

**Journalism 445, Ethics in the Media/Fall, 2012/TR 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m/J104  
Texas A&M University-Commerce**

Instructor: Dr. Lamar W. Bridges, Professor  
Office: Room 127, Journalism Building (inside Room 126)  
Office hours: appointments, please or afternoons  
Telephones: 903-886-5229 (office); 903-886-4703 (home); or  
you may reach the Department's secretary in the afternoons  
at 903-886-5346  
Fax number: for the Division is 903-886-5230  
E-mail: Lamar\_Bridges@tamuc.edu

**Catalog description:** "This is a course using ethical issues raised by contemporary mass media practices to explore moral reasoning and thinking. The privacy issues to be discussed relate to news, advertising, and public relations. Students will learn to recognize and analyze problem situations in terms of a framework of ethical principles in a societal context shaped by the libertarian traditions of enlightenment thought. Communitarian challenges to those traditions will be studied and their impact on media ethics and practices explored. Prerequisite: Junior or Senior standing." (University Catalog)

**Advisory:** J445 is a required course for Journalism Division majors in the news-editorial and public relations sequences.

**Objective of the course broadly stated:** the objective is to examine some of the ethical practices attendant to mass media personnel and their institutions and to explore those practices and institutional behaviors. The student should become a more enlightened "consumer" in the marketplace of information and understand better the professional decision-making necessary at the mass media as these "communicators" exercise their daily activities and functions in our society.

**Textbook:** *Media Ethics: Issues and Cases (SEVENTH EDITION, please note)*, by Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins, McGraw-Hill, copyright 2011, softcover book. I am told that the book is available used, for rent, and for e-readers. It presents cases.

**Outside reading assignments:** Outside assignments are designed to expand issues that we perhaps cannot cover fully in the classroom. Such an assignment could be placed on reserve reading in Gee Library or it could be accessible on the Internet. You will be given reading assignments in advance, and you are responsible for any outside assignments for quizzes.

**In any outside assignments, you are responsible for reading the material before class and for applying that data to classroom discussion.**

**Journalism 445, Ethics in the Media/Fall, 2012/TR 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m/J104  
Texas A&M University-Commerce - Page 2**

**Class Attendance:** The University's attendance policy is in the Catalog (web). Read it carefully. I expect attendance, and absences are recorded, as mandated by University policy. Consistent and prompt attendance is important in this class. A student who misses more than three (3) classes will be dropped from the class unless there are circumstances that can be justified by the student. **This policy begins September 4.** I also expect students to be in class on time. Accountability is expected in both areas. AND, the instructor expects all students to act with civility toward other persons in the classroom. In addition, please note the two University-sanctioned advisories that follow.

◆One: Students enrolled at the University should exhibit common decency and acceptable behavior toward their fellow classmates, faculty and staff members, and individuals they encounter on campus.

◆Two: Students requesting accommodations for disabilities should contact the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services. That office's statement will be distributed in class.

◆◆**Dr. Bridges' comments:** Turn your cell telephone off during class and do not answer a call or talk on your cell telephone if it does ring. Do not read *The East Texan* or use a computer other than for note-taking. Such conduct is annoying. Talking between students or among students while the instructor or a fellow student is talking is annoying and possibly disruptive. Do not do so. You might be asked to leave the class session or permanently.

**Plagiarism:** A copy of a statement about plagiarism will be furnished. Please read this policy, and be aware that I fully support this statement. You will be asked to submit a signed copy of the statement, which remains in my files for the fall semester of 2012.

**Class content:** The class will focus on decision-making by media personnel and outlets when ethical concerns or dilemmas are encountered. **Classes often will be a starting place for classroom discussions. The instructor will insert current local, state, national, and international incidents and ideas into class topics.** So, stay abreast of current news happenings.

Two class periods per week, over about 14 weeks, often mean that content is compressed and that discussion has to be curtailed by the clock. I wish that were not so, but it is likely that a discussion or topic undertaken one session will be continued into the next class period. Try not to "lose" the ideas and material

from the previous class period. Take notes. Most of us cannot remember material without some reminders -- our notes.

**Journalism 445, Ethics in the Media/Fall, 2012/TR 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m/J104  
Texas A&M University-Commerce - Page 3**

**Course requirements:** First, class attendance is a **must**. See above.

Second, **your active participation in class is a must**. The instructor may call upon you for understanding of the class material and ideas. Do not sit back and allow a few students to "carry the load" in discussions; if you do not participate, your lack of participation will be noted in the final evaluations which translate into a letter grade for this class. Your ideas are important; I may not agree with them, your classmates may not agree with them, but learning to voice your ideas is important to your overall development as a student and as a citizen. Again, however, present your ideas with respect for others.

Third, **writing assignments will be given**. Most writing assignments will be out of class. Values (points) will be noted at the time of the assignment. Deadlines must be met. Do not offer excuses. Accountability is expected.

Fourth, **3 quizzes will be given** to divide the material into manageable portions. The formats will be explained. It is possible a quiz could be of a "take-home" variety. I have used those in the past in this class. Quiz 3 is the final hour.

**Preparation of written work for this class:** any outside work prepared for this class must be prepared on a word processor. The content of any work must be solid. You must express yourself clearly and concisely. You must spell correctly and you should attempt to avoid what I call "mechanical errors," that is errors in grammar, punctuation, and language. Any documentation you use must be properly attributed; any failure to do so could result in plagiarism, and plagiarism is a serious offense (**see statement that is provided to you**).

(1) attendance/participation (-2 each)	50 points
(2) written or class assignments	250 points
(3) 3 quizzes (including final hour)	150 points

Total = 450 points

**Schedule:** A week-by-week schedule will be determined after meeting with the class. You will be given weekly reading assignments and writing exercises as we proceed through the topics raised in the course. Other deadlines will be established and will be announced as the class advances. **Course outline:** If you

are absent at a class session, you are responsible for any announcements of that session. Handouts will be distributed at some sessions.

**Final comment:** if you have concerns during the term regarding grades or assignments, please do not wait until the final days or hours of the semester to voice them. At the last minute, time may not permit the instructor to address such questions. Grades must be submitted per a University deadline. And, the holiday break will be upon us.



