Media Law  
J395 (Unique No. 07950)  
Spring 2015

Class: TTh, 8 – 9:15 a.m., BMC 1.202  
Professor: Robert Jensen  
Office: BMC 3.304; 471-1990  
Office Hours: Monday, 9 a.m.-noon; and by appointment  
Teaching Assistants’ Office Hours: by appointment  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
Media Law is designed to (1) introduce students to First Amendment doctrines and issues concerning freedom of expression, (2) explain applications of the law to the work of journalists, and (3) engage students in a conversation about the ethical and political issues facing the news media.  
Students will learn to (1) place contemporary freedom-of-expression controversies in philosophical and historical contexts to understand how legal doctrines have developed; (2) use legal reasoning to predict how those doctrines would apply in new situations; (3) assess the interests at stake in common ethical controversies; and (4) use moral reasoning to apply ethical guidelines in new situations.

Important Note about Computers: Students may not use computers or other electronic devices during class except in cases involving special needs. See the professor if you would like to make a request.

ATTENDANCE:  
No attendance records will be kept. However, the exams and writing assignments in the course will be based in large part on lectures and discussions, and it will be difficult to earn a respectable grade without coming to class on a regular basis.

GRADES:  
Your final grade will be based on:  
--4 exams (15 points each) 60 points  
--4 writing assignments (10 points each) 40 points  

A = 90-100 points  
(A- 90-93.5; A 94-100)  
B = 80-89.5 points  
(B- 80-83.5; B 84-86.5; B+ 87-89.5)  
C = 70-79.5 points  
(C- 70-73.5; C 74-76.5; C+ 77-79.5)  
D = 60-69.5 points  
(D- 60-63.5; D 64-66.5; D+ 67-69.5)
1. Exams:
There will be four exams during the semester, each worth 15 points toward your final grade. Each exam will be 30 questions, multiple-choice and true/false. So, each correct answer will be worth a half point toward your final grade. Each exam will cover material from the lectures and readings for a single segment of the course; exams will not be comprehensive. There is no final exam.

2. Writing assignments:
There will be four writing assignments during the semester, each worth 10 points toward your final grade.
On the Tuesdays marked on the schedule I will give you an assignment based on the material covered in recent lectures, discussions, and readings. Each assignment will include two questions, one legal and one ethical. You will write one page on each question, to be turned in the following Tuesday in class. Bring the assignment to class. Do not email assignments to the professor or a TA unless there’s a real emergency that prevents you from coming to class. If that happens, contact the professor as soon as possible.
Your answers must be double-spaced on no more than two pages (one page on the legal question and one on the ethical question). Don’t write more than that; we will not read beyond two pages. Use 1-inch margins, 12-point type, and the Times New Roman font. Put your name, eID, and the assignment number at the top of each page and staple them together. Do not use a title page. Do not use colored paper. Do not use exotic fonts. Do not use a paper clip.
No extra research beyond the textbooks and the information provided in class is necessary to write these assignments. Do not use footnotes. Mention court cases if they are relevant, but you need not provide formal citations for cases.
Answer the question in your own words. In formulating your answer, you may talk with others. But the final answer and writing must be your own. Plagiarism -- of published material or another student’s work -- will be punished in accordance with university regulations.
Your assignments will be graded on form and content. No late work will be accepted. If special circumstances arise, talk to me as soon as possible.
Keep copies of all assignments you turn in and keep your graded assignments until the end of the semester.
A lot of paper changes hands in a class this large, and sometimes papers get lost. If there are discrepancies between our records and yours, you need to have your papers to help us resolve the problem.
If you don’t think your grade on an assignment is fair, you can ask for an explanation. The first step is to talk with the TA who graded your paper within one week after the assignment is returned. If you want a formal re-evaluation of your grade, write a short (one paragraph to one page) explanation of why you think a higher grade is warranted. Be specific. If you can’t work it out with the TA, ask the professor to resolve the dispute. If you wait longer than a week, we will not review your paper. Papers cannot be rewritten for a higher grade.

3. Graduate Student Assignment
MA students will complete an extra assignment to earn graduate credit in the course. We will meet early in the semester to discuss the subject and form of that assignment.
TEXTBOOKS:

OTHER READINGS:

UNIVERSITY POLICIES and INFORMATION

Scholastic Dishonesty: The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student’s learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

University of Texas Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Religious Holy Days: A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

Students with Disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone). [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssp/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssp/)

Helpful UT Resources:
Sanger Learning Center: [http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc)
Center for Strategic Advising & Career Counseling: [http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc)
Undergraduate Writing Center: [http://uwc.utexas.edu/](http://uwc.utexas.edu/)
Counseling & Mental Health Center: [http://cmhc.utexas.edu/](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/)
Student Emergency Services: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/)
SCHEDULE
J395/Spring 2015

WEEK 1: January 20 and 22
  topic: law, justice, and the U.S. legal system
  reading: Chapter 1

WEEK 2: January 27 and 29
  topic: free speech basics: sedition, prior restraint
  reading: Chapter 2

WEEK 3: February 3 and 5
  distribute writing assignment #1 on Tuesday
  topic: categories of speech
  reading: Chapter 3

WEEK 4: February 10 and 12
  *writing assignment #1 due on Tuesday*
  topic: ethics basics
  reading: SPJ codes of ethics online
  *exam #1 on Thursday*

WEEK 5: February 17 and 19
  topic: libel
  reading: Chapter 4

WEEK 6: February 24 and 26
  topic: privacy and the press
  reading: Chapter 5

WEEK 7: March 3 and 5
  distribute writing assignment #2 on Tuesday
  topic: ethical thinking
  reading: Weston book

WEEK 8: March 10 and 12
  *writing assignment #2 due on Tuesday*
  topic: ethics in a digital world
  reading: Ward
  *exam #2 on Thursday*
Spring Break: March 16-20

WEEK 9: March 24 and 26
*write assignment #3 on Tuesday*
  topic: access to information
  reading: Chapter 6, Texas Open Meetings and Public Information acts

WEEK 10: March 31 and April 2
*writing assignment #3 due on Tuesday*
  topic: free press/fair trial
  reading: Chapter 7

WEEK 11: April 7 and 9
*write assignment #4 on Tuesday*
  topic: journalists’ privilege and confidential sources
  reading: Chapter 7
*exam #3 on Thursday*

WEEK 12: April 14 and 16
*writing assignment #4 due on Tuesday*
  topic: copyright; advertising; corporations and corporate speech
  reading: Chapters 8 and 12

WEEK 13: April 21 and 23
  topic: broadcasting and cable regulation; cyberspace; obscenity/pornography
  reading: Chapters 9, 10, and 11

WEEK 14: April 28 and 30
  topic: ethics challenges – neutrality/ objectivity, truth
  reading: Jensen, Fisher

WEEK 15: May 5 and 7
*exam #4 on Tuesday*
  Big Finish
Useful web sites
Texas Open Meetings Act

Texas Public Information Act

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
http://www.rcfp.org/

Society of Professional Journalists
http://www.spj.org/

Committee to Protect Journalists
http://www.cpj.org/

Reporters without Borders
http://www.rsf.org/

Student Press Law Center
http://www.splc.org/

Legal Information Institute
http://www.law.cornell.edu/

Oyez Project (U.S. Supreme Court news and links)
http://www.oyez.org/

Ethics codes online
Ethical Journalism Network
http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/en

Project for Excellence in Journalism, directory of codes of ethics
http://www.journalism.org/resources/ethics_codes

Society of Professional Journalists
http://spj.org/ethicscode.asp

Associated Press Managing Editors
http://www.apme.com/?page=EthicsStatement

Radio Television Digital News Association
http://www.rtdna.org/content/rtdna_code_of_ethics#Uc93nlZd8E

National Press Photographers Association
https://nppa.org/code_of_ethics

American Society of Magazine Editors
http://www.magazine.org/asme/editorial-guidelines

American Society of Business Publication Editors
http://www.asbpe.org/guide-to-preferred-editorial-practices

National Association of Science Writers
https://www.nasw.org/nasw-code-ethics

American Medical Writers Association
http://www.amwa.org/amwa_ethics

Society for News Design
http://www.snd.org/about/code-of-ethics/

Public Relations Society of America
http://www.prsa.org/aboutUs/ethics/preamble_en.html