

# PHI 293: ETHICS AND THE MEDIA PROFESSIONS

Syracuse University College  
Summer 2017

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## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Oxford University Press, 2015). ISBN: 978-0199997237
- David Sanford Horner, *Understanding Media Ethics* (Sage Publications, 2015). ISBN: 978-1849207881

The required texts should be purchased before the course begins. Additional readings will be made available for download on Blackboard.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

*Ethics and the Media Professions* is an introduction to the ethical issues raised by the media, including television, radio, film, graphics, and photography. The goal of the course is to provide students with the resources and background required to recognize, navigate, and constructively respond to the ethical challenges faced by media professionals. Toward that end, the course focuses on two interrelated topics:

1. Ethical concepts and methods, including traditional views about ethical standards and how they should be determined.
2. Specific areas where ethical issues arise in the media, including the portrayal of sex and violence, the use of stereotypes, and the ethical implications of digital technology.

In addressing these topics, you will learn how to think clearly and carefully about difficult subjects. So, be forewarned: ***This is not necessarily an easy course.*** You will be responsible for a fair amount reading. Some (but not all) of that reading will be challenging. The skills and perspectives you develop, however, will be useful in both personal and professional life.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Exams** [midterm and final]: The exams will consist of true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. The content covered by the final exam will be cumulative.

**Final Paper** [8 pages]: Topics and guidelines will be provided.

**Participation:** *Regular reading, preparation and participation are expected.* There will be weekly online reading quizzes. There also will be a weekly online discussion forum. A significant portion of your final grade will be based on regular reading and participation.

### GRADING INFORMATION

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Midterm Exam:	25%
Final Exam:	25%
Final Paper:	30%
Reading Quizzes:	10%
Participation:	10%

I use a standard grading scale:

A	= 94-100%	B	= 84-87%	C	= 74-77%
A-	= 90-94%	B-	= 80-84%	C-	= 70-74%
B+	= 87-90%	C+	= 77-80%	D	= 60-70%

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Blackboard:** The class will meet on Blackboard, SU's online learning system. To access the Blackboard website, go to <http://blackboard.syr.edu> and use your Syracuse NetID username and password to log in. To access the course, click the link for PHI 293 on your homepage.

**Academic Integrity:** The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy will be enforced. The Syracuse policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete University policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

**Special Accommodations:** If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call 315-443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue "Accommodation Authorization Letters" to students with documented disabilities as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

## WEEKLY BLACKBOARD SCHEDULE

Tuesdays: Online Reading Quiz Due

Wednesdays: First Lecture Posted

Fridays: Weekly Update  
Second Lecture Posted  
Reading Quiz and Discussion Question posted for the coming week

Saturdays: Online Discussion Post Due

## RESOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- José Luis Bermúdez & Sebastian Gardner (eds.). *Art and Morality*. Routledge, 2003.
- Raphael Cohen-Almagor. *Speech, Media, and Ethics: The Limits of Free Expression*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Nick Couldry, Mirca Madianou, & Amit Pinchevski (eds.). *Ethics of Media*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Howard Good & Sandra L. Borden (eds.). *Ethics and Entertainment: Essays on Media Culture and Media Morality*. McFarland, 2010.
- Matthew Kieran. *Media Ethics: A Philosophical Approach*. Praeger, 1997.
- Matthew Kieran (ed.). *Media Ethics*. Routledge, 1998.
- Jerrold Levinson (ed.). *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*. Cambridge, 1998.
- Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge, 2005.
- Lynda Obst. *Hello, He Lied – and Other Truths from the Hollywood Trenches*. Broadway, 1996.
- Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition. Penguin, 2005.
- F. Miguel Valenti. *More Than a Movie: Ethics in Entertainment*. Westview, 2000.
- Bernard Williams (ed.). *Obscenity and Film Censorship: An Abridgement of the Williams Report*. Cambridge, 1981.
- Paul Woodruff. *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched*. Oxford, 2008.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1: Course Introduction**

Reading: Course Syllabus  
Horner: Introduction  
Horner 1: Moral Judgment

### **Week 2: Social Contract Theory: Civilization and Morality**

Reading: Shafer-Landau: Introduction  
Shafer-Landau 13: The Social Contract Tradition: The Theory and Its Attractions  
Shafer-Landau 14: The Social Contract Tradition: Problems and Prospects

### **Week 3: Social Contract Theory: The Media as a Social Institution**

Reading: Horner 10: Privacy  
Horner 11: Security  
Onora O’Neill, “Media Freedoms & Media Standards”

### **Week 4: Consequentialism: Censorship and Liberty**

Reading: Shafer-Landau 9: Consequentialism, Its Nature and Attractions  
Horner 4: Liberty  
Anthony Ellis, “Censorship and the Media”

### **Week 5: Consequentialism: Violent Content**

Reading: Horner 5: Violence  
Stephen Prince, “Violence”  
Susan Hurley, “Bypassing Conscious Control: Media Violence, Unconscious Imitation, and Freedom of Speech”

### **Week 6: Consequentialism: Pornographic Content**

Reading: Horner 6: Pornography  
Susan J. Brison, “‘The Price We Pay?’ Pornography and Harm”  
A. W. Eaton, “A Sensible Antiporn Feminism”

Week 7: MIDTERM EXAM

**Week 8: Deontology: *Truth, Respect, and Other Obligations***

Reading: Shafer-Landau 11: The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice  
Shafer-Landau 12: The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect  
Horner 7: Truth

**Week 9: Deontology: *The Ethics of Representation***

Reading: Horner 8: Images  
Horner 9: Stereotyping  
Lawrence Blum, "Stereotypes and Stereotyping"

**Week 10: Deontology: *Art and Morality***

Reading: Mary Devereaux, "Beauty and Evil: The Case of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*"  
Elisabeth Schellekens, "Taking A Moral Perspective: On Voyeurism in Art"

**Week 11: Virtue Ethics: *Character and Integrity***

Reading: Shafer-Landau 17: Virtue Ethics  
Horner 13: Wrong-Doing

Week 12: FINAL EXAM  
PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE