

JOU 4700 Journalism Ethics

Summer C 2015 / Study abroad for the College of Journalism and Communications in Italy / 3 credits



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ABOUT THE COURSE

Course Description

This course equips you to resolve dilemmas (right-from-right choices such as telling the truth while minimizing harm) that journalists face today by using a three-step process in ethical reasoning.

Learning Outcomes

By the conclusion of the course, you should be able to:

- Debate the most pressing ethical issues facing journalists today.
- Evaluate claims and assertions using critical-thinking skills.
- Resolve dilemmas with a three-step ethical reasoning process.

Required Textbooks

The only required textbook is the Decision Memo Guide I wrote and created as a mini-textbook. Read it on your own before we get to Italy. You also will get details on all of the cases before we leave.

I wrote the Decision Memo Guide because I was dissatisfied with books that focus a bit too much on “thou shalt not” prescriptions and exhortations. The guide distills lessons learned from a 25-year career in journalism, including 15 years as editor in chief, while drawing from time-honored approaches from philosophy.

The bad news. Your grade in the course is dependent on understanding the Decision Memo Guide. To understand it, read it two or three times. Students who truly *read* (not skim) the guide generally get a good grade in the course. Students who skim-read the guide before taking the test or who don’t refer to it when writing decision memos tend to earn low marks or even fail the course.

The good news. Students who absorb and apply the Decision Memo Guide and ethical reasoning system it teaches say it has great value both journalistically and personally, and they use it to help them make tough decisions the rest of their lives.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignments and Grade Allocation

Decision Memo Guide test	10%
Case study worksheets in Italy	20%
Decision Memos (best 4) completed by June 25	70%

Decision Memo Guide test (10%)

This multiple choice test on the Decision Memo Guide is one more incentive to read (not skim) the guide and apply it to new situations.

Case Study Worksheets (20%)

These worksheet are due at the start of classes in which we will discuss a case. Each worksheet will be a condensed form of a decision memo:

1. State the dilemma in a single sentence.
2. List two more viable alternatives.
3. Cite an ethical rationale in making a decision in a single sentence.

You will get full points if you follow the Decision Memo Guide formula and give a good effort, even if your answers are less than optimal. If the formula isn't followed or the worksheet is just going through the motions, the worksheet will count for half.

Decision Memos (70%)

These are completed decision memos according to the formula and examples in the Decision Memo Guide. They will be scored according to the rubric in the guide. You can submit five; the best four will count. All but one memo will be of your choosing from the cases we will discuss in class - which means you can draw from class discussion to help you write these. The fourth memo will involve a case I will give you after our time in Italy. This new case will give you a chance to show you can apply ethical reasoning to an unfamiliar case, just as you would in the workplace or in life.

Tentative Schedule

	Date	Subject	Assignment Due
1	May 7	Ethical reasoning vs. self-rationalization	
2	May 11	Decision Memo Guide test	Read Decision Memo Guide
3	May 13	Truth vs. minimizing harm: Orangeburg Massacre	Case-study worksheet
4	May 18	Truth vs. minimizing harm: New Year's Baby	Case-study worksheet
5	May 19	Truth vs. minimizing harm: The Sassy Judge	Case-study worksheet
6	May 20	Truth vs. minimizing harm: The Social Media "Friend"	Case-study worksheet
7	May 21	Truth vs. minimizing harm: Edward Snowden leaks	Case-study worksheet
8	May 22	Disclosure vs. detachment: The Soldier's Dad	Case-study worksheet
9	May 25	Modern business realities: Online Arrest Mugs	Case-study worksheet
10	May 27	Modern business realities: Sponsored Content	Case-study worksheet

Grading

For journalism majors, a C or higher is required to get credit for the course. The UF grading policy can be found in the undergraduate catalog [online](#).

	Percent		Percent		Percent		Percent
		B+	89-87%	C+	79-77%	D+	69-67%
A	100-93%	B	86-83%	C	76-73%	D	66-63%
A-	92-90%	B-	82-80%	C-	72-80%	D-	62-60%

THE FINE PRINT

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Per study-abroad policy, anyone coming late (after a 5-minute grace period) loses a half-letter grade for the course, and anyone who misses a class loses a full letter grade for the course. The only exception is if you are truly ill and you let me know ahead of time. (FYI, the mandatory attendance policy also applies to other educational activities during the month abroad such as guided tours and speakers.)

Academic Integrity

University of Florida students pledge to abide by an [honor code](#) that prohibits academic dishonesty such as fabrication, plagiarism and cheating. You have an affirmative obligation to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. You also must report to appropriate personnel any condition that facilitates academic misconduct. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

When I discover cheating, my default policy is to fail all involved for the entire course and report the details to the Dean of Students Office.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to me when requesting accommodation. Please request that accommodation and letter in the spring, before we depart.

Help With Coping

The UF [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) is a terrific, free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive after-hours assistance, call 352-392-1575. If you need assistance while we're in Europe, call on any faculty member or AIFS staff member.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online [evaluations](#). You will be notified by email when the evaluations are open, near the end of Summer C. Summary [results](#) are available to you and the general public.