

MODULE GUIDE: JOURNALISM ETHICS

JO3318 Level 6 Semester 2

Module leader: Sara McConnell

Seminar tutors: Sara McConnell; Maurice Walsh

Weeks 1-12 Lecture Tuesday 11-12

Weeks 1-12 Seminar as timetabled

AIMS

This module aims to introduce you to the notion of journalistic responsibility and different ideas of what it means to act ethically as a journalist, working within guidelines set down by the industry's watchdog, the Press Complaints Commission.

During the module, you will have the opportunity to debate questions like: "Is it ever acceptable to fake an image in print or online to tell a better story?" "Is it right to publish horrifying images because they tell the story or should there be a limit on what we show our readers?" "Can it ever be right to reveal our sources?" "Are there limits on freedom of information?" These are ethical dilemmas which all journalists face.

Through considering concepts such as truth, objectivity, accountability, a free press, freedom of information and public interest in relation to journalism, you will develop an awareness of the tensions between journalists, readers, sources and proprietors in a changing media landscape where journalists' own professionalism, ideals and concept of what it means to be a "good journalist" are being challenged by bloggers, aggregators and other new forms of digital communication.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the module you will be able to:

- Show an understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Conduct and other industry codes as frameworks for your own ethical journalism.
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of concepts such as ethics, free press, public interest and freedom of information and the constraints under which journalists and news organisations operate.

- Apply understanding and knowledge of ethical dilemmas and solutions to their own and others' published work in a changing digital age.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment for this module will be a portfolio comprising a) a 2,000 essay and b) a group presentation and evidence of participation in seminars. For the essay, you may either choose from a list of questions set by the module leader or choose your own title, in consultation with your seminar tutor.

The essay element will be worth 60% of your total mark and the group presentation/participation element 40%

The deadline for submitting your assignment is Thursday 12 May at 11am

Marking criteria

Essay: you will be assessed on your ability to:

- Construct a clear argument which answers the question set
- Use a wide and appropriate range of reading to provide evidence for your arguments
- Write in clear, grammatical English
- Use Harvard referencing conventions to reference your work

Case study presentation and seminar: see separate guidelines

How the learning outcomes link with the assessment

Learning outcome	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Conduct and other industry codes as frameworks for your own ethical journalism. 	Classroom work Essay choice Presentation and seminar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a critical understanding of concepts such as ethics, free press, public interest and freedom 	Classroom work Essay choice Presentation and seminar

of information and the constraints under which journalists and news organisations operate.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply understanding and knowledge of ethical dilemmas and solutions to their own and others' published work in a changing digital age. 	Classroom work Essay choice Presentation and seminar

TEACHING METHODS

This module will be delivered through a weekly one-hour lecture and a related one-hour seminar. You will be asked to prepare a presentation on a specific case study and lead a session with fellow-students during one seminar on a topic related to the discussions and issues raised in the relevant week's lecture. You will get separate guidance about this in a handout and on Study Space

PROGRAMME

Week 1

w/b 31 January 2011

Introduction to the module. What are ethics? How do ideas of what it means to be ethical apply to journalism? What does it mean to be an ethical journalist? Is there such a thing?

Reading

- Frost, *Journalism, Ethics and Regulation* ch 1
- Sanders *Ethics and Journalism* ch 1, 2 and 3
- Fenton, *New media, old news: Journalism and democracy in the digital age* ch 3
- McNair *News and Journalism in the UK fifth edition* ch 3
- Randall *The Universal Journalist* 2nd edition chapter 13

Week 2

w/b 7 February 2011

Challenges to journalistic responsibility in the digital age. Can you trust a journalist? Is sensationalist reporting warping news coverage and are key issues being ignored under pressure of 24-hour news coverage?

Reading

- Currah (2009) "A democratic deficit?" (ch 7) in *What's happening to our news?* Reuters: Oxford
[http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/What s Happening to Our News.pdf](http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/What_s_Happening_to_Our_News.pdf)
- McNair ch 2 & 5
- Hayes, A; Singer, J and Ceppos, J (2007) "Shifting Roles, Enduring Values: the credible journalist in a digital age" *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22 (4) 262-279
- Keeble, *Ethics for journalists 2nd edition*, ch 2 and ch 6
- Frost ch 5

Week 3

W/b 14 February 2011

The ethics of taste and decency. How far should you go? Regulatory constraints and editorial responsibility for showing death, disease and destruction.

Reading

- Zelizer, *Journalism after September 11* chapter 3 (Photography, Journalism and Trauma)
- Sanders ch 8
- Frost ch 10
- Dart Center *Tragedies and Journalists*
http://dartcenter.org/files/en_tnj_0.pdf

Week 4

w/b 21 February 2011

The ethics of dealing with sources. On or off the record? The importance of not revealing your sources. The dangers of relationships with sources and questions about journalistic deception

Reading

- Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, Introduction
- Frost ch 7 and 11
- PCC code
http://www.pcc.org.uk/assets/111/Code_of_Practice_2011_A4.pdf
- Keeble ch 4
- Phillips (2010) Old sources, new bottles in Fenton ed (2010) *New media, old news* London: Sage

Week 5

w/b 28 February 2011

Dealing with the death knock and other journalists' dilemmas (Mary Braid)

Reading

- Keeble ch 5
- Jemphrey and Berrington (2000) "Surviving the Media: Hillsborough, Dunblane and the press" *Journalism Studies*, 1: 3, 469 – 483
- Sanders ch 8

Week 6

w/b 7 March 2011

When not to publish: Potential conflicts of interest and freebies – the relationship between journalism and public relations (PR). When does a gift become a bribe? When does an editorial become an advertorial?

Reading.

- Frost ch 7 and chapter 9
- Keeble ch 4
- Davies, *Flat Earth News* ch 3
- Lloyd (2010) Consider not the beam, focus on the mote in Ed Hobsbawm *Where the truth lies*

Week 7

w/b 14 March 2011

Faking it with words and images Journalism as lies. How you can lie with words and pictures

Reading for week 7:

- Winston B (2004), "The last scandal" *British Journalism Review* vol 15 no 3
- Carlson (2009), The reality of a fake image: news norms, photojournalistic craft and Brian Walski's fabricated photograph *Journalism Practice* vol 3 no 2
- Sanders ch 5

Week 8

w/b 21 March 2011

Writing about the poor, the suicidal and the marginalised. How use of language and choice of stories shape public perception and what ethical issues journalists face when covering these stories.

Reading for week 8:

- Keeble chs 7 and 8
- Society of Editors/Media Trust, Reporting poverty in the UK, Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York
<http://www.mediatrust.org/latest-news/documents/reporting-poverty-pdf>
- Society of Editors/Media Trust, Reporting Diversity in the UK ,
<http://www.societyofeditors.co.uk/userfiles/file/Reporting%20Diversity.pdf>
- Mediawise Sensitive coverage saves lives
<http://www.mediawise.org.uk/files/uploaded/Sensitive%20Coverage%20Saves%20Lives.pdf>

Week 9 w/b 28 March 2011

Freedom of Information and censorship. Is there such a thing as a free press? The threat to freedom of expression from anti-terror laws. Journalist as press v journalist as citizen.

Concentration of ownership. How far are powerful proprietors a threat to freedom of expression?

Reading

- Centre for Freedom of the Media <http://www.cfom.org.uk/>
- Index on Censorship <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/>
- English PEN <http://www.englishpen.org/>
- Keeble ch 10
- Sanders ch 6

Week 10 W/b 4 April 2011

Concentration of ownership. How far are powerful proprietors a threat to freedom of expression?

Reading

- McNair (2009), *News and journalism in the UK (5th edition)*, Routledge: London
- Lords Communications Committee evidence on Newspaper Ownership <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldselect/ldcomuni/122/12202.htm>

Week 11 w/b 11 April 2011

Reading week

w/b 18 April 2011

Easter vacation

w/b 25 April 2010

Easter vacation

Week 12 w/b 2 May

Individual tutorials

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Core texts

Frost, C (2007) *Journalism, Ethics and Regulation 2nd edition*, Harlow: Pearson Longman
Sanders, K (2003), *Ethics and Journalism*, London: Sage
Keeble, R (2009) *Ethics for journalists 2nd edition*, Routledge: London

Recommended reading

- Allan, Stuart (2004), *News Culture*, London and New York: Open University Press
- Brookes, Heather (2006), *Your Right to Know: A Citizen's Guide to the Freedom of Information Act* 2nd edition (Pluto Press)
- Blair, Jayson (2004) *Burning Down My Master's House*, New York: Phoenix Books
- Currah (2009) "A democratic deficit?" (ch 7) in *What's happening to our news?* Reuters: Oxford
- Durkeim (1957) *Professional ethics and civic morals*, New York
- Ed. Fenton, N (2010), *New media, old news: Journalism and democracy in the digital age*, Sage: London
- Friend and Singer (2007) *Online journalism ethics, traditions and transitions* London: ME Sharpe
- Hobsbawn, Julia, ed (2006), *Where the Truth Lies*, London: Atlantic Books
- Keeble, Richard ed (2005) *Print Journalism – a critical introduction*, London: Routledge
- Malcolm, Janet (1997), *The Journalist and the Murderer*, London, Granta
- Coates, Tim (ed) (2004) *The Hutton Enquiry* London: Tim Coates Books
- McNair (2009), *News and journalism in the UK (5th edition)*, Routledge: London
- Niblock (2010) *Journalism* One World Publications
- Randall (2000) *The universal journalist* 2nd edition London: Pluto Press
- Zelizer, Barbie and Allan, Stuart eds(2002) *Journalism after September 11*, London and New York, Routledge

Websites

- Mediawise http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=83
- Index on Censorship
- Campaign for Freedom of Information
- Poynter Online (ethics and diversity section)
- <http://www.poynter.org/subject.asp?id=32>