

SYLLABUS FOR -- MCOM 305: Media Law & Ethics
Tuesdays, 9:30am-12:15pm – Fall 2013
Professor Stephanie Spanhel – sspanhel@tamut.edu

- I. Course Number: MCOM305.
- II. Course Title: Media Law & Ethics.
- III. Semester Credit Hours: 3.
- IV. Course Description: Media Law & Ethics provides students an overview of communication law and ethics.
- V. Course Delivery Method: Face to face.
- VI. Required Textbooks/Resources:
 1. Hopkins, ed., *Communication and the Law* (2013).
 2. Other readings as assigned.
- VII. Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of MCOM305: Media Law & Ethics, students will be able to:
 1. Discuss and explain how the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is relative in media roles today;
 2. Articulate the history and current practices related to journalism and electronic media; and
 3. Apply ethical principles in everyday scenarios.
- VIII. Electronic Devices: No electronic devices of any type may be used in the classroom without prior permission of the instructor. All electronic devices should be turned off during class. Laptop computers may not be used in class. Pen and paper is available from the bookstore for note taking. No phones may be used during class. Texting during class is strictly prohibited. All lectures are copyrighted material and may not be recorded or distributed without the express written consent of the instructor.

Failure to comply with the electronic devices policy may result in loss of the device for the remainder of the semester, charges of academic dishonesty, administrative discipline, and/or an administrative drop from the course.
- IX. Methods of Evaluation: The instructor reserves the right to change or amend assignments as necessary to facilitate student learning.
 1. There will four tests: Three interim tests and one comprehensive examination.
 2. There will be one in-class presentation.
 3. There will be two essays.

4. Students are required to participate in class discussions each week. The class will be subject to surprise “pop” quizzes from time to time, which quizzes will not be announced in advance.
5. At least one extra credit assignment will be made available. Any extra credit assignments are optional.

Allocation of points: 100 points are available through regular coursework:

In-class Presentation: 10 points
Test 1: 15 points
Essay 1: 10 points
Test 2: 15 points
Test 3: 15 points
Essay 2: 10 points
Comprehensive Examination: 25 points

- X. Attendance Policy and Late Work: There is no attendance policy per se. However students should not expect to earn a good grade in the course without good attendance and participation.

Late essays will not be accepted.

Examinations may be made up on a case by case basis. In order to be eligible for a make up examination, the reason for missing the examination must have been beyond the student's control, and the instructor must have been notified of the absence in advance.

- XI. Grading Scale:

A: 90%-100%
B: 80%-89%
C: 70%-79%
D: 60%-69%
F: 0%-59%

- XII. Student Participation: MCOM305: Media Law & Ethics utilizes the Socratic method to involve all students in the learning process. Students are encouraged to speak up and engage in classroom discussions, which will occur each class period. As detailed above, the point allocation heavily favors participation through questions and discussion topics emailed before class, and through speaking up in class. Students cannot earn a good grade in this course without meaningful and consistent participation in class.

- XIII. Tolerance and Respect: Freedom of speech is a major theme in this course. Classroom conduct at all times must be respectful to different points of view, belief systems, and lifestyles. Students will inevitably be surprised and may feel offended by some of the content, and some of the ideas voiced in class by their fellow students. Parts of this course directly concern sexual expression, religious expression, political speech, and other hot button topics about which opinions run strong and deep. Students will encounter diverse and unusual viewpoints, some of which may be shocking to them. Students will keep an

open mind and remember that they are in class to learn facts, not to judge them. Students will also treat each other with dignity and respect at all times. Classroom bullying in any form not be tolerated and students engaging in disrespectful behavior will be asked to leave and their grade adjusted downward accordingly. Students who have a recurring problem in this area may be referred to University administration for formal disciplinary action.

- XIV. Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the Texas A&M – Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.
- XV. Academic Integrity: Texas A&M – Texarkana is committed to a high standard of academic integrity. In becoming a part of the academic community Texas A&M – Texarkana students are responsible for honesty and independent effort. The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her academic work. Failure to uphold these standards includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records. Students suspected of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary proceedings. Plagiarism from any source is always unacceptable and will be dealt with pursuant to Texas A&M – Texarkana’s policy on plagiarism. For additional information, please consult the Texas A&M – Texarkana catalog.

Cheating includes looking at or copying from another student’s work, orally communicating or receiving answers during an exam, having another person take an exam or complete an assignment, using unauthorized notes, texts, or other materials for an exam or assignment, and obtaining or distributing an unauthorized copy of an exam or any part of an exam.

Collusion includes inappropriately collaborating on assignments or coursework that is designed to be completed independently.

Plagiarism includes taking authorship credit for the ideas or writings of another without giving proper credit. Plagiarism includes submitting a paper, report, or project that someone else has prepared in whole or in part.

- XVI. Texas A&M University – Texarkana Email Address: Upon application to Texas A&M University – Texarkana an individual will be assigned a Texas A&M University – Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official Texas A&M – Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework. **The instructor does not accept email messages from students that originate from an address other than the students’ official Texas A&M University – Texarkana email address.**
- XVII. Drop Policy: If you decide that you must drop this course it is your responsibility to fill out the appropriate form in the college office on campus. Withdrawal from this course after the official day of record will result in a final grade of “W” on the student transcript and no credit will be awarded. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate and complete a request

for withdrawal from any course. The instructor does not automatically drop students. If you do not fill out the drop form, you will not be dropped from the course and may receive an “F”.

Effective with the Fall 2013 semester, the administrative drop policy as it relates to non-developmental courses will be discontinued. ***Students who no longer wish to attend their course(s) will be required to submit the necessary paperwork to the Registrar’s Office in order to be officially dropped/withdrawn from their course(s).*** Those students who do not follow the correct drop/withdraw procedure will remain registered in their course(s) and receive the grade issued by the instructor. Students may find the drop/withdraw form on the “Dropping/Withdraw a Class” page of the Registrar website.

The policy for **developmental courses** will remain the same. Any student who is registered in a developmental course and fails to attend may be administratively dropped/withdrawn from **all** courses.

Drop/Withdraw deadlines for the Fall 2013 Semester		
Session	Drop without a grade	Last day drop/withdraw
Full Term (16 weeks)	Wednesday, Sept. 11	Monday, Nov. 25
1st 7 week	Friday, Aug. 30	Friday, Oct. 4
2 nd 7 week	Wednesday, Oct. 23	Wednesday, Nov. 27

- XVIII. Changes to Syllabus: The instructor enjoys the right to change this syllabus as needed to meet the needs of Texas A&M – Texarkana and of this course.

Schedule of Assignments: Unless otherwise indicated, reading assignments refer to the assigned textbook *Communication and the Law*.

Week 1: August 27. Introduction to MCOM305.

Week 2: September 3: Law in Modern Society; the First Amendment
Read Chapters 1 and 2 before class.

Week 3: September 10: Conduct v. Speech; Prior Restraint
Read Chapters 3 and 4 before class.

Week 4: September 17: Pornography
Read Chapter 5 before class.
The People v. Larry Flynt will be shown in class.

Week 5: September 24: Presentations; Review
In-class presentations on banned books (worth 10% of grade).
Review for Test 1 will take place during class.

Week 6: October 1: Student Expression; Test 1
Read Chapter 7 before class.
Test 1 will be given in class (worth 15% of grade).

Week 7: October 8: Defamation and Privacy
Read Chapters 6 and 14 before class.

Week 8: October 15: Advertising and Public Relations; Review
Essay 1 is due at the beginning of class (worth 10% of grade).
Read Chapters 8 and 9 before class.
Review for Test 2 will take place during class.

Week 9: October 22: Intellectual Property, Test 2
Read Chapter 13 before class.
Test 2 will be given in class (worth 15% of grade).

Week 10: October 29: Newsgathering
Read Chapter 18 before class.
Good Night, and Good Luck will be shown in class.

Week 11: November 5: Broadcast Regulation and Cable Regulation
Read Chapters 10 and 11 before class.
Network will be shown in class.

Week 12: November 12: Broadcast Regulation and Cable Regulation, cont; Review
Review Chapters 10 and 11 before class.
Review for Test 3 will take place during class.

Week 13: November 19: Test 3

Test 3 will be given in class (worth 15% of grade).

Week 14: November 26: Confidential Sources; Access to Courts; Access to Documents and Meetings
Read Chapters 15, 16, and 17 before class.

Week 15: December 3: New Communications Technologies; Review
Essay 2 is due at the beginning of class (worth 10% of grade).
Read Chapter 12 before class.
Review for Comprehensive Examination will take place during class.
Take-home (essay) portion of Comprehensive examination will be distributed at the end of class.

December 9-11: Final exams. A Comprehensive Examination will be given. Time and place are yet to be determined. At the Comprehensive Examination, students should hand in the take-home (essay) portion of the exam, and will take the in-class portion of the exam. The take-home (essay) portion is worth 15% of grade, while the in-class portion is worth 10% of grade.