

COM 530 Final Project Guidelines and Rubric

Overview

As a communications professional in the 21st century, it is critically important to understand the laws and ethics that guide how we communicate in digital and mediated settings. Using the information learned in this class, you will create a handbook for digital communication for the company you work for or a company you wish to work for. The handbook will be designed to guide employees on how to communicate ethically and legally in a digital world. It will also include a case study of an existing digital communication case, issue, or dilemma as an example of how to apply the ethical guidelines and laws outlined in your handbook.

This project is a realistic assignment a communication professional might receive and also shows how the concepts learned in this course are applicable to the real world. Your handbook should be realistic, but can take many forms. For example, it can be created in a word document like a standard handbook. Or, it could be created as a website, blog, or presentation. You decide the best way to convey the information in an interesting and clear way including examples, photos, or graphics as you see fit.

This project is a realistic type of assignment that a communication professional might receive and also shows how the concepts learned in this course are applicable in the real world. Your handbook should be professional and practical, but it can take many forms. For example, it can be created in a Word document like a standard handbook. Or, it could be created as a website, blog, or presentation. You decide the best way to convey the information in an interesting and clear way including examples, photos, or graphics as you see fit. (Although the final project is a handbook rather than a traditional academic paper, you should still cite sources and include a list of references in APA format.)

This assignment addresses the following course outcomes:

- Analyze relevant legal concepts in planning for the creation of new messages for digital delivery
- Analyze professional codes of ethics for their application to digital and mediated communication
- Evaluate common ethical frameworks for developing personal ethical principles regarding digital communication
- Analyze the influence of landmark legal cases and First Amendment applications for their impact on laws governing communication in a digital setting
- Examine dilemmas in digital communication for their legal and ethical implications

Prompt

You have been asked by your company to create a handbook for ethical and legal communication in the digital age. The format of the handbook is up to you. For example, you can create one in Microsoft Word, or you can use a website or blog. Feel free to get creative, but the goal is to present all the information below in an organized, professional, and accessible way. It should be something that can easily be referred to by employees in your company as they go about their work creating messages and content for digital delivery.

Specifically the following **critical elements** must be addressed:

- I. **Introduction:** Compose front matter (i.e., preface, overview, table of contents) that concisely informs the reader about the purpose and contents of the handbook.
- II. **Laws and Regulations:** This section will discuss the laws and regulations associated with digital communication. Utilize specific examples to illustrate how these laws apply to digital communication decisions.
 - a) Select, and briefly describe, well-known situations that show how the **First Amendment** has been applied to digital and mediated communication.
 - b) Select **landmark court cases** in digital communication and explain what changes were made in communication law because of them.
 - c) Determine **content and messaging** changes made by companies as a result of the changes in communication law brought on by landmark court cases.
 - d) Based on the above determination, compile a list of “**best legal practices**” that company employees should follow when creating digital messages and other content for the company.
- III. **Ethical Guidelines:** In this section, you will write your own code of ethics for your company employees that will guide their communication and message creation in the digital world. These guidelines should be your own and not copied from another source. However, your guidelines should be based on research and the ethical ideas and principles discussed in class.
 - a) Analyze existing **professional codes of ethics** for common themes that apply to digital and mediated communication.
 - b) Based on these **common themes**, develop your own list of ethical guidelines with references to where you have obtained this information.
 - c) Justify the inclusion of each **ethical guideline** and provide appropriate examples to support your rationale.
 - d) Based on the code of ethics you have created and existing ethical frameworks, compile a list of “**best ethical practices**” that company employees should follow when creating digital messages and other content for the company.
- IV. **Case Study:** In this section, you will show how the legal concepts and your ethical guidelines can be applied to a real-life situation. This should serve as an example to employees of how to apply the information in the handbook.
 - a) Overview an existing, **controversial dilemma** in digital communication and explain the legal and ethical implications. This can be a specific incident or a general issue that pervades digital communication. The topic you choose should have both legal and ethical implications.
 - b) Apply the **First Amendment** to this situation and support your application with examples.
 - c) Illustrate how **existing communication laws** and regulations apply in this situation.
 - d) Based on the **precedents** set in the previously selected landmark legal cases, explain how this situation is impacted by them.
 - e) Apply your list of “**best legal practices**” to assess the legal actions of the parties involved in this dilemma.
 - f) Determine **existing ethical codes** from the media professions involved in the dilemma.
 - g) Apply your list of “**best ethical practices**” to assess whether or not ethics were taken into consideration by the parties involved in the dilemma.
 - h) Determine how the results of your analysis can be applied to **future digital communication** situations. Milestones

Milestone One: Analyzing Professional Codes of Ethics

In **Module Two**, you will write a 4–6-page paper analyzing two professional codes of ethics and how they apply to digital communication. Choose two ethics codes from two different professional organizations, for example, journalism and public relations. You can also use the code of ethics from the organization you work for, if one exists. You will then analyze these codes for common themes that could be applied to digital and mediated communication messages. Describe how these codes can help guide ethical creation of messages to the public and then suggest three to five “best practices” or “practical guidelines” for how people should communicate ethically in these fields. Justify why you think each of your best practice suggestions are important. This assignment supports your successful completion of section III above. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone One Rubric.**

Milestone Two: Case Study Topic Selection and Explanation

In **Module Four**, you will submit the topic for the case study that will be included in your final project. The purpose of the case study is to show how the legal concepts you discuss and the ethical guidelines you create can be applied to a real-life situation. The topic for your case study should be a real, controversial dilemma in digital communication. It can be a specific incident or a general issue that pervades digital communication and should illustrate the importance of at least one of the “best practices” or “practical guidelines” for ethical and legal communication in the field. Summarize your topic and briefly describe the legal and ethical aspects you believe are present. Make sure to justify why this topic is important and worth studying in order to become better communicators. Include a list of at least three potential sources you plan to use. This paper should be 2–4 pages long. This assignment supports your successful completion of section IV above. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone Two Rubric.**

Milestone Three: Landmark Court Cases

In **Module Six**, you will analyze landmark court cases for how they have impacted digital communication. Pick three to five landmark court decisions that changed digital communication. For each case, give an overview of the case, then describe how the case impacted or changed digital and electronic communication. Make sure to discuss any changes that had to be made in communication industries as a result of each case and/or any immediate effects as a result of each court decision. Evaluate the impact each case will have on the future of digital and mediated communication. This paper should be 4–6 pages long. This assignment supports your successful completion of section II above. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone Three Rubric.**

Final Project Submission: Final Submission

In **Module Nine**, you will submit your legal and ethical handbook. This handbook will include ethical and legal guidelines and practices along with a case study. The handbook should follow the final project prompt and include all the critical elements. It should be polished and free of errors and reflect the incorporation of feedback gained throughout the course. **The final project will be graded using the Final Project Rubric (below).**

Deliverables

Milestone	Deliverables	Module Due	Grading
One	Analyzing Professional Codes of Ethics	Two	Graded separately; Milestone One Rubric
Two	Case Study Topic Selection	Four	Graded separately; Milestone Two Rubric
Three	Landmark Court Cases	Six	Graded separately; Milestone Three Rubric
	Final Submission: Handbook	Nine	Graded separately; Final Project Rubric

Final Project Rubric

Guidelines for Submission: Your handbook should be 12–15 pages, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and use 12-point Times New Roman font and APA format.

Critical Elements	Exemplary (100%)	Proficient (90%)	Needs Improvement (70%)	Not Evident (0%)	Value
Introduction: Front Matter	Meets “Proficient” criteria and front matter demonstrates a complex grasp of the purpose of the handbook	Composes front matter that concisely informs the reader about the purpose and content of the handbook	Composes front matter that informs the reader about the purpose and content of the handbook, but front matter is cursory or verbose.	Does not compose front matter that informs the reader about the purpose and content of the handbook	5
Laws and Regulations: First Amendment	Meets “Proficient” criteria and situations selected demonstrate a complex grasp of First Amendment issues within digital and mediated communication	Selects and briefly describes well-known situations that show how the First Amendment has been applied to digital and mediated communication	Selects and describes well-known situations that show how the First Amendment has been applied to communication, but description is verbose or contains inaccuracies, or situations do not apply to digital and mediated communication	Does not select and describe well-known situations that show how the First Amendment has been applied to communication	4.5

Laws and Regulations: Landmark Court Cases	Meets “Proficient” criteria and details show keen insight into the symbiotic nature of communication law and digital communication law	Selects landmark court cases in digital communication explaining what changes were made in communication law because of them	Selects landmark court cases in digital communication explaining what changes were made in communication law because of them, but explanation is cursory or contains inaccuracies	Does not select landmark court cases in digital communication explaining what changes were made in communication law because of them	4.5
Laws and Regulations: Content and Messaging	Meets “Proficient” criteria and determination makes cogent connections between changes in messaging and changes in communication law	Determines content and messaging changes made by companies as a result of the changes in communication law brought on by landmark court cases	Determines content and messaging changes made by companies as a result of the changes in communication law, but determination contains inaccuracies or is not directly related to landmark court cases	Does not determine content and messaging changes made by companies as a result of the changes in communication law brought on by landmark court cases	4.5
Laws and Regulations: Best Legal Practices	Meets “Proficient” criteria and list exhibits a direct connection to changes in communication law	Compiles a list of “best legal practices” that company employees should follow when creating digital messages and other content for the company based on above determination	Compiles a list of “best legal practices” that company employees should follow when creating digital messages and other content for the company, but “best legal practices” are cursory or not based on above determination	Does not compile a list of “best legal practices” that company employees should follow when creating digital messages and other content for the company based on above determination	6
Ethical Guidelines: Professional Codes of Ethics	Meets “Proficient” criteria and common themes show keen insight into existing professional codes of ethics that apply to digital and mediated communication	Analyzes existing professional codes of ethics for common themes that apply to digital and mediated communication	Analyzes existing professional codes of ethics for common themes that apply to communication, but analysis contains inaccuracies, or does not clearly apply to digital or mediated communication	Does not analyze existing professional codes of ethics for common themes that apply to digital and mediated communication	6
Ethical Guidelines: Common Themes	Meets “Proficient” criteria and list exhibits a complex grasp of the common themes in professional codes of ethics	Develops a list of ethical guidelines with references to where the information was obtained based on the common themes in existing professional codes of ethics	Develops a list of ethical guidelines with references to where the information was obtained, but list is not based on common themes in existing professional codes of ethics	Does not develop a list of ethical guidelines with references to where the information was obtained based on the common themes in existing professional codes of ethics	6

Ethical Guidelines: Ethical Guideline	Meets “Proficient” criteria and makes exceptional use of examples to justify the inclusion of each ethical guideline	Justifies the inclusion of each ethical guideline providing appropriate examples to support rationale	Justifies the inclusion of each ethical guideline, but justification is cursory, or examples used to support rationale are inappropriate	Does not justify the inclusion of each ethical guideline and provide appropriate examples to support rationale	6
Ethical Guidelines: Best Ethical Practices	Meets “Proficient” criteria and response demonstrates keen insight into how “best ethical practices” can guide the creation of digital content	Compiles a list of “best ethical practices” that company employees should follow when creating digital content for the company based on the code of ethics that was created	Compiles a list of “best ethical practices” that company employees should follow when creating digital content for the company, but list is cursory, or not clearly based on the code of ethics that was created	Does not compile a list of “best ethical practices” that company employees should follow when creating digital content for the company	6
Case Study: Existing Controversial Dilemma	Meets “Proficient” criteria and details provided show keen insight into the legal and ethical implications	Overviews an existing controversial dilemma in digital communication, explaining the legal and ethical implications	Overviews an existing controversial dilemma in digital communication, explaining the legal and ethical implications, but overview is cursory or contains inaccuracies	Does not overview an existing controversial dilemma in digital communication and explain the legal and ethical implications	6
Case Study: First Amendment	Meets “Proficient” criteria and examples highlight cogent connections between the First Amendment and the situation	Applies the First Amendment to the situation and supports application with examples	Applies the First Amendment to the situation and supports application with examples, but application contains inaccuracies, or supporting examples are not cogent	Does not apply the First Amendment to the situation and support application with examples	6
Case Study: Existing Communication Laws	Meets “Proficient” criteria and makes cogent connections between specifics of the situation and communication laws and regulations	Illustrates how existing communication laws and regulations apply in this situation	Illustrates how existing communication laws and regulations apply in this situation but illustration is cursory, or not adequately supported with examples	Does not illustrate how existing communication laws and regulations apply in this situation	6
Case Study: Precedents	Meets “Proficient” criteria and details show keen insight into the impact of landmark precedents on the situation	Explains how the situation is impacted by the precedents set in landmark legal cases	Explains how the situation is impacted by the precedents set in landmark legal cases, but explanation is cursory or contains inaccuracies	Does not explain how the situation is impacted by the precedents set in landmark legal cases	4.5

Case Study: Best Legal Practices	Meets “Proficient” criteria and makes cogent connections between best legal practices and legal actions of the parties involved	Applies “best legal practices” to assess the legal actions of the parties involved in the dilemma	Applies “best legal practices” to assess the legal actions of the parties involved, but application is cursory or assessment is illogical or contains inaccuracies	Does not apply “best legal practices” to assess the legal actions of the parties involved in the dilemma	6
Case Study: Existing Ethical Codes	Meets “Proficient” criteria and demonstrates a complex grasp of the existing ethical codes involved	Determines existing ethical codes from the media professions involved in the dilemma	Determines existing ethical codes from the media professions involved in the dilemma, but determination is cursory or contains inaccuracies	Does not determine existing ethical codes from the media professions involved in the dilemma	6
Case Study: Best Ethical Practices	Meets “Proficient” criteria and makes cogent connections between best ethical practices and the considerations of the parties involved	Applies “best ethical practices” to assess whether or not ethics were taken into consideration by the parties involved in the dilemma	Applies “best ethical practices” to assess whether or not the ethics were taken into consideration by the parties involved, but application is cursory or assessment is illogical or contains inaccuracies	Does not apply “best ethical practices” to assess whether or not the ethics were taken into consideration by the parties involved	6
Case Study: Future Digital Communication	Meets “Proficient” criteria and shows keen insight into how digital communication may evolve in the future	Determines how the results of the analysis can be applied to future digital communication situations	Determines how the results of the analysis can be applied to future digital communication situations, but determination is cursory or illogical	Does not determine how the results of the analysis can be applied to future digital communication	6
Articulation of Response	Submission is free of errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, and organization and is presented in a professional and easy-to-read format	Submission has no major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization	Submission has major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that negatively impact readability and articulation of main ideas	Submission has critical errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that prevent understanding of ideas	5
Total					100%