

COM3115: COMMUNICATION LAW AND ETHICS

Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Communication Law and Ethics

Subject Code

COM - Media and Communication

Course Number

3115

Academic Unit

Media and Communication (COM)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

The course aims to teach students the fundamentals, principles, practices and theories of communication law and ethics. It examines various legal and ethical issues related to journalism, broadcasting, advertising, and new media communication,

including the protection and limits of free expression, intellectual property, defamation, obscenity, and privacy. As law is related and subject to the final test of ethics, this course also examines professional ethics in communication.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Analyze from a comparative approach the systems of law and the political, economic and cultural forces that influence the making of law in Hong Kong , mainland China and the United States		x		
2	Analyze legal or regulatory decisions by courts or regulators applicable to communications issues		x		
3	Analyze and explain the legal freedoms guaranteed or limited by various legal systems and how these freedoms apply to the practices of advertising, broadcasting, and journalism		x	x	
4	Articulate situations in the practices of advertising, broadcasting, and journalism related to communication laws, regulations or ethics		x	x	x
5	Detect and identify conflicts between legal and ethical obligations in the practices of advertising, broadcasting, and journalism		x	x	
6	Demonstrate a good understanding of legal theories and ethical principles that apply to journalism and mass communication		x	x	x
7	Apply ethical standards and decision-making strategies to ethical problems in professional situations		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

	LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures/discussion	Students will engage in lectures on comparative analyses of communication laws in Hong Kong, China and the United States.	1, 2	1 week
2	Lectures/discussion	Students will investigate political, economic and cultural forces that drive and influence the making of law	1, 2, 3, 4	6 weeks
3	Lectures/discussion	Students will engage in class discussions on landmark cases involving freedom of speech, defamation, obscenity, privacy and intellectual property	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	6 weeks
4	Lectures/discussion	Students will engage in lectures on communication laws related to the new media	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	12 weeks
5	Lectures/debates/tasks	Students will engage in lecture on legal theories and ethical principles that apply to communication	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	12 weeks
6	Lectures/debates/tasks	Students will engage in lectures and class discussion on various codes of ethics for journalism, advertising, and new media communication	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	12 weeks
7	Lectures/debates/tasks	Students will investigate strategies for ethical problems	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	12 weeks
8	Lectures/debates/tasks	Students will engage in case studies of professional in professional situations	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	9 weeks

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	In-class assessments Class presentation/ debates on current issues and cases: - Find an important topic and analyse the relevant cases and issues. - Point out the implications and impact to the communication industry and society - Recommend strategies for the industry or reforms to the legal system	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	25	-	Yes
2	Quiz on the knowledge of communication laws and ethical principles and norms	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	15	-	No
3	Attendance and class participation/ interaction	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	10	-	Yes
4	Discussion/answer questions	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	10	-	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

60

Examination (%)

40

Examination Duration (Hours)

1.5

Additional Information for ATs

A comprehensive Examination (40%)

- Multiple-choice questions on the knowledge of communication laws and ethical principles and norms
- Short essay questions on the abilities to analyze legal and ethical issues

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Examination

Criterion

Know and learn the communication laws and ethical principles and ability to analyze legal and ethical issues.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Work that demonstrates full understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Work that demonstrates good understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Work that demonstrates adequate understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Marginal (D)

Work that demonstrates minimal understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Failure (F)

Work that demonstrates little understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Assessment Task

Class presentation/ debates on current issues and cases

Criterion

Need to collect relevant laws, ethical principles, and cases to make their points.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Work involved profound insights, original thoughts, adequate analyses, clear/logical arguments, and good presentation.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Work involved adequate analyses, clear/logical arguments, and good presentation.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Work involved adequate analyses, and clear presentation.

Marginal (D)

Work involved acceptable analyses, and clear presentation.

Failure (F)

Work that has no logic or unclear.

Assessment Task

Quiz on the knowledge of communication laws and ethical principles and norms

Criterion

Ability to understand the communication laws and ethical principles.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Work that demonstrates full understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Work that demonstrates good understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Work that demonstrates adequate understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Marginal (D)

Work that demonstrates minimal understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Failure (F)

Work that demonstrates little understanding of the laws and ethics covered in the class.

Assessment Task

Attendance and class participation/interaction

Criterion

Participate in class discussion and demonstrate independent thinking in learning course material and to complete in-class exercises and discussions.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Attend class on time and participate in the discussion actively in class.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Attend class on time and participate in the discussion when asked by the instructor.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Occasionally absent from class and occasionally participate in the discussion if asked by the instructor.

Marginal (D)

Half of the classes are absent and do not participate in the discussion.

Failure (F)

More than two-thirds of classes are absent and do not participate in the discussion.

Assessment Task

Discussion/answer questions

Criterion

Demonstrate the ability to analyse the questions assigned by the instructor.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Provide correct and insightful answers.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Provide correct answers.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Provide incomplete answers.

Marginal (D)

Provide wrong answers.

Failure (F)

Do not prepare for the questions.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Communication law; communication ethics; Freedom of speech; Regulation of the new media; Communication law cases; Intellectual property; Ethical practices of communication professionals.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Christians, C.G., et al. (2017). Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning. 10th ed. Routledge.
2	Moore, Roy, L., et al. (2018). Media Law and Ethics (5th ed.). Routledge. Online version is available in the library.
3	Weisenhaus, D., Glofcheski, R. & Yan, M.N. (2014). Hong Kong Media Law: A Guide for Journalists and Media Professionals (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury Books.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Roberts, H., et al. (2019). The Chinese Approach to Artificial Intelligence: an Analysis of Policy and Regulation.