

University of North Texas at Dallas
Spring 2025
SYLLABUS

COMM 4353.001: Media & Communication Law 3 HRS

Department of	Communication & Digital Media	School of	Liberal Arts and Sciences
Instructor Name:	Gabe Otteson, "Professor O" or "Mr. O"		
Office Location:	FH 206		
Office Phone:	972-338-1869		
Email Address:	Gabriel.Otteson@untdallas.edu		
Office Hours:	MW 1:00 – 3:00 TTH 10:00 – 11:00; Online by appointment		
Course Format/Structure:	Face to-Face		
Classroom Location:	DAL 1 326		
Class Meeting Days & Times:	TTH 1:00 – 2:20		
Course Catalog Description:	Study of contemporary communication law, with a focus on strategic communication and new media issues. Topics may include freedom of speech and press, corporate and commercial speech, media rights management, intellectual property, libel, and freedom of information.		
Prerequisites:	COMM 1010 or COMM 2300 with grades of C or better.		
Co-requisites:	None.		
Required Text:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smith Ekstrand, V. et al. (2022). <i>Trager's The Law of Journalism and Mass Communication (Eighth Edition)</i>. Routledge ISBN: 978-1071857922 • Additional readings and videos will be posted on Canvas 		
Recommended Text and References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Psychological Association. (2020). <i>Publication manual of the American Psychological Association</i>, (7th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. • OWL Purdue Online Writing Lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/ • Flash or external hard drive(s) or cloud storage • Headphones • Additional readings and materials may be supplied in class or posted to Canvas. 		

Access to Learning Resources	UNT Dallas Library: Phone: (972) 338-1616; Website URL: http://www.untdallas.edu/library UNT Dallas Bookstore: Phone: (972) 780-3652; Website URL: http://www.untdallas.edu/bookstore Email: untdallas@bkstr.com
Canvas Resources Supported Browsers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chrome Supported Devices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iPhone • Android • Chromebook <i>Note: Tablet users can use the Canvas app</i> Screen Readers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VoiceOver (Safari) • JAWS (Internet Explorer) • NVDA (Firefox) <i>Note: There is no screen reader support for Canvas in Chrome</i>	Getting Help with Canvas: Canvas 24/7 Phone Support for Students: 1-833-668-8634 Canvas Help Resources: Canvas Student Guide - https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701 For additional assistance, contact UNT Dallas Distance Learning: DAL1, Room 157 Email: distancelearning@untdallas.edu If you are working with Canvas 24/7 Support to resolve a technical issue, please keep me updated on the troubleshooting progress. If you have a course-related issue (e.g., course content, assignment trouble, quiz difficulties), please contact me during office hours or by email.
Course Goals or Overview: This course is designed to as a study of contemporary communication law, with a focus on strategic communication and new media issues. Topics may include freedom of speech and press, corporate and commercial speech, media rights management, intellectual property, libel, and freedom of information.	
Learning Objectives/Outcomes: At the end of this course, students will be able to:	
1	Demonstrate a basic understanding of the terminology of the American legal system and the working of the court system
2	Demonstrate an understanding of the main points of seminal cases that have shaped Communication Law.
3	Explain their understanding of communication law concepts in written, oral, and/or video form

Course Outline

This schedule is tentative, and as a result is subject to change by the instructor. Changes to this schedule will be communicated in class, via Canvas announcement and/or via email. Additional readings and activities may be added, these will be noted in the Readings and Activities/Assignments sections of Canvas.

<u>Date</u>		<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Due</u>	<u>Chapter Quiz</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>
1/14	T	Syllabus, course overview, expectations			
1/16	TH	Intro Activity			
1/21	T	Law in a changing communication environment	Chapter 1		
1/23	TH	Law in a changing communication environment Facilitations?	Chapter 1	1	
1/28	T	The First Amendment	Chapter 2		
1/30	TH	The First Amendment	Chapter 2	2	
2/4	T	Speech Distinctions	Chapter 3		
2/6	TH	Speech Distinctions	Chapter 3	3	
2/11	T	Libel	Chapter 4		
2/13	TH	Libel II	Chapter 5	4	
2/18	T	Privacy	Chapter 6		
2/20	TH	Privacy	Chapter 6	5	
2/25	T	Gathering Information	Chapter 7		
2/27	TH	Gathering Information	Chapter 7	6	
3/4	T	Prep for Oral Arguments			
3/6	TH	Prep for Oral Arguments			
3/11	T	<u>Spring Break – NO CLASS</u>			
3/13	TH	<u>Spring Break – NO CLASS</u>			
3/18	T	Speech and Press Freedoms	Chapter 8		
3/20	TH	Speech and Press Freedoms	Chapter 8	7	
3/25	T	Electronic Media Regulation	Chapter 9		
3/27	TH	Electronic Media Regulation	Chapter 9	8	Draft annotated prep due
4/1	T	Obscenity and Indecency	Chapter 10		
4/3	TH	Obscenity and Indecency	Chapter 10	9	
4/8	T	Intellectual Property and Copyrights	Chapter 11		
4/10	TH	Intellectual Property and Copyrights	Chapter 11	10	
4/15	T	Advertising	Chapter 12		
4/17	TH	Advertising	Chapter 12	11	

4/22	T	[Catchup/Overflow week]			
4/24	TH	[Catchup/Overflow week]		12	
4/29	T	Review Explainer Videos			Explainer Videos Due
5/1	TH	Review Explainer Videos Prepare for Oral Arguments			
5/6	T	Oral Arguments			

Key Dates

Please take note of the following key dates for the spring term:

1/13/25 Registration Deadline

1/12/25 First Day of Class

1/16/25 Late Registration Deadline

1/16/25 Last Day to Add a class

1/29/25 Census Day

1/29/25 Last day to drop a class without a "W"

3/10 – 3/14/25 Spring Break – No Classes

3/12/25 Midterm Grades Due

3/28/25 Last day to drop a class with a "W"

4/11/25 Last day to drop ALL courses with a W

5/1/25 Last day of instruction – last day to file for incomplete

5/5 - 5/10/25 Final Exams

Course Evaluation Methods

This course will utilize the following instruments to determine student grades and proficiency of the learning outcomes for the course. Further information will be provided on Canvas and on assignments handouts. Assignments may appear in the Canvas modules twice, once during the week that they are assigned, and a second time during the week that they are due.

Assignment Categories

- **Chapter Quizzes (300 pts total; 10 @ 30 pts ea.)**
- **Oral arguments (200 pts)**
- **Individual Arguments Prep (130 pts)**
- **Class Facilitation (Partner or team of 3) (120 pts)**
- **Explainer Video (160 pts)**
- **Participation/Attendance (100 pts)**

Chapter Quizzes:

Quizzes covering each book chapter. Quizzes consist of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. Since there are more book chapters than quizzes, only the top 10 scores will count, others will be dropped.

Oral arguments:

During Finals Week, students will be divided into three groups and will be given either a real, recent case or a hypothetical case. One team will prepare a persuasive argument in the affirmative referencing cases and material from the course, one team will prepare a persuasive argument in the negative, referencing cases and material from the course, and the third team will act as the Court Justices who will evaluate the arguments presented and reach a consensus on the "winner." These exercises are designed as fun, creative applications for what is learned in class.

Individual Arguments Prep:**Explainer Project:**

With a partner, or in a team of 3, produce an "explainer-style" video explaining a particular area of media and communication law to a lay audience. Include any and all relevant case citations and accurate descriptions of what each case has held.

Participation/Attendance:

Class attendance, participation in any in-class activities, discussions, etc.

Extra Credit

Any extra credit opportunities will be announced in class and on Canvas, so stay tuned!

Grading Matrix:

Each of the following assignments will be detailed thoroughly on Canvas. Be sure to access Canvas frequently for assignment guidelines and other important class documents.

<u>Assignment Category</u>	<u>Points</u>
Chapter Quizzes	300
Case Briefs	240
Oral Arguments	200
Explainer Project	160
Participation/Attendance	100
Total	1000

Your final grade is based on a standard grading scale

90%+ = A	80-89% = B	70-79% = C	60-69% = D
0-59% = F			

Missing Class: If you miss class, it's entirely your responsibility to find out what in-class activity, reading, exercise you missed so that you can get caught up and anything that you missed turned in on time. Handouts, powerpoints, assignments, and the like will be posted on the class Canvas, though they may not always be posted immediately after class; so my advice would be to get and keep in contact with your classmates and use each other as resources.

Comm & Digital Media Equipment Checkout: We will be producing creative works in here. Comm and Tech equipment is available for checkout. As of now, all equipment checkout goes through the Speaking Lab (email: UNTD-SpeakingCenter@untDallas.edu and CC Sara.Holmes@untDallas.edu) on an **appointment basis**. Further details will be provided on Canvas once hours are finalized.

My general advice:

1. Plan/schedule your appointment in advance of when you need your equipment. The Center is managed by a faculty member (and usually a student worker) with multiple responsibilities and advance notice is appreciated. Be sure to check out early enough to allow for possible charging time.
2. Know what you need and BE SPECIFIC – we have more than one type of camera (meaning if you want one of the big video cameras, specify as such!), multiple types of microphones available, as well as mounts, lights, headphones, recorders, and other accessories. You (and/or your team members) are the expert on the equipment needs of your project!
3. This isn't the only class using this equipment, although in Fall semesters, DP 1 is often the heaviest users. This also means that these projects are going to require likely more planning ahead than many of you may be used to. Otherwise, I know some of you have your own cameras and gear, mics, etc. so we may have to work with that too, *so long as the quality is equivalent*.

Exam Policy: Quizzes and exams should be taken as scheduled. No makeup quizzes/examinations will be allowed except for documented emergencies (See Student Handbook). Note that the Midterm Exam is given **IN CLASS** on the scheduled exam date. Phones and devices will be collected up front prior to an in-class exam or quiz. You may retrieve your devices after you turn in your test.

Participation in Intercollegiate Athletics: Student-athletes participating in UNT Dallas Athletics have the responsibility of being students first. This means that it's **your** responsibility to:

- Communicate any potential absences due to participation in UNT Dallas Athletics events/competitions to your instructor in writing **prior to** the date of the absence in order for the absence to be excused
- Complete any and all resulting missed work within a reasonable time period
- Ensure that required Athletics compliance forms are submitted at the required times and filled out accurately. (Remember, it's your eligibility, not your instructors'.)

Communication: In the real world stuff happens. Life happens. Especially during circumstances like these. If a technological or life situation happens that impacts your ability to work well in this course, the single most important thing you can do is COMMUNICATE. (You know, the thing you're all studying?) I am willing to work with you (within reason) on managing class stuff but I can't do anything if I don't know what's going on. Same goes for your fellow classmates. We're all in this together, but we can't help unless you communicate with us.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: Don't. Just don't. All of your work is expected to be your own original work produced for this course. Passing off someone else's work as your own, or submitting work done for another course, or submitting work completed by AI/LLMs as your own, triggers the involvement of more people than just your professor (Program Coordinator, possibly the Dean and/or Provost). Play dumb games, win dumb prizes.

Ethics, Integrity and AI

Students are expected to complete their own original work, including but not limited to assigned work in class or at home, examinations, and research-based projects. It is academic dishonesty to use the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgement. If you use ideas of others, regardless of who those individuals are (experts in their field, websites, friends from class, etc.), you must provide proper citation. Cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, tampering with the academic work of other students, use of Artificial Intelligence software to complete your work (unless explicitly permitted), or any other form of dishonesty will be dealt with severely. Students will be subjected to disciplinary action under university regulations.

University Policies and Procedures

Students with Disabilities (ADA Compliance):

The University of North Texas at Dallas makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Disabilities Services Office (DSO) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the DSO will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodation at any time, however, DSO notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delays in implementation. Note that a student must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet/communicate with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Disability Services Office website at <http://www.untDallas.edu/disability>. You may also contact them by phone at 972-338-1777; by email at UNTDisability@untDallas.edu on the first floor of the Student Center.

Canvas Instructure Accessibility Statement:

University of North Texas at Dallas is committed to ensuring that online and hybrid courses are usable by all students and faculty including those with disabilities. If you encounter any difficulties with technologies, please contact our ITSS Department. To better assist them, you would want to have the operating system, web browser and information on any assistive technology being used. The Canvas Instructure Accessibility Statement is provided at <https://www.canvaslms.com/accessibility>.

NOTE: Additional instructional technology tools, such as Turnitin, Respondus, Panopto, and publisher cartridge content (i.e. MyLab, Pearson, etc.) may NOT be fully ADA compliant. Please contact our Disability Office should you require additional assistance utilizing any of these tools.

Grade of Incomplete: In order to receive an incomplete in this course, the Grade of Incomplete Form posted on the Registrar forms site must be completed, signed and returned to the Office of the Registrar by the deadline posted in the Academic Calendar (last date of regular instruction.) For other questions related to grade of incomplete, contact Dr. Dawn Sales, Assistant Provost, at dawn.sales@untdallas.edu.

Disruptive Behavior: Students are expected to engage with the instructor and other students in this class in a respectful and civil manner at all times to promote a classroom environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Students who engage in disruptive behavior will be directed to leave the classroom. A student who is directed to leave class due to disruptive behavior is not permitted to return to class until the student meets with a representative from the Dean of Students Office. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the Dean of Students before class meets again and to provide the instructor confirmation of the meeting. A student who is directed to leave class will be assigned an unexcused absence for that class period and any other classes the student misses as a result of not meeting with the Dean of Students. The student is responsible for material missed during all absences and the instructor is not responsible for providing missed material. In addition, the student will be assigned a failing grade for assignments, quizzes or examinations missed and will not be allowed to make up the work.

The Code of Student's Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (UNT Policy 7.001 found at <https://www.untdallas.edu/hr/upol>) describes disruption as the obstructing or interfering with university functions or activity, including any behavior that interferes with students, faculty, or staff access to an appropriate educational environment. Examples of disruptive behavior that may result in a student being directed to leave the classroom include but are not limited to: failure to comply with reasonable directive of University officials, action or combination of actions that unreasonably interfere with, hinder, obstruct, or prevents the right of others to freely participate, threatening, assaulting, or causing harm to oneself or to another, uttering any words or performing any acts that cause physical injury, or threaten any individual, or interfere with any individual's rightful actions, and harassment. You are encouraged to read the Code of Student's Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct for more information related to behaviors that could be considered disruptive.

CoursEval Policy: Student evaluation of teaching effectiveness is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT Dallas. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider students' evaluations to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Assignment Policy: Students are expected to read assigned material before class and participate actively in class assignments. This includes actively engaging in class

discussion and group exercises as well as taking notes on lecture material. It is your responsibility to know what is done in class and any changes in the syllabus even if you are absent.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is a hallmark of higher education. You are expected to abide by the University's code of Academic Integrity policy. Any person suspected of academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating or plagiarism) will be handled in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. Refer to the UNT Dallas Academic Integrity Policy in the appropriate Catalog at <http://dallascatalog.unt.edu>.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.

Web-based Plagiarism Detection: Please be aware in some courses, students may be required to submit written assignments to Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism detection service, or another method. If submitting to Turnitin, please remove your title page and other personal information.

Bad Weather Policy: Campus facilities will close and operations will be suspended when adverse weather and/or safety hazards exist on the UNTD campus or if travel to the campus is deemed dangerous as the result of ice, sleet or snow. In the event of a campus closure, the Marketing and Communication Department will report closure information to all appropriate major media by 7 a.m. That department will also update the UNTD website, Facebook and Twitter with closing information as soon as it is possible. For more information, please refer to <http://www.untdallas.edu/police/resources/notifications>

If bad weather affects your ability to engage in course content, communicate with your instructor and team members (when applicable) ASAP.

Diversity/Tolerance Policy: Students are encouraged to contribute their perspectives and insights to class discussions. However, offensive and inappropriate language (swearing) and remarks offensive to others of particular nationalities, ethnic groups, sexual preferences, religious groups, genders, or other ascribed statuses will not be tolerated. Disruptions which violate the Code of Student Conduct will be referred to the Dean of Students as the instructor deems appropriate. (UNTD Policy 7.001)

Class Policies and Expectations

Active Learning

You are expected to take an active role in learning. If you are having trouble, come and see me – I will be glad to help. If there are things you do not understand, raise questions in class, as others may benefit from your inquiry, and may also be able to help you. Remember, you're all in this together so feel free to use each other for support as well. If

you are hesitant to speak up in class, stop by after class or send me an email. I am here to assist in your learning, so do not hesitate if you need clarification or assistance.

Missing Class

To help you get information about any class that you miss, check with your classmates to gather any important info you may have missed. Handouts and assignments given out will be posted to the class Canvas, so check there too. If you ask Mr. O if you missed anything important and you didn't check those sources first, you may not like the answer you receive.

Plagiarism

Students need to do original work and properly cite sources. For example, be aware of plagiarism—directly copying more than 3 or 4 words from another author without quoting (not just citing) the author is plagiarism. Cheating, plagiarizing, falsification, misrepresentation or any other form of dishonesty will be dealt with severely. Students will be subjected to disciplinary action under college regulations.

Grade Disputes

Grades will be discussed only during the instructor's office hours. Please do not ask grade questions during class time. If you have an issue with your grade, please wait 24 hours, but no later than 48 hours before submitting an email articulating your concern about your grade. Please include a reference to the work in question. This will give both the instructor and the student time to carefully review all of the information. After 48 hours, your grade will not be changed.

Inclusive Language and Intercultural Diversity

Please use non-sexist language and appropriate cultural terms when speaking and writing. Since the language we use shapes the way in which we see the world, the words we use matter. For example, use "he or she" instead of "he" when referring to a hypothetical person. Similarly, use "everybody" instead of "you guys," "people" instead of "man" or "mankind." Use, "Asian" instead of "Oriental," etc. Encouraging different perspectives related to such factors as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and other relevant cultural identities fosters understanding and inclusiveness related to such diverse perspectives and ways of communicating.

Citizenship

Each of us is responsible for creating a positive learning environment. Respectful class participation includes contributing ideas that relate to the topic, asking questions to clarify understanding, responding thoughtfully when called upon, and giving respectful attention to the instructor and classmates. Good communication skills include listening carefully to diverse opinions, analyzing what is said, clearly stating opinions without personal put-downs, encouraging classmates, synthesizing new information, and applying it. Disrespectful communication includes interrupting or attacking others, monopolizing the conversation, carrying on side conversations, and using personal technology for purposes other than classroom activity. A positive classroom environment improves learning for both the individual student and for the class as a whole.

Drop/Withdrawal Policy

Withdrawing from a course is a formal procedure which **YOU** must initiate; the instructor cannot do it for you. You may withdraw from a class in either Admissions or Advising. If you stop attending or are unable to complete this class and you do not withdraw before the official drop date, you will receive a performance grade, usually a grade of "F." Students sometimes drop a class when help is available that would enable them to continue. Please discuss your plans with the instructor if you feel the need to withdraw.

College-Level Reading, Writing, and Speaking Skills

College-level reading, writing, and speaking are expected. If your outlines or presentations do not meet college-standards, you will not receive credit for them. If you find you need help correcting grammatical and word choice errors, I strongly advise you to meet with a tutor in The Learning Center (M-216).

In addition to specific requirements for each paper assignment, please note the following guidelines in preparing all assignments:

- All written assignments must be typed.
- Format: Double-spaced, 12pt standard font (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman), 1" Margins, adhering to the APA Style Guide and/or indicated script format.
- All assignments must be submitted through Canvas **before** 11:59 pm the day they are due. In the event of a technical issue, you may email the file to Mr. O **BEFORE 11:59 pm AND** submit the file through Canvas when you are able.
- Be sure to proof read your written work before submitting in order to correct any grammatical errors or spelling mistakes. **Please note that grammar and spelling are considered in grading. Knowing how to write properly is an essential part of communication.**

*****If these requirements are not met, points will be deducted from your paper grade.*****