

**COMM 498: ETHICAL ISSUES IN ENTERTAINMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

**6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.**

**ASC 240**

**Syllabus, Fall 2013**

**Instructor:**

Robert Scheer, Clinical Professor

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Office Hours: TBA, by appt.

**Visiting Scholar:**

Sara Beladi

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**Course Objectives:**

COMM 498 is a seminar course centered on ethical issues as they play out in the world of entertainment and communication. The issues covered in this class were touched upon in COMM 310, but we—through probing discussions, made possible by our small class size—will explore them in greater depth. This means that, during your time in class, you must listen actively, reflect critically, form your own opinions, and share them with your peers and professor; outside of class, you must read assigned texts closely, write journals that support your original arguments with evidence, and respond to your instructor’s critiques of your work (see “assignments” section).

During the course of the semester, we will attempt to examine prevailing standards of ethical behavior in the entertainment and communications industries--specifically their derivation, justification and actual practice--using case studies, founded upon readings and the workplace experience of communications professionals. The subjects covered will be numerous and varied. The list includes but is not limited to the ethics of national security and data gathering, the notion of Hollywood and ethics as an oxymoron, the development of journalistic standards in old and new media, ethical issues raised by the economic meltdown, the relation of public relations to journalism, work conditions in the communication industry, and media representations of minorities and the poor.

**Requirements:**

Students must have completed COMM 300 prior to enrollment. The completion of COMM 310 is not a prerequisite but is highly recommended.

**Assignments:**

Students are required to submit electronic journal entries over the course of the semester. Entries will be written after every class meeting and turned in at three-week intervals. Each entry will be approximately three pages in length, double-spaced. After evaluation by Prof. Scheer and Sara Beladi, journals will be returned to students with comments and will be rewritten, if necessary. This is a process that will continue throughout the term. These revised journals will form the basis of the student's grade.

Please email all assignments to [sara.beladi@usc.edu](mailto:sara.beladi@usc.edu) and carbon copy [bobscheer@gmail.com](mailto:bobscheer@gmail.com), and use the subject header "Comm 498, Journal [insert number]" e.g. Comm 498, Journal 1. Journal guidelines and journal writing "dos and don'ts" will be posted on Blackboard before the second session of class.

**Readings:**

The majority of our readings will be posted electronically on Blackboard -- either in the form of links or as scanned electronic documents. We will announce (via email and the Announcements page on Blackboard) when readings are posted.

**Final Exam:**

Take-home exam; details TBA.

**Attendance:**

Attendance will be taken on a weekly basis after the first week of class. Please submit documented excuses to Sara Beladi.

**Grading:**

Students' grade will consist of attendance, and participation, journal assignments, and a take-home final. Attendance and participation will constitute 25% of the grade; journal assignments will constitute 50% of the grade; the final exam will constitute 25% of the grade.

**Calendar:**

The speaker and reading schedule for each class will be posted to Blackboard one week prior to the class in question. *Note: posted speaker schedules are subject to change.*

**Academic Integrity Policy:**

The USC Annenberg School for Communication is committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic excellence. It endorses and follows the policies and procedures of the University Conduct Code as indicated in the SCampus. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, forging another student's signature on the attendance form or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself as your own. If you are caught cheating on an assignment you will receive an F for the entire percentage allocated to that assignment or group of assignments. (e.g. If you plagiarize on one e-journal, we reserve the right to give you a 0 on all of your e-journal assignments. If you cheat on an exam, you will receive an F on your exam and possibly an F for the semester) If you have any questions about these practices, confer with a faculty member.

**Academic Resources**

If you have a learning disability and require accommodation, please provide formal documentation at least two weeks prior to the exam. Please visit <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/asn/DSP/index.html> if you have questions about accommodations for students with learning disabilities.