



**LNDN COMM 3321  
Ethics in the Media:  
Case Studies from US and UK Perspectives**

**CAPA LONDON**

**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 and in many forms. Finally, students will learn to critically engage with the content in order to analyze 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 have:

- 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
- Understand the impact of ethical versus unethical behavior on the part of the media as it relates to democracy, journalistic practice, and public trust
- Describe the roles that the public plays in ensuring and critiquing ethical standards in the media
- Be able to compare and contrast 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 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. Laptops are permitted to be used in this class *only when required for an exercise*. Non-work use however is distracting for your fellow students and will inhibit your own learning. Research also shows that people learn better in lectures by taking handwritten notes. Therefore, laptops should not be used during times when people are presenting.

## 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:

Visiting a marketing agency TBC

## Final Exams

The final is comprised of numerous short essays (this is subject to change at the lecturer's discretion).

## 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	20%	All	Weekly
Oral Presentation	20%	a,b,c	Weekly from Week 3
Weekly thoughts	10%	All	Weekly from Week 2
Midterm exam	20%	All	Week 7
Final exam (cumulative)	30%	All	Final week

## Course Requirements

### Weekly readings

Readings will be available as pdfs or links. All readings are required.

### Weekly thoughts 10%

Each week prior to class, students will post on the module discussion board about something media-ethics related (and ideally connects to the UK). This could be, for example, a news story you read (include a link), an ad you walked by (take a pic), a film or television show you watched (link to its imdb page). These are just examples – be creative and thoughtful. Assessment criteria will be supplied and discussed in class. At the start of class, we will go through these tweets, so be prepared to share some brief thoughts on why you tweeted it and its ethical dimension.

### Class Participation 20%

Class participation, broadly defined, is the student's willingness to answer instructor questions and participate in class discussions. Class participation is very important; this is a discussion class, not a lecture. Most weeks we will have student-

led presentations and team discussions of case studies. For this to work, we really need everyone to participate. Participation is worth 20% of the student's final grade.

### Oral Presentations 20%

Each student will be required to make one or two (dependent on class size) in-class presentations. A schedule and further details on the presentations will be provided in the first weeks of the course.

### In-class midterm (20%) and final (30%) exams

The midterm will cover theoretical topics and readings from the first half of the course. The final is cumulative.

### Readings and Weekly Academic Calendar:

- Unless otherwise noted, ALL classes will take place in the Greenwich Room
- All readings will be sent to students electronically as a PDF file
- **READINGS MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITH ADVANCE NOTICE**

#### Week 1: Ethics in the Media – Ethics, moral philosophy and the naming of a cat

Readings: <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/thinking-ethically/>

Ward, Stephen: <https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/resources/ethics-in-a-nutshell/>

#### Week 2: Truth-tellers? Conceptualising truth in relation to the role of the news and entertainment media

Readings: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/world/middleeast/brutal-images-of-syrian-boy-drowned-off-turkey-must-be-seen-activists-say.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/world/middleeast/brutal-images-of-syrian-boy-drowned-off-turkey-must-be-seen-activists-say.html?_r=0)

<https://web.stanford.edu/class/comm1a/readings/gilens-race-poverty.pdf>

Hawkins, Virgil (2002) The CNN Factor: the media and conflict. *Journalism Studies*, 3:2, 225-240.

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

Readings: Schwartz, M. (2001) The Nature and Relationship between Corporate Codes Of Ethics and Behavior, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 32:2, 247-262.

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2017). Ten years after comparing media systems: What have we learned? *Political Communication*, 34(2), 155-171.

#### Week 4: Ethics of Using Sources

Readings: Ward, Vicky (2007) "Double Exposure." *Vanity Fair*, October 23, 2007. <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2004/01/plame200401>

Joyce, Daniel (2007) *The Judith Miller Case and Relationship between Reporter and Source: Competing Visions of the Media's Role and Function*. Fordham Intellectual Property, Media, and Entertainment Law Journal. 17:3 [http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1377&context=iplj&sei-redir=1&referer=https%3A%2F%2Fscholar.google.co.uk%2Fscholar%3Fhl%3Den%26q%3Dvalerie%2BPlame%2BWilson%26btnG%3D%26as\\_sdt%3D1%252C5%26as\\_sdt%3D#search=%22valerie%20Plame%20Wilson%22](http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1377&context=iplj&sei-redir=1&referer=https%3A%2F%2Fscholar.google.co.uk%2Fscholar%3Fhl%3Den%26q%3Dvalerie%2BPlame%2BWilson%26btnG%3D%26as_sdt%3D1%252C5%26as_sdt%3D#search=%22valerie%20Plame%20Wilson%22)

Week 5: Individual journalistic practice

- Readings: Down, Ann (1998) "The Great Pretender," *Columbia Journalism Review*, July/August, pp. 14-15
- Jones, Maggie and Steve Urbanski, "What Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke Say About the Press and The Erosion of Trust," *Journalism Studies*, 7:6, pp. 828-850
- Shapiro, Ivor (2006) "Why They Lie: Probing Explanation for Journalistic Cheating," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31, pp. 261-266.

Week 6: IN-CLASS MIDTERM

Week 7: CAPA BREAK Have fun! Take a trip. Relax. Stay safe.

Week 8: Commercialization

- Readings: Blair, Jessica Dawn, et al., "Ethics in Advertising: Sex Sells, But Should It?" *Journal of Legal, Ethical, And Regulatory Issues*. 9:2, p 109.
- <http://adage.com/article/global-news/u-k-watchdog-bans-beach-body-ready-ad/299291/>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/jun/03/yves-saint-laurent-ad-ban-underweight-model>

Week 9: Field study to be arranged

Week 10: Privacy

- Readings: Morrow, Lance, "Journalism After Diana," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 36:4, p. 38.
- Carlson, Matt and Berkowitz, Dan "The emperor lost his clothes: Rupert Murdoch New of the World, and journalist's boundary work in the UK and the USA" (2014) *Journalism*. 15:4, pp. 389-406

Week 11: Social Media Ethics

Guest Speaker from [Spin Brands](#)

- Readings: Isaac, Mike, "Nude photos of Jennifer Lawrence are latest front in Online Privacy Debate." *The New York Times*, 09/02/2014 <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/technology/trove-of-nude-photos-sparks-debate-over-online-behavior.html>
- Farhadd, Manjoo, "Hacking victims deserve empathy, not ridicule. *Times*, 09/03/2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/technology/personaltech/hacking-victims-deserve-empathy-not-ridicule.html>
- Ward, Stephen. "Digital Media Ethics" <https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/resources/digital-media-ethics/>
- <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/all-about-ethics/why-facebook-left-up-the-drunk-pelosi-video-but-youtube-took-it-down/>

### Week 12: Politics

- Readings: McNair, Brian. (2004) "PR must die: spin, anti-spin and political public relations in the UK, 1997–2004." *Journalism studies* 5, no. 3: 325-338.
- Bennett, W. Lance. (1990) "Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States." *Journal of communication* 40, no. 2: 103-127.
- Holan, Angie (2018) The Principles of the Truth-O-Meter: PolitiFact's methodology for independent fact-checking. <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2018/feb/12/principles-truth-o-meter-politifact-methodology-i/>

### Week 13: Freedom of expression and censorship

Watson, Mary Ann (2004) Ethics in Entertainment Television. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. 31-4, 146-148.

Hitchens, Christopher (2006) Free Speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z2uzEMOugY>

### Week 14: In-class Final

## **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 [excused.absence@capa.org](mailto:excused.absence@capa.org) 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 [excused.absence@capa.org](mailto:excused.absence@capa.org), 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.