



JOUR 560: Seminar in Mass Communication Law

2 Units

Fall 2015: Thursday, 7:00 – 10:10 p.m.

Section: 21581D

Location: ANN L116

Instructor: Susan Seager

Office: Call for on-campus meetings

Office Hours: Call for on-campus meetings.

Contact Info: Seager@usc.edu; 310-890-8991. .

I. Course Description

This course will teach journalism students about their legal rights and legal constraints.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

Students will learn about their legal rights created by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and other sources of law. The course will teach journalists how to use photographs, trademarks, film clips and other copyrighted works without being sued for copyright infringement; how to publish information without being sued for defamation and invasion of privacy, and how to deal with subpoenas, among other things. Students will learn how to write or produce a news story about a current legal issue impacting journalists. Come prepared to think, discuss, and participate. This is not a passive lecture class.

III. Description of Assignments

Students will be graded on two exams and one news story. Grading is based on research and the ability to understand and clearly explain the application of legal rights and responsibilities to real-life situations facing journalists.

IV. Grading Breakdown

Quizzes: Short written quizzes will be given at the start or end of each class. Students will be selected at random to read their answers in front of the class. Not graded – but only so long as students consistently show they have done the reading and are prepared for class.

Exams: Two exams will be conducted in class (closed-book).

News Article: One written or produced news article about a current legal issue impacting journalists. Student must include (1) direct quotations from at least one expert or other source interviewed by student in person, by phone, email or skype, etc., and (2) direct quotations from relevant source documents (lawsuit, court files, statute).

Oral Presentation: Oral presentation of Article (including quotes from expert and source documents).

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Weekly quizzes	0	0
Mid-Term Exam	100	25
Final Exam	100	25
Oral Presentation of News Article	100	25
Publication-Ready News Article	100	25
TOTAL	400	100%

“A” work clearly describes the legal issue, the correct history and facts surrounding the issue, and includes quotations from at least two interviewed sources, and quotations from essential research materials (such as quotations from the actual lawsuit or statute at issue).

“B” work explains the legal issue clearly, includes quotations from one interviewed source, and includes quotations from essential research materials, but contains some organizational problems that render the Article unclear.

“C” work includes quotations from one interviewed source and essential research materials, but fails to explain the legal issue clearly.

“D” work has excessive organizational problems and numerous errors in describing the legal issue and facts, and fails to include quotations from one interviewed source or fails to include quotations from essential research materials.

“F” work has significant organizational problems or errors in describing the legal issue, fails to describe the legal issue and facts clearly, fails to include quotations from one interviewed source and fails to quote from essential research material.

95-100 A

90-94 A-

85-89 B+

80-84 B

75-79 B-

70-74 C+

65-69 C

60-64 C-

55-59 D+

50-54 D

45-49 D-

0-44 F

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V. Assignment Submission Policy

- A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F.
- B. Assignments must be submitted via email and in class in hard copy form.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Textbook: A Practical Guide to Media Law, Ashley Messenger (Pearson 2015).

VII. Laptop Policy

Effective fall 2014, all undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the Annenberg [Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 Aug. 27	<p>Class Topic: <i>First Amendment Rights</i> Introduction to U.S. court system: How to research and report about court cases, legal issues.</p> <p>First Amendment: History and overview of constitutional protection for free press and democracy; limits on prior restraint, Wikileaks, theories on purpose of First Amendment.</p> <p>Class Activity: Be prepared to discuss reading, role-play, and take short quiz.</p>	Messenger Book Chapters 1-2	Read assignment before class.
Week 2 Sept. 3	<p>Class Topic: <i>Libel, Emotional Distress</i></p> <p>Learn how to report about facts, opinions, jokes, and government records without being sued for libel, and about protections of substantial truth, fair reports of government, opinion, Section 230 of CDA, and statute of limitations, emotional distress.</p> <p>Class Activity: Be prepared to discuss reading, role-play, and take short quiz.</p>	<p>Messenger Book: Chapter 3</p> <p>Work on Article outline, conduct research, contact sources.</p>	Read assignment before class.
Week 3 Sept. 10	<p>Class Topic: <i>Privacy/Newsgathering</i></p> <p>Learn to avoid privacy torts, right of publicity, claims for invasive newsgathering, trespass, false pretenses, limits on hidden cameras, recording phone calls.</p> <p>Class Activity: Be prepared to discuss reading, role-play, and take short quiz.</p>	<p>Messenger Book: <i>Chapters 4-5, 12</i></p> <p>Work on Article outline, conduct research, contact sources.</p>	Read assignment before class.
Week 4 EXAM Sept. 17	<p>In-Class Exam (first 1.5 hours): <i>In-class</i> closed-book written exam.</p> <p>Post-Exam Analysis (1.5 hours): Instructor will explain correct answers.</p>	<p>Messenger Book: Chapters 1-5, 12</p> <p>Choose Article topic, draft Outline, conduct research, locate sources.</p>	<p>Be prepared to take in-class exam.</p> <p>Submit Article Outline and list of three sources with contact information to Instructor a start of class via email and hard copy</p>
Week 5 Sept. 24	<p>Class Topic: <i>Access to Trials and Government Records, Reporter's Privilege</i></p> <p>Learn how to get access to court trials, government documents, cameras in courts. Also the Reporter's privilege and subpoenas.</p> <p>Class Activity: Be prepared to discuss reading, role-play, and take short quiz.</p>	<p>Messenger Book Chapters 11, 13</p> <p>Work on Article, conduct research, interview sources</p>	<p>Read assignment before class.</p> <p>Submit lede paragraph and headline for Article to Instructor at start of class via email and hard copy for comments/suggested edits</p>

Week 6 Oct. 1	Class Topic: <i>Copyright and Trademark</i> Learn how to use snippets of copyrighted works and trademarks for commentary, news. Also, the DMCA and takedown notices. Class Activity: Be prepared to discuss reading, role-play, and take short quiz. Also: Exam Review	Messenger Book Chapters 6-7 Work on Legal Issue Article, conduct research, contact sources Finish Article, make revisions if suggested by Instructor.	Read assignment before class. Submit final draft of Article to Instructor at start of class via email and hard copy for comments/suggested revisions
Week 7 Oct. 8	Class Topic: <i>Student Article Oral Presentations</i> Class Activity: Students make oral/visual presentations of Articles in class.		Be prepared to make oral presentation of Article. Submit final Article to Instructor at start of class via email and hard copy.
FINAL EXAM 10/15	Class Activity: In-Class closed book Exam	Messenger Book: Chapters 6-7, 11, 13	Be prepared to take exam

IX. Policies and Procedures

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned in to the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism.” All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Equity and Diversity

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <https://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources.

Support with Scholarly Writing

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Emergency Information

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

X. About Your Instructor

Susan Seager is a former journalist who earned her law degree from Yale Law School and now defends journalists, documentarians, directors, and screenwriters as they face subpoenas, legal claims, and lawsuits in her post as an in-house lawyer for Fox Entertainment Group, Inc. in Century City. She works for National Geographic Channel, Fox Television Stations, Inc., Fox Broadcasting Co., Twentieth Century Fox Television, among other Fox-owned media companies. Before becoming a lawyer, Susan spent more than 15 years as a journalist, working as a staff writer for the *San Luis Obispo Telegram Tribune*, *United Press International*, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, and *LA Weekly*.