

*Disclaimer: This is an indicative syllabus only and may be subject to changes. The final and official syllabus will be distributed by the Instructor during the first day of class.*

**The American University of Rome**  
**Communication and English Program**

*Department or degree program mission statement, student learning objectives, as appropriate*

<b>Course Title:</b>	Media Ethics and Cultural Citizenship
<b>Course Number:</b>	COM 305
<b>Credits &amp; hours:</b>	3 credits – 3 hours
<b>Pre/Co-Requisites:</b>	COM 105 or equivalent and Junior or Senior standing or permission of the Instructor

**Course description**

This course provides an overview for the role of media ethics in a globalized media system. It explores how ethics shape professional practice and cultural citizenship, studying how media impact cultural commons, democratic practice, and business interests. This course examines the tension between traditional media and emerging participatory cultural practice, and what role students have in shaping the future of media.

**Required Textbook (subject to change)**

- Christians, C. G., Fackler, M., Richardson, K., and Kreshel, P. (2014) Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning – 9th Edition. London: Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-0205029044 ISBN-10: 0205029043.

**Recommended Readings (subject to change)**

All readings will be available online.

**Course Learning Objectives**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of ethical thinking and practice, and derive more complete understanding of various philosophical orientations to ethics.
2. learn to recognize ethical issues present in professional situations.
3. investigate the process of moral development and reasoning towards ethical decision making.
4. evaluate the impact of media-related legal decisions on society and evaluate the impact of media ethics on society.
5. conduct research on legal and ethical issues/controversies related to the media, and present their results clearly, coherently and correctly, in writing.

### **Course Learning Activities**

- Completion of assigned readings before class to be able to participate in class discussions and debates, and work on related cases in class (LOs 1-5)
- Short in-class exercises, both legal and ethics case studies, and surprise reading quizzes (LOs 2-5)
- Writing Assignments: Students are expected to write four short case study analyses (500 words each), where they provide examples of “Media Ethics – Epic Fails”, explaining with references to academic literature why media ethics matter (LOs 4-5)
- Participation in class discussion and debate on both legal and ethical media-related issues (LOs 1-5)
- Term Project: Preparation of a 2,000 word group project on a legal or ethical issue relevant to the media, either based on a real case, or on legal or philosophical arguments (LO 5)

### **Assessment tools**

Participation & debate	10%
Writing Assignments	20%
Midterm exam	30%
Term Project	20%
Final Exam	20%

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Intro to Course Content The Potter Box	Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Ethical Foundations and Perspectives" (pp. 1-11)
Week 2	Interpreting Dilemmas Bentham: Utilitarianism	Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Ethical Foundations and Perspectives" (pp. 12-25) Patterson and Wilkins, Media Ethics - "An Introduction to Ethical Decision Making" Sandel, M. Notes on Justice - "Jeremy Bentham - Principles of Morals and Legislation"
Week 3	Kant: Categorical Imperative Aristotle: The Golden Mean	Sandel, M. Notes on Justice - "Immanuel Kant - Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Moral" Sandel, M. Notes on Justice - "Aristotle, The Politics" Deadline: 1st Assignment
Week 4	Rawls: The Veil of Ignorance Institutional Pressures	Rawls, J. "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical" Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Institutional Pressures" (pp. 31-46)
Week 5	Media Power: The Curious Case of Silvio Berlusconi The Commercial Nature of the Media	Mancini, P. "The Berlusconi Case: Mass media and Politics in Italy" Deadline: 2nd Assignment Christians et al., Media Ethics - "The Media are Commercial" (pp. 155-176)
Week 6	Truthtelling Reporters & Sources	Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Truthtelling" (pp. 47-59) Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Reporters and Sources" (pp. 60-77)
Week 7	Review Session Discussion: Al Jazeera - Charlie Hebdo	Deadline: 3rd Assignment Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Al Jazeera" (pp. 50-53) Chernow, S. "To Publish or Not to Publish Charlie Hebdo" Munzenrieder, K. "Charlie Hebdo: Actually, it's not about Ethics in Satire Journalism"
Week 8	Mid-Term Exam Privacy	Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Invasion of Privacy" (pp.95-119)
Week 9	Discussion: Facebook, the end of Privacy? Intro to Projects	Fuchs, C. "The Political Economy of Privacy on Facebook" Deadline: 4th Assignment
Week 10	Advertising Discussion: Dove, Real Beauty? - Animal Rights	Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Advertising's Professional Culture" (pp. 177-200) Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Advertising in an Image-Based Culture" (pp. 138-154)
Week 11	Public Communication Screening: Skewed	Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Public Communication" (pp. 201-212)
Week 12	Discussion: Violence Review Session	Christians et al., Media Ethics - "Violence" (pp. 255-268) Deadline: Group Project (2,000 word essay)
Week 13	Presentations	
Week 14	FINAL EXAM	

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

In keeping with AUR's mission to prepare students to live and work across cultures, the University places a high value on classroom experience. As a result attendance is expected in all classes and attendance records are maintained. The University's attendance policy is as follows:

1.0. Minimum Attendance Requirement: Students must attend a minimum of 70% of a course in order to be eligible to be considered for a passing grade.

### 1.1. Automatically Accepted Absences

Students will not be penalized for one absence from classes meeting once a week;

Students will not be penalized for three absences from classes meeting twice a week;

Students will not be penalized for four absences from classes meeting more than twice a week, as in the case of some intensive courses.

1.2. If further absences are recorded, grade penalties will be applied according to the Instructor's specific attendance policy, as stated in the syllabus, and following the institutional parameters given in the Note\* below.

1.2.1. If the Instructor does not specify an attendance policy, there will be no grade penalty other than that attached to the minimum attendance requirement, and any penalized absences recorded above the basic 70% attendance requirement for the course will be invalidated.

1.3. During Summer sessions where courses are taught more intensively over a shorter period the following applies:

- Students will not be penalized for two absences from class.

### 2.0. Tolerated Absences

Certain categories of absence will not be penalized but they will be counted as an absence (for a 3-credit course meeting twice a week). These absences are:

- The Model United Nations (MUN);
- Permit to Stay,
- SG's "Ambassador Program" (Student Government initiative)
- Religious Holidays

The American University of Rome makes all reasonable efforts to accommodate students who must be absent from classes to observe religious holidays. (Please refer to the Provost's Office list of accepted absences for religious holidays)

Not attending a class due to the observance of a religious holiday will normally not be counted as an absence.

Students who will need to miss class in order to observe religious holidays must notify their Instructors by the end of the Add/Drop period (first week of classes), and must make prior arrangements with their Instructors to make up any work missed.

2.1. The list does NOT include academic field trips because these (including arrangements for travel) must not overlap with other classes.

3.0. Cases of prolonged absences caused by an emergency or a medical condition may require students to withdraw from some or all of their courses. Under such circumstances students should first consult their academic advisors.

\*Note: No Instructor may penalize a student more than half a letter grade for each absence beyond the tolerated limit (e.g. from A- to B+).

#### Grade Point Average

A student's grade point average (GPA) is computed by multiplying the quality points achieved by the number of credits for each course. The result is then divided by the total number of credit hours taken. The Cumulative or Career Total Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the grade point average for all credit hours taken at the University and at approved study abroad programs. The GPA and CGPA are calculated by truncating after the second digit after the decimal point. Transfer credits have no effect on the CGPA at The American University of Rome.

#### Grades

Grades are posted on a secure area of the University's official website and are mailed to AUR degree students only upon written request. Grades are mailed to the various study abroad programs. Grades computed in the (GPA) reflect the following grade equivalents:

<b>GRADE</b>		<b>GPA</b>	
A	Excellent	4.00	94 – 100 points
A-		3.70	90 – 93.99 pts
B+	Very Good	3.30	87 – 89.99
B	Good	3.00	83 – 86.99
B-		2.70	80 – 82.99
C+		2.30	77 – 79.99
C	Satisfactory	2.00	73 – 76.99
C-	Less than Satisfactory	1.70	70 – 72.99
D	Poor	1.00	60 – 69.99
F	Failing	0.00	59.99 – 0
WU	Unofficial withdrawal counts as an F	0.00	
P	Applicable to development courses	0.00	
<i>Grades not computed into the grade point average are:</i>			
W	Withdrawal		
AUDIT (AU)	Only possible when the student registers for a course at the beginning of the semester as an audit student		
I	Incomplete work must be completed within the ensuing semester. Failure to do so results in automatically converting the I grade to the default grade, which is then computed into the grade point average		
P	Pass grade is applicable to courses as indicated in the catalog.		
WIP	Work in progress		