II: Advertising**

11/4 Case Studies: Empowering or Manipulating the Health-Care Consumer?, Selling Students to Advertisers?

11/6  Case Studies: **Personalized Advertising on Google**, No Holds Barred- The Rise of Guerrilla Marketing  

**Professional Ethics III: Public Relations**

Readings:

11/13  **Second Case Study Analysis Due**
    Movie: *Toxic Sludge is Good For You*
Readings:

**Ethics 2.0**

11/18  Case Studies: **Ruined Lives on YouTube**, Privacy in Cyberspace  
Readings: Helen Nissenbaum, “Privacy as Contextual Integrity”.

11/20  Case Studies: **The Yes Men**  
Readings: M.K. Ganhdi, *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)* (selections)

11/25  Case Studies: **The Death of P2P**  
Readings: Lawrence Lesssig, *Free Culture* (selections)

**Presentations**

12/2, 12/4, 12/9

-**Original Case Study Analysis due 12/9**-