PENNSTATE
World Campus
1855

COMM 403: Law of Mass Communications
Course Syllabus

COMM 403: Law of Mass Communications (3): Nature and theories of law; the Supreme Court and press freedom; legal problems of the mass media.

Professional communicators are governed by a complex set of laws and regulations that have, as a common base, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. COMM 403 is designed to provide students with a thorough grounding in First Amendment law generally and an understanding of the workday legal issues that communications professionals face while doing their jobs. The overarching goal of the course is to enrich your understanding of law and the legal process in such a way that will enable you to use that knowledge in your work as communicators and as active citizens in the democracy.

Overview | Objectives | Materials | Technical Requirements | Course Requirements and Grading | Deadlines and Late Policy | Course Schedule | Communication | Academic Integrity | Policies

Overview

While society has changed dramatically throughout the past two centuries, the forty-five words that make up the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution remain unaltered. More importantly, the ideals embodied in that language play a significant role in creating the framework for our system of democratic self-governance. The words of the First Amendment are simple and direct. They proscribe governmental meddling in our individual liberty regarding expression. Though the intent is clear, the evolution of the First Amendment over time provides us with many examples of government infringment of speech.

The connection between the infringement and the time period in history is not mere coincidence. During the period surrounding World War I, the government was quick to stamp out the expression of those believed to be spreading anti-democratic messages. In the 1950s, fear of communism led to heightened intolerance for expression. The 1960s saw avenues of communication opening up to accommodate the civil rights movement. The media made headway against the government in the sixties and seventies. The 1980s were marked by a clamping down on campus speech while the 1990s had the government grappling with sexually explicit speech in cyberspace. Today, some are questioning whether anonymous online postings and sites such as TheDirty.com should face liability for disparaging reputation. This course examines free speech from the standpoint of the citizen and information professional. Students successfully completing this course will have a solid understanding of the current issues in First Amendment and media law.

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Course Objectives

When you successfully complete this course, you will be able to:

- Develop an understanding of and appreciation for the protections embedded in the First Amendment;

- Understand and apply principles of media law and the concomitant responsibilities of a free press;

- Understand that First Amendment protections apply to all citizens - not just journalists;

- Understand the historic challenges of law to keep pace with the evolution of technology;

- Understand the importance of government transparency and freedom of information laws on the state and federal levels; and

- Recognize that ethics and law do not always merge - what might be lawful is not always journalistically ethical.

Required Course Materials

For pricing and ordering information, please see the MBS Direct website (http://bookstore.mbsdirect.net/psude.htm) . MBS Direct can also be contacted at 1-800-325-3252.

Materials will be available at MBS Direct approximately three weeks before the course begins. It is very important that you purchase the correct materials. If your course requires one or more textbooks, you must have exactly the correct text required (edition and year). The following is required material you need to purchase:

- Communication Law: Practical Applications in the Digital Age by Dom Caristi & William R. Davie, Pearson 2012. ISBN 978-0-205-50416-9.

Using the Library
Many of Penn State's library resources can be utilized from a distance. Through the Library Resources and Services for Off-Campus Users (http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/infosvcs/offcampus.html) website, you can...

- access magazine, journal, and newspaper articles online using library databases;

- borrow materials and have them delivered to your doorstep...or even your desktop;

- ask a librarian for research help via e-mail, chat, or phone using the ASK! service;

...and much more!

Note: You must have an active Penn State Access Account to take full advantage of the University Libraries' resources and services. Once you have a Penn State account, you will automatically be registered with the library within 24–48 hours. If you would like to check that your Libraries' registration has been completed, visit the Librarys' home page (http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/wc.html) , click on "Library Accounts," and then click on "My Library Account."

Technical Requirements

For this course we recommend the minimum World Campus technical requirements listed below:

Technical Requirements

Operating System	Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows 8*; Mac OS X 10.5 or higher *Windows 8 support excludes the tablet only RT version
Processor	2 GHz or higher
Memory	1 GB of RAM
Hard Drive Space	20 GB free disk space
Browser	We recommend the latest ANGEL-supported version of Firefox or Internet Explorer. To determine if your browser fits this criterion, and for advice on downloading a supported version, please refer to the following ITS knowledge base article: Supported Browsers and Recommended Computers (http://kb.its.psu.edu/cms/article/6) . **Note**: Cookies, Java, and JavaScript must be enabled. Pop-up blockers should be configured to permit new windows from Penn State websites. Due to nonstandard handling of CSS, JavaScript and caching, older versions of Internet Explorer (such as IE 6 or earlier) do not work with our courses.
Plug-ins	Adobe Reader [Download from Adobe (http://www.adobe.com)] Flash Player (v7.0 or later) [Download from Adobe (https://www.adobe.com/downloads)] Apple QuickTime [Download from Apple (https://www.apple.com/quicktime)]
Additional Software	Microsoft Office (2007 or later)
Internet Connection	Broadband (cable or DSL) connection required
Printer	Access to graphics-capable printer
DVD-ROM	Required
Sound Card, Microphone, and	

Speakers	Required
Monitor	Capable of at least 1024 x 768 resolution

If you need technical assistance at any point during the course, please contact the HelpDesk (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/technical-support/contact-us) .

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Course Requirements and Grading

Course Requirement

This course is comprised of 10 self-contained lessons. Most of the lessons are designed to be completed in about a week. A few of the lessons, however, are more extensive than the others and will take about two weeks to complete. A discussion forum called "Course Cafe" is available throughout the semester for questions or comments in response to the lesson's content. Each lesson requires reading from the text, course commentary and a graded Lesson Review Activity. The course includes two exams - the first one after the completion of Lesson 5 and the second one after the completion of Lesson 10.

Rubric for Written Work

Your **single-spaced essays** included in the Lesson Review Acties and the exams will be evaluated on content, clarity, comprehensiveness, and creativity.

- **Content:** Develops and supports a central thesis. Provides a focused argument throughout the essay/paper.
- **Clarity:** Writes clearly by developing a coherent, well-organized paper; arranges sentences in a logical and coherent manner; uses correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar; and provides correct citations.
- **Comprehensiveness:** Has reviewed the relevant literature and material, shows an in-depth understanding of the topic, and uses multiple bibliographic sources (books, journal articles, interviews, web-based information). Does not use strictly web-based sources. Able to critique differing points of view on the topic.
- **Creativity:** Draws the reader in and engages him and/or her in the topic. Attempts to make an original contribution to the topic. Presents material in an interesting and unique way.

Grading Rubric

Grade of A	Grade of B	Grade of C	Grade of D	Grade of F
Exemplary work in all aspects of content, clarity,				

| comprehensiveness, and creativity; consistent with expectations associated with a professional written product; shows extra effort and initiative. | Work is better than average quality; demonstrates initiative and extra effort. | Meets the minimal specifications of the assignment. | Below minimal assignment specifications. | Extremely poor quality content and presentation. Failure to complete a required assignment. |

Grading Policy

The graded activities associated with Lessons 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 will comprise **40 percent** of the final course grade (5 percent each). Each exam (following Lessons 5 and 10) counts for **30 percent** of the final course grade. There is **no** extra credit available in this course.

Activity Weights

Activities	Percentage
Lesson Review Activities	5% x 8 = 40%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%

Final grades for the course are assigned according to the following scale:

Grading Scale

Points	Grade
93 - 100	A
90 - 92	A-
87 - 89	B+
83 - 86	B

80 - 82	B-
77 - 79	C+
70 - 76	C
60 - 69	D
Below 60	F

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Deadlines and Late Policy

All assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. North American Eastern Time (ET) on Sunday of the Lesson's week. Any assignment received late will be subjected to a 10% penalty. The late penalty will increase by 10% for each day the assignment is late. If the assignment is not received within five days of the original deadline, the grade on that assignment will be zero.

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Course Schedule

Note: All due dates reflect North American eastern time (ET).

- **Course begins: January 12, 2015**
- **Course ends: May 1, 2015**
- **Course length: 16 weeks**

Tutoring Resources

Writing and Technology tutoring resources are available to World Campus students. Writing Tutoring (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/academic-support-resources/tutoring/writing-tutoring) is available through Penn State Learning and Technology Tutors (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/technical-support/best-practices#techtutors) are available through Information Technology Services (ITS) Training Services. You can also access these resources from the left hand menu pane. Click Student Resources, Course Resources, then Other Tools.

Week 1

Introduction	Welcome to the Course
Timeframe:	January 12 to January 18, 2015
Readings:	- Explore the online course and especially note the dates of assignments and exams; - Introductory Lesson Commentary.
Assignments:	1. Familiarize yourself with course content and structure.

Week 2

Lesson 1	Legal System & How Cases Proceed through the Courts
Timeframe:	January 19 to January 25, 2015
Readings:	- Caristi & Davie, Chapter 1; - Lesson 1 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. Exploring state and federal courts.

Week 3

Lesson 2	Contemporary First Amendment Issues
Timeframe:	January 26 to February 1, 2015
Readings:	- Caristi & Davie, Chapter 3; - Caristi & Davie, Chapter 7, pp. 182-183; - Lesson 2 Commentary.

| Assignments: | 1. Video game law hypo analysis
2. Constitutional Tests exercise. |

Weeks 4 and 5

Lesson 3	Safeguarding Reputation: Law Of Defamation
Timeframe:	February 2 to February 15, 2015 *(2 weeks)*
Readings:	• Caristi & Davie, Chapter 5; • Lesson 3 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. *Hustler v. Falwell* Oral Argument Analysis Paper; 2. Libel hypo analysis.

Week 6

Lesson 4	Invasion of Privacy
Timeframe:	February 16 to February 22, 2015
Readings:	• Caristi & Davie, Chapter 6; • Lesson 4 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. Social Network Privacy Policy Exercise; 2. Invasion of Privacy hypo analysis.

Week 7

Lesson 5	Newsgathering & the Law

Timeframe:	February 23 to March 1, 2015
Readings:	• Caristi & Davie, Chapter 9; • Caristi & Davie, Chapter 8, pp. 198-205; • Lesson 5 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. **Exam 1:** Midterm Exam

Weeks 8, 9, and 10

Lesson 6	Free Press/Fair Trial
Timeframe:	March 2 to March 22, 2015 *(two weeks; Spring Break March 9 to March 15)*
Readings:	• Caristi & Davie, Chapter 8, pp. 186-198; pp. 206-216; • Lesson 6 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. Courtroom closure hypo analysis; 2. Op-ed (600 words) on texting in Courtrooms.

Weeks 11 and 12

Lesson 7	Obscenity Law
Timeframe:	March 23 to April 5, 2015 *(2 weeks)*
Readings:	• Caristi & Davie, Chapter 7, pp. 160-178; • Lesson 7 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. Essay comparing/contrasting feminists scholars' views on pornography vs. women who work in the adult entertainment industry;

2. "Sexting" Research Essay.

Weeks 13 and 14

Lesson 8	**Broadcast/Cable Regulation**
Timeframe:	April 6 to April 19, 2015 *(2 weeks)*
Readings:	- Caristi & Davie, Chapter 7, pp. 178-183; (http://www.texasmonthly.com/story/innocent-man-part-one) - Caristi & Davie, Chapter 10; - Lesson 8 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. Parents Television Council Website exercise; 2. Indecency Essay.

Week 15

Lesson 9	**Commercial Speech/ Advertising Regs.**
Timeframe:	April 20 to April 26, 2015
Readings:	- Caristi & Davie, Chapter 12; (http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505125_162-29540215/what-makes-a-good-press-release-today/) - Lesson 9 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. Endorsement Ad Exercise; 2. Puffery Exercise.

Week 16

Lesson 10	Intellectual Property
Timeframe:	April 27 to May 1, 2015
Readings:	- Caristi & Davie, Chapter 14; - Lesson 10 Commentary.
Assignments:	1. **Exam 2:** Final Exam

Formal instruction will end on the last day of class. Provided that you have an active Penn State Access Account user ID and password, you will continue to be able to access the course materials for one year from the day the course began (with the exception of library reserves).

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Communication

All communication will occur through the ANGEL Web site. You are responsible for checking your ANGEL e-mail regularly.

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Academic Integrity

Academic integrity—scholarship free of fraud and deception—is an important educational objective of Penn State. Academic dishonesty can lead to a failing grade or referral to the Office of Student Conduct (http://www.sa.psu.edu/ja/) .

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to

- cheating,
- plagiarism,
- fabrication of information or citations,
- facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others,

- unauthorized prior possession of examinations,

- submitting the work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor and securing written approval, and

- tampering with the academic work of other students.

How Academic Integrity Violations Are Handled

In cases where academic integrity is questioned, procedure requires an instructor to notify a student (http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/G-9-academic-integrity.html) of suspected dishonesty before filing a charge and recommended sanction with the college. Procedures allow a student to accept or contest a charge. If a student chooses to contest a charge, the case will then be managed by the respective college or campus Academic Integrity Committee. If a disciplinary sanction also is recommended, the case will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct (http://www.sa.psu.edu/ja/title=) .

All Penn State colleges abide by this Penn State policy, but review procedures may vary by college when academic dishonesty is suspected. Information about Penn State's academic integrity policy and college review procedures is included in the information that students receive upon enrolling in a course. To obtain that information in advance of enrolling in a course, please contact us (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/contacts-help-current-students) .

Additionally, World Campus students are expected to act with civility and personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights, and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is requisite to respect for oneself and others, as well as a civil community.

For More Information on Academic Integrity at Penn State

Please see the Academic Integrity Chart (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/policies/academic-integrity/academic-integrity-contacts-chart) for specific college contact information or visit one of the following URLs:

- Penn State Senate Policy on Academic Integrity (http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/G-9-academic-integrity.html)

- iStudy for Success! (http://istudy.psu.edu/tutorials/) (education module about plagiarism, copyright, and academic integrity)

- Turnitin (http://turnitin.psu.edu/) (a web-based plagiarism detection and prevention system)

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Additional Policies

Accommodating Military Students

Veterans and currently serving military personnel and/or spouses with unique circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill/duty requirements, VA appointments, etc.) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor in the case that special arrangements need to be made.

For information about additional policies regarding Penn State Access Accounts; credit by examination; course tuition, fees, and refund schedules; and drops and withdrawals, please see the World Campus Student Policies (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/policies) website.

Accommodating Disabilities

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. The Office for Disability Services (ODS) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus: ODS Disability Liaison Contact Information (http://equity.psu.edu/ods/dcl) . For further information, please visit the Office for Disability Services website (http://equity.psu.edu/ods) .

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation based on the ODS documentation guidelines (http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines) . If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Privacy Notice

In order to protect your privacy, course access is limited to those individuals who have direct responsibility for the quality of your educational experience. In addition to the instructor, a teaching assistant or college administrator may be provided access in order to ensure optimal faculty availability and access. World Campus technical staff may also be given access in order to resolve technical support issues.

In addition, mentor, department head, or program chair may be provided with course access in order to ensure optimal faculty availability and access. Each of these individuals will keep confidential all student course and academic information.

Student Responsibilities and Conduct

1. Students are responsible for online course content, taking notes, obtaining other materials provided by the instructor, taking tests (if applicable), and completing assignments as scheduled by the instructor. As a general rule, students should plan on logging into the course at least three times per week and spending at least three hours per course credit per week on the course, e.g., if the course is three credits, the student should plan on spending at least 9-12 hours per week on the course, just as they would in a residence course.

2. Students are responsible for keeping track of changes in the course syllabus made by the instructor throughout the semester.

3. Students are responsible for monitoring their grades.

4. Students must contact their instructor (and teammates when working on any collaborative learning assignments) as soon as possible if they anticipate missing long periods of online time due to events such as chronic illnesses, death in the family, business travel, or other appropriate events. The instructor will determine the minimal log on time and participation required in order to meet course responsibilities. In the event of other unforeseen conflicts, the instructor and student will arrive at a solution together.

    a. Requests for taking exams or submitting assignments after the due dates require documentation of events such as illness, family emergency, or a business-sanctioned activity.

    b. Conflicts with dates on which examinations or assignments are scheduled must be discussed with the instructor or TA prior to the date of the examination or assignment.

5. Students are responsible for following appropriate netiquette (network etiquette) when communicating with their instructor and classmates. For reference:

    a. Strategies to Improve Online Learning (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/academic-support-resources/strategies-to-improve-online-learning)

    b. Student Guidelines for Electronic Communication at Penn State (http://archive.tlt.psu.edu/suggestions/etips/stuguide.html)

6. Behaviors that disrupt other students' learning are not acceptable and will be addressed by the instructor.

7. For severe and chronic problems with student disruptive behavior, the following will be applied for resolution:

    a. Senate Committee on Student Life policy on managing classroom disruptions: Office of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/conduct/)

    b. Penn State Principles (http://www.psu.edu/ur/pdf/principles.pdf)

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Disclaimer: Please note that the specifics of this Course Syllabus are subject to change, and you will be responsible for abiding by any such changes. Your instructor will notify you of any changes.

Please direct questions to the 'World Campus HelpDesk' (http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/technical-support) |

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