

### **J300 (Section 20084), Communications Law**

Spring 2011

4:15 – 5:30 p.m. Tuesday/Thursday, CV212

Professor: Ron Allman

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Office hours: M–R 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. and by appointment

*Course Objectives:* This course will help you better understand the importance and influence of communications law on mass media, its practitioners and consumers. We will explore the various laws, court rulings and federal regulations that create communications law. The course will develop your critical thinking skills about the media law through class discussions and writing assignments.

*Students with Special Needs:* If you require any special assistance in meeting the class requirements due to a certified disability, please see me after class or during office hours within the first two weeks of the semester. Special accommodations or alternative-format materials will be made available. Students with disabilities may want to contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities.

*Required Text:* “Communications Law” sixth edition by John Zelezny

*Reading Assignments:* All reading assignments will be read before class, and you should be prepared to discuss the reading assignment in class. A portion of your class grade is dependent on class participation.

*Attendance, Punctuality and Deadlines:* You should plan to attend all class sessions, to participate in class and to stay for the entire class period. Being late twice will be considered an absence. A total of three absences will result in a grade of “F.” *Medical appointments, job interviews and part-time or full-time jobs are not considered valid excuses for absence.* Make-up work is strongly discouraged and will only be granted in *extraordinary* circumstances. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. No late assignment will be accepted. There will be no make-up exams.

*Class Interruptions (Laptops, Cellular Phones, Pagers, Et Cetera):* Laptops will not be used during class time. You can check Facebook after class. Cellular phones and pagers will be turned off during the class time. Please inform those who might wish to contact you during class time that your devices will be turned off. Those creating these interruptions will be asked to leave the class and will be considered absent.

*Grading:* Your final grade will be determined by the following criteria:

- 25% — Homework assignments
- 25% — Class participation
- 25% — Mid-term exam
- 25% — Final exam

There will be 12 homework assignments. The assignments will be a minimum of two pages. The homework will be used in class discussions and will be turned in at the end of class. *There will be no extra credit opportunities.* Your writing will be graded on content as well as form. Papers should be free of grammatical errors. Papers will be organized, clear and concise. Papers will be *printed* with the text double spaced. You may write on your homework during class discussions. I reserve the option of raising or lowering a student’s grade based on attendance, attitude, class cooperation, participation, courtesy or improvement in the course.

#### *Class Schedule*

Jan. 11	Snow Day
Jan. 13	Introduction
In Class	• Discuss course content
For Next Class	• Read chapters 1 and 2
Jan. 18	The Legal System / The First Amendment
In Class	• Discuss the structure of the U.S. legal system
	• Discuss the formation of the First Amendment
For Next Class	• Read chapter 3

Jan. 20	Prior Restraint
In Class	• Discuss the history of prior-restraint rulings
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 1
Jan. 25	Prior Restraint
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 1 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 4
Jan. 27	Libel
In Class	• Discuss the definition of libel
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 2
Feb. 1	Libel
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 2 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 5
Feb. 3	Privacy
In Class	• Discuss the right to privacy
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 3
Feb. 8	Privacy
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 3 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 8
Feb. 10	Copyright Law
In Class	• Discuss copyright and trademark law
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 4
Feb. 15	Copyright Law
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 4 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 7
Feb. 17	Fair Trial vs. Free Press
In Class	• Discuss the conflict between the press and the courts
For Next Class	• Study for mid-term exam
Feb. 22	<i>Mid-term Exam</i>
In Class	• Exam
For Next Class	• Read chapter 6
Feb. 24	Privilege
In Class	• Discuss the concept of journalist privilege / shield laws
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 5
March 1	Privilege
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 5 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 6
March 3	Freedom of Information
In Class	• Discuss the federal FOI Act
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 6
March 8	Freedom of Information
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 6 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 11
March 10	Obscenity
In Class	• Discuss the definition of obscenity / indecency
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 7

March 15	Obscenity
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 7 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 10
March 17	Electronic Media
In Class	• Discuss regulation on TV, radio, internet
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 8
March 22-24	No Class
March 29	Electronic Media
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 8 due</i>
UPDATE BELOW	
April 5	Ethics
In Class	• Discuss journalism ethics
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 9
April 7	Ethics
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 9 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read chapter 12
April 1	Commercial Speech
In Class	• Discuss advertising laws and regulations
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 10
April 14	Commercial Speech
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 10 due</i>
For Next Class	• Read pages 69–73
April 19	Student Press
In Class	• Discuss the unique nature of student media law
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 11
April 21	Student Press
In Class	• <i>Homework assignment 11 due</i>
For Next Class	• Homework assignment 12
April 28	<i>Final Exam, 4:15 – 6:05 p.m.</i>