

MODULE:	MEDIA LAW & ETHICS
CODE	BAJH-2-2-10
Number of credits	4 semester credits / 6 quarter units
Stage:	II
Theme:	Structure of the Media
Assessment Weighting:	Exam 60% Assignment 40%

Overview and Aims

This module aims to enable the student to:

- Be equipped with knowledge of the fundamental principles of Irish and EU media law in order to enable them to perform within legal boundaries as media professionals.
- Attain a deep awareness of the ethical problems faced in day-to-day journalism and an ability to critique and evaluate relevant media practice.

On successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

- Understand the issues that might prove to be legally contentious and know when to seek legal advice when working as a media professional.
- Recognise the legal and professional implications for their own and their employers' interests of dubious or questionable copy.
- Build on this general foundation, which may confer on them a specialist status and so advance their career opportunities.
- Appreciate that every decision in journalism has an ethical aspect, and that journalists have responsibility for what they write.
- Understand that as media professionals their primary responsibility is to tell the people the truth.

Module Content

Freedom of Expression:

A general discussion of the origins of the doctrine; and major events in the timeline of free speech since Socrates to present day.

The Irish Legal System:

Introduction to the Irish legal system, its sources and functions.

Defamation:

In Ireland and other democracies every citizen is constitutionally entitled to their "good name". Discussion of the legislature which are in place to protect this right; and the pitfalls that await a journalist who finds themselves in breach of such laws. Defences in Defamation: An introduction to defences available in defamation cases.

Famous Libel Cases:

An in-depth discussion of main libel cases in Ireland, UK, Europe and worldwide.

Reporting from the Courts:

Reporting from the courts can be a minefield of potential legal dangers for journalists. This lecture will discuss the laws and regulations which are in place that protect journalists as well as those that they may be potentially harmful to their own career and/or employer.

Copyright Law and Intellectual Property:

An introduction to the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 and its relevance to media workers. Copyright in the digital age, digital rights management.

Privacy Law:

Introduction to privacy laws in Ireland and the EU. Discussion of important European Court of Human Rights and other rulings on privacy cases; and debate on differences between text and photographs in privacy cases.

Data Protection Act:

An introduction to the Data Protection Acts and discussion of the responsibilities of media workers as data controllers.

Broadcasting Acts:

Like every other field or area of journalism, there are strict laws and regulations in place in the field of broadcasting. These laws and their necessity are discussed in detail in this lecture.

The Internet and Freedom of Speech:

Discussion on attempts by the EU and governments worldwide to regulate the internet.

Ethics:

National and international regulation and self-regulation. Codes of Conduct. Accuracy

and fairness: the fundamental principle.

Press Councils:

The Issues.

Privacy, Sensitivity and Responsibility:

Paparazzi versus legitimate investigation. Legislation and self-regulation. Suicide Coverage.

Prejudice & Diversity:

Sexism , racism, homophobia

Deception:

Where justified and where not.

Sources:

Protecting them, verifying their accounts.

History of media ethics related cases:

Press scandals through the ages. Concern over standards in Western media.