

Class: MCOM 4371 Media Law & Ethics

Instructor: Dr. Christopher F. White

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Room/Time: #125 DRCB on T-Days at 12:30-1:50

Office Hours: #102 M/W 10-11 and 3-4 or T/Th 2-4 & Friday by Appointment

Text: *Communications Law* by John D. Zelezny, 6th Edition
And Handouts & Blackboard Postings

Course Description: This course will offer an overview of the American legal system & how it relates to mass media, new media & evolving practices by media professionals. Topics addressed: The Bill of Rights & constitutional law, selected emerging & abiding legal issues, precedent-setting cases & theoretical concepts; and a host of current events as they relate to the regulation/protection of expression.

MCOM 4371 will consist of lectures, screenings, Blackboard posting & discussion. Take notes. Every day.

Date your notes. That helps. Honest. You might be tested on anything that is said or screened or presented in-class.

Hand-outs too. And view screenings critically & note the video that is screened & note any comments made regarding the screening.

Course Objectives: My objective is to help you understand the historical background of the Constitution & the Bill of Rights; to help you consider essential legal issues related to Free Speech, Privacy, Libel, Copyright & Obscenity, and related case laws. We will regularly assess how citizens, media professionals, and legal scholars are adjusting to the ever-changing digital commons. In short, my objective is to help you think about significant legal issues for the rest of your life!

Grading: Four tests worth 100 points each = 400 points

One Term Paper = 100 points

A=450-500, B=400-449, C=350-399, D=300-349, F=0-299

Tests consist of multiple-choice & short answer questions.

There will be a separate handout describing The Term Paper.

Make-up Exams: offered only under emergency circumstances – might be essay. Ouch!

Attendance: After 4 absences each additional absence for any reason -- subtract 20

points from your grade total. Don't use up your absences! In cases of extended absences -- even with medical excuse -- I will ask you to drop the class. Arriving late for class is considered absent -- bad weather is an exception to this rule. After an absence -- check with a classmate as to what was covered -- come to class with all readings & any work-due completed.

General: No beepers, cell phones, palm-pilots, satellite dishes or anything that otherwise beeps, vibrates or whistles allowed in class. Laptops are OK as long as they are not too noisy & as long as you use them to do work for the class you are sitting in! All laptops closed during screenings. No eating, sleeping or doing work unrelated to the class. Generally students will refrain from behavior that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process. And please maintain complete honesty & integrity in your academic experience both in & out of this classroom (see Faculty/Student Handbook).

PowerPoint slides on Blackboard? Nope. Tests reviewed on Blackboard before each test? Yep. Screenings are not posted on Blackboard. I screen them in class -- that's it. You might be able to find some of them online -- that's up to you.

I encourage class discussions -- especially in this class. But I also decide when to stop these discussions. If you have a burning desire to talk -- schedule an appointment during my office hours. Don't dominate other people's class-time. This class will deal with some controversial issues & will "entertain" some language & images that some people might find offensive. Be forewarned. If you need to be excused because of specific content-covered, let me know & we'll work out some alternative to class attendance.

ALSO: No calling the Instructor at home -- never, ever...never -- that's why God created Office Hours & Emails!!!! I promise I won't call you at home. Please get permission from me to bring visitors or record lectures. You will get a chance to evaluate this class at the end of the semester. The SAM Center provides excellent study help.

Weekly Schedule: The schedule for readings and/or lectures may change -- depending on current events or media coverage of current events. Some additional chapters or sections of chapters may be assigned during the semester & some materials may be put on reserve at the library. There will be handouts & Blackboard postings. You may be tested on these materials.

Some chapters will not be read in their entirety -- specific page numbers will be provided on Blackboard.

And yes -- in this class it is a requirement to buy AND READ the book.

Week One CH 1 The US Legal System

Week Two	CH 2 The First Amendment
Week Three	CH 2 The First Amendment
Week Four	First Test & Review/Discussion
Week Five	CH 3 Risks to Public Safety
Week Five	CH 4 Damage to Reputation
Week Six	CH 4 Damage to Reputation
Week Seven	Second Test & Review/discussion
Week Seven	CH 5 Invasion of Privacy
Week Eight	CH 5 Invasion of Privacy
Week Eight	CH 5 Invasion of Privacy
Week Nine	Third Test & Review/Discussion
Week Ten	CH 8 Creative Property
Week Eleven	CH 8 Creative Property
Week Twelve	CH 8 Creative Property
Week Thirteen	CH 11 Obscenity and Indecency
Paper Due on last formal day of class.	

Fourth Test Scheduled by SHSU during Final Week

Americans with Disabilities Act: SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. The University suggests the following be added to the syllabus:

If you have a disability that may affect your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.”

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy: 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.

University policy #861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). This request must be made two weeks in advance of when the absence(s) will occur. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examination are to be completed.