COMM 4395:001, Fall 2013 (Sept. 4-Dec. 10)  
Professor: Dr. Anantha S. Babbili

Course meets: 12:30p – 1:45p TTh in OCNR 118  
Office: Bay Hall 334

Office Hours: TTh 8:30 am-11:30 am & by appt.  
Office hours: 361.825.2678

E-Mail: anantha.babbili@tamucc.edu  
Cell: 361.563.51777

LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES  
IN COMMUNICATION

Course Description:
This course explores a number of legal and ethical issues in areas of importance to all of us, especially, to those of us who enter the professions in which communication plays the central role, such as journalism, advertising, public relations, and media production.

Learning Objectives:
Accordingly, the goals of the course include the following:

1) to understand legal principles and their application in key areas of communication law;

2) to understand key philosophical principles and their application to ethical issues in communication; and,

3) to employ principles of ethical decision-making in analyzing situations that raise ethical issues and in formulating principled resolutions to those issues.

By the conclusion of the course, you should have developed a more informed and systematic approach to dealing with issues of law and morality in communication as well as a greater sensitivity to the broad range of areas in which these issues may arise.

Student Learning Outcomes:
To help you achieve these goals, your specific objectives include the following:

1. Be able to identify and explain key legal concepts, the reasoning behind them, and their application in specific cases;
2. Be able to explain and apply the five philosophical foundations of ethical reasoning;
3. Be able to apply the Potter Box method of ethical analysis in specific cases; and
4. As a member of a small research team, to undertake independent research and analysis and to present your findings to the classes at the conclusion of the term.

Major Course Requirements and Expectations:

Your class performance and learning are assessed based on: 1) Attendance, punctuality and class participation; 2) Case presentations in class; 3) Topic Paper on designated subject; and, 4) Final Paper and presentation.
Case presentations will be throughout the semester to highlight key legal concepts.

Topic Paper will be scheduled during the term with appropriate preparation time.

Final paper and presentation (written report and oral) will be scheduled towards the latter part of the term. No final exam will be given.

The Final paper details/directions will be provided in class, but generally, these are the expectations: Students will investigate an event or situation that raises ethical issues involving media and communication. You will select your own topic or issue (with instructor’s approval and suggestions). Then, you will apply principles we study in this course to analyze the topic. You will report your analysis and conclusions to the class in a 10-minute formal, power point presentation. You will turn in a written paper, along with a bibliography of the sources and supporting material cited.

Attendance/Participation: Because this course will rely a great deal on class discussion, your attendance and thoughtful participation is very important. You should come to class on time and well-acquainted with the readings and be ready to discuss them. Three unexcused absences will lower your class grade by one letter grade.

Final grade will be determined on the following weightings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Grading Scale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case presentations</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>90-100% = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Paper:</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80-89% = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper &amp; presentation</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>70-79% = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>60-69% = D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>59%-below = F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Textbook and Readings:


Course Policies:

Attendance and punctuality: Attendance is required—both physically and mentally; punctuality is expected. You are expected to take an active role in classroom discussions. Late arrivals and chronic failure to engage in class discussion will all be reflected in your participation grade.

Late work and make-up exams:

- If there should be a legitimate reason for you missing class (illness, family emergencies, certain University-sponsored extracurricular activities), please provide the instructor with notification prior to the event or as soon as you are able—before the missed class period. If appropriate, we can arrange alternate times for you to make up quizzes or exams, but it will be your responsibility to get any information from lecture from one of your classmates.
- Unexcused absences will be noted and reflected in your participation grade. Also, any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.
- Late work for any reason considered unexcused will be penalized by at least one letter grade for each day it is late.

Cell Phone/Electronic Device Usage: While in class, please make sure your phone is off or on silent (and in your backpack or out of sight), so it’s not heard in class. Also, laptop use is not permitted.
Please remember to check your email regularly for any course updates.
If you would like to discuss any course readings, lectures, or assignments outside of class, you should feel free to contact me via email or by arranging to visit me during office hours or set up an appointment to see me at any other time.
Teams will submit a hard copy of final project on December 10 in class.
All writing for this course must be composed using a standard, 12-point font size, and with the standard 1-inch margins.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examination or examination materials, falsification, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one's own work). In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in the course grade of F.

Dropping the Course

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filing out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Please check published dates for the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Preferred methods of scholarly citations

For the purpose of citation, please follow The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th Edition, humanities style (notes and bibliography). For guidance, see http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will result in the grade of F for the course.

Classroom/professional behavior

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Grades Appeals*

As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Academic Advising: The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 361-825-3466.

Notice to Students with Disabilities and/or Returning Veterans

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible. Please have your accommodation letter from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Disability Services (DS) Office with you when you come to see me. If you are a returning veteran and experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Office for assistance. If you suspect that you may have any disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Disability Services Office (located in Room 116 Corpus Christi Hall) at 361.825.3816.

(Course Schedule and Assignments on next page)
Course Schedule and Assignments

(Please complete readings by the dates indicated. The schedule is subject to change)

9-5 to 9-12  Course intro and textbooks;
            Idea of Freedom, American Legal System;
            Ethical Foundations and perspectives;
            Ethical reasoning and the Potter Box; Law book chapters 1 & 2, Christians, pp. 1-27

9-17 to 9-19  Restrictions on Free Press, Libel and Slander and the First Amendment
             Law book chapters 3 & 4

9-24 to 9-26  Issues in Digital Media, Privacy and Copyright; Law book chapters 5 & 6

10-1 to 10-3  Free Press and Fair Trial and Journalists’ rights; Julian Assange to Edward Snowden
             Law book chapters 7 & 8

10-3 to 10-10  TOPIC PAPER DUE IN CLASS October 10

10-15 to 10-17  Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and obscenity; Law book chapters 9 & 10

10-22 to 10-24  Case Presentations in Class

10-29 to 10-31  Broadcast regulation; Social justice and media ethics; Law book chapters 11 & 12

11-5 to 11-7  Commercial speech and free expression; Law book chapters 13 & 14

11-12 to 11-14  Ethics in advertising (Readings to be assigned);

11-19 to 11-21  Final Paper presentations

11-26  Final Paper presentations

11-28  THANKSGIVING BREAK

12-3 to 12-5  Final Paper presentations

12-10  Final Paper presentations

Written Report of Final Paper due (December 10 in class)

(End)