




Communication Law & Ethics

A Summary



Text of the First Amendment



Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



Not Necessarily Protected by the First Amendment

- ▶ Libel
- ▶ Commercial Speech
- ▶ Obscenity
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Prior Restraint
- ▶ Copyright
- ▶ Privacy
- ▶ Broadcast



Ethics



- Ethics are a system of guiding principles.
- Ralph Potter created a process to help in making ethical decisions called the Potter Box.
- The Potter Box consists of four stages: Define, Values, Principles and Loyalties.



Samples of Principles of Famous Philosophers

- ▶ Aristotle: Golden Mean – Between two extremes there is a middle ground.
- ▶ Machiavelli: The ends justify the means (or it's the results that matter).
- ▶ Mills: Principle of Utility – The greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of people.
- ▶ Rawls: Veil of Ignorance – Make decisions without consideration of social, economic, gender, race, class or other social differentiations.
- ▶ Lao-tzu: Wu Wei – Don't go against the current and stick up for the weak.
- ▶ Judeo-Christian: Love your neighbor and put yourself in the other person's shoes.



Review of Mass Communication Theories

- ▶ Agenda Setting Theory
 - ▶ Max McCombs and Donald Shaw
 - ▶ Compared the Most Important Problem (facing America) to the front pages of the New York Times
 - ▶ Strong correlation
 - ▶ The media tell us what to think about and how to think about it
- ▶ Magic Bullet Theory
 - ▶ The media has a direct effect on the audience: watching violent movies will make you violent
- ▶ Cultivation Theory
 - ▶ Exposure to media slowly influences the audience: watching a lot of violent movies will make you violent over time



Review of Mass Communication Research Methods

- ▶ Experiments
 - ▶ Test whether a hypothesis is true
 - ▶ Utilize an experimental group and a control group
- ▶ Survey research
 - ▶ Collecting and measuring data from a group of respondents
- ▶ Content analysis
 - ▶ Studies specific media messages