



**LNDN COMM 3321**  
**Understanding Media Ethics:**  
**Case studies from the US and UK Perspective**

**CAPA LONDON**

**Course Description**

This course will address the principal ethical issues facing journalism, advertising, entertainment media, and online content. It will examine the moral obligations of the producers as well as the responsibilities borne by consumers. The course will provide an overview of the applicable ethical principles and philosophies then apply these to present day cases in the media through case studies. Finally, students will learn to critically engage with the content in order to analyze for themselves the ethical issues that are present in the production and consumption of the media on an individual and societal level.

**Course Aims**

By the end of the course, students should have:

- An understanding of the historical and current ethical issues facing the media industry
- Insight into editorial decision-making and regulatory standards of media producers
- Comprehension of the institutional, societal, and individuals pressures that contribute to ethical decisions and lapses
- Understand the impact of ethical versus unethical behavior on the part of the media as it relates to democracy, journalistic practice, and public trust
- Describe the roles that the public plays in ensuring and critiquing ethical standards in the media
- Be able to compare and contrast UK and US cases

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- a) Engage in critical thinking and evaluation;
- b) Master a body of knowledge;
- c) Communicate effectively both in writing and through oral presentations;
- d) Understand the impact of globalization on the creation of media content and the ethical issues facing journalists in a global community
- e) Describe the similarities and differences between UK and US cases
- f) Explain how political, institutional, corporate and other societal structures influence media practices with specific regard to issues surrounding ethical practices

**Developmental Outcomes**

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, and appreciation of cultural differences.

**Class Methodology**

Lectures, discussions, weekly assignments, tests, student presentations, guest lectures, and out-of-class field visits

**Field Components**

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City in which you are currently living. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

**The assigned field component(s) are:**

LSE Public Lecture:  
(there will be a make-up for those who cannot attend due to WORK-RELATED reasons only)

**Final Exam**

The final will be graded out of 30 and be comprised of numerous short essays (this is subject to change at the lecturer's discretion).

**Grading Scheme**

| Descriptor           | Alpha | UK    | US    | GPA     |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Excellent            | A     | 75+   | 93+   | 4.0     |
|                      | A-    | 70-74 | 90-92 | 3.7     |
| Good                 | B+    | 66-69 | 87-89 | 3.3     |
|                      | B     | 63-65 | 83-86 | 3.0     |
|                      | B-    | 60-62 | 80-82 | 2.7     |
| Average              | C+    | 56-59 | 77-79 | 2.3     |
|                      | C     | 53-55 | 73-76 | 2.0     |
| Below Average / Poor | C-    | 50-52 | 70-72 | 1.7     |
|                      | D+    | 46-49 | 67-69 | 1.3     |
|                      | D     | 40-45 | 60-66 | 0.7 1.0 |
| Fail                 | F     | <40   | <60   | 0       |

**Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

| Assessment Task     | Grade % | Learning Outcomes | Due Date           |
|---------------------|---------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Class participation | 20%     | all               | Weekly             |
| Oral Presentation   | 20%     | a,b,c             | Weekly from Week 2 |
| In-class quizzes    | 10%     | all               | Weekly from Week 2 |
| Midterm             | 20%     | all               | Final week         |
| Final               | 30%     | All               |                    |

**Course Requirements**

**Weekly readings**

Readings will be available as pdfs or links. All readings are required.

**Weekly Quizzes**

Students will respond to questions about the assigned readings, lectures, and discussions. Responses will be graded out of 10 and will be graded on thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and validity. The overall writing assignment grade will be calculated as an average all writing assignment grades. Some writing assignments will be completed out of class.

**Class participation**

Class participation, broadly defined, is the student's willingness to answer instructor questions and participate in class discussions. Class participation is very important in this course and is worth 20% of the student's final grade.

## Oral Presentations

Each student will be required to make one in-class presentations. A schedule and further details on the presentations will be provided in the second week of course.

## Midterm and Final Exam

The midterm will cover theoretical topics and readings from the first half of the course. The final is cumulative.

## Dress Code

N/A

## Readings and Weekly Academic Calendar:

- Unless otherwise noted, ALL classes will take place in the Kensington Room
- All readings will be sent to students electronically as a PDF file
- **READINGS MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITH ADVANCE NOTICE**

### Week 1: Ethics in the Media

### Week 2: Truth-tellers? And other roles of the Media

Readings: Mackey, Robert, "Brutal images of Syrian Boy Drowned off Turkey Must Be Seen," *New York Times*, 9/3/2015  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/world/middleeast/brutal-images-of-syrian-boy-drowned-off-turkey-must-be-seen-activists-say.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/world/middleeast/brutal-images-of-syrian-boy-drowned-off-turkey-must-be-seen-activists-say.html?_r=0)

Gilens, Martin (1996) "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions And the American News Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 60:4, pp. 515-541.  
<https://oied.ncsu.edu/selc/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Race-and-Poverty-in-America-Public-Misperceptions-and-the-American-News-Media.pdf>

Hawkins, Virgil (2002) The CNN Factor: the media and conflict. *Journalism Studies*, 3:2, 225-240.

### Week 3: Private Companies, Capitalism, and the Marketplace

Readings: Schawrz, M. (2001) The Nature and Relationship between Corporate Codes Of Ethics and Behavior, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 32:2, 247-262.

Pilkington, Ed, "Rupert Murdoch Fox Broadcast Licenses targeted by US ethics Goups," *The Guardian*, May 1, 2012.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/may/01/rupert-murdoch-fox-licences-us>

### Week 4: Ethic of Using Sources

Readings: Joyce, Daniel, (2007) "The Judith Miller Case and the Relationship Between Journalist and Source: Competing Visions of the Media's Role and Function," *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal*, 17:3

[http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1377&context=ipli&seire-dir=1&referer=https%3A%2F%2Fscholar.google.co.uk%2Fscholar%3Fhl%3Den%26q%3Dvalerie%2BPlame%2BWilson%26btnG%3D%26as\\_sdt%3D1%252C5%26as\\_sdt%3D#search=%22valerie%20Plame%20Wilson%22](http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1377&context=ipli&seire-dir=1&referer=https%3A%2F%2Fscholar.google.co.uk%2Fscholar%3Fhl%3Den%26q%3Dvalerie%2BPlame%2BWilson%26btnG%3D%26as_sdt%3D1%252C5%26as_sdt%3D#search=%22valerie%20Plame%20Wilson%22)

#### Week 5: Privacy

Readings: Morrow, Lance, "Journalism After Diana," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 36:4, p. 38.

Carlson, Matt and Berkowitz, Dan "The emperor lost his clothes: Rupert Murdoch *New of the World*, and journalists boundary work in the UK and the USA" (2014) *Journalism*. 15:4, pp. 389-406

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1010.5439&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

#### Week 6: MIDTERM EXAM

#### BREAK WEEK

#### Week 7: Individual Journalists and the Ethics of Practice

Readings: "Liar's Club," *The American Spectator*, 36:3, pp. 5-6

Down, Ann, "The Great Pretender," *Columbia Journalism Review*, July/August 1998, pp. 14-15

Jones, Maggie and Steve Urbanski, "What Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke Say About the Press and The Erosion of Trust," *Journalism Studies*, 7:6, pp. 828-850

Shapiro, Ivor, "Why They Lie: Probing Explanation for Journalistic Cheating," *Canadian Journal Of Communication*, 31 (2006), pp. 261-266.

#### Week 8: Guest Lecturers

#### Week 9: No Class (for Public Lecture)

#### Week 10: Commercialization

Readings: Blair, Jessica Dawn, et al., "Ethics in Advertising: Sex Sells, But Should It?" *Journal of Legal, Ethical, And Regulatory Issues*. 9:2, p 109.

Hall, Emma "UK Watchdog Bans 'Beach Body Ready' Ad and not because its Offensive," (2015) *Ad Age*.

<http://adage.com/article/global-news/u-k-watchdog-bans-beach-body-ready-ad/299291/>

Haroon, Sidiqque, "Yves Saint Laurent Ad banned for using 'underweight model' *The Guardian*, 06/03/2015.

<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/jun/03/yves-saint-laurent-ad-ban-underweight-model>

## Week 12: Social Media Ethics

Readings: Isaac, Mike, "Nude photos of Jennifer Lawrence are latest front in online privacy Debate." *The New York Times*, 09/02/2014  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/technology/trove-of-nude-photos-sparks-debate-over-online-behavior.html>

Farhadd, Manjoo, "Hacking victims deserve empathy not ridicule" *The New York Times*, 09/03/2015

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/technology/personaltech/hacking-victims-deserve-empathy-not-ridicule.html?hpw&rref=technology&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=well-region&region=bottom-well&WT.nav=bottom-well>

O'Keefe, Gwend at al. "The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families. *Pediatrics*, 03/2011

[http://research.fit.edu/sealevelriselibrary/documents/doc\\_mgr/1006/O'Keefe\\_and\\_Pearson.2011.The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Social\\_Media\\_on\\_Children,\\_Adolescents,\\_and\\_Families.pdf](http://research.fit.edu/sealevelriselibrary/documents/doc_mgr/1006/O'Keefe_and_Pearson.2011.The_Impact_of_Social_Media_on_Children,_Adolescents,_and_Families.pdf)

## WEEK 13: Censorship

Readings: Watson, Mary Ann (2004) Ethics in Entertainment Television. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. 31-4, 146-148.

Bramante, Sandra, "Public Expectations of Media Versus Standards in Codes of Ethics." (1998) *Journalism Quarterly*, 65:1, pp 71-

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/107769908806500109>

## IN-CLASS FINAL

## **Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities**

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorised absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

**Missing classes for medical reasons:** If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, **you must send an e-mail** to let the Associate Director of Academic Affairs (ADAA) know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: [excused.absence@capa.org](mailto:excused.absence@capa.org). Note that calling the CAPA Centre (0207 370 7389) is acceptable only if

you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments **BEFORE** the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class:** All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behavior during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.