

**MEDIA LAW SEMINAR**  
**UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW**  
**SPRING 2026 SYLLABUS – LAW6396 -23215 # CREDITS 2**

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10 AM-11 AM and Wednesday 10 AM-11 AM (or by appointment)

Office Location: Holland Hall 342

**MEETING TIME:** Tuesday 1:15 PM-3:15 PM

**LOCATION:** Holland Hall 355A

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

This course examines the bodies of law that regulate the media industry, including constitutional law, state tort law, federal and state statutes, and administrative regulations. We will explore the role of the media in society and study how courts and policymakers address issues involving freedom of expression, privacy, and access to information.

There is a substantial First Amendment component to this class, and students will read and analyze U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The course will also survey key federal communications statutes, including the Communications Act of 1934 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and examine the regulatory treatment of broadcast, cable, telephony, broadband, and emerging digital platforms.

Topics will include defamation, invasion of privacy, prior restraint, access to courts, and government regulation of communication technologies. Current controversies in news and social media will be used to illustrate the ongoing evolution of media law and its relevance to modern practice.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Students will gain experience applying black-letter rules from constitutional, common, and statutory law to new fact patterns and will strengthen their skills in legal analysis and advocacy.
- Explain why prior restraints on publication are presumptively unconstitutional and describe how courts have applied this principle in media contexts.
- Make cogent arguments about what kinds of actors qualify as “the press” for purposes of access or special legal treatment.
- Apply constitutional, statutory, and common-law doctrines governing press and public access to information held by the government.
- Describe how First Amendment law has evolved in response to technological innovation, from print and broadcast to digital and social media platforms and artificial intelligence.
- Identify and explain the respective roles of Congress, the courts, and regulatory agencies in shaping the legal framework governing communications and the media.

**REQUIRED READING MATERIALS:**

MARC A. FRANKLIN, DAVID A. ANDERSON, LYRISSA C. BARNETT LIDSKY & AMY GAJDA, CASES AND MATERIALS ON MEDIA LAW (9<sup>TH</sup> ED. 2015). Please be sure to register for the canvas

page for this course. Please bring required book to class every day. I reserve the right to add a “hot topic” if a relevant one arises. :)

Please be sure to register for the Canvas course and have any required materials with you in print or easily accessible electronic form in class. You are responsible for checking your Canvas page and the e-mail connected to the page on a regular basis for any class announcements or adjustments.

### **COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING EVALUATION:**

This seminar will be centered on interactive discussions. We will collaboratively examine complex questions about media regulation, press freedom, and the evolving relationship between law, technology, and public discourse. Readings will include landmark cases, statutes, scholarly articles, FCC materials, and selected podcasts and videos.

Each student will sign up to co-lead at least one session during the semester.

Students will be evaluated based upon the following:

- Discussion participation (10%)
- Discussion co-leadership (10%)
- Two short reading response papers (10%) Each response papers should be 1-3 pages, 12-point font, single-spaced
- Response papers should include reflections on two or more readings and questions for group discussion
- Reading responses are due 24 hours before class (via email or Canvas)
- Final Paper: Comment or amicus brief (70%)

For the final assignment, students will have the option of writing a paper to satisfy the **Advanced Writing Requirement** (defined below) or completing a project. Students will present their final paper or project during the final weeks of the course. A final paper could take the form of a white paper, amicus brief, policy memorandum, or traditional law review–style article.

Projects should be related to the materials covered in the course and may take many forms, including:

- drafting proposed legislation or regulatory rules addressing a media-law issue
- creating a policy proposal to improve media access, or transparency
- conducting field research or interviews on a contemporary media-law controversy (e.g., press access to public records, platform moderation, or defamation reform); or
- analyzing how a specific law, policy, or industry practice affects press freedom or information diversity

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Attendance in class is required by both the ABA and the Law School. I will pass around an attendance sheet each day; students who are present should sign their initials next to their names. The attendance sheet will be considered final; if your name is not initialed by the end of class, you will be considered

absent. Students missing more than four (4) classes will be dropped from the course. Signing in any student as present other than yourself is strictly prohibited and is a violation of the Honor Code on the part of all students involved. I will warn students prior to their possible removal from class as a result of their absences. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are not recorded as absent if they come in late. A student who fails to meet the attendance requirement will be dropped from the course. The law school's policy on attendance can be found [here](#).

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH UF HONOR CODE:**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Law Honor Code located [here](#). The UF Law Honor Code also prohibits use of artificial intelligence, including, but not limited to, ChatGPT and Harvey, to assist in completing quizzes, exams, papers, or other assessments unless expressly authorized by the professor to do so.

#### **INFORMATION ON UF LAW GRADING POLICIES:**

The Levin College of Law's mean and mandatory distributions are posted on the College's website and this class adheres to that posted grading policy. The following chart describes the specific letter grade/grade point equivalent in place:

Letter Grade	Point Equivalent	Letter Grade	Point Equivalent
A (Excellent)	4.0	C (Satisfactory)	2.0
A-	3.67	C-	1.67
B+	3.33	D+	1.33
B	3.0	D (Poor)	1.0
B-	2.67	D-	0.67
C+	2.33	E (Failure)	0.0

The law school grading policy is available [here](#).

#### **OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:**

UF Law respects students' observance of religious holidays.

- Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
- Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.
- Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

#### **EXAM DELAYS AND ACCOMMODATIONS:**

The law school policy on exam delays and accommodations can be found [here](#).

#### **STATEMENT RELATED TO ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>). Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (Assistant Dean Brian Mitchell). Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester. Students may access information about various resources on the UF Law Student Resources Canvas page, available at <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635>.

## **STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Click [here](#) for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and may complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).

## **RECORDINGS OF CLASS**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor and Student Conduct Code.

**ABA OUT-OF-CLASS HOURS REQUIREMENTS:** ABA Standard 310 requires that students devote 120 minutes to out-of-class preparation for every “classroom hour” of in-class instruction. Each weekly class is approximately 3 hours in length, requiring at least **6 hours of** outside of class spent reading and analyzing the assigned materials and reviewing class notes.

## **UF ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES:**

Other information about UF academic policies and resources can be found at [this link](#).

## **COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

This syllabus is offered as a guide to the direction of the course. Our pace will depend in part on the level of interest and the level of difficulty of each section and is subject to change.

Class	Part	Subject	Reading
1	The First Amendment and	I. Foundations of Media Law A. The Role of the First Amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Read CB 3-27</li></ul> <a href="#">Tim Wu, Is the First Amendment Obsolete</a>

	Government Regulation	B. Emergence of Media Law C. Evolution of the News Media	
2		Big Tech and the Press	<a href="#">Toni M. Massaro and Helen L. Norton, Free Speech and Democracy: A Primer for 21st Century Reformers</a>  <a href="#">Moody v. NetChoice</a> <a href="#">Murthy v. Missouri</a>
3,4		II. First Amendment Principles that Apply to Media Generally: A. Prior Restraints on Publication B. Contempt C. Direct Prohibitions D. Indirect Burdens E. Disfavored Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read CB 29-122</li> </ul> <a href="#">Evelyn Douek, The Rise of Content Cartels</a>
5		Twitter Files and Big Regulation v. Big Tech Amnesty	<a href="#">Reason Article</a> <a href="#">Failed Tech Anti-Trust Bills</a> <a href="#">Proposed Tech Immunity</a>
6, 7		III. Different Rules for Some Media A. Broadcasting B. Cable C. The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read CB 123-182</li> </ul> <a href="#">Colbert GQ Cancellation Interview</a> (Watch)  <a href="#">Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton</a>
8		Section 230: What's Next?	<a href="#">Gonzalez v. Google LLC</a>  <a href="#">Balkin, Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society, pp. 1176-1179 (on collateral censorship and digital prior restraint)</a>  <a href="#">Eric Goldman, Why Section 230 is Better than the First Amendment</a>
9,10	Legal Issues	IV. Defamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read CB 185-294</li> </ul>

	Arising from Publication		Drake v. Kendrick Lamar-TBA Blake Lively v. Baldoni-TBA
11		Protecting Privacy/News Gathering Torts	▪ TBA
12		Presentations	
13			