

COURSE NUMBER	COMM 4317
SECTION	001
CLASS NAME	Media Law
CLASSROOM	CAB 333
MEETING DAYS/TIMES	TR 9:30-10:45 AM
INSTRUCTOR	Dr. Brian Brantley
EMAIL	brian.brantley@tamusa.edu
OFFICE	CAB 319C
OFFICE PHONE	210-784-2214
OFFICE HOURS	MW 8-9 AM, 1230-130 PM TR 8-9 AM, 1230-130 PM

WHAT THIS CLASS ACTUALLY IS

Catalog Description – Legal and ethical limitations and responsibilities of the mass media, relationship and interaction between broadcaster, governmental regulatory agencies and the public.

Course Objectives – By the end of this course, students should be able to do each of the following:

1. Understand and apply principles and laws relating to the freedom of speech and of the press.
2. Conduct legal research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the professions, audiences, and purposes that mass communication targets/serves.
3. Think critically, creatively, and independently about legal problems and solutions unique to the various mass communication industries.

GETTING/KEEPING IN TOUCH

The best ways to get in touch with me are (1) talk to me in person during office hours and (2) through email (listed at the top of the page). DO NOT (repeat, DO NOT) try to get in touch with me through Blackboard Messaging. I don't ever check that, so let's just avoid that altogether.

REQUIRED TEXT

- Mass Media Law, by Clay Calvert, Dan V. Kozlowski, & Derigan Silver, twenty-second edition; published by McGraw-Hill. You will be accessing this e-book and completing your reading assignments through Connect (McGraw-Hill's online learning platform). This means that when you purchase your book, you'll be getting not only the book itself but also access to Connect. You will have the opportunity to purchase access to both the Connect platform and the e-book itself by clicking on (1) the Course Content folder, (2) the Week 2 Materials folder, and (3) the SmartBook Chapter 1 assignment. I recommend buying this directly from the publisher rather than from the University bookstore.

HOW THIS CLASS IS GOING TO WORK

The class is divided into three units – Intro/Basics, Defamation, and Other (Invasion of Privacy, Accessing Records/Meetings, and Protecting News Sources).

Within each unit, we'll spend about a week covering each chapter (there are exceptions – some chapters will get three days rather than two because they're more complicated).

For each chapter that we read, students will need to complete a SmartBook assignment (this is an adaptive reading assignment), plus any other assignment that I give related to the course content. Assignments are discussed in more detail in the next section of this syllabus.

GRADING

Readings (SmartBook Assignments)

- 10% of total grade
- Administered through Connect (which is accessible through Blackboard)
- Due by 11:59 PM two days after we finish discussing a chapter (either Wednesday or Friday)
- No late submissions accepted

Scenarios

- 50% of total grade
- One per chapter for Chapters 3-10
- Due by 11:59 PM two days after we finish discussing chapter
- Late submissions accepted for up to one week after due date, with a 5% penalty per day

Case Studies

- 20% of total grade
- Four over the course of the semester
- Due by 11:59 PM the day before discussion of the next chapter starts (either Sunday or Tuesday)
- Late submissions accepted for up to one week after due date, with a 5% penalty per day

Quizzes

- 20% of total grade
- 3 quizzes (1 per unit) will be given
- Administered through Blackboard
- Due by 11:59 PM on the date specified in the course calendar
- No late submissions accepted

For your Scenario and Case Study assignments, you will be allowed to use [Grammarly for Education](#) in order to guide you in the writing process (but NOT as a substitute for doing the actual writing yourself). I will require you to submit each of these assignments as a Google Doc.

Any other use of generative AI is prohibited. If you turn in an assignment that I suspect has been substantially written by AI, then I will give you a zero for that assignment until either (a) we discuss your work to my satisfaction or (b) you rewrite it, yourself, and I will assess a slight penalty when I grade it.

In the interest of maximizing your chances of success in this course, I would advise you very strongly to prioritize your various commitments so that you can submit all of your assigned work on time. Zeroes have a destructive impact on your overall grade.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory for this class and all others in the Communication program. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to check Blackboard, find out about any assignments/due dates/handouts/announcements that were covered in the class(es) you missed, and make up any work you missed.

Absences:

Missing the equivalent of two weeks of class due to unexcused absences will reduce your final grade for the course by one full letter grade. Missing the equivalent of three weeks of class due to unexcused absences means that you cannot pass the course. Should this happen, you will (a) need to drop the course or (b) receive a failing grade. In a course like this one, six absences is the equivalent of missing three weeks of class.

- An excused absence is one in which you miss class either for a required activity or because of illness (excessive excused absences can also result in you not passing the class).
- An unexcused absence is any other absence.

Arriving on time:

This course begins at 2 pm every Monday and Wednesday. If you arrive after attendance has been recorded, then you will be counted late for that class session.

Accumulated lates:

Three lates equals one unexcused absence. I can tell you from experience that these add up more quickly than you'd think.

Classroom distractions:

If you're doing something in class that has nothing to do with what we're covering that day, then I'm likely to be distracted by what you're doing. If you distract me, I will ask you as politely as possible to

stop. If you persist in the distracting behavior, then you will be removed from class for the remainder of that day's class.

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via university email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the [website](#) or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodations with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours for MATH in the ALC are as follows:

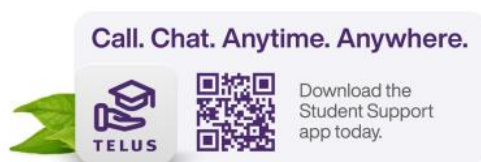
	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
MONDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
TUESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
WEDNESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
THURSDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm

	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
FRIDAY	8 am – 5 pm	11 am – 4 pm

Counseling/Mental Health Resources

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. *Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.* The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>. More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found [here](#). Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming

aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC)

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our [website](#) . The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a [CARE report](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click [here](#) for hours and contact information.

Military Affairs

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots’ Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students

Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous

to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.

3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or visit the resources available in the [QSRR website](#)

Use of Generative AI Permitted Under Some Circumstances or With Explicit Permission

There are situations and contexts within this course where you may be asked to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, to explore how they can be used. Outside of those circumstances, you should not use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any student work (assignments, activities, discussion responses, etc.) that is part of your evaluation in this course. Any student work submitted using AI tools should clearly indicate with attribution what work is the student's work and what part is generated by the AI. If any part of this is confusing or uncertain, students should reach out to their instructor for clarification before submitting work for grading. Use of AI-generated content without the instructor's permission and/or proper attribution in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

NOTE: Guidance for how to cite AI-generators, like ChatGPT, can be found here <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Important Spring 2026 Dates

Dates	Event
January 13	Tuition & Fee Payments deadline
January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. – No Classes
January 20	First day of class
February 4	Census date
February 23-March 6	Midterm grading period
March 9-March 14	Spring Break

Dates	Event
April 3	Study Day – No classes
April 17	Last day to drop with an automatic “W”
May 1	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
May 4	Last day of classes
May 5	Study Day – No classes
May 6-May 12	Final exams
May 19	Commencement

The complete [academic calendar](#) is available online

TENTATIVE SPRING 2026 COURSE CALENDAR

You should feel free to complete/submit each of these assignments **before** the day and time that they are due

WEEK	DATE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITY	WORK DUE THIS WEEK (by 11:59 on specified day)
1	1/21	Go over syllabus	
2	1/26 & 28	Chapter 1 – The American Legal System	1/30 – Chapter 1 SmartBook due
3	2/2 & 4	Chapter 2 – The First Amendment: The Meaning of Freedom	2/6 – Chapter 2 Smartbook due 2/8 – Case Study 1 due
4	2/9 & 11	Chapter 3 – The First Amendment: Contemporary Problems	2/13 – Chapter 3 Smartbook due 2/13 – Chapter 3 Scenario due 2/15 – Quiz 1 due (Chapters 1-3)
5	2/16 & 18	Chapter 4 - Defamation: Establishing a Case	2/20 – Chapter 4 Smartbook due 2/20 – Chapter 4 Scenario due
6	2/23 & 25	Chapter 5 – Defamation: Proof of Fault	2/27 – Chapter 5 Smartbook due 2/27 – Chapter 5 Scenario due
7	3/2 & 4	Chapter 6 – Defamation: Defenses and Damages	
8	3/9 & 11	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
9	3/16 & 18	Chapter 6 (continued) – Examples 3/18 – NO CLASS (TIPA)	3/18 – Chapter 6 Smartbook due 3/18 – Chapter 6 Scenario due 3/22 – Quiz 2 due (Chapters 4-6)
10	3/23 & 25	3/23 – Chapter 7 – Invasion of Privacy (Appropriation)	3/27 – Chapter 7 Smartbook due

		3/25 – Chapter 7 – Invasion of Privacy (Intrusion)	3/27 – Chapter 7 Scenario due
11	3/30 & 4/1	3/30 – Chapter 8 – Invasion of Privacy (Private Facts) 4/1 – Chapter 9 – Gathering Information: Records and Meetings	4/1 – Chapter 8 Smartbook due 4/1 – Chapter 8 Scenario due 4/1 – Case Study 3 due
12	4/6 & 8	4/6 – Chapter 9, continued 4/8 – NO CLASS (SSCA Annual Conference)	4/8 – Chapter 9 Smartbook due 4/8 – Chapter 9 Scenario due 4/12 – Quiz 3 due (Chapters 7-9)
13	4/13 & 15	Chapter 10 – Protection of News Sources/Contempt Power	4/3 – Chapter 10 Smartbook due 4/5 – Chapter 10 Scenario due 4/8 – Case Study 4 due
14	4/20 & 22	4/20 – Chapter 11 – Free Press/Fair Trial (Trial-Level Remedies & Restrictive Orders) 4/22 – Chp 12 – Free Press/Fair Trial (Closed Judicial Proceedings)	4/10 – Chapter 11 Smartbook due 4/12 – Chapter 11 Scenario Due 4/12 – Chapter 12 Smartbook due 4/14 – Chapter 12 Scenario Due
15	4/27 & 29	Chapter 14 – Copyright and Trademark	5/1 – Chapter 14 Smartbook due 5/1 – Chapter 14 Scenario due
16	5/4	Last Class Day Is 5/4	5/4 – Quiz 4 due (Chapters 11-14)
	5/6-12	FINALS WEEK (Finals Week will only be relevant if we are somehow desperately behind and I need to meet with you one more time)	