

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY TOM BIVINS, NEWSLETTER EDITOR



My daughter and I went to see *Wonder Woman* this weekend. I had literally been looking forward to it since the first trailer

dropped over a year ago. To be honest, I'm not a huge fan of super heroes. Even as a kid I tended to collect mostly *Classics Illustrated* comics—probably the chief reason I eventually became a literature major. I had already read most of the canon by the time I was 12. But, I never cared for Batman, Superman, Spiderman, and all those other \*\*\*men.

Then I discovered *Wonder Woman*. I liked her spunk, and her snarkiness; and her magic cuffs, golden lasso and invisible plane made an odd sort of sense to me. Of course, there was the obvious. I was a

pre-pubescent male after all. But I had also been brought up in a latter generation of a long line of matriarchs who, in a strange sort of way, *Wonder Woman's* Amazon lineage seemed to echo. I felt at home with *Wonder Woman* and her alter ego, Diana Prince. Her drive to do good combined with her feminist inner strength resonated with me in a way that mimicked my relationships with my mother, aunt, grandmother, and great grandmother. They were all strong, independent women for whom men were a necessary nuisance (which is not to say they didn't love and cherish the men in their lives).

At some point along the road to growing up, leaving home, and moving from place to place, I lost track of my comic book collection and *Wonder Woman*. Years later, I discovered my mother had given my collection away. There were just too many and too heavy to move about as my parents grew older.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

## Table of Contents

### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR .....1

Newsletter Editor Tom Bivins muses on *Wonder Woman* and matriarchy.

### STATE OF THE DIVISION .... 2

Division Head Ryan Thomas summarizes MED's year.

### JUST AROUND THE CORNER ..... 4

AEJMC Is getting closer. Programming Chair Chad Painter covers some of the highlights.

### AND THE WINNERS ARE... 7

Research Chair Erin Schauster reveals the paper presenters and award winners.

### COVERING POLICE & CRIME IS TRICKY BUSINESS ..... 8

Nicole Kraft traces a reporter's job in a touchy situation.

### "EVERY TEACHER IS DIFFERENT": WHEN CREATIVITY MEETS ETHICS ... 9

MED Grad Student Liaison Tara Walker reminds us that sometimes, we must challenge students to sit with their discomfort, their cognitive dissonance.

### NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS... 10

- A Call for the 4th annual Walter Cronkite Conference.



So, I forgot about Wonder Woman. Perhaps she simply became plain old Diana Prince, one of so many Diana Princes I worked with and knew along the way. And I became immersed in a world in which patriarchy seemed to be the rule, not the exception it had been in my family tree. Admittedly, I began to accept that world. Over time, of course, I started to see the injustice again as I became involved with the women's movement and the ERA in the 70s. But that was an off-and-on-again relationship for lots of reasons, including my need to move up in the media business, and eventually academia.

Thankfully, however, over the years I began to regain my equilibrium. Then, last year, I went to see that awful Batman vs. Superman movie on a bet (which I won. It was as awful as I predicted it would be.) Suddenly, out of the dust and explosions and disintegrating landscape toward



the end of the movie appeared a vision out of my childhood, and I literally gasped. It was my mother, my aunt, my grandmother, and my great grandmother—now all gone, but reincarnated before my astonished eyes.

And that's when I knew. Wonder Woman can't be thrown away with a pile of waste paper. She can't be forgotten or just melt into the crowd of Diana Princes. She will not be ignored, nor will she be denied. Her golden cuffs will still deflect the attacks of even the worst that today's evil can hurl at her. Her golden lasso of Truth is needed now more than ever. And her dedication to what is right will not falter, no matter the forces arrayed against her.

Yes, I did like the movie. A lot. But, more importantly, so did my daughter. She's been looking for a super hero for a long time. I should have introduced them sooner.

*Tom*

## THE STATE OF THE DIVISION

BY RYAN THOMAS, DIVISION CHAIR



**Dear MED colleagues,**

Each June, AEJMC division and interest group chairs must file an annual report reflecting on their unit's accomplishments over the past year and articulating a vision for the year ahead. In the short term, AEJMC uses these reports to ensure that divisions and interest groups are on a

sound annual footing. In the long term, it draws on the information provided in the reports as part of an assessment of every division and interest group that takes place once every five years. MED is up for assessment in 2018.

Two of the questions that the report asks division heads to respond to are: 1) What are your most important goals for the upcoming year? 2) What goals did your group set this year that you were unable to reach? Why? I wanted to use my final column as division head to sketch out some thoughts about our division (and in so doing, get a head start on drafting my report!). I'll start with the second question first, as it seems logical to assess our goals for 2016/17 before discussing goals for 2017/18.

In my first column as division head, I set three goals for the division in 2016/17. The first was to boost our number of research submissions. We had an alarming 18 submissions to our paper competition in 2016, which was

the lowest number of submissions since at least 2004 (based on the information I could find). I am pleased to report that we had 30 valid submissions for the 2017 conference, which is a big improvement (and a big relief!). We still have some work to do before we get closer to our submission mean over the 2004-2015 period, which was 41 submissions. More on that in a moment. (Also, you might note my use of the term "valid submissions" – we actually had 38 papers submitted but had to disqualify 8 due to authors providing identifying information or going substantially over the page limit – it astonishes me that authors do this, but alas, there we are). Full credit must go to our Research Chair, Erin Schauster, who has worked tirelessly over the year to coordinate our paper competition. Thank you, Erin, for all your work!

The second goal I articulated was to expand the division. I have championed a "plus one" theme this year, encouraging every division member to get one other person to (a) join the division; (b) join the division's listserv and Facebook page; (c) submit a paper to the research competition; and (d) attend the division's business meeting. We will find out if we have been successful regarding measures (a) and (d) in August. Please encourage friends and colleagues to join the division and to at-

**We want the division to be a welcoming place for new members.**

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

tend our business meeting! We want the division to be a welcoming place for new members.

The third goal was to emphasize inclusivity. I wanted to open up MED to more faces and voices than perhaps we are used to seeing and hearing from. I am delighted that the majority of our newsletter content for this year has featured columns authored by people who are not part of the leadership team. I'm also delighted that we have purposefully emphasized inclusivity with panel proposals, by ruling out any all-male panels, as well as by broadening our range of discussants and moderators. I must give full credit to Newsletter Editor Tom Bivins and Vice-Head and Programming Chair for their work on

## I still have nagging doubts about our research numbers.

these issues throughout the year. As we look ahead, there are some things I think we can improve upon. I still have nagging doubts about our research

numbers. One problem that division chairs have frequently lamented about is the fact that we are (rightly or wrongly) perceived as a journalism ethics division, and therefore discourage colleagues who study ethics of advertising, public relations, entertainment, new media, and so on, from submitting their research to us. I agree with this concern, but I think we are making strides in the right direction (as I hope a glance at our research line-up for August will attest).

Another problem, and one we don't talk a lot about, is how we articulate what ethics scholarship is in the first place. I am worried that we are able to discuss ethics in a general, topical sense but are unable to articulate a clear identity for media ethics as a body of theory, and thus how we go about studying it. For example, is a paper about journalistic autonomy a media ethics paper? Autonomy is certainly an ethics topic, but what sort of theoretical framework would the author need to couch the paper in for it to be considered valid in our division? What, then, is the relationship between topic and theory? When we talk about ethics, are we talking about it at the individual, organizational, or institutional levels? Is ethics ultimately about ethical decision-making or is it about something more? Is political theory (Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Rawls, etc.) part of the ethics canon or not? The flourishing literature on journalistic roles that you can find in journals like *Journalism Studies* and *Journalism Practice* seems (to my naïve eyes) to be clearly dealing with media ethics issues – is it therefore media ethics research? I don't presume to have answers to these complicated questions

(though I am never short of opinions!) but I think they are things we must wrestle with as a division and a field.

This has practical implications as well; I was struck by a remark Ted Glasser made at a panel in the 2016 conference when he mentioned how there are scarce resources out there articulating the standards for how ones should set about writing a theoretical/philosophical essay, and how – from the reviewer and reader's end – we can know such an essay is of high quality and a substantive contribution to the discipline. This is a problem. We need to think more concretely about how we guide ethics scholarship by providing scholars – especially emerging scholars – with the tools they need to make an impact. Likewise, for colleagues doing empirical work, we ought to be clear about what kind of work qualifies as media ethics research. MED is often people's entry point into ethics research (it was certainly mine) so it seems logical to be thinking about how the division can facilitate these kinds of opportunities and conversations.

We should also all be thinking about how we expand the division. We need to develop a culture where veteran members continue to serve the division in productive ways while shepherding in a cohort of newer members. It seems to me that new members come into the division and take one of two paths: they hang out on the margins for a bit and then disappear, or they get involved in the business of the division, eventually holding a leadership role... and then they disappear! So our goal is twofold, as we need to hold on to all our newcomers AND keep veteran members coming back and playing mentorship roles and participating in the life of the division. I am hopeful that our membership numbers are up in August. I am mindful of the fact that growing the membership is our collective responsibility – the leadership and the general membership. I hope we can all work on this together in the years ahead by nurturing promising graduate students, collaborating with one another on research, and encouraging colleagues to explore ethics issues in their teaching and research.

It has been an honor serving as your division head this year. I have enjoyed it, and have learned a lot. Anybody who has served as division head will tell you that the bulk of the work is actually done by the programming and research chairs, and I have been lucky to work with Chad and Erin in these positions. They have been outstanding in every way and I am excited to see where they take the division. I must also thank Tom Bivins, Jan Leach, Nicole Kraft, John Williams, and Tara Walker, who have been part of a formidable leadership this year.

Onward!  
Ryan

**THANKS RYAN!**  
(An editorial comment)

## JUST AROUND THE CORNER

BY CHAD PAINTER, VICE CHAIR & PROGRAMMING CHAIR



The 2017 AEJMC conference is just around the corner, and I hope to see you in Chicago this August. To help as you are booking hotels and flights, I thought I would share the Media Ethics Division's full program of PF&R, Teaching, and Research panels so you could have all of the necessary information in one place. I also want to give a

shout out and hearty thank you to every division member who proposed a panel idea, helped program a panel, or agreed to be a panelist or moderator. I am so excited about our programming this year thanks to all of your hard work.

Choosing a couple of panels to highlight is like choosing a favorite child, but I am going to do it anyway. The "Send in the Feds! Covering Gun Violence in Chicago and the Nation" panel (11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Thursday) is both timely and locally significant. MED also will co-sponsor a fairly novel panel, "The Ethics of Advocacy: A Debate and Discussion," with the Public Relations Division; pro-and-con panelists will debate the issue and a winner will be declared.

I also want to highlight the MED Members' Meeting (6:45-8:15 p.m. Thursday). Attending the meeting is a great way to become involved, or to become re-involved, with the division while helping to plan its future. I truly hope to see all of you there.

Our division will be co-sponsoring a wide range of sessions that reflect the diversity of people, ideas, and interests in our division. With the caveat that there are always last-minute changes, the full schedule with times, dates, panelists, and descriptions is below.

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### Post-Tenure Productivity and Becoming a Member of University Administration—Impacts for the Field

10-11:30 a.m., Wednesday, August 9

Mass Communication and Society and Media Ethics Divisions

Professional Freedom and Responsibility

Moderating/Presiding:  
Paul Voakes, Colorado

Panelists:  
Jennifer Greer, Alabama  
Dwight Brooks, Hofstra  
Marie Hardin, Penn State  
Lee Wilkins, Wayne State

Dr. Voakes mentioned the importance of remaining a productive scholar post-tenure and becoming a member of university administration. To start with, we're thinking that it would be useful to hear advice on how to maintain research productivity when faced with the new demands of being a tenured professor (i.e., increased service load). The goal here would be to give people advice on how to remain productive so they can become full professors. The other focus of this panel would be the importance of moving up the university hierarchy after becoming a full professor. Indeed, having communication scholars in these positions may benefit departments, but also the field as a whole. Therefore, it might be important to outline why this is a worthy and important endeavor.

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### Pressing issues in Digital Ethics

1:30-3 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 9

Communication Technology and Media Ethics Divisions  
Professional Freedom and Responsibility

Moderating/Presiding:  
Katy Culver, Wisconsin

Panelists:  
Meg Leta Jones, Georgetown  
Whitney Phillips, Mercer  
Thorsten Bush, St. Galen  
Don Heider, Loyola Chicago

Virtual reality, trolls, and the right to be forgotten are among the many issues raised by advent of new technology. These scholars will present research offering frameworks to better understand the ethical questions brought forth by these technologies and give us tools to make sense of the moral choices involved.

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### Refereed Research Panel

3:15-4:45 p.m., Wednesday, August 9

Fake News, Trolling, & Cyberbullying: Debating Social Media Companies' Rights & Responsibilities  
5-6:30 p.m., Wednesday, August 9  
Media Ethics and Law & Policy Divisions  
Professional Freedom and Responsibility

Moderating/Presiding: Morgan Weiland, Stanford University

Panelists:

Jane E. Kirtely, University of Minnesota  
Neil Richards, Washington University in St. Louis  
Jay Edelson, Edelson P.C.  
Theodore L. Glasser, Stanford University

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### **Send in the Feds! Covering Gun Violence in Chicago and the Nation**

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m., Thursday, August 10  
Electronic News and Media Ethics Divisions  
Professional Freedom and Responsibility

Moderating/Presiding:

Bastiaan Vanacker, Loyola University Chicago

Panelists:

William Lee, Chicago Tribune  
Michael Lansu, WBEZ  
Tony DeMars, Texas A&M-Commerce  
Tim Brown, Central Florida  
Sally Hastings, Central Florida  
Bill Davie, Louisiana at Lafayette

While the United States has only about 5% of the world's population, our country has more than 30% of reported mass shootings. The deadliest shooting in 2016 occurred at the Pulse nightclub of Orlando (49 killed), which followed by less than ten years the Virginia Tech massacre (32 killed), and the Sandy Hook shooting (27 killed). During the July 4th 2016 holiday in Chicago, 11 people were killed and 60 others were wounded. We also have more guns per capita than any country in the world, and when news media coverage of mass shootings and gun control spikes so does the sale of guns. The role of the press in facilitating useful conversations about public issues to facilitate constructive change is challenged by these facts.

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### **Solutions Journalism: Ethics, Advocacy, and Community**

3:15-4:45 p.m., Thursday, August 10  
Media Ethics and Scholastic Journalism Divisions  
Teaching

Moderating/Presiding:

Jan Leach, Kent State

Panelists:

Kristin Gilger, Arizona State University  
John Bowen, Kent State  
Holly Wise, Texas State University, Solutions Journalism Network

This panel will consider and debate issues related to

teaching Solutions Journalism, plus offer best practices including lessons, activities and examples. SoJo is an emerging trend that reports on problem solving (based on evidence) instead of hero worship or inspiration. It complements investigative journalism but is not advocacy. What minefields should students learn and avoid? What is the best way to promote SoJo? How can student media engage campus communities with Solutions stories?

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### **Refereed Research Panel**

5-6:30 p.m., Thursday, August 10

MED Members' Meeting

6:45-8:15 p.m., Thursday, August 10

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### **Is Women's Work (Never) Done? Gender and the Re-valuation of Faculty Work**

1:45-3:15 p.m., Friday, August 11

Commission on the Status of Women and Media Ethics Divisions  
Professional Freedom and Responsibility

Moderating/Presiding:

Julie Andsager, Tennessee

Panelists:

Linda Steiner, Maryland  
Carolyn Kitch, Temple  
María Len-Ríos, Georgia  
Lana Rakow, North Dakota

For decades, women faculty in journalism and mass communication programs sought to advance up to roles in local administration, organizational leadership, and scholarly recognition, such as editorship of journals. The success that women have recently enjoyed in these arenas is to be congratulated and commended. This panel, however, provocatively argues that these indicators may obfuscate an underlying revaluation of what is powerful and prestigious in our field. The panel considers professionalism and service to the journalism profession, community- and service-based learning, leadership in organizational roles, and local administration in terms of gender revaluation, including what this means for women who are also members of under-represented groups.

**Are We Part of the Problem or the Solution? Teaching for Change: Addressing Marginalization in College Classrooms and Newsrooms Through Leadership Development**

5:15-6:45 p.m., Friday, August 11

Cultural and Critical Studies and Media Ethics Divisions Teaching

Moderating/Presiding:

Janice Marie Collins, Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Panelists:

Esther Taj Clark, Tennessee Technological

Joy Marie Anderson, Arizona State

Chad Painter, Dayton

Guy Harrison, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication

This is a crucial time and a wonderful opportunity for professors to think critically about their pedagogical approaches. We should address how our students learn about marginalization and how they practice their craft in their learning spaces. This panel will provide pedagogical tools and practices that will illuminate problems and solutions that they use in their learning spaces that address fair and responsible reporting in the midst of schematic perspectives that may affect the messages conveyed to the public. This includes addressing the demographic of sensitive topics, the students, the professors, and the campus climate through assessments of the design of their classrooms and pedagogical approaches.

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**Refereed Research Panel**

12:15-1:30 p.m., Friday, August 11

**The Ethics of Advocacy: A Debate and Discussion of How to Teach Advocacy**

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Saturday, August 12

Public Relations and Media Ethics Divisions Teaching

Moderating/Presiding:

Kathy Fitzpatrick, American University

Panelists:

Lauren Brengarth, Colorado-Colorado Springs

Pat Curtin, Oregon

Derina Holtzhausen, Lamar

Kevin Stoker, Texas Tech

Tim Coombs, Texas A&M

Dean Kruckerberg, North Carolina-Charlotte

Tom Bivins, Oregon

Erin Schauster, Colorado-Boulder

Giselle Auger, Duquesne

Shannon Bowen, South Carolina

This session will feature a debate using modified the rules that colleges and high schools with their debate teams. There will be 3-members on the pro-and-con sides to debate the “Ethics of Advocacy” issue so that there will be three rounds and a brief closing before being opened up to Q&A with attendees. While a team of judges discusses who won the debate privately, someone from Media Ethics and Public Relations divisions will give a talk about how to teach advocacy in light of the debate and followup Q&A. Once the teaching discussion is done, the judges would name the winning side of the debate.



*An allegorical female image of the “Republic” overlooks the Chicago Worlds Fair of 1893.*

## AND THE WINNERS ARE...

BY ERIN SCHAUSTER, RESEARCH CHAIR



Congratulations to the authors of accepted papers and to award winners. And a sincere thank you, paper reviewers, moderators and discussants.

Resulting from a range of diverse and timely topics, we should have a lively discussion this year at AEJMC. Here is Media Ethics Division's refereed paper schedule for the 2017 AEJMC conference in Chicago.

division's refereed paper schedule for the 2017 AEJMC conference in Chicago.

### 8:15 to 9:45 a.m., Wednesday, August 9

*Traversing Media Ethics: Historical, Pedagogical and Theoretical Papers*

- The Evolution of the Potter Box in Mass Media Ethics, Matthew Reavy, University of Scranton
- A history of media ethics: From application to theory and back again, Lee Wilkins, Wayne State University
- Teaching Journalism Ethics Through "The Newsroom": An Enhanced Learning Experience, Laveda Peterlin, University of Kansas; Jonathan Peters, University of Kansas
- Bringing Habermas into the newsroom: consensus or compromise and the rehabilitation of common sense, Laura Moorhead, San Francisco State University
- Student Understanding and Application of Virtues in a Redesigned Journalism Ethics Class, David Craig, The University of Oklahoma; Mohammad Yousuf, The University of Oklahoma

### 3:15 to 4:45 p.m., Wednesday, August 9

*PR, Fake News, Social Media, Oh My! Emergent and Divergent topics in Media Ethics*

- An Emotional Approach to Risk Communication, Shiyu Yang, Marquette University
- \*The Use of Influence Tactics by Senior Public Relations Practitioners to Provide Ethics Counsel, Marlene Neill, Baylor University; Amy Barnes, University of Arkansas at Little Rock \*PROFESSIONAL RELEVANCE AWARD
- An Ethics-Based Investigation of Algorithmic Use of Social Media Data for News, Tau Fu, University of International Business and Economics; William Babcock
- Falsity, fakery and carbon monoxide: A typology of fake news and an ethical approach, Fred Vultee, Wayne State University
- Trust vs. evaluation: The interplay of ethics and participation in news, Katy Culver, University of Wisconsin Madison; Byung Gu Lee

### 5:00 to 6:30 p.m., Thursday, August 10

*Crime, Drugs and Politics: Media Ethics Division Reports on U.S. and Foreign News Coverage*

- News in the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: Reconciliation Isn't Sexy, Charis Rice, Coventry University; Maureen Taylor, University of Tennessee Knoxville
- "The Times F'd up": Responsibility, blame, and journalistic paradigm repair following the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Miles Sari Washington State University; Elizabeth Hindman Washington State University
- Weeding out the differences: Market orientation's effects on the coverage of marijuana legalization, Patrick Ferrucci University of Colorado Boulder; Chad Painter University of Dayton; Angelica Kalika University of Colorado Boulder
- \*The Devil is in the Details: Comparing Crime Coverage Credos in the United States, The Netherlands, and Sweden, Romayne Fullerton, The University of Western Ontario; Margaret Patterson, Duquesne University; Katherin Hoad Reddick, The University of Western Ontario \*TOP FACULTY PAPER

### 12:15 to 1:30 p.m., Friday, August 11

*Ethical Practice Makes Perfect: Expectations of Journalists and Journalism*

- "I'm more ethical than you": Third-person and first-person perception among American journalists, Angela Lee, University of Texas at Dallas; Renita Coleman, University of Texas at Austin
- Here's What BuzzFeed Journalists Think of Their Journalism, Edson Tandoc, Nanyang Technological University; Cassie Yuan Wen Foo, Nanyang Technological University
- Playing the right way: In-house sports reporters and media ethics as boundary work, Michael Mirer, University of Wisconsin
- Ethical, moral, and professional standards in journalism practice: A baseline definition of journalistic integrity, Kimberly Kelling, University of Missouri
- \*Spotlight: Virtuous Journalism in Practice, Yayu Feng, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign \*TOP STUDENT PAPER
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## COVERING POLICE & CRIME IS TRICKY BUSINESS

Following a Mississippi shooting, a reporter videotapes the suspect's confession while he was handcuffed on the side of the road. Ethical issues? You bet.

BY NICOLE KRAFT



Therese Apel, who describes herself on Twitter as the “crime/breaking/mayhem reporter” for Mississippi’s Clarion-Ledger, got the call May 31 at 3 a.m.

An officer was down in Lincoln County and three other people may be dead. Apel knew Lincoln, and she knew its police force, having served the community as both a reporter

and a volunteer firefighter. She grabbed her camera and ran.

The officer dead was Deputy William Dur, with whom Apel had worked for years. And the story got worse as night became day. The death toll was actually eight people. The suspect, Willie Corey Godbolt, was on the loose.

Apel was on the run again when a second call came through the police radio—Godbolt had been found and opened fire. By the time she arrived, Godbolt was in custody with a gunshot wound to his arm. He had been read his Miranda rights.

She originally thought he might be dead, but then he started to move. She started to roll her camera, capturing the scene of controlled chaos.

“My pain wasn’t designed for him,” Godbolt said, speaking into a camera about Dur. “He was just there.”

Godbolt explained he had gone to his in-laws to talk about his children. At some point neighbors called police, and the deputy arrived. Four people were left dead at that scene.

The video lasts 1:10, and in it the two have a quiet and direct conversation, without police interest or input. The only interjection is the beep of an ambulance backing up.

Apel asked, “So, what’s next for you?”

“Death,” Godbolt replied. “My intention was to have [them] kill me. I ran out of bullets.”

Her reply: “It’s a good thing they showed mercy.”

“Suicide by cop was my intention,” he continued. I ain’t fit to live, not after what I done. Not in y’all eyes. Not in nobody’s eyes. But God. He forgives you for everything.”

Godbolt then looks off to his left, and the video ends.

It’s every reporter’s dream to be one-on-one with a source that gives quotes that are too good to make up. While reporters often wait hours or days for police to provide info readers are clamoring to know—what happened and why—almost never does a murder suspect personally provide the information.

Except it happened to Apel. In the days after posting the video, Apel faced her share of critics. There are those who feel she gave a suspected killer rights of expression he did not deserve. Others say the attention put the focus on the killer rather than those killed.

Even the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, in the section

entitled, “Minimize Harm,” lists coverage considerations that might apply to such a scenario, including :

- Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)



[Watch the video here.](#)

She inched her way closer to Godbolt, now seated on the roadway beside a plain-clothed police officer, his left arm bandaged, feet splayed out before him, his arms handcuffed behind his back.

And as he looked into her camera lens, he began to talk.

- Balance a suspect’s right to a fair trial with the public’s right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges.

I spoke with Apel just hours after she covered the funeral of Dur, including a live Facebook stream. She was open in retelling the story, and admitted that if not the trust she had built through years as a police reporter—and her own experiences as a first responder—she would likely never have had such access.

She knows her level of access made some uncomfortable, and brought up questions of objectivity or the motivations behind broadcasting something as controversial as a confession just hours after a murder spree.

She stands firmly behind her reporting.

“I’m not worried about prejudicing anybody,” she said. “He was not under duress... it came straight from his mouth. Everyone here knew I was a reporter. I was standing there when he was Mirandized, and he continued to talk. That’s why I stayed where I was. I wanted it all on tape. The more he talks the better.

“I knew this is my job, and there is nobody else in the world who can do this right here.”

Apel said the real lesson is to see and understand the rapport reporters can build with agencies that allow such a level of trust and respect. It takes a reporter who understands boundaries, and is fair and accurate in reporting the news.

Covering police and crime is tricky, especially amid the current polarization between community and police. The role of the media could not be more important, Apel said.

But she fears too few young journalists see coverage in black and white, right and wrong, media and authorities. They may not be comfortable building the relationships that matter for news that involves life and death.

“If we are all doing the right thing, we are working toward the greater good for the world,” she said. “If we are all on the same page, it’s about truth and facts and things you can’t manipulate.”

## “EVERY TEACHER IS DIFFERENT”: WHEN CREATIVITY MEETS ETHICS

BY TARA WALKER, MED GRAD STUDENT LIAISON



This summer, I’ll be teaching a course called “Concepts in creativity” for the first time. The course is basically an overview of how people come up with ideas and execute them in strategic communication fields. So far, I’ve talked to both instructors and students about their experiences in the

course. I asked two former students whether they talked at all about ethics in their class. They looked at me, a little confused. “No...” they said. “But every teacher is different.”

The course is often taught by adjuncts that are professionals in advertising and public relations. They’ve given me great ideas for assignments – helping students to get over their fears of drawing and writing, breaking through to their creative selves, and following an idea from inception to finish. I appreciate all of this. But my version of this class will be somewhat different.

I was looking at a textbook chapter and it showed a sample ad of a woman in a thong bikini and sandals walking down a beach. “At least her feet are comfortable,” the copy reads. Underneath this sample ad in the textbook, the caption reads: “Sexist? Maybe. But did it sell shoes?”

I’m sure the person who came up with this ad thought they were very creative. I can imagine a round table of copywriters chuckling over it. But why is the textbook writer brushing off the idea of sexism so lightly, as if it doesn’t matter as long as the ad sells shoes? Why didn’t this writer use this opportunity to discuss the fact that just because an idea sells something doesn’t mean it’s a good idea? Good ideas must be judged as good not just because they achieve a desired end, but because they do so in a way that treats people as ends in themselves, not just as mere means. (Thanks, Kant.) I get it that advertisers have to please clients. But they do not have to go for the easy way out to do so.

Part of the reason I got involved in this field is because I think that persuasive messages are powerful, that they shape our lives every day and that we take them for granted. We can write off an ad like the one I mentioned, saying that it’s not sexist because it’s not meant to be taken seriously. But it doesn’t matter whether the ad is meant to be taken seriously or not. It does matter that young people see images like this of women’s bodies objectified in advertising. It matters that the message is that women care more about their looks than anything else. It

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matters, because women are still not equal citizens in the United States. And it's not just about sexism in ads, it's about racism, classism, and homophobia.

### How can we judge creativity without talking about the limits of creativity?

I think that the way we change the industry is from the bottom up. To do this, we need to be talking about these issues from day one with our students. This

may mean having some difficult and uncomfortable conversations. Yes, this ad might sell shoes, but what else is it doing? What messages is it sending? I'm not saying we have to rip apart every idea, searching for excuses to be offended. But in this era where being culturally sensitive is denounced as "political correctness," it's more important than ever to point out to students that words are powerful. Images are powerful. They are not harmless, and they are not indifferent. They are tools that, for lack of a better phrase, can be used for good or evil.

It makes perfect sense to me that freshman classes like "Concepts in Creativity" have an examination of me-

dia ethics built right in. How can we talk about what constitutes "good" work without discussing the social context that the work is created in? How can we judge creativity without talking about the limits of creativity? I wonder if the kind of moral myopia that researchers have seen with advertising and PR professionals could be avoided if ethical decision making was established as an important part of the practice before practitioners even join the industry. I still believe that media and journalism students should be required to take courses in media ethics specifically before they graduate, but at the same time, I think it's important to talk about ethics in practitioner-oriented classes because it will help students to see the connections; they will see that ethics is not just an abstract concept that people philosophize about, and it's not about looking for justification to complain. Ethical thinking is not about putting arbitrary limits on creativity. In fact, challenging students to think ethically as well as creatively may even enhance their creativity. And, hopefully, it will set a precedent: the choices students make in an intro-level college class may shape their careers and the way they think about media for the rest of their lives.

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## NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Call for papers, abstracts, and panels

#### THE WALTER CRONKITE CONFERENCE ON MEDIA ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

##### *Fourth Annual Conference*

Oct. 26, 2017  
Dallas Texas  
Dallas Sheraton

Abstracts and Panel Proposal Deadline: July 1, 2017  
Final Paper Deadline: Sept. 1, 2017

Media educators, graduate students and professionals are invited to submit completed research papers, abstracts and hot topics panels for the fourth annual Walter Cronkite Conference on Media Ethics and Integrity, sponsored by Missouri Western State University and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Media Ethics Division. While the conference has been held the last three years at MWSU in Cronkite's hometown of St. Joseph, this year we will be co-locating our conference with the National Collegiate Media Convention in Dallas, in order to reach out to college journalists.

Completed papers and abstracts should be original, unpublished work that deals with media ethics issues in contemporary and historical settings. We welcome all research methodologies—quantitative, qualitative, historical and philosophical—and scholarship from other media disciplines (public relations, photography, design) as it relates to issues of media ethics and integrity. We're especially interested in research-in-progress, exploratory essays and critiques of current and past media practices. Authors also are encouraged to submit papers exploring the ethical implications of the changing media environment, especially in regards to broadcasting and the legacy of Walter Cronkite. Keep in mind that the conference will include educators, professionals and students.

All abstracts and papers will be competitively peer reviewed and should not include any identifying information, either on the abstract or in the electronic copy. Accepted papers and abstract proposals will be presented at the conference in research sessions. Authors should have handouts or executive summaries of their research for conference participants.

Abstract proposals should be one page in length and include an explanation of why the scholarship is significant to the field of media ethics. Completed papers should be no more than 25 pages long, not including references. Completed papers by submitted by the Sept. 1 deadline will be eligible for scholar and graduate student awards, which will include busts of Cronkite created by Eric Fuson. Winners will also have their conference registration fees waived.

Panel proposals should include the name of the sponsor, the title of the panel, summary of the topic and a list of panel participants. Please include a title for each panelist's presentation.

Submit abstracts, panel proposals and completed papers via email to Ryan Thomas at [thomasrj@missouri.edu](mailto:thomasrj@missouri.edu). Conference questions can be sent to conference director Bob Bergland: [berglan@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:berglan@missouriwestern.edu).

Updated registration and other information will be provided by July on the conference website: [www.missouriwestern.edu/cronkiteconference](http://www.missouriwestern.edu/cronkiteconference).

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## AEJMC 2017 CONFERENCE

August 9 - 12 • Chicago, Illinois • Closing the Gap: Media, Research and the Profession



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