

**Journalism 431  
Mass Media Ethics  
Spring 2015**

8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays  
LA3 204

**INSTRUCTOR**

Todd Henneman  
Lecturer  
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**OFFICE HOURS**

LA4 206F  
9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Mondays and by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Media professionals encounter situations that test their ethics, affect the lives and livelihoods of others and grapple with disagreement and ambiguity. This course will challenge you to think about behavior and actions and will hone your critical-thinking and decision-making skills, using the case study method. It will help you become a better journalist or public relations professional by learning how to apply decision-making processes based on more than personal opinion or instinct. At the end of the semester, you should be able to recognize and analyze ethics questions, apply critical analysis and make informed judgments based on ethical theories and principles explored in this course.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the completion of the course, students will:

- Know central tenants of journalism ethics;
- Recognize ethical issues in professional situations;
- Understand the impact of media decisions on society;
- Develop methods to analyze ethical issues in mass media environments;
- Better understand how to make informed news judgments based on legal and ethical considerations.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

"Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning" (9th Edition) by Clifford G. Christians et al.  
Other assigned readings will be provided as handouts or posted on BeachBoard.

**CURRENT EVENTS**

Periodically, we will discuss current events at the beginning of class sessions. At least twice a week, you should read the Los Angeles Times, [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com), or New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com>.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Students are expected to have completed assigned reading before class. All assignments should be typed and double-spaced unless otherwise specified. Copy should be clean and free of errors. Outside assignments are due at the beginning of the class unless told otherwise.

## ATTENDANCE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance is essential, and I will take attendance every class. Regularly attending class creates a better experience for all of us by making discussions more interesting and fun. You can have one unexcused absence — and only one — without it hurting your grade. If I see you browsing online (posting Facebook statuses, shopping on Amazon, etc.), I will count you as absent. Anyone missing more than three consecutive classes will be docked one letter grade at the end of the semester. That means if you have an A at the end of the semester but you also have three consecutive unexcused absences, your final letter grade will be lowered to a B. The only exception: a documented medical reason (for example, you have a doctor's note).

If you miss a class, you are still responsible for material presented in class and announcements you missed. Get phone numbers of at least two classmates so you can contact them in case you miss a class session.

If you miss a class when an assignment is due,

- Ask a classmate to turn in your assignment on the due date;
- Or attach the assignment to an email by the time that day's class begins.

## GRADING CRITERIA

Grades will be based on points earned from assignments, participation and exams:

◇ Case presentations and analysis	20%
◇ Participation	20%
◇ Midterm and final	40%
◇ Paper	20%

**Case study:** In the second class, I will distribute a list of the cases from which you may choose. You will work in pairs on this assignment. By the end of class Feb. 2, you must tell me which case you have selected. You'll lead the class discussion, and you'll turn in a paper that summarizes your thoughts. I will post detailed instructions on BeachBoard. Please note: Partners who are absent on the day of their presentations will receive a zero.

**Participation:** Occasionally, we have small-group discussions. Both your participation in the small-group discussions and your regular involvement affect your grade. An "A" reflects near-perfect attendance and regularly participating in discussions, making thoughtful comments that show you have read the material. Merely being present — but not participating in discussions — will not earn an A for the participation portion of the grade.

**Paper:** You will select a topic that interests you, research it and write a paper about it. This class is an advanced course; you will be expected to write well. I expect proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. Detailed instructions will be provided after the midterm exam.

**Midterm and final:** I will provide a study guide for each test. Exams will be multiple choice, fill in the blank and true/false. You will need to bring two #2 pencils.

This university does not use a plus/minus grading system.

**A:** 100-90%

**B:** 89-80%

**C:** 79-70%

**D:** 69-60%

**F:** 59% or lower

I encourage students who are struggling to seek help. Schedule an appointment to see me

and bring your graded assignments.

#### CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

- ◆ Arrive on time. Arrive prepared. Plan to stay for the full time.
- ◆ Turn off or silence cell phones and place them away.
- ◆ Use computers for taking notes or working on assignments — nothing else.
- ◆ Refrain from talking when others are, even if you're discussing class topics.
- ◆ Show respect for the opinions of others even when you disagree.

#### ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Todd Henneman has degrees from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and the University of California, Los Angeles. He has been working in the field for more than two decades. Todd began his career at Edelman, the world's largest public relations firm. He then transitioned to a career as a staff writer for regional newspapers owned by the Tribune Co. and eventually became a staff writer for the San Francisco Chronicle. He also has written freelance pieces for clients ranging from the Los Angeles Times to Bark magazine. He has taught at the University of Southern California and in the Los Angeles Community College District. He continues to write for magazines, websites and corporate clients.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**  
(subject to change)

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>DATES</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READING and ASSIGNMENT</b>
1	JAN. 21	⇒ Overview of course	
2	JAN. 26 & JAN. 28	⇒ The case study method ⇒ Studying media ethics: What is the right answer? Is there one?	⇒ Case list distributed Monday ⇒ Read: Introduction (1-30) and BeachBoard reading for Wednesday
3	FEB. 2 & FEB. 4	⇒ Institutional pressures	⇒ Chapter 1
4	FEB. 9 & FEB. 11	⇒ Truth-telling	⇒ Chapter 2 ⇒ Beachboard readings
5	FEB. 16 & FEB. 18	⇒ Reporters and sources	⇒ Chapter 3
6	FEB. 23 & FEB. 25	⇒ Social justice	⇒ Chapter 4 ⇒ BeachBoard readings
7	MARCH 2 & MARCH 4	⇒ Invasion of privacy	⇒ Chapter 5 ⇒ BeachBoard readings
8	MARCH 9	⇒ MIDTERM	
	MARCH 11	⇒ In-class video and discussion	
9	MARCH 16 & MARCH 18	⇒ Commercialization ⇒ Image-Based Culture	⇒ Chapter 6 for Monday ⇒ Chapter 8 for Wednesday
10	MARCH 23 & MARCH 25	⇒ Diversity	⇒ Pages 182 to 194 ⇒ BeachBoard readings
11	MARCH 30 – APRIL 3	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
12	APRIL 6 & APRIL 8	⇒ Public Communication	⇒ Chapter 10
13	APRIL 13 & APRIL 15	⇒ Telling the Truth in Organizational Settings	⇒ Chapter 11 ⇒
14	APRIL 20 & APRIL 22	⇒ Conflicting Loyalties	⇒ Chapter 12
15	APRIL 27 & APRIL 29	⇒ The Demands of Social Responsibility	⇒ Chapter 13
16	MAY 4	⇒ Censorship	⇒ Chapter 18
	MAY 6	<b>LAST DAY OF CLASS</b>	
17	MAY 11	<b>FINAL (8 A.M. TO 10 A.M.)</b>	

## **ADDENDUM TO COURSE SYLLABUS**

### **Department of Journalism Policies on Grading, Conduct of Classes, Drops, Absences and Cheating**

**Grading:** The grading policies and practices in this class are explained elsewhere in the syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to read them and to seek clarification if necessary. The student should be fully aware of what is required for success in the course, such as group participation, writing, speaking, completing assigned readings, etc.

**Seat in Class:** An enrolled student may lose his/her seat in class if he/she misses the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, a student who attends the first class but not subsequent classes may also be dropped from the course.

**Withdrawal from Class:** Students may withdraw from a class from the third to the 12th week for "serious and compelling reasons." Normally these are defined as anything of import that is beyond the control of the student. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, death or serious illness in a student's immediate family or a documented change in a student's work schedule. Poor performance, tardiness and unexcused absences are not considered a serious or compelling reason beyond the student's control for purposes of withdrawal.

**Absences from Class:** Grades in a course may be adversely affected by absences, and students should seek clarification from the instructor regarding the course absence policy. Make-ups usually are granted in strict accordance with CSULB policy, which defines excused absences as (1) illness or injury to the student; (2) death, injury or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) religious reasons; (4) jury duty or government obligation; (5) CSULB-sanctioned or approved activities [2002-03 Catalog, p. 75]. These and any other requests for an excused absence must be documented.

**CSULB Cheating/Plagiarism/Fabrication Policy:** CSULB takes issues of academic dishonesty very seriously. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam, or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating. If you use someone else's ideas or work and represent it as your own without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if you can show that you honestly developed the ideas through your own work. Any instructor can show you the correct ways of citing your sources, and you should use quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes and bibliographic references to give credit to your sources according to the format recommended by your instructor.

**Responses, Penalties and Student Rights:** Students should consult the appropriate sections of the Catalog for examples of cheating, fabrication and plagiarism, and instructor and/or CSULB response options in such circumstances. The Catalog also outlines student rights. Any instance of academic dishonesty may result in your immediate expulsion from the class with a grade of "F" and/or other sanctions, as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **Student Learning Assessment**

The national accrediting agency for journalism education has established a requirement that all accredited journalism schools assess student mastery of 12 core values and competencies that any graduate of a journalism and mass communication program should possess. According to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), all graduates, irrespective of their particular specialization, should be able to:

- 1) Understand and apply principles of law of freedom of speech and press for the United States, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of expression around the world – including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
- 2) Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- 3) Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in the United States in relation to mass communications
- 4) Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- 5) Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- 6) Work ethically in the pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- 7) Think critically, creatively and independently.
- 8) Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professionals in which they work.
- 9) Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- 10) Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- 11) Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- 12) Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

### **Accommodation of Students with Disabilities in Journalism Courses**

Students with disabilities who need assistant or accommodation to participate in or benefit from university programs, services, and/or activities should inform the instructor and then contact Disabled Student Services. Students needing support services or accommodations should contact the instructor of the course within the first week of class. In addition, students should establish their eligibility for assistance by contacting the Disabled Student Services Office (Brotman Hall 270) at 562-985-5401.

Students are to provide to the instructor verification of their disability from Disabled Student Services. Typical accommodations available from Disabled Student Services, working with the journalism instructor, includes extended time for tests, test proctoring, private test rooms, note taking, Braille transcriptions, and referral for tutoring.

If the service offered is insufficient or inadequate, the student should confer with the instructor and the director of Disabled Student Services. If these efforts are unsuccessful, students have the option of directing their concerns to the Office of Equity and Diversity (University Student Union 301) at 562- 985-8256. Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act has been delegated to the campus director for disability support and accommodation.