

**JOUR 431 (Media Ethics) Fall 2015 Prof. Victor Valle Noon to 1:30 p.m., LA3 204**  
**Office Hour:** Mondays, 10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. **Office:** F03-206f. **Email:** [Victor.Valle@csulb.edu](mailto:Victor.Valle@csulb.edu)

**REQUIRED TEXT:** *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*, Philip Paterson & Lee Williams, (McGraw Hill, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition), 2014, and D. Soyini Madison's Chapter One, "Introduction to Critical Ethnography: Theory and Method" available at 49er Bookstore. **OTHER REQUIRED READINGS**, team sources, and selected Team Presentations posted on Beachboard.

**THE COURSE will** examine the ways media institutions and professionals help and hurt society, and consider ethical strategies to lessen or prevent these harms. Soon, some of you will work full time for newspapers, broadcast stations, public relations firms, advertising firms, and online media sites. Some of you will work in fields outside of the media. Regardless of the paths you take, this class will help you think **critically** about the ethical issues of different forms of media **representation**. As you will soon learn, however, this class will take a specific approach to the terms "critical" and "representation." That approach, steeped in critical theory and Cultural Studies will explore: 1) how relations of power discipline media practitioners and their audiences, and 2) identify the opportunities for ethical intervention available to media organizations and practitioners. **Social construction theory** as an ethical practice for questioning **essentialist representations** of race, gender, sexuality, and social class will therefore receive special consideration. To sum up, the learning objectives of the course will explore:

- The societal, philosophical and ethical challenges emerging from different media ecologies.
- A thorough critique of "journalistic objectivity" and how its demise is now or will soon impact other forms of non-fiction or documentary representation.
- Ethical strategies that address the ethics of truth-seeking in a post-Objective media universe.
- Ethical strategies that address the challenges of communicating in a media universe constituted by vast inequalities of wealth and power.
- Ethics of Cultural Critique to address the technical, economic and cultural challenges of communicating in a 21<sup>st</sup> media environment.
- Narrative alternatives that deconstruct the idea of race itself without ignoring the inequalities of power and wealth that reinforce and perpetuate racial and other forms of essentialist discourse.
- Ethically reflect upon your own experience as a producer and consumer of mass media and consider how you might make a positive difference.

#### **More About the Course**

This class will depart from traditional "Mass Media Ethics" courses for obvious and not so obvious reasons. First, the term "mass" is a relic of the previous century; the "mass media" no longer exists. Second, following "the learn by doing" tradition, this course will be an experiment that tests out how the insights of Cultural Studies theory can be applied as a method of ethical intervention in a media environment dominated by huge disparities of power, wealth, and inequality. As shall also learn, my relative disinterest in "fairly" reviewing all of the traditional media ethics topics can be understood from John Rawl's theory of justice, namely that one may create a temporary inequality to correct the damaging effects of longstanding inequalities. I won't say more on this point except to say that I hope you can appreciate the urgency of this departure from convention. As some of my Cal Poly colleagues like to say in the grimmest of circumstances, we are passing through an imminently teachable moment brought on by shooting death of Michael Brown at the hands of Ferguson police and the Black Lives Matter Movement it spawned.

## About Your Instructor

Although this is the point where instructors try to establish their authority, I am going to provide a few biographical links (<http://ethnicstudies.calpoly.edu/faculty-staff/victor-valle>, <http://ethnicstudies.calpoly.edu/news/fulbright-award>, <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/people/victor-valle>) to help you decide if you want to take this course.

Social and racial injustice and a search for identity in a world that mostly denied these things to me are the challenges that drove me to become a journalist. You see, I grew up in the sixties, a time when the racial apartheid of the 50s had not yet been fully dismantled, and a world of radical alternatives beckoned. That I learned at a young age that my father was what they called a “wetback” only intensified my feelings of estrangement and hunger for answers. The high value my extended family placed on education, its history of political involvement, and the documents and memories they salvaged despite forced immigration, prevented me from following the despairing example of other Latino males in my generation.

Though that family archive of memories and documents would later prove crucial to my writing, my politically liberal, though socially conservative parents, and Pioneer High School’s stifling lower-middle class conformism gave me a lot to rebel against. That’s why my acceptance to this university saved my life. I earned a B.A. in Anthropology (74) and an M.A. in Comparative Literature and Spanish (78) here, which led to an M.S.J. from Medill’s Northwestern University (81). During a thirty year career that spanned the *Los Angeles Times* and Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, my writing and teaching have focused on promoting justice, and closely related to it, a critical curiosity that explored Cultural Studies in five books (*Calendar of Souls*, 1990; *Recipe of Memory: Five Generations of Mexican Cuisine*, 1996; *Latino Metropolis*, 2000; *Encarnacion’s Kitchen*, 2003, and *City of Industry: Genealogies of Power in Southern California*, 2009). In other words, Cultural Studies, a field of scholarly inquiry conventional journalists and journalism scholars have ignored, has been for me, and for many other so-called social or cultural minorities, nothing less than a path to emancipation. Although I would like to invite you to follow this path, I must, in the interest of full disclosure, give you an idea of where I want to take this class. I won’t be offended if you decide to drop it.

**ASSIGNMENT PHILOSOPHY:** All of your assignments are designed to help you write your final exam essay. For example, you may decide to return to your team presentation, team mini-paper, or social constructionist critique for arguments or sources you will develop in your essay final. Or you may decide to draw inspiration, ideas or sources from the comments or presentations your classmates share in class. Although the best presentations will be posted for this purpose, that will not prevent you from taking notes during discussions or other presentations that are not posted.

**GRADING:** A maximum of 100 points may be earned (not counting extra credit opportunities) in the following assignment categories: **team presentation**, 25 points; one **team mini-paper** worth a maximum of 3 points; two **discussion exercises** (2 points each), **two quizzes** (2 points each) with two points extra credit possible, one **context builder**, 2 points, with one extra credit point possible; one final exam **thesis statement**, 2 points, for a total of 10 points; one **mini-film review**, 5 points; **social constructionist critique**, 20 points possible; **essay final**, 25 points; **attendance**, 10 points.

**TEAM PRESENTATIONS:** This assignment requires a team to develop a **25-minute** oral presentation that answers a set of specific questions assigned by instructor. Teams will be graded on

how well they: 1) apply ethical analysis to assigned topic, 2) uses multi-media (Power Point, Prezi, streaming video, Skype interviews, charts, tables, graphs, etc.) to illustrate its argument, 3) cites its sources, and, 4) successfully responds to questions during presentation. The best presentations will present a concise, comprehensive and cohesive **interpretation** of assigned sources, **not** a serial book report. The **interpretive and/or research effort expected of teams will increase as quarter progresses**. All team members must participate in and contribute to the presentation to receive credit. A grading rubric will be provided to explain how the presentation will be graded. **Instructor will assign presentation topics and dates in the first week of class**. Presentation dates can only be re-scheduled with instructor's permission. Teams must be technically prepared to present on their assigned dates. Preparation means reserving the audio visual equipment you will need to make your presentation. Points will be deducted from technically unprepared teams.

**TEAM MINI-PAPER:** This assignment requires teams to write a three-page, double-spaced, 12-point follow up ethical analysis of its presentation. The analysis, which must be emailed to the assignment's drop box as a Word document, is due no later than seven days after a team's presentation date. (See course schedule for deadlines.) In addition to providing a **concise** summary of your presentation's argument, the mini-paper **must** respond to recommendations or comments your instructor makes during your presentation. This assignment offers an opportunity for teams to reflect upon overlooked arguments or evidence. No citations or references are required for this assignment.

**SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST CRITIQUE:** This five-page, double-spaced 12 point analysis requires each student to critique the Dylann Roof's massacre media coverage from a social constructionist perspective. The assignment requires you to: 1) cite a viable link to a full copy of Roof's manifesto, 2) find at least five other news stories (not including those posted on Beachboard) that reported on Roof's manifesto, 3) identify the themes or metaphors with which the news stories interpreted the manifesto, 4) critique the ways the coverage interpreted Roof's construction of "race," and 5) critique the ethical harms the coverage perpetuated. Your critique, which must be emailed to this assignment's drop box as a Word document, is due Monday, Sept. 28. It will be graded according to how well it applies Cultural Studies and ethical theory to interpreting the news stories. Your analysis must cite its sources on a sixth references page.

**ESSAY EXAM FINAL:** Your final is your opportunity to apply what you have learned in this class to an ethical problem you want to explore. There are two options. You can choose to write an essay that focuses on what you consider the most important ethical challenge media communicators will face in the next two decades, or you can explore the most important ethical issue you will expect to face in your chosen career path. The essay must be six, double-spaced 12 point pages in length, not including a references page, submitted as a Word document. It will be graded on how well it applies relevant course texts, posted readings, and presentations. A grading rubric will explain how the essay will be graded. Students **must** turn in hard copy in class on final exam day to receive credit.

**CONTEXT BUILDER Report:** This assignment requires teams to find and annotate a source that can help another team develop its ideas. (Team #10 submits its report to Team #11 and so). The source can be a news, magazine, scholarly, or trade magazine article, but no blogs. The assignment requires: 1) a typed verbatim quote of no more than **two** key passages, 2) a one-paragraph summary explaining why your team selected the source, and 3) a pdf of the source. The report's written portion (quotations and explanatory paragraph) must not exceed one double-spaced page, list team member full names, and identify the receiving team. The source can suggest an ethical argument or key piece of evidence the receiving team overlooked. Teams must

post their reports and pdfs in this assignment's drop box on or before Monday, Nov. 16. Your instructor will assign one point for the report and one for the attached document. Teams can earn an extra point if a team's sourcing report and pdf can help a team or class compose their essays.

**THESIS STATEMENT exercise:** This typed, double-spaced one-page assignment requires each student to compose one paragraph that summarizes the ethical issue to be explored in the final essay and listing of a minimum of six sources. Turn in two hard copies of the assignment on Wednesday, Dec. 2.

**MINI-FILM REVIEW:** Students may earn as much five points by writing a double-spaced, 12 point, typed two-page mini-essay on one of the films screened in class. The assignment requires students to: 1) summarize an ethical issue they want to interpret, 2), and then interpret it applying course ethics theory. Your instructor is not interested in a descriptive summary. Students will turn in a hard copy of the mini-essay on the **first** Monday following the film's in-class screening.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** As many as 11 extra credit points may be earned in the following ways: Three additional points for a posted team presentation; one extra point for posting a team's **context builder**, as many as one extra point for each quiz, and as five extra points for writing a second double-spaced and typed two-page mini-essay on any of the films screened in class or put on reserve in the library. The instructions for this assignment are the same as the required film review. Extra credit mini-essays must be posted in this assignment's drop box on or before Monday, Dec. 7.

**CASE STUDY DISCUSSIONS & CLASS ATTENDANCE:** Preparation for case study discussions means being ready to answer Patterson and Wilkins "Micro Issues," "Midrange Issues," and "Macro Issues" questions. Students can earn 10 points for attending each class session, except for days when a student can provide a bona fide and verifiable excused absence. One point will be deducted for each unexcused absence. It is the student's responsibility to sign the class roster to be counted as present. See your university's attendance policy to learn what absences are excused.

([http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic\\_information/class\\_attendance.html](http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic_information/class_attendance.html))

<b>GRADE/POINT SCALE</b>	A+ 100 to 97, A 96 to 94, A- 93 to 90
	B+ 89 to 87, B 86 to 84, B- 83 to 80
	C+ 79 to 77, C 76 to 74, C- 73 to 70
	D+ 69 to 67, D 66 to 64, D- 63 to 60
	F=59 or less.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE (Tentative)**

1st Week (8/24 & 8/26)

M – Review Course Syllabi. Begin formation of presentation teams.

W – Conclude team formation. Lecture and exercise overview. Screen Stuart Hall's *Representation & Media*.

Begin reading for the following week's lectures and discussions **means** that these materials should have been read by Monday of the following week: All of Chapter One, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*; Stuart Hall's Chapter One, "The Work of Representation," pgs. 15-63, in *Representation & Signifying Practices*, and Sharifa Rhodes-Pittsoct's, *The Worth of Black Men, From Slavery to Ferguson*."

2nd Week (8/31 & 9/2)

M – Conclude screening and first exercise.

W – 1<sup>st</sup> quiz (covers previous lectures). Lectures: Journalism Avoids the Cultural Turn. Screen portion of *The Matrix* if time permits.

Read for the following week: Renato Rosaldo's "Lone Ethnographer," S. Madison's "Introduction to Critical Ethnography: Theory and Method," Wendy N. Wyatt's "Being Aristotelean: Using Virtue Ethics in An Applied Media Ethics Course," and Robert Wald Sussman's "There is No Such Thing As Race."

3rd Week (9/7 & 9/9)

M – Labor Day – Campus Closed

W – Lecture: "The Lone Ethnographer." Begin second discussion exercise.

Read for the following week: Chapter Two, pgs. 21-36 and Cases 2-A, 2-D, 2-E, and 2-F in *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*.

4th Week (9/14 & 9/16)

M – Conclude second exercise and begin first case study discussion.

W – 2<sup>nd</sup> quiz. Lecture: "Constructing Normative Morality."

Read for the following week: All of Chapter Three, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*.

5th Week (9/21 & 9/23)

M – Continue case study discussion of Chapter Three, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*.

W – Presentations begin: Team #1.

Begin reading for the following week: All of Chapter Four, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*.

6th Week (9/28 & 9/30)

M – Presentations continue: Team #2 & #3.

W – Presentations continue: Team # 4. Continue case study discussion of Chapter Four. (Team #1 turns in mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week: Chapter Five, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*.

7th Week (10/5 & 10/7)

M – Continue case study discussion of Chapter Five. (Teams #2 & #3 turn in mini-papers.)

W – Presentations continue. Team # 5. (Team #4 turns in mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week: All of Chapter Six, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*, **except** Case 6-B, pgs.146-148.

8th Week (10/12 & 10/14)

M – Continue case study discussion of Chapter Six.

W – Presentations continue: Team # 6 (Team #5 emails me mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week: All of Chapter Seven, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*

9th Week (10/19 & 10/21)

M – Continue case study discussion of Chapter Seven. Turn in "Social Constructionist Media Critique."

W – Presentations continue. Teams # 7 (Team #6 emails me mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week:

10th Week (10/26 & 10/28)

M – Presentations continue: Team #8. (Team #7 emails me mini-paper.)

W – Presentations continue. Teams #9 (Team #6 emails me mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week:

11th Week (11/2 & 11/4)

M – Case Study Discussion.

W – Presentations continue: Team #10 (Team #8 turns in presentation mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week:

12th Week (11/9 & 11/11)

M – Veterans Day – Campus Closed

W – Screen *Citizen 4* (Team #10 emails me mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week:

13th Week (11/16 & 11/18)

M – Presentations continue. Team #11

W – Presentations continue: Team #12. (Team #10 turns in presentation mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week: All of Chapter Nine, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases* and Case 6-B (Wikileaks), pgs.146-148.

14th Week (11/16 & 11/18)

M – Case Study Discussion. (Team #11 emails me mini-paper.) (**Context Builder report** deadline).

W – Presentations continue: Team #13. (Team #11 turns in presentation mini-paper.)

Begin reading for the following week:

15th Week (11/23 & 11/25)

No Classes – Campus Open (Team #12 turns in presentation mini-paper).

Begin reading for the following week: All of Chapters Ten & Eleven, *Media Ethics: Issues & Cases*

16th Week (11/30 & 12/2)

M – Continue case study discussion of Chapters Ten & Eleven.

W – Screen *The Act of Killing*. Turn in thesis statements.

Begin reading for the following week:

17th Week (12/7 & 12/9)

M – Discuss film. Edit and discuss thesis statements. (Team #12 emails me mini-paper.)

W – Continue reviewing thesis statements. (Team #13 emails me mini-paper.)

Turn in Final Essay Exam in class    Friday, December 11                    12:30PM - 2:30PM

### Class policies

\*A full letter grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late unless student can provide a bona fide, verifiable and documented explanation that conforms to university attendance policy (link below).

\* You are expected to attend every class and to be on time. The success of this class will depend on your participation. It's also very disruptive to walk in more than 5 minutes after class starts.

- \* Your experiences, impressions, questions and comments are an important element of this class. I will do my part to make the atmosphere conducive to meaningful, engaging discussion. Likewise, please be respectful of opposing viewpoints. It is critical that everyone feel comfortable in expressing themselves.
- \* As much 10 points may be made up through the extra credit enhancements or assignments.
- \* Unless specified otherwise, all written assignments require fully typed pages. Half or three-quarter typed pages will not count as typed pages. Your instructor may deduct points for incomplete pages. The assignment title, date, and author or authors must appear on a separate cover page.
- \* Be sure CSULB has your correct e-mail address on record and your account is functioning. It is your responsibility to make sure you can receive Journalism 431 emails.
- \* Please turn your cellular phones off for class. A ringing cell phone or texting is discourteous to both your peers and to the professor. I retain the right to collect your cellphone if it goes off during class, and will return it at the end of the class session. Similarly, I also might ask for your cellphone if I see you texting in class.
- \* Keep copies of your work. You can use it to correct any grading mistakes I make.
- \* Computer crashes or printer deaths are not excusable reasons for failing to turn in an assignment.
- \* Academic Integrity – The words you present as your own absolutely have to be your own work. Cheating in any way will result in a grade of F for the course, and could have further repercussions. CSULB’s policy on academic integrity is stated in the general catalog. Academic dishonesty encompasses a variety of activities, including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and falsification.
- \* Students with physical or learning disabilities or with other special needs are encouraged to meet with me so we can discuss how I can best accommodate you.
- \* If you have questions about your class performance, do not hesitate to make an appointment with me during my office hours to discuss it. Feel free to call or e-mail me as well. I want this class to be valuable and enjoyable for you.

**WITHDRAWAL POLICY:** Students are responsible for withdrawing from a class and should not expect an instructor to execute a withdrawal on their behalf. Consult CSULB’s Academic Regulations page ([http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic\\_regulations/part\\_one\\_definitions.html](http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic_regulations/part_one_definitions.html)) and give special attention to the withdrawal policy’s following sections:

- “1. Withdrawal during the **first two weeks** of instruction: Students may withdraw during this period and the course will not appear on their permanent records.
2. Withdrawal **after the second week of instruction and prior to the final three weeks** of the regular semester (20% of a non-standard session) of instruction: Withdrawals during this period are permissible only for serious and compelling reasons. The approval signatures of the instructor and department chair are required. The request and approvals shall state the reasons for the withdrawal. Students should be aware that the definition of "serious and compelling reasons" as applied by faculty and administrators may become narrower as the semester progresses.
3. Withdrawal during the **final three weeks** of instruction: Withdrawal during the final three weeks of instruction **are not** permitted except in cases such as accident or serious illness where the circumstances causing the withdrawal are clearly beyond the student's control and the assignment of an Incomplete is not practical. . . . Request for permission to withdraw under these circumstances must be made in writing on forms available from Enrollment Services.”