

Mass Comm Law – Comm 411

Fall, 2016; Section 50

**Gina Firenzi, Instructor**

**Office:** Online Availability Mon – Thurs 7:00am to 5:00pm PST

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**Weekly Assignment Deadlines:** Tuesdays at midnight

Teacher availability - I am online Monday through Thursday checking emails through out the day. Please email me with any questions and concerns. If we need to have more of a conversation then we will schedule a time to chat.

**Course Description:** This course will introduce you to the general principles and policies underlying mass communication law in the United States. Mass communication law influences much of our professional lives in communication roles and inevitably our personal lives well beyond that realm.

While this course is about law, it is not “law-school class.” What’s the difference? Law-school classes train lawyers. This class introduces “the law” to communication students who need to understand some basics about law, and in particular, how law can relate to communication careers and interests. The overarching goal for the course is to familiarize you more specifically with those laws most influencing communication and communication technologies and their underlying social policy origins and influences.

Consequently, we will mostly explore:

- (1) the 1st Amendment and related speech protections under the U.S. and individual state constitutions,
- (2) common and state law considerations governing defamation (libel and slander) law, rights of privacy, and publicity, and
- (3) federal laws covering copyright and trademark.

Addressing contemporary problems and issues in the law will shape much of our learning activity. Readings will include case law developed by judges and statutes developed by legislators. Understanding those political divisions and resulting “law” is essential to understanding “the law.” Outcomes will focus on developing skills for legal reasoning in order to understand substantive laws and to advocate change in those laws when necessary.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to:

- Understand the legal and policy issues surrounding a particular controversy.
- Analyze and identify applicable law(s) and policies.
- Develop and present policy and legal arguments in support of advocacy and change.
- Demonstrate skills for analyzing relevant facts, conducting legal research, applying

policy and legal arguments, and advocating for a particular outcome to a controversy. · Recognize and articulate the policy choices inherent in developing and applying legal principles to complex and often irreconcilable social and political controversies.

### **Required Reading and Materials**

Siegel, Paul. *Communication Law in America*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014).

### Explanation of Assignments:

**Problem Sets** - These assignments ask you to explore 4-5 question prompts to examine your understanding of the reading and legal situations. You will be asked to provide examples of understanding and research to back your ideas. (Each problem set is worth 20 points)

**Mini Papers** - These assignments will ask you to write 2-3 pages about a legal situation. In many cases you will be asked to create an argument based on a hypothetical or current real life example of how the law applies to our society. (Each mini paper is worth 20 points)

**Quizzes** - Multiple choice questions corresponding to the textbook readings. (Each quiz is 20 points)

**Final Project** - The final project for this course will be a moot court paper and discussion.

Grades will be posted on Canvas as soon as assignments are graded. You should get in the habit of checking Canvas and keeping up with your grades. I typically get grades back in a week or two from the turn in date. Any problems or discrepancies should be reported to me within two weeks of when grades get posted. Do not wait until the end of the semester to check on your grades.

### Grading Scale

Percentage Range	Letter Grade
100-94%	A
93- 90%	A-
89 - 88%	B+
87- 83%	B
82 - 80%	B-
79 - 78%	C+
77- 73%	C
72 - 70%	C-
69 - 68%	D+
67 - 63%	D
62 - 60%	D-
< 59%	F

## **Course Protocol, Practices, and Policies**

### **Teacher Availability:**

Online does not mean 24-hour teacher availability. I encourage you to dedicate time that you spend committed to this class each week as I will do the same. My availability is Mon – Thur 7:00am to 5:00pm PST. I get back to emails as soon as I can during these times. I do teach in-person sections so there may be a short delay. If you email me over the weekend the issue will be replied to on Monday.

Please email me at [gina.firenzi@sjsu.edu](mailto:gina.firenzi@sjsu.edu) or [gmfire01@louisville.edu](mailto:gmfire01@louisville.edu) Emailing through canvas will have a delay. Some of those messages do get lost.

Please indicate in your email who you are, what class/section number you are in and be specific about what assignments you are referring to. Assignments may have similar names so be very specific.

Similar to my turnaround time I expect the same from you. If you email me then you should respond to my reply in a timely manner.

### **Grading Policy:**

I believe that every student should have the same opportunity to be successful in my classes so there are few exceptions for late work or extensions. Everyone has the same time frame and access to the assignments. I will answer any specific question about an assignment submitted to me 24 hours before the deadline. Plan ahead! I will not review drafts of assignments – your work needs to be your own voice and vision.

Please note that students who discuss and/or apply the class concepts tend to do better than those simply sharing an opinion. Also note, I love creative risk taking when it comes to assignments. So I encourage you to think outside the box.

### **Deadlines and Late Work:**

Deadlines are always the same each week except if expressly noted on the syllabus. You will always have at least one assignment a week unless if expressly noted on the syllabus. Canvas does glitch and sometimes the assignment deadline disappears so pay attention to the syllabus always! That will always confirm if there is an assignment due.

I adhere to deadlines. This class is online so you need to get to a computer to submit each week. You may not submit assignments late except with prior expressed permission. Plan ahead! This is not a class where you can catch up at the end. Submitting work late may be graded in a rare one-time circumstance and is subject to a penalty of 10% each day it is late. If submitting this one-time assignment late there will be no feedback given.

Exams/Quizzes and final assignments will be closed at the deadline and will not be able to be made up.

### **Pacing of the course:**

This is not a self-paced course. You are a participant in a class community and not individually taking the class. You are expected to check in and submit assignments every week. Just like in-person classes where class participation and involvement are required I expect the same for this class. I will open assignments every Wednesday so that you have at least six days to submit. I will, on some occasions, open future

assignments to get ahead. I pace the course so that you are getting feedback and understanding the material at the same time. Please be aware that there is logic and reasoning to why I pace the class the way I do.

### **Submitting Work:**

There are two ways to submit work. An assignment calls for an upload of either a word document or a pdf version of the document. PAGES cannot be submitted. You must convert your documents. A discussion board asks you to reply to a forum – here you will type directly in the space. No upload will be necessary. Work cannot be submitted through email. It must go through the Learning Management System to receive credit and be submitted on time.

### **Positivity and Credibility**

Unlike an in-person class I only learn about who you are as a student from the work you submit and how you communicate with me in email. Teaching online can become very transactional – “do this for me”, “I need this,” “I have a problem” etc. I welcome and encourage you to talk to me about the course and how you see it connect to your life. Remember that in communicating with me and your classmates that we are people and that we enjoy talking about the good things along with any needs/concerns.

### **A Foreword Regarding Technology**

This course will require you to work with a number of technological components (emails, online learning management systems, and more). If you are not extremely comfortable with minimal to no in-person contact with your instructor, or the aforementioned components trouble you, I **strongly** encourage you to attempt enrolling in a traditional section of during the semester. Discomfort or unfamiliarity with technology or technical difficulties with any of these components will **not** be an excuse for late, subpar, or incomplete work.

Also, note that you are responsible for making sure your assignments are submitted and/or posted. Using a mobile device may complicate this for some people. Using mobile devices you complete your work does not excuse you from meeting a deadline.

This is not an exhaustive list. Other policies may need to be adapted as the course forms. I also realize that while some of the policies may seem rigid, they ultimately exist to make your life easier and promote your success in this class. I **want** you to do well, and have seen many students struggle with online classes due simply to poor time management.

### **Title IX/Clery Act Notification**

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain confidential support from the PEACC Program (852-2663), Counseling Center (852-6585), and Campus Health Services (852-6479). To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact the Dean of Students (852-5787) or University of Louisville Police (852-6111).

Disclosure to University faculty or instructors of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty

and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

For more information, see the Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide

(<http://louisville.edu/hr/employeerelations/sexual-misconduct-brochure>).

### **Plagiarism Statement**

The University defines plagiarism as “representing the words or ideas of someone else as one’s own in any academic exercise.” Thus, all writing you do for this course must be your own and must be exclusively for this course, unless the instructor stipulates differently. Please pay special attention to the quotes, paraphrases, and documentation practices you use in your papers. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask your instructor. If you plagiarize, your instructor reserves the right to grant you a failure for the course and your case may be reported to the College of Arts and Sciences.

NOTE: Please see further information in the PLAGIARISM section in the composition handbook.

### **Statement on behalf of students with disabilities**

Students who have a disability or condition which may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with the instructor to identify, discuss and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform instructor about circumstances no later than the second week of the semester or as soon as possible after a disability or condition is diagnosed, whichever occurs earliest. For information and auxiliary assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center.

### **Intellectual Property**

Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.

**The instructor has the right to make changes to the course schedule/syllabus if necessary.**

### **Assignments and Grading:**

#### **Module (Introduction) – 2 weeks**

Introduction In-Take

Problem Set

#### **Module 1 Freedom of Speech – 2 weeks**

Problem Set

Mini Paper

Quiz

**Module 2 Defamation & Privacy – 2 weeks**

Problem Set

Mini Paper

Quiz

**Module 3 Publications & Regulation – 2 weeks**

Problem Set

Mini Paper

Quiz

**Module 4 Law & Media (News and Advertising) – 2 weeks**

Problem Set

Mini Paper

Quiz

**Module 5 How Lawyers Communicate – 3 weeks**

Problem Set

Mini Paper

NO QUIZ!!!

**Module 6 Final Project - 2 weeks**

COMM 411, Mass Comm Law,

**Fall 2016 Online**

*Subject to change with fair notice:*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Due Date</b>		<b>Assignment Due</b>
	Tuesday		
1	8/23	Intro Module	In-take questionnaire
2	8/30	Intro Module	Problem Set Intro
3	9/6	Module 1	Reading / Problem Set 1
4	9/13	Module 1	Mini Paper 1 / Quiz 1
5	9/20	Module 2	Reading / Problem Set 2
6	9/27	Module 2	Mini Paper 2 / Quiz 2
7	10/4	Fall Break	No submissions
8	10/11	Module 3	Reading / Problem Set 3
9	10/18	Module 3	Mini Paper 3 / Quiz 3
10	10/25	Module 4	Reading / Problem Set 4 Quiz 4
11	11/1	Module 4	Mini Paper 4
12	11/8	Module 5	Mini Paper 5 Quiz - Module 5
13	11/15	Module 6	Problem Set – 6 / Mini Paper 6
14	11/22	Thanksgiving	No Submissions
15	11/29	Module 7	Advocacy Argument
16	12/6	Module 7	Rebuttal