MCOM 5315: Media Law and Ethics
Spring 2024

Name: Bailey Thompson, Ph.D.
Email: thompsonba@sfasu.edu
Office: Boynton 201
Office Hours: Th: 11-3:30; T: 11-12pm
Department: Mass Communication
Class meeting time and place: online

Course Description
MCM 5315 Explores First Amendment doctrines and issues concerning freedom of expression in the media industry, applications of law to the word of the media industry, and the ethical dilemmas facing the media industry.

Course Contact Hours and Study Hours
MCOM 5315 “Media Law and Ethics” (3 credits; fully online), spans 15 weeks, requiring students to engage the online modules for at least three hours per week, and covers foundational topics in media law and ethics such as libel, the First Amendment, copyright, trademark, advertising, publicity and privacy law, along with the ethical issues concerning law and the ways in which law impacts society. The course consists of multiple weekly readings and reaction papers, tests, APA-style papers, and/or application projects depending on the course material. For every hour a student spends engaging with the content, they spend at least two hours completing associated assignments and assessments.

Text and Materials

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.

Student Learning Outcomes
1. Define basic legal terminology
2. Recognize the limits of legal rights
3. Properly use copyrighted works and trademarks
4. Explain current legal issues impacting media professionals
5. Understand when to seek legal counsel when needed

SFA Policies

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.

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/.

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
I adhere to 11 general policies in all of my courses:

1. **No late work accepted:** I do not accept late work or late exams, quizzes, assignments, etc. Do not email me to ask for extensions on late work, making up missed coursework etc.

2. **No extra credit:** I do not provide extra credit on an individual basis. Any extra credit provided will be at my discretion and will be extended to the entire class.

3. **24/7 rule:** Your grades are just that—your grades. Not mine. If you have questions about a grade you earned on an assignment, I urge you to contact me about it (via email) to set up an appointment to come in and talk about it. I want you to know what you did wrong, and what you did right. However, please observe the 24/7 policy—take 24 hours after receiving a grade to cool off, try to understand your mistakes, and then shoot me an email. You will also have 7 days after a grade is posted to contact me to discuss or dispute it. After those 7 days, all grades will stand as is.

4. **No D2L emails:** Contact me via SFA email, not D2L email. My email address is thompsonba@sfasu.edu

5. **No doctor’s notes please:** I do not accept, want or need doctor’s notes for missed classes or assignments—your medical information is yours and is private. If you have an extended absence for hospitalization, etc. please go through the proper channels at the rights and responsibilities office.

6. **There are some emails I will not respond to:** I will not respond to any emails asking the following questions or making the following requests: 1) emails asking for grade changes 2) emails asking for final grades to be rounded up 3) emails asking for extensions on assignments with no hospitalization or extreme circumstance 4) emails asking for extra credit—any extra credit given by me will be given to all students and advertised in class or on D2L, not on an individual basis via email. Essentially, emails asking me to show favor grade-wise to one student in a course over other students will not be returned. This is the primary way I will be working to ensure that all students have the same opportunities in my courses.

7. **Final grade rounding policy:** I will round final grades with a .5 or higher. I will not raise final grades with a .4 or lower for any reason. I will also not round “9” grades. Therefore, if you make an 89 in the class, do not email me asking if I will bump in to a 90. Unless you make an 89.5 or higher, I will not round.

8. **Grading Turnaround Time:** My turnaround time for grading assignments varies by the assignment type. For multiple choice quizzes or exams the turnaround time is approximately 48 hours. For substantial written assignments it is 2 weeks.

9. **Email Turnaround Time:** I do not answer emails after 5pm or before 8am Monday-Friday. If you email after those hours expect a reply within 48 hours. I also do not respond to emails on the weekends. I encourage each of you to set healthy boundaries when it comes to your own work-life balance.

10. **Emails + Grades:** I will only discuss grade issues/dispute via email in writing. This is to ensure a paper trail for both the student and myself.

11. **A is for Awesome:** Every student should not expect an A in my course. A is for exceptional work. B is for good work. C is for average work. A work goes above and beyond the requirements and shows true mastery of the content. A work impresses.

**Course Requirements**

**Quizzes:** Each chapter has a quiz with 10 M/C or T/F questions. Feedback on the quiz will be released one hour after it’s due date/time for you to review your mistakes.

**Discussion Posts:** For each chapter you will write a short discussion post. Instructions are posted within each assignment on Connect and D2L.

**Discussion Papers:** You must complete 2 discussion papers by the end of the semester. Each discussion paper must be minimum 5 full pages (12pt. Times New Roman, double spaced) and first provide a basic overview of the chapter and
then you must engage with the material through discussion of a current event that pertains to content within the chapter (MUST take place in the US) where you show that you understand how the basic legal principles discussed in the chapter pertain to your current event. “Current” for the purposes of this class will be any event from 2022-2024. Your grade will reflect the amount of thought you have given to the chapter and the issues at hand. You will also be graded on how well you articulate the basic premises of the chapter and apply the current event to the chapter content. Additionally, your writing must be proofread and reflect the writing of a graduate student. Rushed work, sloppy work and work that has not been edited for grammar, spelling and punctuation issues will result in poor grades. I urge you to write your current event papers over topics that interest you within a particular chapter. In graduate school, my hope for you is to find a small piece of this course that pertains to your future career goals or simply sparks your curiosity. This course utilizes APA style for writing assignments in terms of citing, style, etc.

No late work will be accepted for any reason. I will not accept any coursework via email.

Grading Policy

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Quizzes (11 @ 100pts each)</td>
<td>1100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter Discussion Posts (11 @ 20pts each)</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Papers (2 @ 300pts each)</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total points</strong></td>
<td><strong>1810</strong></td>
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Attendance Policy

*There is no specific attendance policy for this course, however, students are expected to log into D2L and Connect regularly to complete work, read updates, engage with content, etc.*

Course Calendar

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Chapter Covered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan. 18-21</td>
<td>Syllabus + Course Intro</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Jan. 22-28</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Jan. 29-Feb.4</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Feb. 5-11</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Feb. 12-18</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Feb. 19-25</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Feb. 26-March 3</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>March 4-10</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 11-17</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>March 18-24</td>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>March 25-31</td>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>April 1-7</td>
<td>Chapter 16</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>April 8-14</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>April 22-28</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>April 29-May 5</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>May 6-12</td>
<td>Finals Week</td>
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