

## COM 400 Communication Law

### Credit Hours: 3

In Class Instructional Hours: 3

Labs: 0

Field Work: 0

### Catalog Description:

*Prerequisite: Junior-Senior Status*

Intensive exploration of American law affecting mass media; focus on freedom of expression (speech and press) and on media rights, responsibilities and constraints; attention to issues of privacy, privilege, free press/fair trial, obscenity, copyright and advertising

### Reasons for Addition or Revision:

(Spring 2006). This course, formerly called Law of Mass Communication, was last revised in 1997 as part of a departmental program restructuring. This new proposal is part of a general program review, through which Communication seeks to update its courses in light of departmental experience with the previous program version, evolving departmental needs, and expanding scholarship in the field. Additionally, the department is undertaking this revision to position itself for accreditation by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

<b>Student Learning Outcomes:</b>	<b>Course Content References:</b>	<b>Assessment:</b>
At the completion of this course, students will be able to:  1. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of freedom of expression in a democratic society and the role of media as a conduit of such freedom	I, II	1. Exams, papers, applied projects, presentations
2. Explain and analyze the legal restrictions on the gathering and dissemination of information by the media	III, IV, V	2. Exams, papers, applied projects, presentations
3. Recognize and modify media content that could lead to lawsuits, particularly issues related to defamation, privacy, and copyright	III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII	3. Exams, papers, applied projects, presentations
4. Effectively analyze legal and social bases for freedom of expression and contemporary legal issues affecting media practitioners	IX, X	4. Exams, papers, applied projects, presentations
5. Demonstrate thinking skills and problem-solving skills associated with issues of media law and regulation	II, X	5. Exams, papers, applied projects, presentations

## **Course Content:**

- I. Theoretical base of free expression
  - A. History
  - B. Philosophy
  - C. Law
  - D. Journalistic privilege based on media role "Fourth Estate"
- II. Legal provisions affecting free expression
  - A. Common v. constitutional law
  - B. Legislature v/ judiciary
  - C. State v/ federal jurisdiction
  - D. Individual v/ media rights
- III. Defamation (libel and slander)
  - A. Legal definitions and principles
  - B. Constitutional protections
  - C. Fault
  - D. Damages
  - E. Defenses for media use
- IV. Privacy
  - A. Legal definitions and principles
  - B. Misappropriation
  - C. Private facts and intrusion
  - D. False light
  - E. Defenses re: media use
- V. Government secrecy
  - A. Legal definitions and principles
  - B. Freedom of Information Act
  - C. Sunshine laws
- VI. Copyright
  - A. Legal definitions and principles
  - B. Infringement
  - C. Issues of new technology
  - D. Defenses for media use
- VII. Corporate speech and advertising
  - A. Legal definitions and principles
  - B. Governmental control and regulation
- VIII. Obscenity and pornography
  - A. Legal definitions and principles
  - B. Governmental control and regulation
- IX. Regulation of media
  - A. Statutory controls
  - B. FCC controls
  - C. Administrative and economic controls
- X. Contemporary issues of First Amendment
  - A. Ethics and media responsibility
  - B. Free press and fair trial
  - C. National security and right-to-know
  - D. Freedom of expression in schools

## **Resources:**

Classic Scholarship in the Field.

Current Scholarship in the Field.

### Periodicals:

Broadcasting and Cable magazine

Broadcast Engineering

Digital Television

Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic media

### Electronic and/or Audiovisual Resources.

Broadcastingcable.com

Broadcastengineering.com

Digitaltelevision.com

Eonline.com

Nab.org

Videosystems.com