



Communication Studies (CMNS) 311

Mass Media and the Law (Revision 4)

Status:	Replaced with new revision, see the course listing ↗ for the current revision ✕
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Delivery mode:	Individualized study online ↗
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Credits:	3
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Area of study:	Applied Study
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Prerequisites:	None
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Precluded:	None
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Challenge:	CMNS 311 has a challenge for credit option.
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Faculty:	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences ↗
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Notes:	Questions about this course? Contact the course coordinator: Veronica Fynn Bruey .
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Overview

This course discusses the principles of media law as they apply to the work of media and communications professionals in a variety of fields. Understanding the current and evolving state of media law is a challenging task, but, we hope you will come to agree, worthwhile for anyone interested in such ideals as freedom of expression and the press.

Outline

Part I: Fundamental Principles of Canadian Law

- Unit 1: Basic Principles of Law
- Unit 2: The Shape of Government and the Law in Canada

Part II: Freedom of Expression and Related Issues

- Unit 3: Freedom of Expression and the *Charter*
- Unit 4: Issues in Free Speech and the Law

Part III: Legal Issues Researching the Story

- Unit 5: Access to Government-Held Information
- Unit 6: Privacy Law

Part IV: Legal Issues Before the Court

- Unit 7: Confidentiality
- Unit 8: Public Access to Information about Judicial Processes
- Unit 9: Contempt of Court

Part V: Legal Issues Writing the Story



- Unit 10: Copyright Law
- Unit 11: Defamation

Objectives

This course assumes no prior knowledge of the law. However, students who are already working as media or communication professionals may very well have previously sought legal advice during the preparation or production of a story, because media law affects, in many different ways, how news and other information can be obtained and presented.

The goal of this course is to assist you in identifying when legal issues may arise so that you can avoid legal disputes if you choose to do so. Alternatively, you may want a legal issue to become a dispute so that you can go to court to make a point or establish a principle—one of the common themes throughout this course is the interplay of the rights of, and restrictions on, journalists in the context of the need for freedom of expression and freedom of the press. In either case, the early identification of issues will enable you, your employer, or both, to seek legal advice without delay and decide on the best course of action.

Evaluation

To **receive credit**  for CMNS 311, you must complete the assignments, receive at least 50 percent on the final examination, and achieve a minimum composite course grade of at least **D (50 percent)** . The chart below summarizes the course activities and the credit weight associated with each one.

Activity	Weight	Complete by
Assignment 1	15%	after Unit 4
Assignment 2	15%	after Unit 6
Assignment 3	15%	after Unit 9
Assignment 4	20%	after Unit 11


Activity	Weight	Complete by
Final Examination	35%	
Total	100%	

The **final examination** for this course must be taken online with an AU-approved exam invigilator at an approved invigilation centre. It is your responsibility to ensure your chosen invigilation centre can accommodate online exams. For a list of invigilators who can accommodate online exams, visit the **Exam Invigilation Network** [↗](#).

To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's **online Calendar** [↗](#).

Note: The final examination for this course must be taken online at an invigilated location. It is your responsibility to ensure a computer with an Internet connection and Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher is available for your use at the invigilation centre.

Materials

Michael G. Crawford. *The Journalist's Legal Guide*, 6th ed. Toronto, ON: Carswell, 2015.  (Print)

Other materials

Students will access all other course materials online.

Challenge for credit

Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about **challenge for credit** [↗](#) can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) for the CMNS 311 challenge registration, you must achieve a grade of at least **D (50 percent)** [↗](#) on the examination.



Challenge for credit course registration form

Important links

- › **Academic advising** [↗](#)
- › **Program planning** [↗](#)
- › **Request assistance** [↗](#)
- › **Support services** [↗](#)

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 4, January 16, 2015

Updated June 6, 2023

View **previous revision** [↗](#)
