



MED Newsletter

MEDIA ETHICS DIVISION • FALL 2021 • VOLUME 25 • NO. 1

Letter from the Editor

by Sorin Nastasia

Welcome to the winter edition of the MED newsletter! I am delighted to start with this newsletter issue my service as newsletter editor. In this issue you will find information about the 2022 conference and various professional resources.

In my ethics graduate course, students pursue an array of case studies and hands-on activities to weigh the values and demands implicit in public relations and communication management professions as compared to the values and demands that underlie particular communities and society at large. Learning how to employ research-based evaluation and critical thinking in the analysis of ethical dilemmas across strategic communication practice is as eye-opening for my students today as it was for myself during my doctoral studies over a decade ago.

One of my students wrote in a discussion board engagement: “Over time, we may start to run on autopilot in the workplace or in our lives, often not taking the time to step back and consider whether our actions and behaviors are ethical and what the consequences of those actions and behaviors may be. Because of this, ethics courses or refreshers remain an important part of the workplace and daily life. They allow us to see those ethics reminders and take the time to reconsider our actions.”

The MED division of AEJMC is of key importance for communication scholars and practitioners specifically as it constitutes an exceptional information hub regarding the ethics coursework and scholarship needed for shifting from autopilot to deep reflection on the implications of our personal, professional, and community activities.



MED Newsletter

Division Head: Nicole Kraft
Vice Head / Programming Chair: Anita Varma
Newsletter Editor: Sorin Nastasia

MED newsletter is published quarterly by the Media Ethics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

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Watch for the next MED Newsletter issue!
Highlights will include:

- An update on Professional Freedom and Responsibility activities of MED
- An update on articles included in the Journal of Media Ethics

New Leadership for MED

by Nicole Kraft - Division Head



Near the end of the semester, after students have learned and executed the core concepts of journalism in our introductory reporting class, we do a deep dive into ethics. During that week, we throw at them as many realistic

ethical scenarios we can find - from plagiarism and fabrications to unnamed sources and invasions of privacy. Some they get “right.” Some they debate and argue among themselves to decide not just what they would do but why they would do it.

That’s the thing about ethics - reporters can travel different roads to come to the right answer, and sometimes what is right is nebulous at best and barely recognizable at worst.

I think about the actual engagement with ethics in the reporting world with every step I take as your new division head, and I truly believe everyone at AEJMC must do the same.

I recently noted to the organization’s leadership that the subject of our division is among the few ones touching EVERY member, no matter what they study, research, teach, or practice in journalism and mass communication.

Being division head is a challenge in many ways. Preparation for next year’s conference in Detroit began literally days after the latest online conference ended, despite the fact we all had many other obligations to attend to at that time.

There are meetings and correspondence seemingly weekly throughout the year that can appear excessive but also reflect the complexities of putting on the next conference.

But serving as a division head is also gratifying in so many ways. It ensures that our division’s views are heard at the highest level, and we have the proverbial voice at the table as decisions are made that impact our members.

It is exciting to be surrounded by such dedicated professionals as those in the front AEJMC office - especially our amazing new leader Jan Boyles - and those who are getting our division’s business done: Anita Varma who is in charge of programming and Yayu Feng who is coordinating our paper submissions.

The areas on which we are working include streamlining aspects of the conference, better supporting the non-tenure track faculty who often lack a cohesive community, and bringing a full and welcoming experience in Detroit for our 2022 event.

Anita, Yayu, and I meet monthly to ensure we are making decisions collaboratively and with clarity that will help each one of them in their time as division head, just as Katy Culver and Marlene Neill guided me.

I never cease to be inspired by their wisdom and enthusiasm, and have no doubt our panels and papers will be the best ever under their tutelage.

I know all of you are working tirelessly and sometimes perhaps without the appreciation you deserve, as we teach our students, advance research, and ensure the field of media ethics remains prominent in the academy. Please know, as we all speed toward the winter break and promises of more challenges and gratifications ahead, that you are thought of with appreciation and respect by your division leaders. We promise this year we will continue to make sure MED is a key part of AEJMC activities and conversations.

Every division does important work, but none of us can truly be at our best without respect for and adherence to the ethics which shape what we do, what we teach and, most importantly, who we are.



MED Programming Is Underway!

by Anita Varma - Vice Head / Programming Chair



First, a big thank you to everyone who submitted panel proposals for MED. The range, depth, and timeliness of panel submissions is a great indication of how our division tackles pressing questions confronting journalism and media at this time.

A major theme across submissions was, “Where should we go from here?” As we know all too well, 2020 was a year like no other. Through the immediate impact of COVID-19 on newsroom layoffs and furloughs, concerns about the mental health and well-being of journalists covering trauma and crisis indefinitely, a racial reckoning that brought longstanding equity issues to the fore, and a global surge in covid-related disinformation amplified through social media platforms, the role and relevance of media ethics has become abundantly clear.

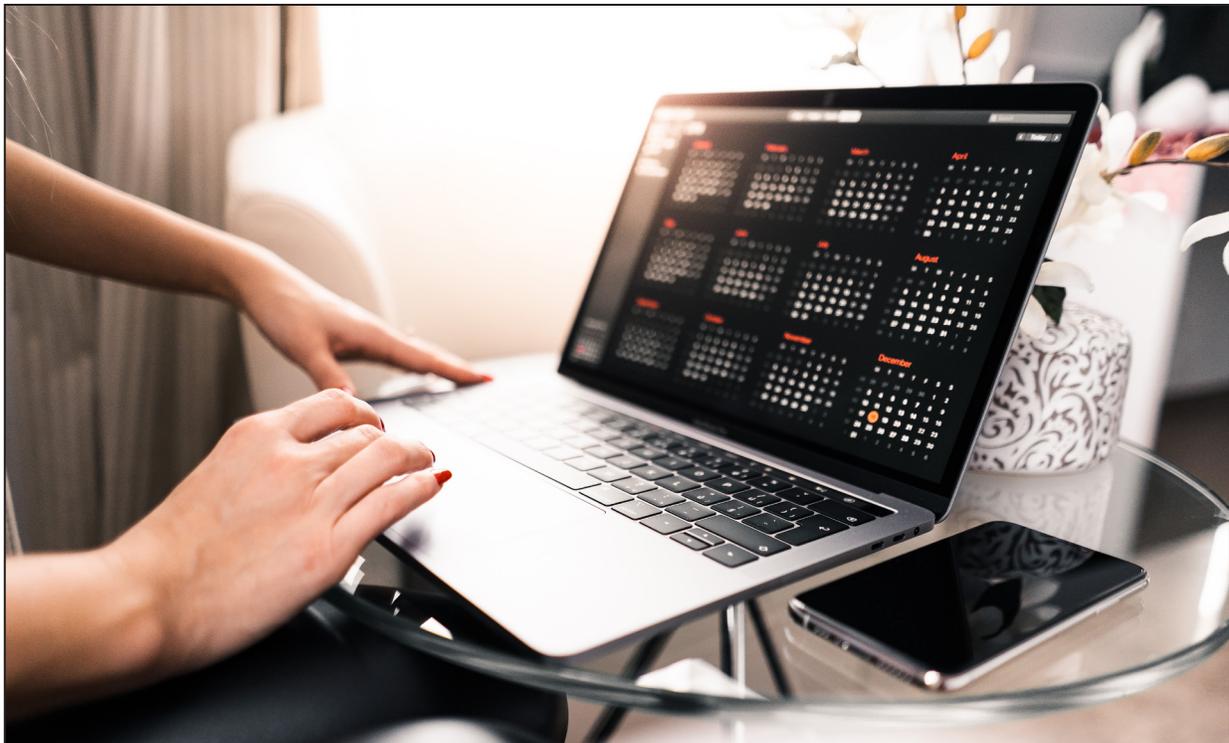
What is less clear is where we go from here. All 15 panel proposals approached this underlying theme, using a diverse set of

frameworks, cases, and potential speakers.

In addition to putting forward our own proposals for panels, MED also partners with other divisions for co-sponsorship of their proposed panels. Ten other divisions had ethics-focused panels, and while we cannot sponsor all ethics-related content due to limits on slots, it is encouraging that so many divisions are thinking about the ethical dimensions of their respective areas of journalism and mass communication research.

Early October was a flurry of activity as all the divisions completed the deal-making process for proposing panels, formalizing co-sponsorship, and sketching our desired programming. Now, AEJMC’s Council of Division leaders and staff are in the process of their “programming extravaganza” to set the final slate.

We expect to have final decisions on the 2022 program in coming weeks. Until then, we appreciate your patience and contributions, and look forward to more to come!



Entertaining Ethics

by Chad Painter - Teaching Chair



Lee Wilkins and I embed discussion questions throughout our book *Entertaining Ethics: Lessons in Media Ethics from Popular Culture*. These questions could serve two functions in a classroom - they could be used

as discussion prompts as students watch films, or they could serve as the basis for an essay that builds on the ethical lessons learned during class discussions and viewings.

Below are a couple of sample questions:

- How complicit are *Hunger Games* audiences - and communities - in the invasion and maintenance of privacy? What are possible remedies when “things go too far”?
- There are obviously parallels between the fictional M-I pandemic in *Contagion* and the very real COVID-19 pandemic. How are media reports in *Contagion* similar and dissimilar to media reports you have seen about COVID-19? How are the actions and reactions of public information officers, such as the fictional Dr. Cheever, similar and dissimilar to those of their real-life counterparts, such as Dr. Anthony Fauci? What normative roles have journalists and public information officers fulfilled in reporting on COVID-19?

I'll add another example here - the text is included in the truth telling chapter, though there isn't a specific discussion question outlined in the book. The example comes from the 1994 film *The Paper*, which my students typically say is one of their favorites from class. The film centers on a fictional New York newsroom trying to expose a sham arrest of two Black teenagers accused of murdering two white tourists (mobsters actually committed the crime).

From page 21 of *Entertaining Ethics* (and please adapt to fit the needs of your class):

If there were a remake of *The Paper*, the *Sun* would publish at least three headlines. The first would be the morning page one column about the parking commissioner. Then editors would run a “Gotcha!” story about the two teens being arrested for murder. Finally, there would be a late-night change to “They Didn’t Do It.” There are advantages and disadvantages to these very distinct ways of linking truth and news. Modern readers get a sense of the evolving nature of a story as it breaks and as reporters unearth more and more information. However, readers also would spend most of the day with misinformation - that the teenagers shot two white businessmen - and may miss the follow-up story correcting the earlier mistake. Readers in 1994 would have to wait 24 hours to get the full story since the paper only publishes once a day; however, when the news did eventually reach them, it at least would be accurate.

Modern reporters have to struggle with the question of whether it's better to be first or to be right. It's a trick question because if the news is not right, then the reporter isn't really first. However, there is a lot of pressure - from readers, editors, and professional competitive instincts - to be first. If a reporter has 24 hours to get the story, then he or she can slow down, verify, and get as much of the story as possible. However, if there is a rush - and there always is a rush when there is pressure to publish quickly - then the reporter must verify any information possible, publish it, and continue reporting and publishing throughout the day. The bottom line: truth has a strenuous relationship with technology.

The MED Mentorship Program

by Chad Painter - Teaching Chair



The Media Ethics Division started its mentorship program five years ago with the stated purpose of increasing the active involvement of our members, especially graduate students and junior faculty. At the time,

the leadership determined that increased involvement was both necessary and vital for the long-term health of the division.

The good news is that the program is working. Members, including graduate students, junior faculty, and senior faculty, are becoming more and more involved with the mentorship program. The program has continuously grown; we have a new record of 12 mentorship teams this year. We've also seen some multiyear mentoring partnerships, as well as at least one published article from a mentorship team.

I'm especially excited about this year's program. Hitting another record high is exciting. Seeing some of our former graduate students continuing as junior faculty mentees, and one also serving as a mentor, is even more exciting because it shows that they have found the program worthwhile. And seeing the number of members willing to step up as mentors is both exciting and gratifying (though I do regret that there was so much interest in the program that not every mentor was able to be matched with a mentee this year).

I would like to thank the mentors willing to step up: Stephanie Craft, Wendy Wyatt, Ryan Thomas, Anita Varma, John Ferré, Susan Keith, Maggie Patterson, Katy Culver, Yayu Feng, Patrick Plaisance, Marlene Neill, and Ginny Whitehouse.

I would also like to welcome our new mentees: Pamela Peters, Sara Renee Browning, Indah Setiawati, Sheila Lalwani, Lisa Lenoir, Md

Mahfuzul Haque, and LaRissa Lawrie. And a welcome back to our returning mentees: Patrick Johnson, Liz Bent, Rhema Zlaten, April Newton, and Yayu Feng.

I'd be remiss if I didn't give a special shout out to Patrick Johnson, who worked with the Graduate Student Interest Group to identify potential mentees.

As a refresher, mentees in the program are paired with mentors who share similar research, methodological, and institutional interests. Mentors meet on an informal though regular basis (via Zoom, phone, or whatever works best for the pair) with their mentees to discuss questions and concerns related to their career path. For instance, mentors might provide feedback on dissertation or research work in progress, tips on creating stellar job applications or tenure and promotion materials, and advice on Zoom and campus interviews, although this list is far from exhaustive.

As part of the mentorship program, MED also periodically sends topic prompts to membership pairs. In addition to encouraging dialogue and contact throughout the year, the aim is to encourage conversation around certain topics (e.g. how to review a paper).



Media Ethics Division Announces Paper Calls for the 2022 Conference in Detroit

by Yayu Feng - Research Chair



What's new this year?

We updated the division's style guide to APA style **7th edition**.

We have a special call about paradigm shifts in media ethics education.

We will devote a research paper session to the top five graduate student submissions. Selected graduate students will be paired with senior scholars in the division, who will offer advice on improving papers prior to presentation during the conference.

Why should you submit to MED?

To borrow an expression from MED member Bernhard Debatin, the time we live in and the grand scheme of things today present us with countless "ethicists' case study dreams and a citizen's nightmares." We can always find an ethical twist in media and communication. From media coverage of current affairs to social media hype, from the struggles of science communication during the pandemic to the unanswered questions and accountability issues with technological advancement, what we are exposed to and experience every day in the media world are all worth some ethical inquiry.

MED encourages submissions that address a broad spectrum of ethics-related topics and concerns, and so if you are interested in research that addresses any ethical topics or expresses any of such concerns, MED would be a perfect home for it. We also give special recognition to a paper that is judged to be the most relevant to working professionals in a media industry, including but not limited to journalism, advertising, and public relations, entertainment, and social media.

Division Paper Calls

Open Call: The Media Ethics Division seeks a diverse range of original faculty and graduate student paper submissions related to ethics. The division encourages submissions that address a broad spectrum of ethics-related topics and concerns, which may include, but are not limited to, ethical decision-making, moral development, truth-telling and deception, privacy, credibility, the relationship between journalism and democracy, the impact of technology and economics on ethics, organizational norms and routines, accountability systems, corporate social responsibility and advocacy, global ethics, audience considerations, applied ethics in journalism, advertising and public relations, and the relationship between law and ethics. In addition to our regular call, the Division is sponsoring a special call focusing on media ethics in international contexts (see below).

The division seeks the broadest possible range of theoretical, methodological and pedagogical scholarship, looking at ethics across a range of media contexts including journalism, advertising,



public relations, entertainment, new media, social media, etc.; from a range of theoretical/paradigmatic approaches such as philosophical, critical, sociological, psychological, etc.; and using a range of methods including qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Essays grounded in ethics theory are welcome, as well.



All papers should adhere to APA style (7th ed.); must be no more than 25 pages (excluding title page, references, figures, illustrations, and/or appendices); should be double-spaced, use 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman or equivalent font; should be saved as Word or PDF; and must otherwise conform to the rules outlined in the AEJMC Uniform Call for Papers. Papers that do not conform to these rules or contain information identifying the author(s) will be disqualified. The Division **strongly** advises authors to submit papers with sufficient time to review them in the All Academic system and ensure identifying information is removed.

Submitting a paper to the Media Ethics Division implies that the author (or one of the co-authors) intends to present the paper in person at the conference.

Special Call for Paradigm Shifts in Media Ethics Education: In addition to our regular call, the Media Ethics Division is sponsoring a special call for papers focused on paradigm shifts related to media ethics education. Special call papers should present research that addresses a topic related to communication, media, or journalism ethics education, and propose changes and new ideas for ethics teaching and/or course design. Examples include (but are not limited to) pedagogical analysis of ethics courses and teaching methods, innovative course designs, diverse theories and perspectives in ethics education or moral development, and comparative analysis of ethics education in different cultures. The Division encourages papers from a range of scholarly approaches – critical, philosophical, theoretical, empirical, legal, historical – and a range of methods – qualitative, quantitative and mixed. The Division will not accept commentaries about teaching or sets of teaching tips. Submissions should adhere to length and style guidelines for the Division open call. Special call papers must be marked “Special Call: Paradigm Shifts” on the title page.

Burnett Award Graduate Student Papers: The Media Ethics Division is committed to supporting and promoting promising graduate students with an interest in research related to any of the many aspects of media ethics. All graduate students who submit full papers to the Media Ethics Division (in this call, the Open Call or the International Media Ethics Call) are automatically entered into the Carol Burnett Award competition. The Media Ethics Division teams with the University of Hawaii, the Carol Burnett Fund for Responsible Journalism and Kappa Tau Alpha to sponsor this honor for graduate students.

Students are invited to submit papers on any topic related to media ethics, from any theoretical approach, using any method or combination of methods.

The winning paper and runner-up will receive the Carol Burnett/University of Hawaii/AEJMC Prize, which includes a monetary award. Authors for the top two submissions also receive a small travel assistance stipend. The winner will be invited to accept his or her prize at the Kappa Tau

Alpha Awards Luncheon at the AEJMC conference. Graduate student papers must include graduate student status on the title page. The Burnett Award is reserved for graduate students, and papers with faculty co-authors are ineligible.

All questions should be directed to Media Ethics Division Research Chair Yayu Feng, University of St. Thomas, yayu.feng@stthomas.edu

Division Awards

Professional Relevance Award: The Division gives special recognition to a paper that is judged to be the most relevant to working professionals in a media industry. The recipient will be selected from the open and special calls.

Top Faculty Paper: The Division gives special recognition to the faculty paper judged to be the best paper submitted among faculty authors.

The Penn State Davis Ethics Award:

Scholars who have successfully defended ethics-related dissertations in the 2021 calendar year are encouraged to apply for the new Penn State Davis Ethics Award. The award provides a \$1,000 honorarium, travel support to present their scholarship in a session of the Media Ethics Division at the 2022 AEJMC annual conference, and a fully supported guest-lecture visit to Penn State's Bellisario College of Communications. The Don W. Davis Professor in Ethics at Penn State, Patrick Lee Plaisance, will administer all aspects of the award competition and selection process.

Applications should include a cover letter stating applicant's ethics-related focus and contact information, statement of defense date, full dissertation (either in pdf format or a web link), and dissertation adviser contact information. All applications are due April 1, 2022, and should be sent to plp22@psu.edu. The award will be presented at the Media Ethics Division's Business Meeting during the 2022 AEJMC conference. This award is intended to recognize new scholarship in the fields of media and communication ethics, and is sponsored by the Davis Program in Ethical Leadership at Penn State.

Arrangements for a guest-lecture visit to Penn State will be made for fall 2022 based on recipient availability.

Call for Reviewers:

Research chair Yayu Feng is now recruiting reviewers for the 2022 conference. If you're interested and available, please fill out a short survey (available on the MED website) to let her know your interest in reviewing and areas of expertise. As soon as AEJMC finalizes the All Academic site on their end, Yayu will be in touch with reviewers about how to set up accounts and the review process.



AEJMC Exploring Opportunities, Support for Graduate Students

by Patrick R. Johnson - MED Webmaster



I have the privilege of serving two DIGS: Media Ethics and the Graduate Student Interest Group (GSIG). I use the voice I have within both to advocate for stronger, better, and more inclusive futures for the graduate student populations

of AEJMC. I had the opportunity recently to lead, with GSIG head Hayley Markovich of the University of Florida, a Council of Divisions roundtable about the status of graduate students and graduate education. It was clear that there is a lot more that AEJMC and its faculty and professional membership can be doing to support its graduate membership. Moving forward, GSIG has asked AEJMC to commit to the following areas to improve graduate student experiences and education:

- **Organizational Statement:** We've asked the association to write and release a statement supporting graduate students nationwide and encouraging stronger attention to mental health and mentorship.
- **Membership and Financial Considerations:** We are discussing what financial decisions can be done to help graduate students. Our division is currently being elevated as a leader in helping graduate students by making membership to our division free. We are encouraging this for all other divisions as well. There is also consideration for an automatic enrollment of graduate student members into GSIG to create a central place for graduate student voices and information.
- **Shared Resources and Mentoring:** We are attempting to create a central hub for resources for graduate students. This will also hopefully include a more centralized place for mentoring. Currently, not every DIG has a mentor program or a place for graduate student voice; we are hoping to change that

moving forward.

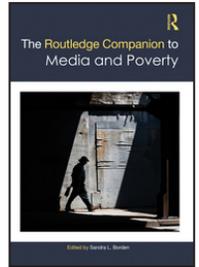
- **TT/NTT Jobs and Alt-Ac:** We are looking to diversify what the future possibly looks like for graduate students, attempting to prepare students for more opportunities than the traditional research track. The assumption is that what higher education once was, especially in regard to the job market, is not what it currently is or will be in the future. We are also attempting to change the culture around non-tenure track and alternate academic jobs, pushing for the association to be more conscientious of how it talks about these opportunities and challenging our faculty membership to recognize that there are more ways to use a Ph.D.
- **Commission on the Status of Graduate Students:** GSIG is in the process of transitioning to a commission. Part of that process will include research into what graduate students need and want out of AEJMC. This will most likely be in the form of a survey, but we are talking about a larger, mixed-method approach to understanding the status of graduate students in the association.

As the organization begins to tackle these imperative issues, I encourage our graduate student members to reach out to me with any concerns you would like to see addressed at the larger organization level (as I can do as GSIG Vice Head) or within our division (as the MED graduate student chair). I also encourage our faculty membership to continue to help advocate for our graduate students and improve their experience. If any faculty have ideas that they would like to share with me about helping support our graduate student membership, then please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I welcome any and all thoughts about enhancing our graduate student programming.

New Book Announcement

Sandra L. Borden (Editor). *Routledge Companion to Media and Poverty*. Routledge, 2021. ISBN 9780367260729

<https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Companion-to-Media-and-Poverty/Borden/p/book/9780367260729>



Publisher's Description

Comprehensive and interdisciplinary, this collection explores the complex, and often problematic, ways in which the news media shapes perceptions of poverty.

Editor Sandra L. Borden and a diverse collection of scholars and journalists question how the news media can reinforce (or undermine) poverty and privilege. This book is divided into five parts that examine philosophical principles for reporting on poverty, the history and nature of poverty coverage, problematic representations of people experiencing poverty, poverty coverage as part of reporting on public policy and positive possibilities for poverty coverage. Each section provides an introduction to the topic, as well as a broad selection of essays illuminating key issues and a Q&A with a relevant journalist. Topics covered include news coverage of corporate philanthropy, structural bias in reporting, representations of the working poor, the moral demands of vulnerability and agency, community empowerment and citizen media. The book's broad focus considers media and poverty at both the local and global levels with contributors from 16 countries.

This is an ideal reference for students and scholars of media, communication and journalism who are studying topics involving the media and social justice, as well as journalists, activists and policy makers working in these areas.

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1. Principles: Ethical Frameworks for Covering Poverty
2. Poverty: Socioeconomic Need and Its Causes in the News
3. Poor": News Representations of People Experiencing Poverty
4. Policy: Indirect Coverage of Poverty as Part of Watchdog Journalism
5. Positives: Promising Practices for Better Poverty Coverage

About the editor



Sandra L. Borden is a professor in the School of Communication at Western Michigan University, where she also directs the Center for the Study of Ethics in Society. Her work has been published in several scholarly books and journals, including *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*, the *Journal of Media Ethics*, *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, and *Communication Theory*. Her other books are *Journalism as Practice: MacIntyre, Virtue Ethics and the Press*, *Ethics and Entertainment: Essays on Media Culture and Media Morality* (co-edited with Howard Good, 2010) and *Making Hard Choices in Journalism Ethics* (with David Boeyink, 2010), and *Ethics and Error in Medicine* (co-edited with Fritz Allhoff, 2020).



New Book Announcement



Meenakshi Gigi Durham. *MeToo: The Impact of Rape Culture in the Media*. Polity Press, 2021. ISBN 9-781509-535200

https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=metoo-the-impact-of-rape-culture-in-the-media--9781509535194

Meenakshi Gigi Durham's new book *MeToo: The Impact of Rape Culture in the Media* (Polity, 2021) delves deeply into the media's role in both sustaining and challenging rape culture, engaging intersectional feminist theorizations of rape culture as well as a critical/cultural studies approach that encompasses media production, texts, and audiences. The book's centering of the media industries as the literal sites of sexual violence is an original and significant contribution to the burgeoning literature on the MeToo movement and the media's role in real-world sexual violence. "The media industries are not unique," writes the author, "but they have awakened a realization that workplaces harbor a rape culture – a culture that not only facilitates rape but, perhaps most damningly, silences its survivors."

Divided into three sections, "Rapacity," "Representation," and "Resistance," the book connects workplace dynamics in media corporations such as Fox News and the Weinstein Company to media representations of –as well as audience responses to – these crimes. "Media worksites, mediated images and messages, and media social networks all serve to illuminate the way sexual violence percolates throughout societies," writes the author.

In her multi-perspectival analysis, Durham interrogates such concepts as consent, credibility, carceral justice, and the systemic silencing of survivors. The book is global in scope, acknowledging the worldwide impact of #MeToo as well as its differential valences in various contexts and cultures. A recent review in *Media Practice and Education* described it as a "timely intervention," in which "Durham has deftly combined the rape myths with a critique of the MeToo movement from a historical feminist standpoint."

Durham's alertness to the complexities of rape culture as it is entwined with intersectionality, power, and politics points to an ethics framework for understanding the media's involvements with sexual violence. In her book, she re-envision sexual vulnerability as a starting point for social justice. Drawing on the feminist ethics of care, Paulo Freire's analysis of power, and a theory of values in media practice, she sees transforming media as a key aspect of moving toward a rape-free world.

About the Author



Meenakshi Gigi Durham is a professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and CLAS Collegiate Scholar at the University of Iowa. She also holds a joint appointment in the Department of Gender, Women's Studies, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Iowa. She is the author of *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It* (Overlook Press, 2008) as well as *Technosex: Precarious Corporealities, Mediated Sexualities, and the Ethics of Embodied Technics* (Palgrave 2016), both addressing mass media explorations of the sexuality and gender.

New Book Announcement



Jeffrey Dvorkin. *Trusting the News in a Digital Age*. Wiley/Blackwell, 2021.
ISBN: 978-1-119-71429-3

<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/+the+News+in+a+Digital+Age%3A+Toward+a+%22%22New%22%22+News+Literacy-p-9781119714293>

I wrote this textbook as a primer for undergraduates in journalism and media studies, largely because undergrads are (like many of us), overwhelmed by the tsunami of information that we all encounter on a constant basis.

As the director of the journalism program at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC) for the past nine years, I was privileged to teach at what has been described as the most diverse campus in North America. UTSC is located in the east end of Toronto, where many residents are immigrants from South and East Asia and the Caribbean. UTSC actively recruits in China, resulting in a high proportion of international students.

It was clear to me that many of our first-year students were puzzled about what constitutes so-called “reliable” information. Moreover, they lacked any ongoing relationship with mainstream media, either in print or broadcasting. Native-born Canadian students were only slightly more aware of the rich media offerings in Toronto. Most of the class say they rely almost entirely on the Internet for daily news and culture. Podcasts are especially popular as a primary source.

I would begin each class (of more than 100+ students) asking what they had seen or heard that day that piqued their interest and why. I learned a lot about the local music scene, as a result. When the discussion moved away from Drake and The Weekend, they would tell me what stories they found useful, and which ones they found less useful.

Even if they were unclear of what they liked, they had no hesitancy in telling me what they did not like!

One student from India denounced the news from Pakistan. A Pakistani student replied angrily that “Indian media lie all the time!” That allowed me to ask what constitutes reliable information? Frequently it was because a family member said it was so. The role of critical thinking then became a skill I needed to help them develop. The book is an attempt to show how this can be done in a university environment.

“Trusting the News...” also gets into the basics of journalism: sources, verification, what is on and off the record. Additionally, it discusses some of the ethical dilemmas that journalism encounters.

In each chapter, I draw on my experiences as NPR’s first ombuds to present a real situation in journalism, for which there may not be a clear-cut solution, as a basis for class discussion or assignments.

About the Author



Jeffrey Dvorkin is a senior fellow at Massey College, University of Toronto. From 2011, he was lecturer and director of the journalism program at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. He began his career as a CBC journalist in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto and became Managing Editor and Chief Journalist for CBC Radio in 1991. In 1997, he was named vice-president of news and information at NPR in Washington, D.C., where he subsequently became NPR’s first news ombudsman, handling ethical questions, complaints, and concerns from listeners. Dvorkin has been an advisor and examiner for the Institute of Medical Science at the University of Toronto.