

COMMUNICATIONS, INTERNET AND MASS MEDIA LAW SEMINAR

(Law 428-001, Fall 2003)

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Course Description and Policies

Course Description: This seminar will provide students an opportunity to explore in an in-depth manner the intersection of Communications, Internet and mass media law. Each week we will discuss recent developments in these areas from the perspective of case law, FCC regulation, federal and state legislation, and other policy proposals. Topics to be covered include: local telephony, wireless and broadband competition; the transition to digital television; mass media competition and deregulation; increasing regulation of the Internet; spectrum reform; and the impact of new technologies on traditional communications law. No prerequisites are required for this course. A research paper and in-class oral presentation will be required in lieu of a written examination. Students should review the proposed syllabus for more details.

Class Format: Typically, class format will consist of a presentation by the professor and/or a distinguished guest lecturer combined with an interactive class discussion regarding that week's topic. Each week, students should be prepared to discuss and advocate a viewpoint regarding that week's topic and the assigned reading materials.

Class Attendance: Consistent with law school policy, regular and punctual attendance is required. Class attendance will be taken on a weekly basis. If absence is unavoidable, prior arrangements must be made with the professor.

Assigned Readings: Reading assignments and discussion topics will be posted on-line and available either from the Internet or Westlaw. Assigned readings may range from 30-80 pages per week, depending on the topic.

Research Paper and Oral Presentations: A research paper and in-class oral presentation is required in lieu of a written examination. The paper should be approximately 20-30 pages (double-spaced, 12 point type), and should reflect individual substantive research on a communications legal issue, as approved by the professor in advance. Paper topics will be discussed within the first few weeks of class. In addition, students will be expected to make an in-class oral presentation on their paper topic of approximately 15-20 minutes in length during the last few sessions of the class. Oral presentation times will be scheduled in class. As part of the oral presentation, each student will be expected to submit a short reading assignment related to his or her topic for the benefit of the rest of the class at least one week before the date of the student's presentation.

Timetable for Paper Submission: On or before **September 11, 2003**, please submit two copies of a typed proposal for your paper. I will keep one for my files, and annotate and return to you the other copy. The proposal should be 1-2 pages long, should demonstrate that you have read a bit about your topic, and should show why you are interested in it. Please contact me beforehand to discuss possible topics (contact can be through e-mail, telephone, meeting before or after class, or setting up a meeting at the law school at another time). I will return the proposal to you by **September 18, 2003**, with any comments I may have. **October 30, 2003**, is the deadline for submission of an optional first draft of your paper if you want me to provide feedback before your oral presentations and final paper is due. The final paper (20-30 pages) is due, in proper citation form, by **5 p.m. Thursday, December 11, 2003**. (Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis, but only if the student submits a rough draft of his or her paper by October 30, 2003.)

Policy on Submission of Papers: Students should submit two copies of their papers to the George Mason Law School Records Office by 5 p.m. on Thursday, December 11, 2003. If for some reason a student is physically unable to get to the Records Office by that time, the student may e-mail his or her paper to Professor Sockett by 5 p.m. on Thursday, December 11, 2003, and then turn in the two copies to the Records Office as soon as possible thereafter. Students who want their papers to be subsequently returned to them with Professor Sockett's comments should include with their paper copies a large envelope with the address to which the paper should be returned. The law school will pay for postage. All other graded papers will be returned to the Records Office. Any questions about this policy should be directed to Professor Sockett.

Grading: While a large part of a student's grade will be based on the final seminar paper, an equally large part will depend on the thoughtfulness of the student's comments during the course of the seminar discussions as well as the student's oral presentation at the end of the semester. Students should take careful note of the Law School's plagiarism policy in the course of researching, citing, and attributing sources in their papers. Students should also carefully proofread their papers before submission as the presence of a significant number of typographical and/or grammatical errors will result in a lower grade.