



*Today, anyone with a lawyer has a shot at bullying a media outlet into climbing down from a contentious story. The evidence is not just anecdotal: A majority of media executives said they are “less able” to stand up for free speech, according to a 2016 [survey](#) by the Knight Foundation.*

*This environment is especially perilous for young and/or new reporters. Many of them are working without a proper legal backstop, but that’s just one part of the problem. The other is that many rookie reporters are impelled to produce a style of rapid-fire publishing (‘churnalism’) that is likely to lead to legal snafus in the first place.”*

This course aims to help you navigate through the environment of which Roberts speaks.

The web is the most prominent and important platform in journalism. Thus, journalists must be aware of the legal issues that affect it. That means, for the seven weeks of this course, you will become one part-tech geek, one part journalism practitioner and one part legal scholar.

I have gathered syllabi, readings, notes, assignments and ideas with the assistance of several scholars, namely two of my mentors, Drs. Aimee Edmondson and Susan Burgess, as well as a colleague, Dr. Patrick File. Further sources used in the implementation of this course include the [Digital Media Law Project](#), the [Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard](#) and the [Student Press Law Center](#).

You and I are embarking upon a topic that is constantly changing and I will continue to learn right along with you. For that reason, I am quite excited about this course. So, let’s jump right in...

## **OBJECTIVES**

At the conclusion of this course, the assigned readings, class discussions and completed assignments should have helped you to:

- Understand how the courts have balanced the First Amendment right of free speech and free press with other governmental and/or personal interests (national security, privacy, libel, obscenity, access to information, confidentiality, free press v. fair trial and other issues) in an online environment.
- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
- Understand how, why and when First Amendment rights can be limited online.
- Apply the law to situations you may face as a journalist.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.

- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes we serve.
- Critically evaluate your own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style (AP style) and grammatical correctness.

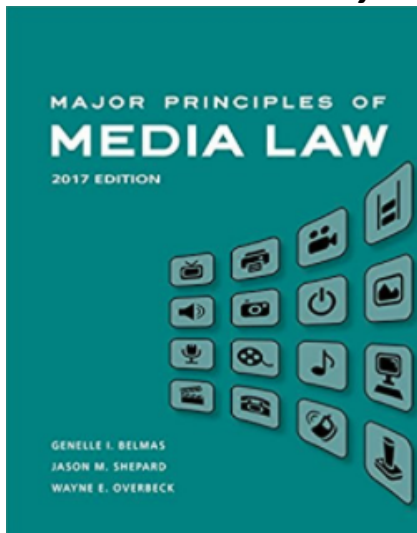
Topics covered in the course will include, but may not be limited to Copyright & fair use law in the age of GIFs and viral videos, the “right to be forgotten,” libel on Twitter, the expansion of the right of publicity, e-FOIA, obscenity and the Miller standard, tech companies’ use of terms of service to control content, the PATRIOT Act, government spying and FISA, and violence & incitement.

## BOOK NEEDED FOR THIS CLASS

All students are required to have access to the following book for this class. (Kindle edition is acceptable)

\* [MAJOR PRINCIPLES OF MEDIA LAW \(2017 EDITION\)](#) By Genelle I. Belmas, Jason M. Shepard & Wayne E. Overbeck

**\* NOTE: It is critical you get the green-colored, 2017 edition**



\* There will be other readings posted within the modules on BlackBoard that are expected to be read, as well.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**READINGS:** You are expected to complete all readings. Read them. Take notes. Prepare questions and discussion points. READ. READ. READ. *Have I made this clear enough?*

**MIDTERM & FINAL EXAM:** The exams will include 15 to 20 short essay questions. They are open-book exams, but must be completed independently. Students will have a week to complete them.

*\* Each worth 25 percent of total grade (100 points each, 200 total)*

**CASE BRIEFS:** You will receive a set of legal cases to “brief” for each module. See the INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEGAL BRIEFS file on BlackBoard for the style for these.

*\* Worth 25 percent of total grade (100 points)*

**WEEKLY Q&A:** The fact is, law is currently developing and changing. So, we need to discuss how we think it should be developing and evolving. Thus, a virtual conversation must take place. The Weekly Q&A will take place in our Message Boards and your active participation in both answering questions and responding ***thoughtfully and considerately*** to others is crucial.

*\* Worth 25 percent of total grade (100 points)*

**DEADLINES:** Assignments are considered **LATE** if they are even one minute over the requested deadline and points will be deducted as follows:

\* One minute to one hour: 5-point deduction

\* Plus-one hour to 12 hours: 10-point (letter grade) deduction

\* Plus-12 hour to 24 hours: 20-point (two letter grade) deduction

\* Assignments later than 24 hours will not be accepted and a ZERO will be issued for the assignments

## GRADING SCALE & RUBRIC

Grade %/Point Range	Grade
> 93	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+

73-76	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
<59	F

**A = Outstanding:** Exceptional theoretical understanding and application of basic principles and concepts; answers are fully completed using concepts and evidence examined in course material -- and beyond -- and include thorough, critical, and independent thought that is supported by *both* course and outside resources. Organized, clean, concise copy that correctly utilizes grammar, punctuation and usage.

**B = Very Good:** Thorough theoretical understanding and application of basic principles and concepts; answer are completed using some concepts and evidence examined in course material and include some critical and independent thought. Mostly clean and concise copy that, for the most part, utilizes proper grammar, punctuation and usage.

**C = Average:** Adequate understanding of basic principles and concepts that meets minimum requirements, offering little in the way of innovative theoretical understanding or application; answers are completed using relative concepts and evidence examined in course material. Some grammatical or usage errors; writing is loose and the point/thesis comes in and out of focus.

**D = Below Average:** Inadequate and incomplete understanding of basic arguments and concepts; answers lack a clear thesis and provide little supporting argumentation and evidence. Many grammatical or usage errors; writing mostly lacks focus.

**F = Poor:** Little to no understanding of basic terms and arguments; presentation/writing is error-riddled and lacks structure and clarity.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & ASSISTANCE

Familiarize yourself with Quinnipiac University's policy on Academic Integrity. ([Available in full here.](#))

### ASSISTANCE

If you have health and/or educational needs, please inform the professor within the first week of the session. Even if you have already made arrangements with the Office of Academic Services, *please* make the professor aware within the first week of the semester.

Consistent with its responsibilities, Quinnipiac University provides [reasonable](#)

[accommodations to promote equal educational opportunity](#). The University provides staff members to ensure compliance with the ADA and Section 504. These staff members work directly with students, faculty and staff regarding reasonable accommodations and other assistance as needed. If you require assistance beyond what your professor can provide, please contact John Jarvis, Coordinator of Learning Services at 203-582-5390 or [John.Jarvis@Quinnipiac.edu](mailto:John.Jarvis@Quinnipiac.edu).

## DEPARTMENT/UNIVERSITY LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Department of Journalism states that its mission is “to prepare journalism professionals who reflect and can effectively report on the diversity of the human experience.”

Students who graduate with a degree in journalism should be able to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to research, report, write and edit news stories that conform to professional journalism standards, including the ability to apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
2. Demonstrate command of the techniques used to produce and present news in print, broadcast and digital environments, and understand the interconnectedness of these systems.
3. Demonstrate familiarity with the history of journalism, its social responsibility and the underpinnings of its practice in a culturally and racially diverse society.
4. Understand the implications of the First Amendment and the role journalism plays in democracy.
5. Engage in the ethical practice of journalism.

In addition, Quinnipiac University has established Essential Learning Outcomes and learning paradigms. They include **Interpersonal Proficiencies:** Written communication, oral communication, responsible citizenship, diversity awareness & sensitivity and social intelligence, and **Intellectual Outcomes:** Critical thinking & reasoning, scientific literacy, quantitative reasoning, information fluency, creative thinking and visual literacy.

More on these outcomes is [available here](#).