

COMM 4454-02: Media Law
Tuesday/Thursday 2:00 pm – 3:20 pm
HUM 312
Spring 2016

GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor: Patrick D. Hadley, Ph.D.

Office: Humanities 144

Physical Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10 am - noon; 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Virtual Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 10:00 am- 12:00 noon (via CourseDen email or Google Voice phone/text); Fridays, 2:30 pm - 3:30 pm

Google Voice Phone/Text: (404) 919-7349

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E-mail: phadley@westga.edu (for use only if CourseDen email is unavailable)

CourseDen: <https://westga.view.usg.edu/>

Important Note: Read this entire course syllabus **carefully**. You are responsible for all the information contained herein. Ignorance of the policies of the class will not be an acceptable excuse.

OFFICE HOURS

I am available to address matters of concern **during** my office hours. If those hours are not convenient, please schedule an appointment with me or send me an email through CourseDen D2L. If you visit my office at other times, I may not be available because of other duties I must attend to.

If you have problems in the class, **it is YOUR responsibility** to initiate contact with me. I cannot help you if you do not communicate with me. Let me know of any problems **early** in the semester.

TEXT & ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

1. Pember, D. R., & Calvert, C. (2015). *Mass media law* (19th Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. (Online Learning Center: www.mhhe.com/pember19e)

2. Additional content from selected articles and Web sites will be assigned throughout the semester as well as the viewing of or listening to various television, radio, or online programs.

*It is not possible to successfully complete the requirements of COMM 4454 without reading the textbook and additional materials.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS,

- **Computer-compatible microphone:** In this course, you will need the ability to record audio (for a final project that involves creating an animated video with narration). Most laptops have integrated microphones that will work adequately. Alternatively, a headset microphone should work fine as well. If you do not have access to a microphone, please contact the instructor to discuss alternative options.

ABOUT THE COURSE

COMM 4454 is an examination of the legal context regulating print, telecommunication, and electronic media as well as advertising and public relations industries. Emphasis is placed on libel, privacy, copyright, free press, fair trial, and obscenity law. Furthermore, COMM 4454 is a Discipline-Specific Writing (DSW) course and will require “Writing To Learn” and “Writing To Communicate” assignments to develop your communication skills. This is a D2L-enhanced course.

Department of Mass Communications Learning Outcomes:

1. Awareness: Students will demonstrate *awareness* of mass communications scholarship, i.e., theory/research; paramount economic, ethical, legal/policy, social, and technological issues; and the role of principal personalities and stakeholders within the context of freedom of speech, freedom of press, media competition, media convergence, diversity, and/or social responsibility. ACEJMC defines awareness as familiarity with facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
2. Understanding: Students will demonstrate *understanding* of mass communications scholarship, i.e., theory/research; paramount economic, ethical, legal/policy, social, and technological issues; and the role of principal personalities and stakeholders within the context of freedom of speech, freedom of press, media competition, media convergence, diversity, and/or social responsibility. ACEJMC defines understanding as assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
3. Application: Students will demonstrate effective application of mass communications scholarship, i.e., relate and/or apply concepts, theory/research, and professional principles to analyze and synthesize information, create, develop, produce, and/or write for converging digital, multimedia, and traditional media. ACEJMC defines application as competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will identify the Constitutional principles, statutes, and administrative and common laws that apply to communicators in any medium. (*Awareness*)
2. Students will analyze the philosophy supporting the liberty of speech and the press and the legal principles that both protect and limit that liberty. (*Understanding*)

3. Students will apply practical guides to coping with legal problems likely to confront communicators in the area of freedom of speech and press, censorship, libel, invasion of privacy, fair trials, obscenity, advertising and copyright. (*Application*)

GRADING POLICY

Grades earned in this class are based solely on the following:

Test #1 = 15 percent

Test #2 = 15 percent

Test #3 = 15 percent

Case Brief (Writing to Learn) = 5 percent

Oral Case Presentation = 5 percent

Legal Scenario/Outline of Legal Analysis/Annotated Bibliography (Writing to Learn)= 10 percent

Draft Legal Analysis Script/Storyboard (Writing to Learn) = 5 percent

Final Project: Final Legal Analysis Script and Animated Video (Writing to Communicate)= 25 percent

Attendance/Participation = 5 percent

Total =100%

Grading Scale:

Points needed to receive grade

A=90% - 100%

B=80% - 89%

C= 70% - 79%

D= 60% - 69%

F= 59% and below

***Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the assignments and in an effort to meet the objectives of the course. Ample notice will be provided if such changes are made.**

ASSIGNMENTS

Tests - Three (3) tests will be administered in class during the semester. The three tests are worth a total of 45 percent of your final grade. There is A LOT of reading in this course. Begin reading the chapters immediately so you do not fall behind.

Case Briefs – You will be randomly assigned one case from a list of cases to be provided, all of which are found in various chapters in our textbook. (You are free to trade cases with a classmate after you receive your assigned case, but you are required to inform the instructor of your switch in advance of the presentations.) Some cases are major turning points in case law and others are important because of the presence of a specific factual issue or development. Your initial information should come from the textbook, but for full credit your case brief should examine the full case using the Lexis/Nexis Academic database available through the UWG Library website.

Submission format: You will post your case brief in the Discussions area of CourseDen, using the name of your case as the title of your message. Cut and paste the text of your brief into the body of the message field in the Discussions area. If you wish, you also may submit your brief as an attachments to the Discussion message. However, to have the opportunity to earn full credit you must paste the text of the brief into the body of the message field in the Discussion area.

You will complete one case brief, worth up to **5 percent of your grade**.

Late postings: Case briefs must be posted on CourseDen by 11:59 pm the night before the brief is due to be presented. Grades are reduced by 25 percent if case briefs are not posted by 11:59 pm. If your brief is not posted by noon on the day of the presentation, the grade will be reduced by a total of 50 percent. Briefs not posted by the start of class will receive a zero grade. [Posting dates to be announced.]

Oral Case Presentations (worth up to 5% of grade) -You will prepare an oral report to present (a) the key elements of your case, and (b) the relevance of your case to the topic in the chapter. You will lose points on this assignment if you merely read your brief. Use index cards only. Be prepared to answer questions from the instructor or your classmates about your case and its relevance. Absences: Oral presentations are due on the date indicated without exception. If you will be absent on the date indicated, it is your responsibility to switch cases with another student. If you are absent and have not switched, you will receive a zero for the oral presentation portion of the assignment. [Presentation dates to be announced.]

Legal Scenario/Outline of Legal Analysis/Annotated Bibliography: This is a team project that is a preparatory step in developing your final project. Your team will submit a description of a legal scenario, outline the elements of a legal analysis (based on resources from this course), and prepare an annotated bibliography of at least three cases relevant to that scenario. (worth up to 5 percent of final grade). [See deadline in separate Weekly Schedule]

Draft Legal Analysis Script/Storyboard: This is a team project that is a preliminary step in preparing your final project. Your team will prepare a draft script for a narrator to present your legal analysis in Powtoon. In addition, your team will prepare a storyboard (hand-drawn or digitally created) to show the rough images that will accompany key aspects of your script. More detail on the process will be provided later in the semester (worth up to 5 percent of final grade). [**Deadline in separate Weekly Schedule**]

Final Project: Final Legal Analysis Script and Animated Video: This is the final team project for which your team will submit (1) a revised script presenting the analysis of your legal scenario, and (2) your animated video presenting that legal analysis (with actual narration). More detail will be provided later in the semester (worth up to 25 percent of final grade). [**Deadline in separate Weekly Schedule.**]

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION

Here is the general policy for the course. To optimize your chances for success in the class, you should attend every scheduled class session. Please be on time. I will take daily attendance. You may miss up to **three (3) total classes without a documented excuse** and not have points deducted from your Attendance/Participation grade, so use them judiciously and sparingly (e.g., car trouble, minor illness, job interview). **You will have 0.5 percent deducted for each unexcused absence in excess of three.** (For example, you will lose 1.5 percent points if you have 6 total unexcused absences for the semester.) You can lose all of the available 5 percentage points for Attendance/Participation for 13 unexcused absences.

You may not use your personal days on test days. An unexcused absence from a test will result in zero credit on the missed test. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to take notes and take tests as scheduled, especially if you are a graduating senior.

Note: It is also YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to be aware of your attendance. You should see me at any point during the semester if you have any questions about this policy or your attendance—the sooner the better. I will not entertain unsubstantiated claims at the end of the semester that an absence was incorrectly recorded during the first three months of the semester.

Excused absences: Absences may be excused when due to unavoidable situations substantiated with documentation. Acceptable situations include a serious incapacitating illness or a death in your family, among others. Requests for excused absences will not be considered unless made in writing prior to the absence in question unless there are extreme circumstances that did not allow for a prior request. I certainly understand that unforeseen things can happen to anyone. Please try to work things out with me in advance if at all possible.

CLASS DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPATION

Preparation: Not only do I expect you to be in class, I expect you to come to class prepared. The course syllabus shows your reading assignments. Adhere to that reading schedule and you should be prepared for class discussions. You may be called on at random to contribute to class discussions. Of course, on the day of your case presentation, you are expected to be exceptionally well prepared to co-lead the class discussion regarding your case.

Class Communication: It will be necessary to keep in contact with one another using either your myUWG email account or using the CourseDen mail tool. In addition, you will be responsible for checking our course site on CourseDen on a regular basis for class announcements, assignments, and discussion topics. If you do not use your UWG email account, make certain to have your myUWG emails forwarded to your personal email account so that you do not miss any important class announcements or information that might be delivered through that network.

BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

You do not need me to tell you how to behave in a classroom environment. However, I want you to know what I expect from you in order to avoid embarrassing situations.

- You are expected to participate in class discussions. None of us will have answers to all of the issues that are raised in this course. Some of the issues are very difficult to resolve. Even the courts disagree. There will – hopefully - be a lot of debate and conflict. Feel free to speak your mind during class, no matter how outrageous your comments may be. I expect, however, that you show respect to your classmates. If you disagree with their point of view, please express that disagreement in a way that is not offensive. When one person is talking, everyone else should listen. The same goes for discussions via CourseDen.
- I will frequently add material to that contained in your text and discuss topics that are not covered in your text. Keep up with your reading so that you can make an informed response when you are asked questions.
- Do not ever hesitate to state your opinion on issues even when it may differ from the opinion of others. We will frequently play “devil’s advocate” with you so be prepared to defend your views.
- Throughout the semester I will cross-examine individuals in class over material you should know.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty is NOT tolerated. It will result in failure on assignment(s) as well as possible disciplinary sanction(s) as stipulated by university rules. University of West Georgia Student Conduct Code defines academic dishonesty as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism and facilitating or allowing academic dishonesty in any academic exercise.

Cheating: using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids

Fabrication: falsification or unauthorized invention of any information or citation

Plagiarism: representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. Direct quotations must be indicated and ideas of another must be appropriately acknowledged.

Academic dishonesty in any form compromises your grade and lowers the quality of your diploma. A fellow student who cheats may actually lower your grade, sometimes causing unfair and inflated grading scales. I hope each of you values your college education enough to protect yourself from dishonest classmates. If you are aware of cheating taking place, please contact Dr. Camilla Gant, chair of the Department of Mass Communications or me and proper action will be taken. If you are not certain of the definition of plagiarism in practice, please inform the instructor **before submitting your written work.**

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

I will make special arrangements for students with special needs. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester, outside of class if you prefer. Don't wait until after the first test to talk with me. Don't try and "wing it" without telling me about your particular problem or needs. If you need special accommodations for tests, let me know **early**, not a few days before the test. I am here to facilitate your learning, but I need to be informed to do so.

Additional information about university policies related to classes is available at the following URL: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

CLASS SCHEDULE (see separate document)

The class schedule and assignments are **subject to change** in order to accommodate guest speakers, reinforce course material, and maintain some flexibility with case brief presentations and other assignments. **Additional reading, listening, and viewing assignments will be made throughout the semester. You are responsible for all material assigned.**