



Communication Studies (CMNS) 455

Media Ethics (Revision 2)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the **course listing** [↗](#) for the current revision **ⓧ**

Delivery mode: Individualized study online [↗](#)

Credits: 3

Areas of study: Arts or Social Science

Prerequisites: **CMNS 301** or a course in communication theory is recommended but not required.

Precluded: None

Challenge: CMNS 455 is not available for challenge.

Faculty: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences [↗](#)

Overview

This is a course about the ethics of journalism. It provides students with an introduction to the different philosophical views of ethics; a critical examination of the rights, responsibilities, limitations, and abuses of media in democracies such as Canada and the United States; and an analysis of emerging pressures to redefine journalism as a reliable, responsible process of accurate reportage and critical commentary on our society.

Outline

Part 1: The Ethics of News Gathering (Units 1 to 4)

- Unit 1: Codes of Ethics and the Information Professional
- Unit 2: Ethical Intentions vs. Actual Practices
- Unit 3: Journalistic Formats: Narratives and Media
- Unit 4: What Does It Mean To Be “Ethical”?

Part 2: Real Information vs. Pseudo-Information (Units 5 to 7)

- Unit 5: Four Information Models
- Unit 6: Reality and Representation
- Unit 7: The Pursuit of Truth

Part 3: The Warping Effect of Economic and Political Interests (Units 8 and 9)

- Unit 8: Money and Power
- Unit 9: Wrangling the News: The Roles of Public Relations and Media Organizations

Part 4: Justice, Violence, and Codes of Conduct (Units 10 to 12)

- Unit 10: The Ethics of Reporting on Justice and Violence
- Unit 11: Codes of Conduct
- Unit 12: A Free Press ... In Spite of Everything?



Objectives

Students completing the course will better understand the use and abuse of sources, research materials, quotes, the positioning and concealment of information, plagiarism, ethics (as it relates to the coverage of criminal and terrorist acts), and the role of the news media in exposing or validating public prejudices.

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze and discuss contemporary journalism in a variety of media
2. Understand and evaluate scholarly and critical works about ethics in media production practices
3. Formulate their own critical analyses of the role of ethics in news coverage
4. Understand and discuss media codes of ethics and their application in Canada, the United States, Europe, and the Middle East
5. Explain the balance of rights and responsibilities involved in media practices by media organizations and journalists
6. Understand and discuss the social, political, and ethical implications of media
7. Discuss the various roles of media in public life
8. Explain the ethics involved in selection of sources and research material by news media

Evaluation

To **receive credit**  for CMNS 455, students must complete all assignments and achieve a course composite grade of at least **D (50 percent)** . The weighting of the composite mark is as follows:

Activity	Weight
Assignment 1	20%
Assignment 2	20%
Assignment 3	20%
Assignment 4	40%
Total	100%

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

Materials

This course either does not have a course package or the textbooks are open-source material and available to students at no cost. This course has a **Course Administration and Technology Fee** [↗](#), but students are not charged the Course Materials Fee.

All of the materials required to complete this course are available online through links on the course home page. These materials include an online Student Manual, Course Information, Study Guide, and various online readings.

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.

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View **previous revision** [↗](#)
