Instructor: Cassandra Hayes, Ph.D., M.F.A. (Dr. Hayes)
Email: Cassandra.Hayes@sfasu.edu
Office: BO 301E
Available for office hours Mondays & Wednesdays noon-2pm; Fridays noon-1pm
   OR by appointment (virtual or in person): https://cassandra-12.youcanbook.me/

Catalog Description
Study of communication law affecting the rights and duties of the press, including electronic media.
Attention given to the First Amendment, libel, privacy, Freedom of Information Act, copyright and obscenity.

Course Description
The United States of America was founded on revolutionary ideals uniquely centered on media and communication principles. These principles are impacted by and have impacts within the global media environment. As citizens and media professionals in the world today, you must have a clear understanding of your rights and responsibilities regarding media and communication. In this course, you will gain a solid foundational understanding of media law to guide your work and experience with media in the modern world.

Course Format & Required Materials
Regular participation is mandatory for this course. Participation will be graded via (a) lecture notes, (b) reading talking points, and (c) check ins regarding your assignments and experiences in the course.

Required readings include:
   • *The Law of Journalism and Mass Communication* by Ross et al. (7th edition)

Suggested readings include:
   • *The Associated Press Stylebook* (latest edition)
   • *Major Principles of Media Law* by Belmas & Shepard
   • *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* by Paul Starr

Active communication is key to your success in this course: reach out to me, your peers, on campus resources, or consult additional resources I provide for help completing assignments. Although succeeding in the course remains your responsibility, I want to set you up to succeed—do not hesitate to reach out for help, writing feedback, clarification, etc.

Program Learning Outcomes
1. Demonstrate the ability to write effectively across a variety of platforms appropriate to the discipline.
2. Gather, analyze, organize and synthesize discipline-appropriate research and communication information about it.
3. Understand the role of public relations and media in society.
4. Comprehend the legal and ethical principles relating to public relations.
5. Demonstrate the application of media technology, terminology and techniques outside of classroom hours.

Student Learning Outcomes
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the media law landscape, primarily in the U.S.
2. Comprehend rights and regulations that impact media professionals.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of media law development and history.
4. Compile and interpret robust research on media law topics
5. Collaborate interpersonally with peers to articulate media law topics

Assignments and Grading Scale

Points Breakdown
Total points 1000, broken down as follows:
- Attendance/Participation (200 points)
- Exams x2 (300 points total)
- Legal Brief (100 points)
- Film Reflections x2 (100 points total)
- Media Law Game Design (300 points) [Keystone Event—cannot be missed]

Grading Scale
Your final course grade will be comprised of a weighted average, using the following grading scale.
Grades are not rounded up.
A = 90% - 100% Excellent. (900-1000 points)
Mastery of the assignment/concepts at the highest level of attainment.
B = 80% - 89.9% Good. (800-899 points)
Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment.
C = 70% - 79.9% Average. (700-799 points)
An acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment.
D = 60% - 69.9% Inferior. (600-699 points)
A marginal performance; a minimal passing level of attainment.
F = 0% - 59.9% Failure. (0-599 points)
Unacceptable performance revealing almost no understanding of content.

Attendance/Participation
Attendance is required for this course. To earn attendance points, you must actively participate in classroom discussions and/or in-class activities. In addition, to earn these points you must be a good classroom citizen—engaged and respectful to those around you. We will often use the online tool Padlet to aid in encouraging classroom discussions and activities.

Exams
Midterm and final exams will gauge your understanding of key course terms and concepts. Much content covered by the exams will only come from required readings—not all content will be expressly mentioned in class. Exams will be open note, but NOT open book or additional resource. You must take the exams in class via d2l or must schedule a time to make up your exam under my supervision within a week of the due date. The final exam will be comprehensive. In addition, you must complete a pre-test to gauge your knowledge of media law before taking the course. The pre-test is worth 20 points, earned through completing all questions to the best of your ability.

**Legal Brief**
You will compile a legal brief that details a case relating to media law. The brief should be a creatively designed report including the FIRAC components as described in the course textbook and how the case decision can be or cannot be applied to media situations today. I will assign the case. You also must present your information to the class in a 5-10-minute presentation, including robust class discussion of at least three questions. You may work with a group of 3-4 for this assignment.

**Film Reflections**
Twice during the course, we will watch movies relating to issues in media law. Following each of these movies, we will have a discussion of key concepts to take away from the films and you will turn in a reflection document that includes (a) a summary of the film, (b) a summary of the class discussion, and (c) your own thoughts and takeaways, as relating to media law. Your reflection should include at some point a rigorous analysis of what the main characters did right or wrong regarding media law concepts we’ve learned in the course. Your reflections should be at least two pages, double spaced and in 12pt Times New Roman.

**Media Law Game Design**
For your final project, you will illustrate your understanding of media law through designing a playable board or video game. The game must incorporate a clear and comprehensive understanding of (a) the media law landscape, (b) how individuals navigate media law, (c) concepts within media law discussed throughout the course, (d) example cases discussed in the course, and (e) application of law concept to current or speculative future event(s). The game should be engaging and creative, as well as informative. You will present your game in a 5-minute presentation at the end of the course. You may work with a group of 3-4 for this assignment.

**Course and Campus Policies**

**Late Work**
A one-week grace period will be given for all assignments except the final exam, to allow for technical glitches or other issues that may delay you turning in your work. Beyond the grace period, no late work will be accepted.

**Extra Credit**
Memorize and recite the First Amendment word-for-word for me for 50 points of extra credit added to your final course grade. You may recite this at any time throughout the course.

**Questions about Grades**
I welcome questions about grades, so please reach out if you would like clarification. However, I ask that you wait for 24 hours after receiving your grade before talking with me about it. This “cool off” period is required before I will meet with you. Afterwards, you have a week to talk with me about the grade; after a week, I will consider the issue closed. All discussions of grades must take place via videoconference or, depending on our situation, in person.

Generative-AI Tools (such as Chat-GPT)
I do not mind if you use AI tools such as Chat GPT to provide structure or basic editing/proofreading for your writing. However, you must NOT use these tools to generate ideas with no reflection or direction from your own mind and you may NOT use these tools to draft a document. I want YOUR ideas and YOUR voice in your work in this class. Producing unoriginal work will result in a 0 on the assignment. A good rule of thumb is to be transparent about your use of AI tools.

Institution Absences (HOP 04-110)
An Institutional Absence may be granted to a student who participates as a representative of the University in academic (including research), extra- or cocurricular, or athletic activities. Students will be excused for institutional purposes from otherwise required academic activity only when a valid Institutional Absence is approved by the appropriate administrative unit or official and the documentation of approval is provided to the faculty member at least five (5) days in advance.

Institutional absences will not be approved for keystone events, defined as: a special or unique assignment, test, project, experience, or other academic exercise identified by the Faculty member as critical for successful completion of standards of the class and unable to be missed. These events must be identified on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester and communicated to the students. Events added to the syllabus at a later date will not qualify for Keystone Event status. Keystone Events where the date/time is changed will no longer be considered a Keystone Event. Students should make themselves aware of any Keystone Events identified in the syllabus to ensure there are no conflicts.

For keystone events where the assignment dates vary, it is incumbent upon the students to work with their faculty member to not select a conflicting date.

More information on Institutional Absences, including how to apply, can be found at https://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents/student-resources/institutional-absences.

Academic Integrity (4.1)
The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any
means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one's self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one's own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one's own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5)**
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to [https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf).

**Students with Disabilities**
To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Student Wellness and Well-Being**
SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.
If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
The Dean of Students Office (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic Human Services, Room 202
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub
936.468.4008
thehub@sfasu.edu

Crisis Resources:

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- johCrisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
Course Schedule
(subject to change)

Due dates bolded and in red.
Required readings in blue and in italics.
Required movie watching sessions bolded.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date &amp; Topics</th>
<th>To Do</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Module 1—Introduction to Media Law</strong></td>
<td><strong>Read Course Syllabus</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete Pre-Test by class time Mon., Jan. 22</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fri., Jan. 19—Syllabus &amp; Intro</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mon., Jan. 22—US Media Law Environment</td>
<td>• Ch. 1 The Rule of Law: Law in a Changing Communication and Political Environment</td>
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<td>• Wed., Jan. 24—The First Amendment</td>
<td>• Ch. 2 The First Amendment: Speech and Press Freedoms in Theory and Reality</td>
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<td>• Fri., Jan. 26—Explore Oyez.org</td>
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<td><strong>Module 2—Testing the First Amendment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
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<td>• Mon., Jan. 29—Privacy</td>
<td>• Ch. 6: Protecting Privacy: Conflicts Among the Press, the Government and the Right to Privacy</td>
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<td>• Wed., Jan. 31—Law Guidelines for Media Pros</td>
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<td>• Fri., Feb. 2—FOI Request Activity</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
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<td>• Mon., Feb. 5—The Post</td>
<td>• Ch. 7: Gathering Information: Opportunities and Obstacles</td>
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<td>• Wed., Feb. 7—The Post</td>
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<td>• Fri., Feb. 9—Discussing the Post</td>
<td>Film Reflection 1 Due Friday, Feb. 9 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>Module 3—Speech Distinctions &amp; Libel</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mon., Feb. 12—Media Game Design Work Session 1</td>
<td>• Ch. 3: Speech Distinctions: Disruptive Speech, Student Speech, and Media Harm</td>
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<td>• Wed., Feb. 14—Speech Distinctions</td>
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<td>• Fri., Feb. 16—Guest Speaker TBA</td>
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| Week 6 | • Mon., Feb. 19—Libel History  
• Wed., Feb. 21—Libel Law Currently  
• Fri., Feb. 23—Media Game Design Work Session 2 | • Ch. 4: Libel and Emotional Distress: The Plaintiff's Case  
• Ch. 5: Libel: Defenses and Privileges |
|---|---|
| Week 7 | • Mon., Feb. 26—Media Game Design Work Session 3  
• Wed., Feb. 28—Midterm Exam Review  
• Fri., March 1—Midterm Exam | Midterm Exam Due Friday, March 1 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 8 | • Mon., March 4—Legal Brief Presentations  
• Wed., March 6—Legal Brief Presentations  
• Fri., March 8—Legal Brief Presentations | Legal Brief Due Friday, March 8 at 11:59 p.m. |
| Spring Break | • No Class (March 9–17) | |
| Module 4—Internet & Commerce | | |
| Week 9 | • Mon., March 18—Digital Media Law  
• Wed., March 20—Digital Media Law Cont’d  
• Fri., March 22—Media Game Design Work Session 4 | • Ch. 9: Electronic Media Regulation: From Radio to the Internet |
| Week 10 | • Mon., March 25—Advertising Law  
• Wed., March 27—Media Game Design Work Session 5  
• Fri., March 29—Easter Holiday No Class | • Ch. 12: Advertising: When Speech and Commerce Converge |
| Week 11 | • Mon., April 1—The Social Dilemma  
• Wed., April 3—The Social Dilemma  
• Fri., April 5—The Social Dilemma Discussion | Film Reflection 2 Due Friday, April 5 at 11:59 p.m. |
<p>| Module 5—Obscenity, Intellect, &amp; Justice | | |
| Week 12 | • Mon., April 8—Commercial Law Litigation Activity | • Ch. 10: Obscenity and Indecency: Social |</p>
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<th>Week 13</th>
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<th>Week 14</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fri., April 12—Media Game Design Work Session 6</td>
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<td>Wed., April 17—Multimedia Intellectual Rights Cases</td>
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<td>Fri., April 19—Media Game Design Work Session 7</td>
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<td>Fri., April 19—Media Game Design Work Session 7</td>
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<tr>
<th>Module 6—Wrapping Up</th>
<th>Media Law Game Design Due Friday, April 26 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Week 15</th>
<th>Extra Credit (Optional) Due Friday, May 3 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon., April 22—Pursuing Justice</td>
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<td>Mon., April 29—Presentations</td>
<td><em>Final Exam Due Monday, May 6 at 11:59pm—NO Grace Period</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed., April 24—Activity TBA</td>
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<td>Wed., May 1—Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri., April 26—Media Game Design Work Session 8</td>
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<td>Fri., May 3—Final Exam Review/Celebration</td>
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