

Media Ethics Division-AEJMC

[Visit us on Facebook](#)

Home
Announcements
Newsletter
Newsletter Archive
Teaching Resources
Find an Ethics Expert
MED Officers
Research Abstracts
Links of Interest
AEJMC Home



[Archive of past issues](#)

Ideas R Us

Do you have a teaching idea or question you'd like to see in the Newsletter or on the website? Would you like to "poll" MED members on some aspect of teaching? Send your ideas to our Teaching Chair and she'll try to pursue them in future issues. Examples might include: teaching ethics to large classes, using the Socratic method in teaching ethics, tips for grading and assessment in ethics education and more. What's "trending" in your brain? Contact Jan Leach at jleach1@kent.edu or phone 330-672-4289.

MASTHEAD

Division Head: **Bastiaan Vanacker**

Vice Head/Programming Chair: **Kevin Stoker**

Newsletter Editor: **Ryan J. Thomas**

Newsletter Layout & Design: **Tom Bivins**

Ethical News: Fall 2012 • Volume 16, No. 1

CONTENTS

[MED Annual Meeting Minutes](#)

A report of the annual meeting of the Media Ethics Division by Division Head Bastiaan Vanacker

[Journalists Fail Ethical Duties with Shallow Coverage of Muslim Protests](#)

Matt J. Duffy argues that journalists need to take extra care not to perpetuate stereotypes about the Muslim world

['Oil and Water': The Challenges of Teaching the Combined Law and Ethics Course](#)

Jan Leach explores the challenges of teaching law and ethics together

[Send Your Grad Student to the Media Ethics Division!](#)

Sound advice from Jenn Burleson Mackay

Dirty Politics

Jan Leach's report from the recent Poynter Kent State Media Ethics Workshop on "dirty politics"

How Much Professional Experience is Enough?

Newsletter Editor Ryan J. Thomas on the thorny issue of the professional experience of journalism educators

Media Ethics Division-AEJMC

[Visit us on Facebook](#)

[Home](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

[Teaching Resources](#)

[Find an Ethics Expert](#)

[MED Officers](#)

[Research Abstracts](#)

[Links of Interest](#)

[AEJMC Home](#)

AEJMC Members' Meeting Minutes

by **Bastiaan Vanacker, Division Head**



Outgoing Division Chair Kate Tusinski Berg opened the meeting a little after 8:30 p.m. and started off her remarks by pointing out that the division's membership is remaining stable at a healthy 236 members. She then gave an overview of her initiatives to give the division a greater online and social media presence: The new MED Educators Facebook group (see below), a MED Twitter account and a new format for the newsletter allowing individual stories to be linked to and shared more easily than was the case with the PDF format. She especially thanked Tom Bivins for his effort in successfully executing this transition.

Programming Chair Bastiaan Vanacker gave an update about the eight MED co-sponsored panels, which were going off without a glitch and were particularly well attended. He did note that eight panels was a bit many for a relatively small division and suggested that in the future MED set one chip aside for a MED-only panel rather than to desperately try to find a co-sponsor for a panel doomed to be slotted in the undesirable weaning hours of the conference.

Research Chair Kevin Stoker's report focused on the low numbers of submissions MED received this year. With only 23 submissions, this year's research competition stayed well below expectations. Stoker was even forced to approach the Public Relations Division for a co-sponsored research session in order to fill all our research slots. Despite the low numbers, Stoker maintained that the quality of the accepted research was top notch and that the research presentations had been stimulating and thought provoking. Later in the meeting,

Stoker would recognize the award winning research:

Clifford Christians, Illinois & Stephen Ward, Wisconsin-Madison: "Anthropological realism for global ethics" (Top Faculty Paper)

Patrick Lee Plaisance, Colorado State, Elizabeth Skewes, Colorado, & Joanna Larez, Colorado State: "The moral psychology of journalism exemplars" (Runner-up top faculty paper)

Lee Wilkins, Missouri: "The ethics of collaboration: Justice as reciprocity and capabilities" (Third place faculty paper)

David Herrera, Missouri: "Journalism enhanced by argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking" (Carol Burnett Award)

Vanacker provided further context to the low submission numbers by pointing out that conference-wide submissions were up and that MED's numbers were now much lower than those of many interest groups. While acknowledging that quantity does not equal quality, he argued the division's membership needs to make greater efforts to attract more submissions, especially since MED is up for evaluation this year.

Teaching Chair Jan Leach thanked everybody who has been contributing to the Teaching Ethics Resources [website](#) and requested that members continue to send her teaching materials they are willing to share. She also invited members to join the MED Educators Facebook group, the brainchild of David Craig from the University of Oklahoma. The group is meant to be a forum for questions, announcements or links for other members. It is a closed group that people can join by contacting Jan at jleach1@kent.edu. Jan also agreed to continue in her role as Teaching Chair for the upcoming year.

PF&R Chair Matt J. Duffy and Graduate Liaison Ryan J. Thomas were then recognized for their valuable contributions to the newsletter. Duffy invited anyone who has ideas relating to PF&R to contact him and would later agree to assume his role as PF&R Chair for one more year. Thomas on the other hand, recently accepted a faculty position at Missouri and therefore no longer can function as graduate liaison (as of this writing, this position is still vacant, please forward any nominations to bvanacker@luc.edu). Later in the meeting, Thomas agreed to take over newsletter editor duties from Jenn Burleson Mackay. Mackay, after being nominated by Matt Duffy, was voted into the leadership ladder as Research Chair. The division leadership expressed its gratitude and appreciation to Mackay for the hard work she put in during her two-year tenure as newsletter editor.

Journal of Mass Media Ethics editor Lee Wilkins gave her annual update on the state of the division's journal and told the membership that JMME is maintaining a healthy local and international subscription base, and only in Western Europe have institutional subscriptions lagged in the past year. The journal has been coming out on time and on budget and 61,000 article downloads were registered. Wilkins also mentioned that some issues of JMME will be re-issued as books and finished with the announcement that she will be stepping down as editor. In a follow-up email she indicated that the selection process that will begin early in 2013 and will be done through a committee of the journal's editorial board. While JMME is the journal

affiliated with our division, it is not an AEJMC journal and neither AEJMC nor our division have any formal say in the editorship.

As representative of the award committee, Wilkins also presented The Carl Couch Center's Clifford G. Christians Ethics Research Award to Professors Mark Fackler (Calvin College) and Robert Fortner (Hope College) for their book on international media ethics, *Ethics and Evil in the Public Sphere: Media, Universal Values, and Global Development* (Hampton Press, 2010). Christians praised the book as representing "research with authenticity."

Next, it was Tom Bivins' turn to be honored. He received the MED Distinguished Service Award from his former student and outgoing Chair Kati Tusinski Berg who thanked Bivins for his tireless efforts in designing and providing the layout for the newsletter for many years. Bivins graciously accepted the award and suggested that the division leadership and newsletter editor consider whether they still want to hold on to pre-digital deadlines now the format of the newsletter has been changed to be more in lockstep with a social media environment.

Bill Babcock and Ginny Whitehouse's pre-conference workshop this year was co-sponsored by the Political Communication Interest Group and once again was at maximum capacity. Based on the feedback received, Babcock labeled this as one of the most successful workshops he could remember. Babcock further revealed that in all likelihood, next year's workshop will deal with covering trauma.

MED member and APPE liaison Wendy Wyatt urged MED members to consider attending the APPE conference in San Antonio next winter and join the strong media ethics contingent that is present there each year. One of the perks of APPE is that it enables one to see what ethicists in other fields are working on, she argued. This year, there will be a "hot topics in media ethics" session at the APPE conference. Anyone with ideas for the session topic or any questions and remarks regarding APPE should contact Wendy Wyatt at wnwyatt@stthomas.edu.

After concluding remarks by Ed Wasserman about the importance to the profession of what we do and a plea by Patrick Plaisance to keep one another apprised of our research activities in other fields that may be of relevance to the study of media ethics, incoming Chair Bastiaan Vanacker adjourned the meeting.

The MED leadership would once again like to extend its gratitude to the [Center for Digital Ethics and Policy](#) at Loyola University Chicago and [Media Ethics magazine](#) for providing the funds for a truly remarkable social this year.

[Go to the next story](#)

[Go to Newsletter Contents](#)

Print this page

Media Ethics Division-AEJMC

Visit us on Facebook

Home

Announcements

Newsletter

Newsletter Archive

Teaching Resources

Find an Ethics Expert

MED Officers

Research Abstracts

Links of Interest

AEJMC Home

Journalists Fail Ethical Duties with Shallow Coverage of Muslim Protests

by **Matt J. Duffy**

PF&R Chair

The protests in the Muslim world over an anti-Islam video created in the United States offers an excellent opportunity for a discussion about Western press freedom and responsibility.

Many have noted that the US coverage of the issue doesn't help to bridge the cultural divide between the West and the Muslim world. Queens College Professor Mohammed el-Nawawy, a member of the Arab-U.S. Association for Communication Editors and the editor of the Journal of Middle East Media, recently made this point in an editorial for the New York Times.



U.S. journalists failed "to dissect the root of the problem, which is the fine line between free speech and offensive speech," el-Nawawy [wrote](#).

He said that all Muslims find any depiction of the Islamic prophet highly offensive. However, by focusing on the protests with little in-depth coverage, el-Nawawy faulted journalists for creating a stereotypical representation of all Muslims.

"As intense and as fast as the media coverage of these protests started, they quickly fell off the U.S. media radar without answering a basic question: Why has this amateurish video angered the Muslim world?," he said.

His observation is valid—particularly for television journalists, and it's important to note the ethical perspective of this case.

The SPJ's Code of Ethics states that journalists should strive to "examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others."

With a cursory news story about the protests, journalists fail to meet this ethical obligation. They must make clear with in-depth reporting, for instance, how many Muslims do not understand the U.S. approach regarding free expression—even offensive speech.

Many Americans assume that everyone looks at the world through the same perspective regarding freedom of speech. Of course, that perspective is shaped by living in a country that enjoys wide latitude in freedom of expression. Anyone who's watched the television show "Southpark" or seen a news report on the Westboro Baptist Church funeral protests understands innately the breadth of free expression in the United States.

Living in a Muslim country can be far different. Often the government controls the media and the boundaries of allowable discourse. Cultural norms also place restraints on what is spoken publicly. This environment helps fuel the perception from some Muslims that the United States government must expressly approve of the video. When coming from such an environment, the idea that the president could not simply ban such an offensive benefit is hard to understand.

Another ethical edict from the SPJ code also applies: "Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so."

Journalists offering shallow coverage violate this principle in at least two ways. First, they don't fully explain how deeply offensive Muslims find any depiction of their prophet and the cultural reasons leading to this outrage. This offense stems from Muslims overwhelming sense of sanctity for Islam and other religions.

Second, by focusing attention on the violent protesters and ignoring the more reasoned responses from the vast majority of Muslims, journalists fail to "tell the story" of the diversity of Muslims.

When journalists neglect their ethical duty in their reporting, the result makes it harder to bridge cultural divides. Their actions leave audiences with a stereotypical perception of 1.6 billion members of the world.

Dr. Matt J. Duffy taught communication ethics for two years in the Middle East. He is currently organizing the [AUSACE journalism educators'](#) conference that will be held at Georgia State University on Nov. 16-19. Follow him on Twitter: @mattjduffy.

[Go to the next story](#)

[Go to Newsletter Contents](#)

Print this page

Media Ethics Division-AEJMC

Visit us on Facebook

Home

Announcements

Newsletter

Newsletter Archive

Teaching Resources

Find an Ethics Expert

MED Officers

Research Abstracts

Links of Interest

AEJMC Home

'Oil and Water': The Challenges of Teaching the Combined Law and Ethics Course

By **Jan Leach**

Teaching Chair

Teaching media law and ethics together can be as difficult as mixing oil and water. So it's no surprise that former MED chair Jack Breslin suggested "oil and water" in the title for a panel addressing the controversial teaching topic during the August (2012) AEJMC conference.

MED and the Law and Policy Division jointly sponsored the conference session titled "Teaching Law and Ethics Together: Oil and Water." Breslin moderated discussion among panelists John Williams, Principia (Ill.) College; Brian Steffen, Simpson (Iowa) College; Ted Glasser, Stanford; Joan Connors, Randolph Macon (Va.) College, and Joyce Hoffman, Old Dominion (Va.) University.

Speakers highlighted teaching methods, practical activities, tips, assignments, and ideas instructors can use teaching both subjects together. Breslin will compile some of these suggestions, which will be posted to the MED teaching resources website in time for winter/spring semester classes.

Breslin, associate professor of journalism in the Department of Mass Communication at Iona College (N.Y.) admits that teaching media law and media ethics in one course isn't ideal. Sadly, it *is* reality for many journalism programs.

He suggested the AEJMC panel because he feels the topic needs more debate. According to his research, nearly a third of journalism programs nationwide teach law and ethics together in one course. The reason for this consolidation, according to Breslin, is teaching load.

Addressing law and ethics together can be done, Breslin says, "but we've got to make it work without sacrificing the essential elements of either. Students have to walk out of that classroom knowing the practical elements of both (subjects)."

Breslin is writing a new textbook, due next fall, addressing law and ethics content and the pedagogy of teaching both subjects in one combined course.



Jack Breslin

“It’s important to keep in mind what the perspective of the course is supposed to be,” Breslin says. “With due respect to our law colleagues, it’s not just about cases. With ethics, we need the theoretical foundation to help students think critically.”

One approach Breslin is experimenting with introduces media issues followed by an introduction to ethics theory. Then, he asks students to look at the concept of truth-telling, for example, from a legal perspective and from an ethical perspective. He uses this method with other concepts such as objectivity, loyalty and privacy. His course uses real case studies, court decisions, current readings, movie clips and other “tools” so students get a good grounding in both fields.

For more information, contact Breslin at jbreslin@iona.edu.

[Go to the next story](#)

[Go to Newsletter Contents](#)

Print this page

Media Ethics Division-AEJMC

[Visit us on Facebook](#)

[Home](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

[Teaching Resources](#)

[Find an Ethics Expert](#)

[MED Officers](#)

[Research Abstracts](#)

[Links of Interest](#)

[AEJMC Home](#)

Send Your Grad Students to The Media Ethics Division!

by **Jenn Burleson Mackay** Research Chair



It's time for the Media Ethics Division to put a little extra time and effort into recruiting graduate student paper submission and conference participation.

The division has a long-standing tradition of encouraging students to submit papers to the Carol Burnett competition. The award is presented in conjunction with the University of Hawaii. The award winner receives \$350. The runner up receives \$150. Winners also receive a small travel supplement.

Students are invited to submit papers on any topic related to media ethics yet only two students submitted papers to the Carol Burnett competition this year. Research Committee Chair Kevin Stoker incorporated three additional graduate student papers into the competition when he saw that they had submitted papers without designating them for the Carol Burnett award.

Those five papers, however, are a far cry from what we would like to see in our division.

Our division saw a slump in paper submissions overall this year with only 23 entries. We received more than double that number of submissions for the 2011 conference. After we received 49 entries, we were able to accept even more papers for the 2011 conference than we received for the 2012 conference.

One way for us to boost our submission numbers is by encouraging more graduate student to get involved in the division. Membership Director Pamela Price reports there are 811 graduate students who have AEJMC memberships. While we offer a subscription to the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* with every membership, only 18 graduate students have memberships to MED.

This past year we had one graduate student, Ryan Thomas, who served as our graduate student representative. Thomas now has completed his doctoral work and moved on to a

faculty position at the University of Missouri. He most graciously accepted a position as the division's newsletter editor. Now, however, we no longer have any graduate student officers.

I submit that it is time for us to spend more time encouraging graduate students to get involved in our organization. If we want our division to be strong, we need the best graduate students to submit their work to our division. We need graduate students to want to attend our division meeting. We need for them to rise into division leadership positions.

Many of our members teach graduate-level ethics classes. If you teach one of those classes, please encourage your students to submit papers to our division and to get involved. Let them know that they are welcome to submit quantitative, qualitative, and rhetorical papers to our division.

Encourage them to send us work that relies on normative or descriptive theory. Let them know that we welcome papers that touch on all areas of mass media ranging from journalism and public relations to entertainment.

If you attend a conference and you see a graduate students doing solid work in ethics, tell him or her about our division. Invite those students to submit papers to us. Tell them about our newsletter and our interest in incorporating graduate students in our division meetings. If you know of someone who is interested in serving as our graduate student representative, please send a message to Division Chair Bastiaan Vanacker. The more all of our members work to encourage graduate students to get involved, the more likely we'll be to grow our division.

[Go to the next story](#)

[Go to Newsletter Contents](#)

Print this page

Media Ethics Division-AEJMC

[Visit us on Facebook](#)

[Home](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

[Teaching Resources](#)

[Find an Ethics Expert](#)

[MED Officers](#)

[Research Abstracts](#)

[Links of Interest](#)

[AEJMC Home](#)

Dirty Politics

by **Jan Leach**

The "Dirty Politics" of candidates' speeches and campaign visits, political faux pas and scorching ads framed the eighth annual Poynter Kent State Media Ethics Workshop on Sept. 20.

More than 150 media professionals, educators and students were on campus to reflect on the upcoming election and address the coverage and ethics of political reporting with Poynter's Kelly McBride, head of the ethics faculty, and Ellyn Angelotti, of the digital trends and social media faculty. In addition, nearly 200 computers were tuned to the live web stream throughout the day.

The workshop featured TEDx-like presentations, panel discussions, question and answer sessions and debate. Over the course of the day, speakers and participants identified and analyzed myriad pressure points in producing political journalism today.

Pulitzer Prize-winner and national commentator Connie Schultz gave the lunch keynote. She then visited students at the *Daily Kent Stater* where she had been editor as a KSU journalism major in the late 1970s.

Other speakers included: Bill Adair, founder and editor of PolitiFact; Greg Korte, political reporter for *USA Today*; Jill Miller Zimon, writer, project director for EfficientGovNetwork and city council member in suburban Cleveland; Pam Fine, Knight Chair and professor of journalism at the University of Kansas; Dr. John Green, director of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron; local reporters and editors from the *Plain Dealer* and the *Akron Beacon Journal*, and educators in journalism and political science.

In addition, the [Civic Commons](#) (Cleveland) and the [Journalism Accelerator](#) (Portland, Ore.), both partners in the Media Ethics Workshop, introduced a project to flesh out specific ethical challenges journalists face on the politics beat. Moderated and ongoing online conversations will lay the groundwork for a new, crowd-sourced, ethical best practices guide to political



Connie Schultz

journalism. Anyone can respond to the online conversations at any time (not just when they're live), so check them out [here](#) and add your comments for possible inclusion in the later guidelines.

For a complete digital archive of the Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop see <http://mediaethics.jmc.kent.edu/2012/index.htm>.

[Go to the next story](#)

[Go to Newsletter Contents](#)

Print this page

Media Ethics Division-AEJMC

Visit us on Facebook

Home
Announcements
Newsletter
Newsletter Archive
Teaching Resources
Find an Ethics Expert
MED Officers
Research Abstracts
Links of Interest
AEJMC Home

How Much Professional Experience is Enough?

by **Ryan J. Thomas**

Newsletter Editor

The Italian football (soccer) coach [Arrigo Saachi](#) was once questioned about his lack of professional playing experience. At the time, Saachi was one of the most decorated coaches in Italian football, but unlike his contemporaries, Saachi had never played the game professionally. In fact, prior to becoming a coach Saachi spent time as a shoe salesman. Saachi's response was abrupt: "I never realized that in order to become a jockey you have to have been a horse first."

It is not an exact parallel, but some analogies can be drawn to the experience of teaching journalism and mass communication. Is it necessary for journalism educators to have served as professional journalists? (Please note I am not endorsing the view that journalists are "horses" and teachers are "jockeys" – the equine metaphors end here!).

Some context: I have the good fortune to be employed by the [School of Journalism](#) at the [University of Missouri](#), which has an outstanding reputation for undergraduate education. At Missouri, we pride ourselves on developing students with both cutting-edge journalistic skills and the critical thinking acumen that helps them understand and appreciate journalism's fiduciary role in a diverse, democratic society. Our faculty is staffed with Pulitzer Prize winners and journalists with longstanding and outstanding reputations in the field.

What of me, you say? Prior to commencing graduate education at [Washington State University](#), I was a freelance music journalist for some eighteen months, writing features and criticism for a number of online outlets (we were going to be the next [Pitchfork](#)! We were going to change the world!). Though I possessed a press pass, I would not at any point have defined myself as a "professional" journalist given that the reward for my efforts was little more than chump change, free albums, and the occasional gig ticket, and I worked in a non-journalism job (retail) throughout. Though I miss writing about music, I now define myself as a researcher concerned specifically with media ethics. As I look at my esteemed colleagues, I find myself the journalistic equivalent of [Admiral James Stockdale](#): "Who am I? Why am I here?"

Now, I should add that I was hired to teach graduate-level qualitative research methods and mass communication theory, so I am not exactly a duck out of water. But nonetheless, the issue of professional experience (or lack thereof) is an interesting and important one.

Raising these issues re-opens old and somewhat tired debates about "Chi-squares versus

Green eyeshades” and go to the heart of the tension (real or perceived) between journalism researchers and professionals. We should be cautious about where these conversations lead, as more “conceptual” topics like ethics, history, theory, and law should not be sidelined by vocational education but sit alongside it, and, indeed, underpin it. On the other hand, we should not vaunt the doctorate as the ticket to superiority over professional faculty. Journalism education is best served, I believe, by a blend of researchers, professionals, and those with feet in both camps.

What, specifically of ethics? After all, ethics is a branch of philosophy – does one need journalistic experience to be a philosopher? This is a specious idea. I see this issue as one of individual preference in how faculty members tailor their courses: Whether one takes a “hands-on” approach, drawing on extensive professional experience in the field, or a “citizen’s-eye-view” approach that examines journalism’s historic role and responsibilities to the polity. Or some blend of the two.

Rather than suggesting that either extensive professional experience or the doctorate is the gold standard for journalism education, I think any “litmus test” (my apologies for the use of this term) of faculty should be wholly contextual. To use myself as an example (as to use anybody else would be just rude), my journalistic and educational experience hardly prepare me to teach say, sports reporting or copy editing, but do prepare me to teach matters of research, theory, and ethics. Ultimately, whether we define ourselves primarily as researchers, teachers, practitioners, or ethicists, we need to cultivate the mindset that we are all pulling together, with the same mission: Developing journalists and journalism researchers who recognize the role that journalism plays in a democratic society and the responsibilities that it shoulders.

[Go to Newsletter Contents](#)

Print this page