

Instructor: Dr. Christopher White

Room: DRB 125/10-11:50

Office Hrs.: M/T/W 9-10, 4-5 and Th & F by appointment in Room 102

Text: *Mass Media Law* by John D. Zelezny, 5th Edition

Other reserve readings may be required

Course Description: Essentially an examination of the law in general and how it applies specifically to the mass media and new media technologies, the class will focus on old and new legal theories, statutes, regulations, precedent cases, regulatory agencies and industry policies.

Familiarity with the rules governing the manner and content of communication in the media is integral to any assessment of how our culture "works." This course will offer an overview of the American legal system and focus on other, general issues related to the regulation/protection of expression. More specific topics will include free speech in the media & in schools, commercial expression vs. individual expression, media access and broadcast/cable regulation. You must learn about general legal issues first -- then learn how these issues relate to mass media, media audiences, new media technologies, etc.

Course Objectives: to understand the historical background of the First Amendment; to gain a basic understanding of the American legal system, how it works and how it relates to the mass media and/or new communication technologies; to become familiar with legal theories related to Privacy, Libel, Copyright and Obscenity; to become familiar with Case Law in regards to Privacy, Libel, Copyright and Obscenity; to become familiar with regulations related to the print and electronic media. In short, my primary objective is to help you think about significant legal issues for the rest of your life!

The text chapters we will focus on include:

Introduction & The U. S. Legal System (1)	Week One
The First Amendment (2) & Risks to Safety (3)	Week Two
Media and the Justice System (7)	
Damage to Reputation (4)	Week Three
First Test & First Paper	
Invasion of Privacy (5)	Week Three
Creative Property (8)	Week Four
Obscenity and Indecency (11)	Week Five

Second Test & Second Paper at scheduled time for Finals.

Grading:	2 tests worth 100 points each =	200 pts
	Two Papers =	50 pts each

Participation/class-work will be also considered in your final grade

Tests will be multiple choice and essay.

A=300-270, B=269-240, C=239-210, D=209-180, F=179-0

A Critical Outline of Chapter One & pages 250-266 in Chapter Seven is due on the second Friday. Should be about 4-5 single-sided HAND-WRITTEN pages. Details forthcoming. Considered part of participation/class-work.

If you are late for class, you are considered absent. After 4 absences, 40 points will be taken off the final grade for each additional absence (**for whatever reason**). The final will not be comprehensive but you will be tested on some essential issues covered on the first test.

Take notes on ALL SCREENINGS. Read the book EVERY night. Keep ALL hand-outs. If you miss class miss a hand-out, you are responsible for getting a copy from a classmate.

A hand-out explaining the papers will be distributed in the 2nd week.

Lecture notes are not posted on Blackboard. Reviews for tests are posted on Blackboard.

I encourage class discussions -- and especially in this class. But I also decide when to stop class discussions. Often I'll open the floor for questions & comments after an introductory lecture, discussion or screening. I'll then cut off discussion to move on to another topic. Anyone who can't "get with this program" or who is, in my judgement, a hindrance in-class will be asked to leave. If you have a burning desire to talk -- schedule an appointment during office hours, but don't dominate other people's class-time. This class will deal with some controversial issues and might "entertain" some language and images you find offensive. Be forewarned. Be mature.

No beepers, cell phones, palm-pilots, satellite dishes or anything that otherwise beeps, vibrates or whistles allowed in class. No eating, sleeping **or doing work unrelated to the class**. Live with it. Generally students will refrain from behavior that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process. And please maintain complete honesty and integrity in your academic experience both in and out of this classroom (this from Faculty Handbook).

Make-up exams are difficult to arrange and are likely to be offered in essay form.

Any assignments passed in must be stapled, typed (unless otherwise noted) and have your name at the top of the page. I won't accept anything less.

Do not call me at home -- never, ever --that's why God invented office hours.

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor

DISABLED STUDENT POLICY

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that no otherwise qualified disabled individual shall, solely by reason of his/her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any academic or Student Life program or activity.