



# COURSE SYLLABUS

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## SECTION 1: COURSE INFORMATION

**Format:** Eight weeks.

**Course ID:** COMM 4533

**Course Title:** Mass Communication Law

**College:** School of Unrestricted Education – Department of Design and Communication

**Prerequisites:** Junior or Senior Status or approval of the instructor

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Instructor:** See the online course in MyFIRE for instructor contact information and availability.

### Course Description

This course is an extensive study of the various communication laws with particular emphasis on the interpretation and implementation of the First Amendment. It also focuses on the influence of communication law on the work of the media professional.

## Course Overview

In this course, students learn about the various issues and considerations of mass communication law. Students learn and apply important principles about intellectual property and copyright, freedom of speech and of the press, libel, privacy, electronic media regulation, and newsgathering in weekly forum responses and quizzes. Students are to increase their critical thinking and argumentation skills by researching and then writing the final research paper, which focuses on an issue of mass communication law. The purpose is to prepare students who plan to work in the field of mass communication after graduating, or even those who might do freelance work (writing, photography, logo design, etc.).

## Course Workload

Time spent on course assignments will vary by student depending on familiarity with course content, reading rate of speed, writing rate of speed, and other individual factors. Based on averages for most students, it is estimated that the course workload estimate for this course is 12.42 hours per week.

## Course Materials

1. The Law of Journalism and Mass Communication by Trager, Ross, Reynolds.  
Required and optional textbooks are accessed and ordered through [SEU's bookstore](#).

**Disclaimer:** The resources utilized in this course provide information, thoughts and insights that should encourage critical thinking on the part of the student. Please note as well that as an Assembly of God institution, Southeastern University does not necessarily endorse specific personal, religious, philosophical, or political positions found in these resources.

## Course Topics

**The purpose of this course is to introduce, reinforce, and measure learning on the following topics:**

- Foundations and the Rule of Law
- The First Amendment and Free Speech
- Libel
- Privacy
- Gathering Information and Reporting
- Electronic Media Regulation
- Intellectual Property and Copyright
- Advertising

## Intended Learning Outcomes

**As a result of reading, study, and assessments in this course, the student should be able to:**

1. Understand legal terminology and the functions of the United States legal system.
2. Summarize the development of the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and of the press under the United States Constitution.
3. Describe the historical development of different areas of communication law.
4. Apply legal reasoning skills through the examination of specific cases.
5. Understand the practical application of communication law.
6. Analyze current issues in communication law from a Christian worldview.
7. Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and critical analysis of one of the major aspects of mass communication law.
8. Apply a critical thinking model to the development, application, enforcement, and

outcomes of mass communication law.

### **Late Work**

Turn in work on time in order to get feedback on your research paper and for better class participation. If a graded assignment such as the research paper is turned in late, 20 points are taken off per day it is late. Complete the weekly quizzes and final exam by the due date, since access can be blocked after the due date.

### **Extra Credit**

None accepted.

## **SECTION 2: SOUTHEASTERN POLICIES**

### Academic Policies

View this link to see Southeastern's Policies regarding SEU's Mission and Vision Statements, Title IX Statement, Student Services, Class Participation, Official Email, MyFIRE Use, Technical Difficulties, Technical Support, Disability Statement, Academic Honesty, Course Evaluation, Official Withdrawal, Grading Scale, and Netiquette.

## SECTION 3: COURSE SCHEDULE

The **Course Schedule** provides a listing of your work in this course. The assessments are listed by Module and include the due dates and point values.

**Note:** Assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. EST on the due date, unless otherwise noted.

### AIM, LEARN, AND APPLY DESCRIPTIONS

#### Aim

 When you see the Aim icon, you will be introduced to topics and ideas that will be covered throughout this module. The AIM will also provide you with a glimpse into your learning objectives and an introduction to this module.

#### Learn

 When you see the Learn icon, all of your reading assignments will be listed and may include additional resources that your instructor is providing to help you complete the activities and assessments for the module.

#### Apply

 When you see the Apply Icon, it will be time to demonstrate your learning for the module. The items here are those in which you'll be graded and may include discussions, activities, assignments, quizzes, exams, and projects.

**MODULE 1**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- Describe the foundations of law.
- Identify sources and types of law.
- Describe the roles of the three branches of the U.S. Government.
- Identify the key terms, concepts, and structure of the judicial system.
- Explain the concept of stare decisis and describe its role in the U.S. judicial system.
- Summarize legal arguments related to communication law.



- Read Trager/Ross/Reynolds p. xxi - p. 49
- Chapter 1 Summary
- View video



- Week 1 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Saturday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Week 1 Quiz
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100

**MODULE 2:**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- Understand Describe the background and development of the First Amendment.
- Identify and describe the narrowly define restraints on the First Amendment.
- Differentiate between various categories of speech.
- Describe the differences between content-based and content-neutral regulations of speech.
- Analyze what narrow factors would hypothetically lead to prior restraint of publications



- Read Trager/Ross/Reynolds pp. 50-143
- Chapter 2 Summary
- Chapter 3 Summary
- View video



- Week 2 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Saturday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Week 2 Quiz
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100

**MODULE 3:**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- List and describe the elements of libel.
- Describe the consideration of emotional distress as a factor in libel law.
- Identify and describe the various defenses against libel charges.
- Analyze case law relating to libel.



- Read Trager/Ross/Reynolds pp. 144-231
- Chapter 4 Summary
- Chapter 5 Summary
- View video



- Week 3 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Saturday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Week 3 Quiz
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100

**MODULE 4:**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- Describe the development of privacy law.
- Identify and describe aspects of the false light tort.
- Identify and describe aspects of the appropriation part of privacy tort law.
- Identify and describe the considerations of intrusion, specifically in the context of news gathering and right to privacy.
- Identify and describe the considerations of the private facts tort.
- Apply the criteria of false light, appropriation, and transformative use test in case studies.



- Read Trager/Ross/Reynolds pp. 232-284
- Chapter 6 Summary
- Final Research Paper Instructions
- View video



- Week 4 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Saturday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Week 4 Quiz
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100

**MODULE 5:**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- Understand Describe the various legal considerations relating to newsgathering for reporters.
- Explain the importance of open government and information gathering.
- Identify obstacles to gathering information.
- Describe the allowances of and prohibitions against recording people.
- Analyze specific court cases relating to gathering information and reporting.



- Read Trager/Ross/Reynolds pp. 286-339
- Chapter 7 Summary
- View video



- Week 5 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Saturday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Week 5 Quiz
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100

**MODULE 6:**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- Describe the development of broadcasting regulation.
- Describe the development of internet regulation.
- Identify landmark cases in electronic media regulation.
- Describe the parameters and considerations of the broadcasting regulation.
- Explain the arguments for and against net neutrality.



- Read Trager/Ross/Reynolds pp. 396-439
- Chapter 9 Summary
- View video.



- Week 6 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Saturday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Week 6 Quiz
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100

**MODULE 7:**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- Describe the development of intellectual property law.
- Describe the development of advertising law.
- Explain the fair use factors of transformative use.
- Distinguish between false and misleading advertising and puffery, as defined by the FTC.
- Describe how the FTC regulates advertising.



- Read Trager/Ross/Reynolds pp. 484-576
- Chapter 11 Summary
- Chapter 12 Summary
- View video



- Week 7 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Saturday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Week 7 Quiz
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100

**MODULE 8:**

**XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX**



- Demonstrate understanding of the overarching concepts related to the First Amendment and free speech.
- Demonstrate understanding of the primary considerations of journalists and members of the public who want to access governmental information and other information.
- Demonstrate understanding of the regulation of electronic media (including broadcasting and the internet) and advertising.
- Demonstrate understanding of intellectual property rights and regulation.
- Analyze a mass communication issue in a final research paper.



- Final Exam Study Guide
- View video



- Week 8 Discussion Forum
  - Due: Monday, Tuesday
  - Points: Class Participation
- Final Exam
  - Due: Tuesday
  - Points: 100
- Final Research Paper

- Due: Tuesday
- Points: 100

## **SECTION 4: ASSESSMENTS**

### **Open-Book Quizzes**

#### **Description**

Weeks 1 through 7 feature open-book quizzes. Weeks 1 through 6 quizzes have 25 questions each and week 7 quiz has 50 questions. They are meant to measure students' learning of key issues, facts, and principles of the weekly readings.

#### **Total Possible Points**

100 points each

#### **Grade Weight**

35% (each quiz is weighted 5%)

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### **Final Exam**

#### **Description**

For the final exam, every question is multiple choice. There are no true/false questions. Questions are 1 point each for total of the 100-point final exam. The final exam is closed-book; do not use any sources while taking the final exam. It is meant to demonstrate understanding and knowledge of key issues, principles, and concepts of mass communication law.

#### **Total Possible Points**

100

#### **Grade Weight**

15%

## SECTION 4: ASSESSMENTS

### Class Participation

#### Description

This assessment is to assess how much and to what extent students participated in the class, with an emphasis on meaningful and timely discussion from initial posts and responses on the forums. Back up arguments with reasoned evidence, explain where and why you agree or disagree or expound upon ideas, instead of just saying vague comments such as "nice post." Refer to rubric for grading criteria.

#### Total Possible Points

20

#### Grade Weight

20%

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### Final Research Paper

#### Description

In this research paper, you are to analyze a current issue in mass communication law. As part of your research and writing process, you are to develop an in-depth knowledge and critical analysis of a major aspect of mass communication law. You are to think critically about the development, application, enforcement, and outcomes of mass communication law. The assignment is to research and write a 5- to 8-page paper in which you address and explore a current issue in mass communication law and propose a means of resolving the specific problem or issue. Your discussion of the mass communication law issue is to be the majority of the paper. This assignment is to assess skills related to critical thinking, analysis, research, and writing. Refer to the rubric for grading criteria. Refer to the document in week 4 for detailed instructions.

#### Total Possible Points

100

**Grade Weight**

30%