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. Be able 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/guidelines 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 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>Percentage</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>90-100% = A (excellent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80-89% = B (very good)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case presentations</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>70-79% = C (average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper &amp; presentation</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60-69% = D (poor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>59%-below = F (hopeless)</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 the 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 or discussion. Please remember to check your email regularly for any course updates.

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.

Late work for any reason considered unexcused will be penalized by at least one letter grade for each day it is late.

Examinations: Unless specifically authorized by your instructor, all exams are to be taken in the presence of the instructor. No computers, tablets, cell phones, or any electronic devices are allowed during any exam.

Grade Appeal: Grade Appeal Procedures

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.

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 illicet possession of examination or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity 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 filling 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 APA Style (notes and bibliography). Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will result in the grade of F for the course.

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 361.825.5816.
Course Schedule and Assignments

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

8-28 to 9-4  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*

9-9 to 9-11  Restrictions on Free Press, Libel and Slander and the First Amendment
             *Law book chapters 3&4 (Case presentations)*

9-16 to 9-18 Issues in Digital Media, Privacy and Copyright; *Law book chapters 5&6 (Cases)*

9-23 to 9-25 Free Press and Fair Trial and Journalists’ rights; Julian Assange to Edward Snowden
             *Law book chapters 7&8 (Cases)*

9-30 to 10-2  **TOPIC PAPER DUE IN CLASS October 10**

10-7 to 10-9  Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and obscenity; *Law book chapters 9&10 (Cases)*

10-14 to 10-16  **Case Presentations continue in Class**

10-21 to 10-23 Broadcast regulation; Social justice and media ethics; *Law book chapters 11 & 12*

10-28 to 10-30 Commercial speech and free expression; *Law book chapters 13 & 14 (Cases)*

11-4 to 11-6  Ethics in advertising (Readings to be assigned);

11-11 to 11-13  **Final Paper presentations**

11-18 to 11-20  **Final Paper presentations**

11-25 to 11-27  **Final Paper presentations (THANKSGIVING BREAK)**

12-2  **Final Paper presentations**

**Written Report of Final Paper due (December 2 in class)**

(End)
ABOUT THE PROFESSOR

Anantha S. Babbili (Ph.D., The University of Iowa) is former Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs of Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi (2007-2010). He is former Dean of the College of Mass Communication (2002-2007) at Middle Tennessee State University. He is currently Professor of Communication & Media Studies at TAMU-CC. Babbili taught and directed the Journalism and Media Studies department at Texas Christian University for more than two decades. He was the visiting Rogers Chair in Journalism and New Information Technologies at the University of Western Ontario, Canada and lectured in Mexico, India, Slovakia, UK and Asia. Babbili is the co-author of the book, *An Ethics Trajectory*, published by the University of Illinois Press and has published his research in several books including *Communication Ethics and University Values*, *Critical Issues in Media*, *Bosnia by Television* (British Film Institute), *Mass Media in the Middle East*, and *The Press and the State*. A former journalist, Babbili has produced scholarly articles that have appeared in journals such as *Media, Culture and Society, Journal of Communication Inquiry, Newspaper Research Journal* and the *International Third World Studies Journal*. Babbili was the Editor (2000-2008) of the national *Journalism & Communication Monographs* and served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* and *Journalism Studies*. He is on the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences advisory board at the London School of Economics. He received the Barry Bingham Award from the National Conference of Editorial Writers and was the consultant to the United Nations and the UNESCO on human rights and communication. The Carnegie Foundation and the Council on the Advancement and Support of Teaching named Babbili the Texas Professor of the Year. He is the recipient of the National Teaching Award from the Poynter Institute for Media Studies owned by the Times Publishing Co. His columns and opinions as a news source on breaking events and U.S. foreign policy appeared on CNN, ABC News, CBS, and NBC and in *Chicago Tribune, New York Times, Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and many other media outlets. Before earning his doctorate, Babbili earned two undergraduate degrees in biological sciences and journalism from his native India and M.A. in journalism from the University of Oklahoma.