

Instructor: Dr. Christopher White

Room: 125 DRCB on T-Days 2:00-3:20

Office Hours: Room #102 M/W 10-11 or 2-4 & Th 11-2 & Fridays by Appointment

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Texts: *Mass Media Law* by Pember & Calvert, 2009-2010 Edition, Reserve Readings, Handouts & Web Postings

Course Description: This course will offer an overview of the American legal system and how it relates to mass media and new media technologies. Topics addressed: abiding and emerging legal issues, statutes, precedent cases and theoretical concepts; evolving constitutional debates; and a host of current news events as they relate to the regulation/protection of expression.

Course Objectives: to gain basic knowledge about the historical background of the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights; to understand the structure of the American legal system; to be familiar with essential legal issues related to Privacy, Libel, Copyright and Obscenity; to become familiar with Case Law in regards to Privacy, Libel, Copyright and Obscenity; to review recent developments in electronic media regulations. In short, my primary objective is to help you think about significant legal issues for the rest of your life!

Grading: 4 tests worth 100 points each = 400 pts  
One Term Paper = 100 pts  
A=450-500, B=400-449, C=350-399, D=300-349, F=0-299

All tests consist of essay and multiple-choice questions.

There will be a separate handout describing The Paper.

Extra Credit: None

Make-up Exams: offered only under emergency circumstances/likely to be all essay.

Attendance: After 4 absences each additional absence FOR ANY REASON -- subtract 20 points from your grade total. Don't use up your absences! In cases of extended absences -- even with medical excuse -- I will ask you to drop the class. No Doctor's Excuses! Arriving late for class is considered absent -- bad weather is an exception to this rule. REMEMBER late for class -- you are considered absent. After an absence come to class with all due readings and due work completed. Don't ask me "What did we do last class?" Find out from a classmate. You are responsible for getting copies of any hand-outs you miss -- from a classmate.

#### General

No beepers, cell phones, palm-pilots, satellite dishes or anything that otherwise beeps, vibrates or whistles allowed in class. Laptops are OK as long as they are not too noisy and as long as you use them only to do work for the class you are sitting in! No eating, sleeping or doing work unrelated to the class. Live with it. Generally students will refrain from behavior that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process. And please maintain complete honesty and integrity in your academic experience both in and out of this classroom (see Faculty/Student Handbook).

I do not post PowerPoint slides on Blackboard. I will post a brief Blackboard Review before each test.

I encourage class discussions -- and especially in this class. But I also decide when to stop these discussions. If you have a burning desire to talk -- schedule an appointment during office hours. Don't dominate other people's class-time. This class will deal with some controversial issues and might "entertain" some language and images you find offensive. Be forewarned. Act like an adult! If you need to be excused because of specific content-covered, let me know and we'll work out some alternative to class attendance.

ALSO: No calling the Instructor at home -- never, ever...never -- that's why God created Office Hours and Emails. I promise I won't call you at home. Please get permission to bring visitors or tape lectures. You will get a chance to evaluate this class. The SAM Center provides excellent study help.

### Weekly Schedule

The schedule for readings and/or lectures is likely to change -- depending on current events related to the mass media. You will always be informed at least a week ahead of time when a chapter or part of a chapter is due. Some additional chapters or sections of chapters may be assigned during the semester & some materials may be put on reserve at the library. There will be plenty of handouts and Blackboard postings and Email missives. You may be tested on these as well as on the scheduled readings and screenings.

Most chapters will not be read in their entirety -- specific page numbers will be provided. And yes -- in this class it is a requirement to buy AND READ the book.

Week One	CH 1 The American Legal System
Week Two	CH 2 The First Amendment
Week Three	CH 3 The First Amendment
Week Four	<u>First Test &amp; Review/Discussion</u>
Week Five	CH 11 Free Press/Fair Trial
Week Five	CH 4 Libel
Week Six	CH 5 Libel
Week Seven	<u>Second Test &amp; Review/discussion</u>
Week Seven	CH 16 Telecommunication Regulations
Week Eight	CH 7 Invasion of Privacy
Week Eight	CH 8 Invasion of Privacy
Week Nine	<u>Third Test &amp; Review/Discussion</u>
Week Ten	CH 14 Copyright
Week Eleven	CH 14 Copyright
Week Twelve	CH 13 Regulation of Obscene Material
Week Thirteen	CH 11 <u>Paper Due</u>
Week Fourteen	CH 13 Regulation of Obscene Material
Week Fifteen	Review/Discussion/Updating

### Fourth Test Scheduled by SHSU during Final Week

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities covered by the Americans with disability Act should go to the Counseling Center and Service for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in a timely manner to obtain the documentation required. Students are responsible for initiating the process of documenting the need for an accommodation under the ADA act.

#### **Religious Observance**

University policy allows for students to observe religious holy days without penalty. If you intend to miss class as a result of the observance of a religious holy days or as a result of the necessary traveling time required for religious observance, such an absence will not be penalized so long as you have notified the instructor in writing of the dates and times of class sessions that are missed. The deadline for notification is the 12 class day. Students Absent from class as a result of religious observance are required to submit any due assignments immediately on their return to the classroom. Makeup tests and quizzes will also be provided on return to the class. 1.01 Section 51.925 of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education shall allow a student who is absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. The student, not later than the 15th calendar day after the first day of the semester, or the 7th calendar day after the first day of a summer session, must notify the instructor of each scheduled class that he/she would be absent for a religious holy day.