



## Letter from the Editor By Tom Bivins



Summer has been a long time coming. At least it seems so. And I literally welcome it with open arms—which is something I haven’t been able to do for quite some time. I also really need a break. My mass-lecture media ethics class (usually 150 students) was 300 this term. I quickly learned that when you’re teaching an asynchronous, online course, the number of students doesn’t really matter, if you can get enough help with the grading. Fortunately, my students seem to have gotten what I wanted them to get from the experience, and I learned a lot in the process.

Teaching ethics is a delicate endeavor at best. Teaching it online is even more intricate. I recalled that Aristotle believed that one of the best ways to impart a message is to build it into an entertaining story. He was referring specifically to theater, which, in many ways, is what mass lecture is. I recall sitting in on a lecture by Michael Sandel at Harvard many years ago. It was brilliant, informative, and entertaining. It was, in fact, a joy.

And, just a month or so ago I heard a fourth-grade teacher say on a television news show that remote learning is still learning—but only if you keep the joy in it. My approach to teaching in general, and especially in mass lecture, has always been to insert joy into the process. Joy is a manifestation of the heart, not the intellect. Or, as Aristotle noted, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”

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## med newsletter

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 Vice Head/Programming Chair: **Nicole Kraft**  
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MED newsletter is published quarterly by the Media Ethics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Direct questions to [tbivins@uoregon.edu](mailto:tbivins@uoregon.edu)

## Our MED bets for the future

By Kathleen Bartzen Culver—Division Head



It's hard for me to believe my time in the Media Ethics Division leadership ranks is coming to a close. This summer marks the end of my term as head of the division, so I thought I'd use this opportunity for a few thanks and a few hopes.

My deepest thanks to everyone who welcomed me into this division and encouraged me along the

way. I'm not going to thank people individually because then I'll end up like that actor at the Oscars who accidentally forgets to thank his wife. I hope I have thanked you individually along the way. If the pandemic has shown me anything, it's that gratitude is like a superhero's cape – I'll never be able to soar without it.

We all should be grateful for the hard work of our vice head, Nicole Kraft, who has put together an incredible lineup of programming for the conference, and our research chair, Anita Varma, who ran an outstanding paper competition. You're going to be thrilled to see the research we have on tap in August. The division is stronger than ever in this regard.

Thanks to our other leaders, Chad Painter as teaching chair and Patrick Johnson as social media chair. And to Tom Bivins, who has put together this newsletter for all my years in the division. His hard work has helped us stay informed and engaged. Tom has decided to cycle off as editor, so we'll be looking for a new editor at our business meeting.

Speaking of that meeting, I want to remind everyone to please join us on Zoom on Wednesday, July 28, at 5 ET/4 CT/2 PT for our members meeting. A link to the event will go to members that week. This meeting is unusual in that you don't have to attend the conference to attend the meeting. So let's have FANTASTIC turnout. My theme for the meeting is: "MED's Bets for the Future."

AEJMC is undergoing some important reflection and consideration of where the association should head, including whether to restructure the current divisions and interest groups or approach them differently in any ways. That's why you've been receiving more requests for feedback via surveys (and I hope you've responded).

It's not an immediate process, and it coincides with our review as a division, which begins next year. So I'd like us to use our business meeting to do the normal fun stuff – handing out awards, hearing about JME's progress, keeping watch on our finances. But I'd also like us to do some aspirational thinking:

- What do we want MED to look like in terms of membership size and composition?
- What strengths do we have in research that we can build on?
- How can we best integrate MED with other divisions and interest groups?
- What are our biggest weaknesses and how do we address them?
- What collaborations can we develop to share teaching resources?
- What do we want from future leadership?
- How do we best encourage and support emerging scholars?

I have a few ideas for activities that could help us generate ideas. And then we can close with a virtual happy hour, where you can move between breakout rooms to hang out with people you know and meet new MED friends.

I am eternally grateful to have found a home in this division and want to ensure it remains a vibrant community for years to come!

Any questions or concerns about the conference? Email me at [kbculver@wisc.edu](mailto:kbculver@wisc.edu). Use the same address if you need to join the MED Google Group mailing list. Join our [Facebook group](#) and follow our [Twitter account](#).



# A Living Document for Challenging Times

By Nicole Kraft—Vice-Head, Programming Chair



There has never been a better time to be a collegiate journalist—or a more challenging one.

Covering campus creates trials that transcend stereotypical stories about housing, food or Greek life. Now the news is of global pandemics and racial inequality, rising crime and ethnic disparities.

In truth, covering a college campus as a member of student media provides ethical challenges that transcend conventional media. Student-journalists report their community from the inside, chronicling clubs to which they may belong, student-athletes with whom they share classes, and holding accountable the leadership that sets policies impacting the community as a whole.

The majority of student journalists are instructed to follow the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, which provides a framework on which to build ethical standards of coverage.

The code, last revised in 2014, is categorized under four main headings:

- Seek Truth and Report It
- Minimize Harm
- Act Independently
- Be Accountable and Transparent

SPJ has determined these four principles to be the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use by all people in all media.

But the immersive nature of collegiate student journalists, which provides access and insight, also means that they need guidelines that are more tailored to the specific ethical challenges they face.

It was with that motivation that I applied for and was accepted into the Ohio State Center for Human Values Ethics Circle in the Spring of 2021 and used the experience to delve deeper into the specific ethical needs of collegiate journalists.

The result was the creation of the College Journalist's Code of Ethics, an addendum to the SPJ Code of Ethics I plan to dispense to my students and our student editors and reports at the Ohio State Lantern. The goal is to see ethics for our student journalists through the lens by which they provide coverage, and for us to train future generations of journalists and media consumers through the use of the code in a class assignment in Media Law and Ethics.

Like the SPJ Code, this addendum has four main categories:

- Professionalism and Transparency
- Diversify Voices
- Serve Your Populations
- Fairness And Accuracy

Some of the guidelines may seem familiar to the SPJ Code but others have come out of our specific coverage experiences. They include:

1. Be fair and accurate when reporting your stories and recognize the need to identify yourself as a reporter anywhere and everywhere you encounter a source or potential source, including classes, school facilities or in social situations.
2. Press releases, email interviews and prepared statements may make reporting easier, but they are not the most effective way to serve your community. Get firsthand interviews and accounts when possible and conduct your own reporting.
3. If you have personal issues or unavoidable conflict of interest, real or perceived, in covering stories or participating in editorial decisions, reveal them to your adviser and editors right away so that you make work through the potential for coverage or participation.
4. A cohesive staff is important, but do not let friendships get in the way the professionalism. Of course, it's not a bad thing to be friends with your coworkers. Just be cognizant to encourage people of all different backgrounds and opinions to join the newspaper, even if your social circle is mostly homogenous. Diversity strengthens journalism.
5. Conduct a source audit at least once a semester to understand the bias that may creep into your reporting through sources.
6. Many of your sources, especially students, are not savvy about media coverage and may not realize the long-lasting implications of information they provide. Ensure your sources are aware that the information they are providing can and will be disseminated beyond the boundaries of campus.
7. Consider unintended or undesirable consequences that may result from a story or interview in the near term and in the future for your sources.
8. Be aware that using university resources to contact sources can feel like an intrusion to those who call campus home, and be respectful and judicious in using such resources.

9. Remember that views held and actions taken in late teens and early 20s can have long lasting ramifications in the age of Google. Be conscious of this when posting controversial viewpoints or compromising images that may have questionable news value.
10. Words that live online have a long and everlasting reach. Establish a content-neutral policy as it relates to unpublishing online content if requested by subjects and authors, and apply your policy with fairness and a full explanation.

The complete 25-point College Journalist Code is still being refined, and this fall it will be used as part of an assignment to encourage students to understand why it is important for journalists to be ethical and why it is important to establish a Code of Ethics.

As part of the assignment, teams of students will be assigned one of the four sections and each team member will interview real student journalists about the topic and obtain real-life examples of the recommendations.

In addition, students will develop at least three recommendations for additional ethical considerations that should be added to the code, one of which can be a modification of a current ethical consideration.

The teams will then record a video conversation about the Code, their examples, and their suggestions for additions.

It is a challenging time to be a student journalist, and the lack of understanding of how journalists do their job can make it especially difficult when they coverage population includes friends, classmates and instructors.

This living document is intended to be utilized in conjunction with other ethical frames to help student media be responsible and responsive in their coverage.

Please contact me at [kraft.42@osu.edu](mailto:kraft.42@osu.edu) if you would like to see our completed Code and assignment. Together we can work to help our students build the ethical frames that will benefit their coverage and journalism as a whole.



## MED Paper Presentations at AEJMC

By Anita Varma—Research Chair



*We have an excellent lineup of research paper presentations throughout the entire length of the conference. Take a look and bookmark your favorites.*

### Wednesday, August 4

5pm-6:30pm

Session title: "Morality in Advertising & Publicity"

Presiding/Moderating: Yayu Feng, University of St. Thomas

1. Moral reasoning and the life stories that depict personal interest, maintaining norms and universal principles. Erin Schauster, University of Colorado Boulder

2. Tear down this wall: Native advertising as boundary object in scholarship. Andrew Duffy; Nanyang Technological University
3. Skepticism, Egoism, & COVID-19 Advertisements: An Exploratory Study of Consumer Attitudes and Moral Foundations. Christopher Vardeman, University of Colorado Boulder
4. Morality rules: Understanding the role of prior reputation in consequences of scansis. Lewen Wei, Pennsylvania State University; Pratiti Diddi, Lamar University

Discussant: Kati Tusinski Berg, Marquette University

### **Thursday, August 5**

1:00pm-2:30pm

Session Title: Reassessing Journalism Ethics in Tumultuous Times

Presiding/Moderating: Jonathan Anderson, University of Minnesota

1. Confucian Virtue System: Bring Media Ethics (Back) to a Humanistic Path. Yuyu Feng, University of St. Thomas, Top Faculty Paper
2. Journalists with Different Mindsets Agree on Truth as the Profession's First Obligation. Greg Munno, Syracuse University; Megan Craig, Syracuse University; Katherine Farrish, Central Connecticut State University; Alex Richards, Syracuse University
3. A New Objective: Recasting Journalism Ethics Through the Racial Reckoning. Brad Clark, Mount Royal University
4. Exploring moral ecology in the coverage of the 2020 racial protests: Analyzing sentiment and intent classification of Newspapers and Broadcast news content in the US. Gregory Gondwe, University of Colorado

Discussant: Ginny Whitehouse, Eastern Kentucky University

### **Friday, August 6**

9:00am-10:30am

Session Title: Changing Dynamics Between Individuals, Publics, & Media Organizations

Presiding/Moderating: Liz Bent, University of Missouri

1. Autonomy in Local Digital Journalism: A Mixed-Method Triangulation Exploration of the Organizational Culture and Individual Moral Psychology Factors of Digital News Workers. Rhema Zlaten, Colorado Mesa University, Davis Ethics Award
2. A Need for Change: The Perceived Power of Media and Journalists in Greece. Minos-Athanasios Karyotakis, School of Communication HKBU
3. Converging Theory with Practice in the Media Skills Classroom (Top Student Paper). Alexis Romero Walker, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
4. Always Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide: Analyzing Moral Conviction, Perceived Motives, and Organization-Public Relationships in Corporate Social Advocacy Efforts. Holly Overton, Penn State University; Anli Xiao, University of South Carolina

Discussant: Florence Chee, Loyola University Chicago

### **Saturday, August 7**

10:30am-12pm

Session Title: Moral & Ethical Orientations in Murky Media Contexts

Presiding/Moderating: Deborah Dwyer, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

1. Ethical Organizational Listening in Issues Management for Stakeholder Engagement and Moral Responsibility. Shannon Bowen, University of South Carolina; Marlene Neill, Baylor University
2. I Dare Someone to Try: SNL's "Can I Play That" and the Ethics of Whitewashing and Stereotypes. Rick Moore, Department of Communication and Media, Boise State University
3. Moral Orientations and Traits of Public Relations Exemplars. Patrick Plaisance, Penn State; Marlene Neill, Baylor University; Jin Chen, Penn State University

4. Moral Foundations in Life Narratives of Emerging Adults in Media-Related Fields. David Craig, University of Oklahoma; Katie Place, Quinnipiac University; Erin Schauster; Patrick Plaisance, Penn State; Chris Roberts, University of Alabama; Ryan Thomas; Casey Yetter, University of Oklahoma; Jin Chen, Penn State University

Discussant: Jasmine McNealy, University of Florida

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## MED Panels at AEJMC

By **Nicole Kraft**—Vice-Head, Programming Chair

**Wednesday, August 4, 1 to 2:30p**—Media and Poverty • Research

**Wednesday, August 4, 9a to 10:30a**—Ask Me That Another Way: Empathy on the Frontlines of News about COVID, Police Brutality, and Weather Disasters • PF&R

**Wednesday, August 4, 3p to 4:30p**—Ethics of Care + The Moral Psychology of Media Practitioners • Research

**Wednesday, August 4, 11a to 12:30p**—The Nature of Political Bias in the News: What Do Journalism Students Need to Know? + Solidarity in Journalism: Covering Social Movements (and Upheaval) Beyond Neutrality • Teaching

**Thursday, August 5, 3p to 4:30p**—The Ethical Obligations of Journalism Educators • Teaching

**Thursday, August 5, 11a to 12:30p**—Data Scraping: Legitimate news gathering or privacy nightmare? • Research

**Friday, August 6, 1p to 2:30p**—Dealing with bad political actors: Implications for ethics, law and policy • PF&R

**Friday, August 6, 5p to 6:30p**—New Normal for Journalism Ethics in 2020: Journalists' Responsibility in Addressing Misinformation in the Year of Coronavirus, Social Protests, and Natural Disasters • PF&R

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## Our own fearless leader, Katy Culver has been awarded the 2020 Scripps Howard Foundation Teacher of the Year Award

This national competition recognizes excellence in teaching in several areas, including innovative teaching practices, influence on curriculum, mentoring of students and faculty scholarship as it relates to teaching, leadership in educational activities, and on-going industry engagement inside and outside the classroom.

Kathleen Culver is an associate professor, the James E. Burgess Chair in Journalism Ethics and director of the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. "She has been instrumental in developing classroom advances, initiating curricular change, creating communities of practice and mentoring other instructors," her school's nominating committee wrote. "Seeing her work here in our program, as well as on the national stage, we cannot envision an educator more worthy of this honor than Katy."



Katy Culver

The award will be presented at the beginning of the keynote session during AEJMC's Aug. 4-7 virtual conference.

# MED Teaching Award

By Chad Painter—Teaching Chair

I'm pleased to announce that Ann Auman is the 2021 winner of the Media Ethics Division's Teaching Excellence Award. Auman teaches undergraduate and graduate media ethics courses at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

The selection committee especially was impressed by her graduate course—Emergent media ethics across cultures: Truth-seeking in the global, digital age. In the course, Auman blends teachings from influential Western philosophers with Hawaiian values and ethics. Students also discuss racism and stereotyping in America. An assignment from that course will be added to the division's teaching resources site (<https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/resources/resources-for-teachers-students/>).

Auman also serves as the director of the Carol Burnett Fund for Responsible Journalism. In that role, she presents awards annually to Hawai'i students and the AEJMC/Carol Burnett Award for MED's top graduate student papers.

Auman will accept the Teaching Excellence Award during the July 28 MED members' meeting.



Ann Auman

## Speaking of the teaching resources site...

The division's teaching resources site covers a broad range of materials for teaching media ethics broadly—including journalism, public relations, advertising, and entertainment. Materials on the site include 14 case studies; 14 syllabi for media ethics, communication ethics, and combined law and ethics courses; 40 classroom activities; and four other teaching resources.

Frankly, there is enough material there to design and build an entire media ethics course. However, we always can use more. So, if you have a syllabus, assignment, case study, idea—really anything—please send it my way ([cpainter1@udayton.edu](mailto:cpainter1@udayton.edu)), and I'll get it added to the site.

## Expanding teaching at the annual conference (and beyond)

I've spent a lot of the past year thinking of ways to innovate our teaching-focused programming at AEJMC. Consider the following conversation starters:

We could reserve one of our panels at the annual conference for a “master class” session. We could invite ethics professors from outside our discipline who influence our work—I'm thinking of folks such as Margaret Radin for the Detroit conference in 2022 or Martha Nussbaum the next time we're in Chicago. This session also could be a way to bridge MED with members of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics.

We also could restart discussions on two important programs: a teaching-centered preconference and the media ethics colloquium bringing together junior and senior scholars.

I also would welcome ideas on how to engage with host cities (presuming that we'll return to some form of an in-person conference in 2022)—whether that engagement is with newsrooms and/or strategic communication agencies, with the broader public, or both.

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## Dissertation focused on local digital journalism earns Davis Award

A dissertation by a graduate of Colorado State University earned this year's Penn State Davis Ethics Award, which annually recognizes the best ethics-related dissertation successfully defended each year in the fields of communication and media.

Rhema Zlaten of the Department of Journalism and Media Communications at Colorado State won the award for her dissertation titled “Autonomy in Local Digital Journalism: A Mixed-Method Triangulation Exploration of the Organizational Culture and Individual Moral Psychology Factors of Digital News Workers.” Her work uses ethnographic and survey approaches to explore the moral judgments, journalistic norms and organizational dynamics of a hybrid local news outlet to assess journalistic autonomy as news business models shift. Zlaten is now an assistant professor in mass communication at Colorado Mesa University.



Rhema Zlaten

For this year's award, a panel of three independent media ethics scholars separately judged the dissertation award applications, all of which were prepared for blind review. good job of situating the findings in the existing literature, with theoretical and practical implications explained."

This is the third year for the Davis Award. Previous recipients were Philip Todd of Oklahoma University and Anita Varma of Stanford University. The Davis Award provides a \$1,000 honorarium and a fully supported future guest-lecture visit to the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State. Zlaten also will be invited to give a virtual presentation based on her dissertation by the Media Ethics Division at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in August.

## Long-time MED member, Tom Cooper retires



Tom Cooper

After decades of teaching ethics and media studies, at Emerson College and numerous other institutions, Professor Tom Cooper was honored by a heart-felt Zoom retirement event attended by nearly 200 students, faculty, administrators, community leaders, and friends.

His numerous interests and skills were highlighted throughout the evening, including performances by an Emerson a cappella singing group, the Skintones, which he founded, an opening musical overture, which he composed, and references to his musical HIGHER! HIGHER! Which is in development at a professional theater.

Cooper has also been a guest scholar at Stanford, Berkeley, the East-West Center and the University of Hawaii, and at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Oxford, and Cambridge. He is a playwright with a

Ph.D. in theater and media, a union musician who trained at the Royal Conservatory, and author of eight books and more than two hundred academic and professional articles and reviews. His latest book *Doing the Right Thing*, about twelve of the most difficult and influential ethical decisions ever made, has just been published

When asked about his retirement plans, Cooper said, "I have taught at the University of Hawaii before, as well as served as a visiting fellow at the East-West Center, and once we are settled in Hawaii, I may do some work at either location. I am developing a musical. When it's ready for its next reading I look forward to moving it to the next stage."

We wish him well.



Cooper with the a cappella group The Skintones, which he founded.

## A quick reminder ...

The MED members meeting will be held at the AEJMC conference Wednesday, July 28, at 5:00 p.m. ET/4 CT/2 PT. Be there or be square.