

## **COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT**

**Academic School/Department:** Communications and the Arts

**Programme:** Communications: Advertising & PR  
Communications: Media Studies  
Digital Marketing:

**FHEQ Level:** 6

**Course Title:** Media Ethics and Law

**Course Code:** JRN 6101

**Total Hours:** 160

Timetabled Hours: 45

Guided Learning Hours: 15

Independent Learning Hours: 100

**Credits:** 16 UK CATS credits

8 ECTS credits

4 US credits

### **Course Description:**

This course examines the main legal and ethical issues which media practitioners of the digital age encounter in their working lives, whether in the fields of PR, journalism, or advertising. Thus, the course will focus on the concepts of libel and defamation, copyright law, the public sphere, media ownership, objectivity and neutrality, freedom of the press, censorship, codes of conduct for journalists and PR practitioners, advertising regulation, privacy, and public interest, reporting restrictions and national interest, propaganda, gender issues and reporting in a multicultural society.

### **Pre-requisites:**

COM 5200 Mass Communications and Society

### **Aims and Objectives:**

This course aims to critically examine key legal and ethical questions raised by media and journalistic practices. What is the role of the media in democratic societies? Why does media ownership matter? What are the limits to freedom of expression? Is there a right to privacy? What is the relationship between journalism, PR and advertising? What is the meaning of media objectivity? Throughout the course we will engage in critiques and analyses of media practices and regulation with the aim of developing a detailed understanding of legal and ethical issues in journalism, PR and advertising.

By the end of this course successful students will have:

- A critical understanding of the public and social role of mass media;

- The ability to relate those roles to the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of citizenship, democracy and globalization.
- The ability to critically understand the political and economic agendas of the media.
- To apply these insights to the study and production of news in relation to a variety of ethical and legal dilemmas.
- To examine the legal, ethical and regulatory frameworks that affect media and cultural production, manipulation and consumption.
- To understand how class, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexuality and other social divisions play key roles in terms of both access to the media and modes of representation in media texts.

**Programme Outcomes:**

Communications: Advertising and PR: A6i, A6iv, C6i, C6iv, D6i, D6ii

Communications: Media Studies: A6i, A6iv, C6i, C6iv, D6i, D6ii

Digital Marketing: A4, B2, B3, B4, C1, D4

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification.

This is maintained by Registry and located at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of the course successful students must have:

- Demonstrated a critical understanding of the role of free media, PR and advertising in democratic societies.
- Demonstrated a systematic understanding of how commercial and economic factors constrain media production and consumption.
- Produced a detailed analysis and critical appraisal of questions about media objectivity, neutrality, public interest, privacy, the role of PR and advertising, and censorship.
- Developed a detailed understanding of how different views and cultural commitments influence media ethical and legal standards around the world.
- Demonstrated an ability to produce detailed analyses of competing perspectives and concepts on media ethics, to make comparisons and connections and to identify the possibility of new concepts.
- Demonstrated the ability flexibly to locate their own views and cultural commitments within the practice of research, within a level of autonomy.

**Indicative Content:**

- The role of the media in democratic societies
- Implications of media ownership to freedom of the press.
- Media agendas
- Ethical codes governing PR and journalism
- Concept of a right to privacy
- Censorship
- Propaganda

- Media and advertising regulation
- Digital media

## **Assessment**

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

## **Teaching Methodology:**

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures, seminars, oral presentations and group work. Screening of films and documentaries and study materials will be used as appropriate. The general approach in the classes is informal and discussion is encouraged as an essential part of learning.

## ***Indicative Texts:***

Dodd, Mike and Mark Hanna, *McNae's Essential Law for Journalists*, OUP, 2018

Frost, Chris. *Journalism Ethics and Regulation*, Routledge 2016

Morris, Trevor, and Simon Goldsworthy. *Public Relations Ethics*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Sanders, Karen, *Ethics & Journalism*, Sage Publications, 2008

## **Journals:**

Journal of Mass Media Ethics

Journal of Media Law and Ethics

Journalism Studies

Journal of Mass Communication and Journalism

## **Web Sites:**

[www.savethemedia.com](http://www.savethemedia.com)

[www.journalismethics/info](http://www.journalismethics/info)

[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

[www.bbc.co.uk/journalism](http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism)

[www.reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk](http://www.reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk)

[www.journalismfoundation.org](http://www.journalismfoundation.org)

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

[www.prca.org.uk](http://www.prca.org.uk)

[www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk)

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Change Log for this CSD:

Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or LTPC)	Change Actioned by Academic Registry
Various updates as part of the UG programme review	AB Jan 2022	
Revision – annual update	May 2023	
Total Hours Updated	June 2024	