

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**MASS COMMUNICATIONS LAW & ETHICS - JOUR. 400**  
**Fall, 2009**

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**Office Hours**

Mon.: 6:30 - 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 - 10:30 p.m. by appointment

**Course Description**

This course will survey how the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution is interpreted and applied to the mass media in the United States. These applications will be illustrated by court decisions, laws and/or regulations impacting each major type of legal problem faced by the media; however, the emphasis will be on U.S. Supreme Court opinions. This course is mainly a lecture/discussion class, not a workshop course, however there will be in-class exercises, hypotheticals and special events. Class participation and questions are highly recommended. This course also will focus on the ethical dilemmas that journalists face in today's media marketplace and how those dilemmas become entangled in legal cases. Students are encouraged to explore the many ethical and legal questions that predominate the daily news and ponder how they would resolve those questions.

**Course Requirements**

1. Two non-cumulative exams: a midterm and a final. Each will be multiple choice/definition and short essay questions. Each will cover about one-half of the lecture material and reading assignments. You will need a Scantron 882 form and blue book for each exam. Each exam is worth 75 points, or approximately 40% of your final grade.
2. There will be in-class exercises, possibly including quizzes and hypotheticals, worth 40 points, or approximately 40% of your final grade.
3. Grading -- The cut-off scores will be: A = 181, B = 162, C = 143, D = 124. However, a grading curve will be applied, so that the cut-off scores may be changed as necessary to produce a fair grade distribution. The plus and minus system will be used.

## **Class Rules**

1. Exams must be taken at the scheduled time except for extraordinary circumstances such as an illness serious enough to require hospitalization. All excuses must be documented. For example, exams may not be made up due to work conflicts or car trouble. Start planning now so you can be present and on time on the scheduled exam days -- and beware of unreliable cars!
2. Students who miss in-class work, including quizzes or hypotheticals, because of absence may not make up work unless arrangements are made in advance. Class assignments that are late will be downgraded for each day they are late. The instructor emphasizes attendance and class participation. Remember, if you do miss a class, you miss an entire week of class. Moreover, if you hope to participate meaningfully, do the assigned reading before class begins.
3. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated, and anyone caught cheating will be reported to the University for possible further action. For a further explanation of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 531-532 of the 2004-2006 CSUN catalog.

Please also remember that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws. Passing this information off as your own is a violation of CSUN's plagiarism policy and carries the penalties outlined above.

## **Required Textbooks**

Major Principles of Media Law, 2010 edition, Overbeck & Pullen (Harcourt & Brace); Ethics handouts (provided by the professor)

## **Furloughs and the State Budget**

For the past 10 years the CSU system has suffered chronic under-funding. This year, because of the state economic crisis, the budget cuts are draconian, \$584 million, the worst-ever in decades. The CSU administration is attempting to manage these cuts by dramatically increasing student fees and by furloughing almost all University employees, including faculty, staff, and administrators. A furlough means mandatory un-paid days off for employees; there are 18 of these this year for the faculty, nine per semester. For students this means that on some days the campus will be closed. The library will have shorter hours and many campus support services will be decreased or eliminated. It will, for example, be more difficult to get signatures to meet deadlines. Additionally, many classes you need have been cut from the class schedule or are full. These cuts have consequences, especially for you.

How the furloughs affect this class is still in flux. Because of that, the Course Outline below is still a work in progress. I will announce in the next few weeks the final class schedule, including any cancelled classes. These days off are not holidays; they are a very concrete example of how budget cuts have consequences for education.

## COURSE OUTLINE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Subject</u>
Aug. 24	Ch. 1	Introduction/Legal System
Aug. 31	Ch. 1/Ethics Handout	Legal System/Ethics
Sept. 7	LABOR DAY!	Enjoy!
Sept. 14	Ch. 3	Prior Restraint
Sept. 21	Chs. 3/4	Prior Restraint/Libel
Sept. 28	YOM KIPPUR	Atone.
Oct. 5	Ch. 4	Libel
Oct. 12	Ch. 5	Privacy
Oct. 19	Chs. 5/14	Privacy/Student Press
Oct. 26	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	Focus!
Nov. 2	Chs. 7/8	Fair Trial/Privilege
Nov. 9	Chs. 8/10	Privilege/Obscenity
Nov. 16	FURLOUGH	Ponder.
Nov. 23	Chs. 10/11	Obscenity/Electronic Media
Nov. 30	Chs. 11/13	Electronic Media/Advertising
Dec. 7	Ch. 13	Advertising
Dec. 14 (8:00 p.m.)	<b>Final Exam</b>	Celebrate!