



## **DBLN COMM 3321 Ethics in the Media CAPA Dublin**

### **Course Description**

This course will address the principal ethical issues facing journalism, advertising, entertainment media, and online content. It will examine the moral obligations of the producers as well as the responsibilities borne by consumers. The course will provide an overview of the applicable ethical principles and philosophies then apply these to present day cases in the media through case studies. Finally, students will learn to critically engage with the content in order to analyse for themselves the ethical issues that are present in the production and consumption of the media on an individual and societal level.

### **Course Aims**

By the end of the course, students should be to demonstrate:

- An understanding of the historical and current ethical issues facing the media industry
- Insight into editorial decision-making and regulatory standards of media producers
- Comprehension of the institutional, societal, and individual pressures that contribute to ethical decisions and lapses
- Understanding of the impact of ethical versus unethical behaviour on the part of the media as it relates to democracy, journalistic practice, and public trust
- An ability to describe the roles that the public plays in ensuring and critiquing ethical standards in the media
- An ability to compare and contrast Ireland, UK and US cases

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- a) Engage in critical thinking and evaluation;
- b) Master a body of knowledge;
- c) Communicate effectively both in writing and through oral presentations;
- d) Understand the impact of globalization on the creation of media content and the ethical issues facing journalists in a global community;
- e) Describe the similarities and differences between Irish, UK and US cases;
- f) Explain how political, institutional, corporate and other societal structures influence media practices with specific regard to issues surrounding ethical practices

## Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, and appreciation of cultural differences.

## Class Methodology

Lectures, discussions, weekly assignments, tests, student presentations, guest lectures, and out-of-class field visits.

## Field Components

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City in which you are currently living. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

The assigned field component(s) are TBC

## Grading Scheme

Grading Scheme Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	0.7 1.0
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

## Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
Class participation/Small group discussion	20%	all	All units
Oral Presentation	20%	a, b, c	All units after 1
In-class quizzes	10%	all	All units after 1
Mid-term	20%	all	Last unit
Final Exam	30%	all	

## Assignments

### Weekly Quizzes

Students will respond to questions about the assigned readings, lectures, and discussions. Responses will be graded out of 10 and will be graded on thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and validity. The overall writing assignment grade will be calculated as an average all writing assignment grades. Some writing assignments will be completed out of class.

### Class Participation

Class participation, broadly defined, is the student's willingness to answer instructor questions and participate in class discussions. Class participation is very important in this course and is worth 20% of the student's final grade.

### Oral Presentations

Each student will be required to make one in-class presentation. A schedule and further details on the presentations will be provided in the second week of course.

### Midterm and Final Exam

The midterm will cover theoretical topics and readings from the first half of the course. The final is cumulative. The final will be graded out of 30 and be comprised of numerous short essays (this is subject to change at the lecturer's discretion).

## Course Requirements

### Required Reading:

- All required readings will be made available in Canvas as pdf or hyperlink documents
- READINGS MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITH ADVANCE NOTICE

### Recommended Reading:

Barnes, J. 2001. *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Bernays, E.L. 2004 [1928].

*Propaganda*. New Ed ed. Brooklyn, NY 11238: Ig Publishing. Blackburn, S. 2009. *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boczkowski, P. J. & Papacharissi, Z. (eds). 2018. *Trump and the Media*. Cambridge, MA: MITPress.

Brady, C. 2010. *Did the Media Fail to Sound Alarm Bells Before the Financial Crisis?* *The Irish Times*, 6 March 2010, pp.15. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/did-the-media-fail-to-sound-alarm-bells-before-the-financial-crisis-1.633555>

Chibnall, S. 1973 *The Production of Knowledge by Crime Reporters* IN Cohen, S. & Young, J. *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media* Rev. ed. London; Beverly Hills, Calif: Constable; Sage Publications.

Cook, T. E. 2006. *Freeing the Presses: The First Amendment in Action*. Benson, NC: LSUPress

Corcoran, M.P. and O'Brien, M. 2004. *Political censorship and the democratic state: the Irish broadcasting ban*. Dublin: Four Courts.

Curran, J. and Seaton, J. 1988. *Power without responsibility: the press and broadcasting in Britain*. 3rd ed. London ; New York: Routledge.

Curran, J. 1977. *Capitalism and the control of the press* in Gurevitch, M., Curran, J., Roberts, C. and Open University. *Mass Communication and Society* Course Team. 1977. *The media: contexts of study*. Milton Keynes, Eng: Open University Press. pp195-230.

- Davies, N. 2008. *Flat Earth news: an award-winning reporter exposes falsehood, distortion and propaganda in the global media*. London: Vintage Books.
- Gaber, I. 2009. *Exploring the paradox of liberal democracy: More political communication equals less public trust*. *Political Quarterly*, 80(1), pp.84-91.
- Fahy, D., O'Brien, M., and Poti, V., 2010. "From Boom to Bust: a Post-Celtic Tiger analysis of the Norms, Values and Roles of Irish Financial Journalists," *Irish Communication Review*: Vol.12: Iss. 1, Article 1.
- Fawkes, J. 2017. *Public Relations Ethics and Professionalism: The Shadow of Excellence*. London: Routledge
- Frost, C. 2000. *Media Ethics and Self-Regulation*. Harlow: Longman. Frost, C. 2007. *Journalism Ethics and Regulation*. Harlow: Longman.
- Haidt, J. 2012. *The righteous mind: why good people are divided by politics and religion*. London: Allen Lane
- Harcup, T. 2007. *The ethical journalist*. 1st ed. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Herman, E.S. and Chomsky, N. 2002. *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of the mass media*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Horgan, J. 1995. Saving us from ourselves: contraception, censorship and the 'evil literature' controversy of 1926. *Irish Communications Review*, [5] pp.61-67.
- Impress, 2020. 'About Us'. Available at: <https://www.impress.press/about-us/> [25 Oct 2020].
- Independent Press Standards Organisation (UK). 2020. 'What we do'. Available at: <https://www.ipso.co.uk/what-we-do/> [25 Oct 2020].
- Kant, I. 2005. *The Moral Law: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Translated & Analysed by H.J. Paton). London: Routledge.
- Kenny, C. (2009) 'Significant Television: Journalism, Sex Abuse and the Catholic Church,' in *Irish Communications Review*, pp.63-76.
- Knowlton, S.R. and Reader, B. 2009. *Moral reasoning for journalists*. 2nd ed. ed. Westport, Conn: Praeger.
- Kohring, M. and Matthes, J. 2007. Trust in News Media. *Communication Research*, 34(2), pp.231-252.
- Law, S. 2006. *The war for children's minds*. Abingdon, OX; New York: Routledge. Lippmann, W. 2009. *Public opinion*. Milton Keynes: Lightning Source.
- London School of Economics. 2018. Articles on Leveson inquiry (tag) Available at: [25 Oct 2020] <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/tag/leveson-inquiry/>
- Marchi, R. 2012. With Facebook, Blogs, and Fake News, Teens Reject Journalistic "Objectivity". *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 36(3), pp.246-262.
- McNair, B. 2004. *PR must die: Spin, anti-spin and political public relations in the UK, 1997-2004*. *Journalism Studies*, 5(3), pp.325-338.
- Meyers, C. (ed). 2010. *Journalism Ethics: A Philosophical Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- National Union of Journalists. 2016. *Submission to the Statutory Review of the Defamation Act*. Available at: [25 Oct 2020] [http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National\\_Union\\_of\\_Journalists.pdf/Files/National\\_Union\\_of\\_Journalists.pdf](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National_Union_of_Journalists.pdf/Files/National_Union_of_Journalists.pdf)
- New Yorker, 2018 'Articles on Trump and Fake News' [tag]. Available at: [25 Oct 2020] <https://www.newyorker.com/tag/fake-news>.

O'Brien, M. 2007 *Selling Fear: The Changing Face of Crime Reporting in Ireland* IN Horgan, J., O'Connor, B., M.A. and Sheehan, H. 2007. *Mapping Irish media: critical explorations*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

O'Connell, M. 1999 'Is Irish Public Opinion Towards Crime Distorted by Media Bias?' in *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 14 (2)

O'Malley, T. and Soley, C. 2000. *Regulating the Press*. London: Pluto. Parekh, B. (ed). 2012.

*Jeremy Bentham*. London: Routledge.

Parekh, B. (ed). 2017. *Bentham's Political Thought*. London: Routledge.

Parsons, P. J. 2016. *Ethics in Public Relations: A Guide to Best Practice*. London: KoganPage.

Press Council of Ireland (2018) *Code of Practice*. Available at: [25 Oct 2020]  
<http://www.presscouncil.ie/code-of-practice>

PRII. 2018. Submission to The Department of Justice On The Review Of The Defamation Act 2009 From The Public Relations Institute Of Ireland. Available at: [25 Oct 2020]  
[https://www.prii.ie/assets/uploads/documents/DefamationAct2009\\_Review-PRII\\_Submission.pdf](https://www.prii.ie/assets/uploads/documents/DefamationAct2009_Review-PRII_Submission.pdf)

Rachels, J. and Rachels, S. 2010. *The elements of moral philosophy*: James Rachels; sixth ed. by Stuart Rachels. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Reynolds, P. 2006. *Crime in Ireland* [address by RTÉ Crime Correspondent to Ceifin]  
[www.ceifin.com/resources/paper/PaulReynolds\\_CrimeCorrespondentRTE.pdf](http://www.ceifin.com/resources/paper/PaulReynolds_CrimeCorrespondentRTE.pdf)

Sanders, K. 2003. *Ethics & journalism*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage. Todorov, T. 2009. *In defence of the Enlightenment*. London: Atlantic Books.

## Dress Code

N/A

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: Ethics in the Media

The influence of philosophy on the creation of democracy; the influence of religion on maintaining feudalism until the European and USA revolutions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries inspired by shifts in ethical thinking. Do we need to re-examine our ethical systems with the rise of behavioural economics and artificial intelligence?

#### Follow-up Readings

### Week 2: Fake News & Alternative Facts

Truth-telling journalism provides our window to the world, when citizens do not have a first-hand account. But increasingly journalists are reliant on second-hand accounts from motivated sources and public relations. Are facts being presented or is democracy being undermined by half-truths and lies?

#### Readings

### Week 3: Private Companies, Capitalism, and the Marketplace

From corporate whistleblowers to Wikileaks; the wrongdoing of the powerful has been exposed to the media – or has escaped scrutiny until catastrophic failure [Enron, Lehman Brothers, Anglo-Irish Bank]. Irish media commentators failed to identify a property bubble before the economic crisis of 2008 – was this oversight or a conflict of interests?

- Brady, C., 2010. *Did the Media Fail to Sound Alarm Bells Before the Financial Crisis?* *The Irish Times*, 6 March 2010, pp.15. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/did-the-media-fail-to-sound-alarm-bells-before-the-financial-crisis-1.633555>

- Fahy, D., O'Brien, M., and Poti, V., 2010. "From Boom to Bust: a Post-Celtic Tiger analysis of the Norms, Values and Roles of Irish Financial Journalists," *Irish Communication Review*: Vol. 12: Iss. 1, Article 1.

#### **Week 4: Unattributed Sources**

What issues surround unattributed sources – and the protection of source identity. Journalists ought to be prepared to go to jail to protect their confidential sources; so how big a risk should journalists take to break the story. Who's Using Who? Entertainment features in the top five content providers for our print and broadcast news; but are celebrities so often the victims of media intrusion or responsible for an ethical shift as a result of shameless publicity seeking.

#### **Readings**

#### **Week 5: Privacy**

Lady Diana Spencer was described in her brother's eulogy as "the most hunted person of the modern age". The media were also skeptical of her charity work – and this raises questions of motivation of anyone who publicly tries to do good [now termed 'virtue signalling']. How do journalists balance the public interest versus an interested public?

#### **Readings**

#### **Week 6: MIDTERM EXAM**

#### **Week 7: MID-TERM BREAK (if applicable)**

#### **Week 8: Individual Journalists and the Ethics of Practice**

You Couldn't Make It Up... but some journalists have – and they so nearly got away with it; from falsely declaring the breakout of war to inventing unattributed quotations. Why the truth reigns supreme in deciding what is real or imaginary, right or wrong, there are those who break societal values that underpin communication.

#### **Readings**

#### **Week 9: Moral Panic and Public Opinion**

The construction of moral panics and the beneficiaries of these seismic shifts in public opinion: and the damaging impact of commercial and political influences on social freedoms. From increased insurance premiums to clampdowns of law and order to benefit politicians at the ballot box.

#### **Readings**

#### **Week 10: Crime and the Media**

From underreporting to overreporting and the rise of the journalist as participant. The changing nature of crime journalism in Ireland highlights a fraught and shifting relationship between journalists and police – including the glamorization of criminals and the dangers to reporters – but how does this impact on the watchdog role of the media?

- O'Brien, M. (2007) 'Selling Fear: The Changing Face of Crime Reporting in Ireland' in Horgan, J. et al Mapping Irish Media [Key Reading]
- Chibnall, S. (1973) 'The Production of Knowledge by Crime Reporters' in Cohen, S. & Young, J: The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media
- Reynolds, P. 'Crime in Ireland' [address by RTÉ Crime Correspondent to Ceifin]
- [www.ceifin.com/resources/paper/PaulReynolds\\_CrimeCorrespondentRTE.pdf](http://www.ceifin.com/resources/paper/PaulReynolds_CrimeCorrespondentRTE.pdf)
- O'Connell, M. (1999) 'Is Irish Public Opinion Towards Crime Distorted by Media Bias?' in *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 14 (2)

#### **Week 11: Commercialization**

How advertising bypasses the critical process of journalism and speaks directly to the consumer; but what are the ethical considerations for advertisers and are they followed. There will be case studies from the gambling industry – decoding the imagery presented to understand what the advertisers are selling

#### **Readings**

## **Week 12: Crossing the Line: Does the end justify the means?**

Examining where journalists break the rules in order to break the story. Kant says no; Bentham says yes - Even Woodward and Bernstein crossed the line during Watergate by gaining access through contacts to telephone and credit card records; in a fiercely competitive profession, the temptations may prove too much.

### **Readings**

## **Week 13: Social Media Ethics UNSOCIAL MEDIA**

Is the rise of social media platforms re-engineering humanity into a profoundly different way of interacting with each other; and creating division and conflict to manufacture consent? Does social media inherently encourage individuality and competition rather than community and cooperation? The regulators believe so; but are lagging behind rapidly evolving algorithms.

### **Readings**

## **Week 14: Censorship and IN-CLASS FINAL**

Irish media has experienced religious and political censorship in the 20th century – from ‘evil literature’, Ireland’s neutral status in the Second World War and the lawful prohibition from broadcasting interviews with members of proscribed organisations. Media censorship has assumed greater relevance in the ‘war on terror’ – but what are the ethical implications for democracy?

### **Readings**

## **Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities**

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. The first time a student has an unexcused absence for a class, their grade will not be impacted. The second time a student has an unexcused absence in that class, it will result in a 3 percent reduction of the final grade (for example: an A- [92] will become a B+ [89]). The student will be placed on academic probation at this time. Three unexcused absences per class will result in failure of the course. A pattern of three absences in more than one course will result in dismissal from the program. If a student arrives late for a scheduled class, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor to ensure that they are added to the class register for the session.

**Excused Absences:** Absences are only excused for medical reasons, for a family emergency or for a religious holiday. To request an excused absence, students must contact the Academic Director ahead of time and provide evidence (e.g. a doctor’s note) of the reason for their absence, otherwise the absence will not be excused. Even if the student knows the absence will not be excused, the student should still contact CAPA to inform CAPA they will not be in class. In addition to contacting the Academic Director, it is the responsibility of the student to contact their instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate in all classes and to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assigned reading BEFORE the class and arrive at the session on time. Participation is a vital part of students’ grade: students are expected to participate in class and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others will not be tolerated.

**Academic Accommodations:** Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability should contact the instructor and/or the Director of Academic Affairs privately to discuss their specific needs. Students requesting accommodations must have their home institution’s Disabilities Services or an appropriate licensed professional or healthcare provider submit official documentation directly to CAPA in a timely manner outlining their specific needs. If the documentation is submitted by a provider other than the home institution’s Disabilities Services, it must be someone familiar with the history and functional limitations of the student’s disability (not a relative or family member of the student). Any required accommodations will be approved by CAPA’s Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with relevant Academic Directors, before being relayed to faculty. Any student who requires an accommodation based on official documentation should also discuss their needs directly with their instructor.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in their scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism, self-plagiarism and cheating can result in dismissal from the program. Self-plagiarism, copying an assignment entirely or partially to submit to a different class in an attempt to receive credit twice for one piece of work is unacceptable and considered cheating by duplication. Students risk receiving a "0" for any assignments in which they have duplicated their own work. All substantial writing assignments will be run through the plagiarism checking software Turnitin when submitted via CANVAS. See CAPA's Academic Standards and Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX:** CAPA: The Global Education Network is committed to encouraging a safe and healthy environment at our CAPA centers. This commitment includes the understanding of, and applicable adherence to, the guidelines outlined in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX necessitates that US universities provide equity in all educational programs and activities without sex discrimination. CAPA understands the implications of Title IX compliance for our institutional partners and thus endeavors to support this compliance as a vital aspect of partnership. The safety and security of all students during a program is a matter of crucial importance to CAPA. To facilitate this, CAPA encourages students to openly disclose any and all information that is Title IX relevant so that CAPA staff can provide support and connect students with appropriate resources. Because students may not understand the implications of Title IX abroad, CAPA will work to advise students about the resources available through Title IX and explain the importance of compliance in Title IX reporting. CAPA will work to build student confidence in CAPA's status as a mandated reporter by outlining the advantage of disclosure for the student, reassuring them that any information disclosed will not be used in an inappropriate manner, and stressing that individuals will only be informed on a need-to-know basis.

**Use of Electronic Equipment in Class:** All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are NOT allowed unless students have express permission from the faculty, or they have been instructed to do so. If students require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, they must inform the Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of term.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a "0" (F) grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request for an extension must be made to the relevant faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a 3 percent per day deduction of the final grade. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of "0" (F) will be given for the assessment.

**Behavior during Examinations:** During examinations, students must do their own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, and students may not access online resources of any kind, compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.