Course Approach:

I believe our professional ethics constantly evolve. Information workers have forever been conflicted by freedom of expression and censorship. This semester we explore two challenges to freedom of expression that have a basis in religious, ethical, cultural, and moral values. These are religious issues and materials deemed harmful to children.

In the last fifty years, a number of works have been challenged as sacrilegious. These include *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis. The Kazantzakis work suggested both the humanity and the human fallibility of Jesus. Salman Rushdie published his novel *Satanic Verses* in 1988. This work has been interpreted as blasphemous by some. In 1988 a fatwa or death sentence was announced against Rushdie by the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini. In 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* published a series of cartoons critical of the Prophet Mohammed. These cartoons led to demonstrations in many parts of the Muslim world, to acts of terrorism, and to threats against the newspaper and the cartoonists. In another instance, the satirical French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* has published many cartoons and articles critical of any institutions, including those Christian, Islamic, and Jewish institutions and icons. In January 2015, the editorial offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris were attacked by Islamic fundamentalists leaving twelve employees of the magazine dead.

Since the advent of the Web in the mid-1990s, “harmful to children” has been employed to justify various forms of censorship, particularly of online pornography. Management of pornography and obscenity has long been a concern for libraries. Through the end of the nineteenth century, librarians interpreted their function to insure that collections were free of “riff raff;” that the collection was wholesome. In historical terms, it is only recently (last 100 years or so) that is has been accepted that public library collections should include popular fiction. Perhaps the standards that define the acceptable in libraries have been relaxed, both social and more specifically library standards are evolving.

The purpose of this course is to focus on those evolving standards. The student should come to appreciate that our sense of freedom of expression in librarianship has evolved and is continuing to do so. The two areas of concern are important to librarians and to the practice of their responsibilities. We will focus on discussing our ethical, legal, and professional concerns. In so doing, we will by necessity consider other aspects of our professional ethics.
One important note: This course is not intended to dictate answers to these concerns. Its purpose is to help the student, the information professional to address potential conundrums in her/his practice.

Text to be purchased:

Wallace Koehler. *Our Changing Values* in press, 2015 (should be available early summer 2015)

Course Resource:


Dr. Samek’s book is an important LIS ethics resource. While it is not assigned as a required text, it would be an important resource for any professional library.

On-Line Resources:

American Library Association Code of Ethics
http://wwwalaorgala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethicshtm

American Library Association Library Bill of Rights
http://wwwalaorgala/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrightshtm

Required Readings:


http://wwwiflaforgfiles/assets/faife/publications/sturges/cartoonspdf

Assignments:

A. One Term Paper

A term paper is required at the end of the semester. It is to address one or both of the course hypotheses described above. Please discuss your proposed subject with the teacher at the very beginning of the semester.

The paper is to be a well-developed argument, hopefully an interesting proto-manuscript to be sculpted for publication. It is to be fully documented and in an appropriate citation
style. I would suggest you consider examining a journal of choice that might be an appropriate venue for your article. Use the writing and citation style required by that journal. APA and Chicago are commonly used.

There is no specific length. Your paper needs to be as long as it needs to be to make your argument. A guideline might be twenty to thirty double-spaced pages, times roman 12 point. Use parenthetical citations please. Please advise which journal style you are using as a model.

Some journals you might consider

*History of Ideas*

*Information Ethics*

*Libraries & Culture*

*Library History*

**B. Extensive Discussions**

This course is set up as a graduate discussion seminar. Experience indicates that this format is problematic but not impossible in an online format. For the first half of the semester, we will focus on the conflict between freedom of expression and religious and other rights. The second half will focus on freedom of expression and “harmful to minors”. Please read Sturges in the first days of the semester. Read Etzioni no later than the point where we transition to “harmful…..” Specific readings in Koehler are indicated in the courseware.

Discussion guidance is provided in the courseware. All students are expected to participate actively in all discussions.

Written discussions are graded. Because the approach is a seminar format, students are encouraged to engage in debate and, if appropriate, make more than one posting during each discussion.

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

(1) Understand and appreciate the basic ethical tenets of the LIS field(s)

(2) Understand and appreciate the historical evolution of information professional ethics

(3) Analyze in the abstract and in the particular ethical conflicts and provide guidance to the resolution of the conflict. Also to demonstrate these skills through their work and
subsequent practice

**University Calendar**

We follow the University calendar for course start and end date and for indicated holidays.

Due dates are provided in the courseware calendar.

**Grades**

Paper 66%,

Discussions 34%. There are five assigned discussions. Each is weighted equally.

A= 91-100  B=81-90  C=71-80  D=61-70  F= 0-60

**Student Ethics, Rights and Responsibilities**

The University of Tennessee takes a dim view of plagiarism.