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New opportunity for journalism students
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Starting in the Spring of 2009, the School of Journalism and Broadcasting is offering a new advanced journalism course that focuses on First Amendment issues. The class has been created due to the generosity of two Louisville attorneys, Jon Fleischaker and Kim Greene. Fleischaker and Greene have always displayed dedication to the advancement of free press, and they created the Fleischaker-Greene Fund for Excellence so that students could have a unique learning experience that will increase their understanding of the First Amendment and the importance of free press in a democratic nation. The attorneys chose to institute their fund at WKU due to the high reputation of our journalism program.

“It is a huge compliment to WKU’s journalism program that two people who did not graduate from the university would choose our school to initiate this program,” said Sara Shipley Hiles, adjunct professor in WKU’s journalism department.

Hiles will teach the first semester of the new course next spring, modeling it after the Honors journalism course she taught in the Fall of 2007. It will be a high level reporting course, incorporating First Amendment skills into the reporting and writing that the students do in the course. There will be an emphasis on open records and open meetings, and students will do some investigative reporting on their own.

Outside of the classroom setting, the students will participate in a field experience which will be an important aspect of the course. A guest speaker will come to WKU’s campus and the students in the class will participate in selecting the winner of a national First Amendment award. A multi-media component will be built into the course, putting an emphasis on audio and video, and the students will be able to put their work on the web and create a DVD.

With all of its unique elements, this course will serve as a foundation to build other Honors courses in the journalism department. It is designed to provide top journalism students with an opportunity to be involved with high-level issues.

“I think we already have excellent students in the journalism program,” said Hiles, “This will really challenge those students to do something they might not otherwise have done. And not only will it be challenging, but I think it will be fun and engaging as well.”