

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Course number: MCOM 5320

Course title: Digital Media Law and Ethics

Credit hours: 3

Semester/Year: Fall 2017

Class times: Online

Instructor: Dr. Christopher F. White

SHSU Office: Dan Rather Building 102

Office hours: By appointment

Office phone: 936-294-1343

Email: [cwhite@shsu.edu](mailto:cwhite@shsu.edu)

Online/email messages will be answered as quickly as possible. I check for questions daily on weekdays and at least once over the weekend. If I am offline for more than two business days, I will send an email to the class.

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED**

Texts: *Digital Media Law* by Ashley Packard, 2nd Edition

Web Links on Blackboard

Additional information will be posted online and assigned for reading or viewing.

You must have an SHSU email account.

## **DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES**

Description: This course will offer an overview of the American legal system & how it relates to mass media, new media & the practice of media professionals. Specifically this course addresses an essential fact, a fact that lawyers, judges, juries, legal scholars, and media professionals are faced with on a daily basis: The emerging digital environment has turned American jurisprudence on its head. Traditional notions of free speech, privacy, copyright and libel are challenged regularly by the evolving revolution in the production, distribution and reception of information in our new, cyber-commons.

The class will consist of my posted content, screenings, Blackboard postings, Blackboard discussions, two assignments, two tests and one term paper. And of course reading the text.

Objectives: To encourage you to consider essential legal concepts related to Constitutional Law, Free Speech, Privacy, Libel, Copyright and related Case Law; to help you assess recent developments/debates in media regulations related to these topics; and to help you understand how the emerging digital commons is influencing all of these issues. My primary objective is to help you think about significant legal issues for the rest of your personal and professional lives!

## **GRADING**

First Test = 50 pts

Second Test = 50 pts

Term Paper = 100 pts

Two Case Abstracts = 25 pts each (50 pts total)

Online Participation = 50 pts

A=300-270, B=269-240, C=239-210, D=209-180, F=179-0

Both tests are online & open-book. You will have a week to complete each test. Unless otherwise noted, you will have a week

to compete and post all assignments.

There will be separate emails/postings describing The Abstracts and The Term Paper.

## **TIME REQUIREMENTS**

Succeeding in online courses requires a determined commitment of your time, strong organizational and problem-solving skills, and personal initiative. I will administer this online class like an in-class graduate seminar. That means: I will expect regular online postings & other forms of online participation. This participation could be the difference in your final grade. Note: We can have a face-to-face, meet-and-greet mid-way in the semester, if you, as a class, want to do that.

## **EQUIPMENT**

You must have access to computer hardware and software that is compatible with the SHSU Blackboard platform. Please review the Blackboard tutorial regarding computer requirements.

## **FORMAT FOR ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments must be submitted as instructed in the assignment criteria. Be sure to submit your work in the format and style specified.

## **SAM HOUSTON WRITING CENTER**

The Sam Houston Writing Center, located in Farrington 111, is open from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Friday, and 2 - 7 p.m. on Sunday. Writing tutors will work with you at any stage of the writing process (brainstorming, generating a draft, organizing a draft, or revising a draft) for any written assignment. The Writing Center operates on an appointment system, so please call (936) 294-3680 to schedule a session with a writing tutor. Skype sessions are available for distance students, and a tutor is available at the University Center. See website for more information:

[www.shsu.edu/wctr](http://www.shsu.edu/wctr).

## **SHSU POLICIES**

Academic Honesty: The University expects students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experience both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. (Taken from official SHSU policies)

Ethics are the cornerstone of responsible communication. Honesty is expected—and demanded—of all students. Violations of professional ethical standards can lead to an automatic "F" in the course. All work in this class must be original work. No work that a student has already published or is in the process of publishing is considered original work. No work a student has used to meet requirements in a previous class is considered original work.

Plagiarized assignments will not be accepted. For the sake of clarity, plagiarism is defined below: Plagiarism occurs when one person claims credit for another person's work. It is a form of intellectual dishonesty that is treated with great severity by professionals and by the university. Students are encouraged to review the university's policy on plagiarism. Students should be certain they understand the meaning of plagiarism: a paper using quotes without quotation marks and attribution is plagiarized. But plagiarism is more than unrecognized quotes. Conclusions that are not the student's, information that is not common knowledge, and specific facts must be attributed: tell who said it and attribute it, even if the information is not a direct quote. Dates are important, especially as on-line information is becoming more common.

**Students with Disabilities:** It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

**Religious Holidays:** Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

**Q-Drops:** Students are allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will

need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop the class, the student will be required to remain in the class. Q-drops from other universities will not be included in the five Q-drop limit. **NOTE:** A Q-drop is a drop made after the last day for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring).

**Class Evaluation:** You will be asked to complete an online evaluation of this class and the instructor toward the end of the semester using the IDEA system. These evaluations are taken very seriously by SHSU administrators and faculty, so please take time to provide your thoughtful feedback.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**How do I know what is happening in the class?** It is your responsibility to check regularly (at least every other day) for announcements. Also check your email regularly for bulletins and reminders.

**Where do I begin?** First, log into the course and look carefully at the options on the left side of the screen. Note there is a HELP and HOW TO section to help you with problems using the site and giving you the 24/7 Helpdesk for tech support.

Next, review the Course Home unit. Read the Syllabus carefully. Examine the Class Schedule (It is a good idea to put the deadlines listed there in your personal planner.)

**If I still have questions about an assignment, how do I ask a question?**

After reading the syllabus and carefully reviewing all resources available for an assignment, if you still have questions, contact me via email or phone. Between Monday and Friday (except holidays), I will make every effort to respond within 24 hours. It is also possible to schedule a conference with me in my office or via phone.

**When are assignments due?**

Due dates are included in each module and on the course schedule. It is a good idea to put those dates in your planner since projects are time-consuming.

### **How are assignments submitted?**

Specific directions will be provided with each assignment.

### **How are my grades on assignments determined?**

I will assess all assignments & tests. Grades will be posted in the online Gradebook. Your online participation is ongoing & my assessment of same is ongoing. I will contact you if I see a problem with your participation. You can contact me if you have questions about your participation. What happens if I miss a deadline for an assignment?

Late assignments may not be graded immediately. NO late assignments will be accepted for grading after one WEEK from the due date.

What if there are technical problems (like the SHSU internet going down)?

Allowances will be made if such difficulties arise. Typically, the instructor will extend the deadline so assignments can be submitted without penalty. Remember to contact the 24/7 Helpdesk with any technical problems.