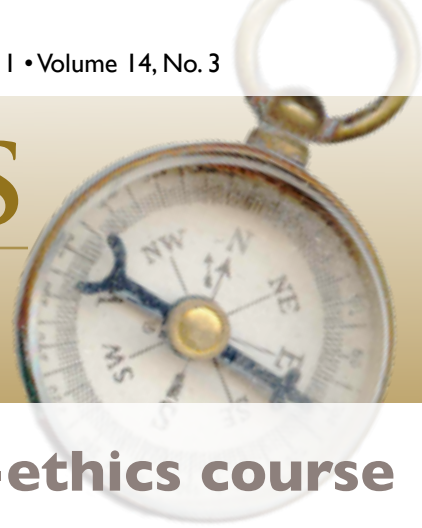


ETHICAL NEWS

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- Visit the MED website at http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~tbivins/aejmc_ethics/index.html
- Have an announcement or an article to share with MED members? Email the newsletter editor at jmackay@vt.edu

Is it time for a pro-ethics course policy?

Shannon Bowen
 Division Chair

A large professional association in public relations that visits and accredits university degree programs recently contacted me, as MED Chair. They asked me what our policy is toward ethics courses: should they be required, should ethics be integrated across the curriculum or taught in a stand-alone course, should the approach be professional or philosophical, and so on. I was happy to offer personal opinion and evidence from my own research, but I could not speak on behalf of the division in terms of an officially adopted policy or stance. Perhaps it is time to change that.

Others in the division have debated the questions I was asked, along with the associated concerns of feasibility and implementation. However, I believe it is time for the Division to adopt a policy on this question. If not the Media Ethics Division of AEJMC, then who will -- or should -- adopt guidelines for ethics education in the media professions? If not now, when?

If the division decides to take this challenge and create an overall stance toward teaching ethics, it will create some level of controversy. Some members of the division (and of the larger Association) are very entrenched in their beliefs and in the ways they have been teaching ethics. Others division members are nonconformists, predisposed to challenge conventional wisdom. As one example, law and ethics are commonly conjoined at many programs, but oftentimes that means ethics gets the last two weeks of the semester while law comprises the lion's share at 13 weeks. But, what is the best-case scenario? I ask that we all come together and discuss these issues at our meeting in St. Louis, as well as before and after the conference. Serious questions such as those posed above require thought, analyses, contemplation, and input from numerous perspectives.

Many of us are constrained by financial issues limiting our course offerings and the

degree requirements within our particular programs, departments or units. However, what is the best-case scenario for teaching ethics? If we ignore fiscal constraints and degree requirements and think normatively, where would ethics fit into the curriculum? Ideally, how should ethics be taught?

On my teaching evaluations of my public relations ethics course, currently offered as an elective, students often write that the course should be required. Most of us in MED would agree with that evaluation, but the question of requiring an ethics class for any of our numerous majors is far beyond what we can accomplish as a division. What we can determine is a normative stance that ethics should be taught. Once that general idea is agreed upon, our guidelines can offer more specific guidance when it comes to the issue of how ethics should be taught: a course, a module, integrated and so on.

Judging by my own experience and knowledge of the field, the assessment that needs to be made is the exact question I was asked by the professional association: Should ethics be a stand-alone course or integrated into other courses across the curriculum? My assessment is that ethics must be taught in a stand-alone course and integrated across the curriculum. A stand-alone course in ethics is necessary because the sheer volume of reading and depth of understanding to grasp the complex concepts found in moral philosophy require a 15-week semester, at minimum. In a 15-week semester, one can cover the basics of ethical reasoning through a few main perspectives and then begin to apply those forms of analyses to the student's chosen major or profession (digital news, broadcasting, advertising, radio-television-film, public relations, strategic communication, and so on).

Before and after a stand-alone ethics course, ethics should be discussed in each class

we teach in our respective majors. It is common to discuss ethics in a foundation or principles class, or a senior-level capstone class. That discussion can emphasize the importance of ethical decision-making and link back to the concepts taught in the ethics class. It is less common to discuss ethics in our technical skills classes, such as writing, producing or campaigns. However, these activities also require ethical discernment and should include discussion of the types of ethical dilemmas that may be encountered and potential solutions to those dilemmas. Students who have already completed the stand-alone ethics course would recognize and confront those dilemmas successfully, while students who have yet to take the ethics course can begin to appreciate the value and importance of ethics in their chosen field.

My question to members of MED is: What are your thoughts about MED adopting a position statement? It would, of course, have no enforcement, but would be a normative guide as to what we value as a division. It could be used to illustrate our values both to the larger membership of AEJMC

and to other groups and associations looking for comment. It could be something along the lines of:

Ethics is best taught in a stand-alone ethics course, whenever it is possible, and also should be reinforced by the integration of ethical concepts, discussion and cases throughout the curricula of each major.

As I complete the last months of my three years of service to MED, I think about what I will leave of value to the division. In the tradition of the chairs before me, I want to offer the division some betterment for my service and leave it growing and strong. Perhaps a policy on teaching ethics is one way to do that?

Your comments and feedback are welcome, either by e-mail to me (sbowen@syr.edu), to any of the division leadership (see our executive list on the header of page 1), or in person at the St. Louis Conference. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Anyone can whistle, according to the Government Accountability Project

Maggie Patterson
Professor, Duquesne University

Anyone can whistle, according to the Government Accountability Project.

When John Munsell, a meat grinder with his own small business, blew the whistle on the giant meatpacker ConAgra as the source of an E. coli contamination, it led to the recall of 19 million pounds of beef.

Cathy Harris blew the whistle on racial profiling practices she observed as a customs inspector at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

Daniel Ellsberg gave us the Pentagon Papers; Karen Silkwood revealed the health and safety violations at the Kerr-McGee Cimarron River nuclear facility; and Frank Serpico exposed the corruption in the NYPD.

In order to spotlight the role whistleblowing can play as an antidote to institutional corruption and unsafe practices, GAP is coordinating The Anyone Can Whistle Campus Tour. The Tour is built around the appearance of well-known whistleblowers, including some of those above, who have risked personal safety to speak out about wrongdoing.

The Tour will take place at 20 campuses between fall 2011 and spring 2012. Participating campuses will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Anyone Can Whistle Campaign has also put together a nationwide faculty committee of professors to develop a multi-disciplinary curricula on whistleblowing, appropriate for courses in law, social work, public administration, journalism, the social sciences, business, management and accounting.

The foundation of the Tour will be an evening appearance of two or three well-known whistleblowers, but individual campuses can include other events, such as classroom appearances or a film festival of notable films such as *The Insider*, *Karen Silkwood*, *Erin Brockovich* and *On the Waterfront*.

The Tour's goal is to raise \$5,000 at each college to go toward honoraria for the whistleblowers, as well as travel expenses. But raising this amount of money is not a pre-requisite for participating in the Tour.

For more information about how your school might participate, contact:

Heather Hoffman, Anyone Can Whistle Tour Coordinator
Email: heatherh@whistleblower.org
Phone: (202) 457-0034 ext. 111
1612 K St., NW
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20006



Using “Learning Logs” to teach ethics

Jan Leach
Teaching Standards Chair

Sandra Borden is using “learning logs” to help her ethics students understand what they read.

Dr. Borden, professor of communication at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo and long-time MED member, incorporated learning logs into her ethics classes this year because she was convinced “students don’t know how to make sense of their readings.”

Learning logs have been used by K-12 teachers in various subjects for many years. Usually, the logs are plain notebooks or journals in which students reflect on readings or lessons. Students use learning logs to evaluate a lesson or think about topics. Students may also record their own observations, feelings or problems they have with the material. Learning logs help students make sense of what they read, hear, see and learn.

Borden, who has been at WMU for 15 years, heard about learning logs during a summer teaching workshop at WMU last year. She decided to try them with her classes to see if they would help her students better prepare for discussions by reading more carefully.

“We all have anecdotal evidence that our students don’t read,” Borden said. “In a class like ethics it’s a big problem because I want to use readings as a springboard for discussion.

“It became a priority for me to get them to read,” she said.

For Borden’s ethics students, learning logs aren’t fancy. Students use single sheets of paper folded in half for each log. On the left side of a creased paper, students summarize what they were assigned to read such as a chapter in a book, a journal article or a case study. They are to list the main points of the entire reading, not just parts of it.

On the right side of the creased paper, students then reflect on what they read. Reflection might be in the form of a personal observation, a query about the author, a statement about the depth of an argument or a conflict the student sees in the material or between different readings. The learning log is a place for students to ask questions, be critical, or inquire about the implications of an author.

Borden limits each learning log to one (usually hand-written) page, front and back. She said she is “not too strict” on the grammar in these writings.

This year, Borden is offering extra credit to students who complete learning logs. She assigns a simple check, check-plus or check-minus grade for logs turned in relating to that day’s assigned readings. Each learning log is worth 3 points. She said she may require learning logs of all students next year and score them as part of her students’ final grades.

Borden said learning logs provide good references and they become “really good notes to study from.” She said students who use learning logs to write inquiries about readings are more likely to ask questions in class and contribute to discussions.

In addition, students who use learning logs may do better in class overall. Borden said her students who wrote learning



logs had better midterm scores than the students who did not do them.

Borden said she wanted to try a different approach to get her students to read because “we overestimate what students understand.” Learning logs are one new approach to help students process their reading.

“I think I’m experimenting here...I became convinced that students didn’t know how to read or how to do it well,” she said.

Now, Borden said, her students engage more meaningfully with content in ethics classes and students see learning logs as a benefit to study.

For more information about using learning logs in ethics classes, contact Dr. Sandra L. Borden, School of Communication, Western Michigan University, at sandra.borden@wmich.edu or 269-387-0362

From Sandra Borden’s Syllabus



Learning logs: It will be much easier for you to follow lectures and get answers you need if you read the assigned material before coming to class. Research also shows that student achievement increases when students do the assigned reading. To encourage you to keep up with the readings, to engage actively with them, and to come to class prepared, I am offering extra credit for learning logs.

To get credit, you must turn in the learning log for a reading on the day for which it is assigned (In other words, you cannot turn in a log late or early). Each learning log should be no more than one page (front and back). Split each page into two columns. In the left column, write down your notes on the reading. In the right column, write down the questions you have based on the reading. Each log is worth 3 points and will be graded on a $\sqrt{-}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{+}$ system. Late logs (turned in more than 5 minutes after class is scheduled to start) will be penalized 1 point. Logs may be hand-written as long as your writing is legible. There is no limit on how many logs you may turn in.

Center for Journalism Ethics Holds Conference on Partisan Media

Bastiaan Vanacker
Research Chair

Like no other spot in this country, Madison's State Capitol has come to epitomize the messy intersection of politics, partisanship and media over these past months. It is fitting then, that less than a mile from the spot that has captured the headlines, UW-Madison's Center for Journalism Ethics held its third annual ethics conference on the topic of partisan media in a democracy.

We have all heard, read and perhaps even said it: the Internet and cable channels like Fox and MSNBC mark a return to the olden days of the partisan press. UW-Madison media historian James Baughman started the day off by sketching a somewhat more nuanced view of today's media situation. As the conference opening speaker, he argued that today's media landscape, unlike that of the nineteenth century, provides us with a mixed media universe in which partisan media coexist with "those news outlets that still endeavor to report the news seriously."

The first panel of the day discussed the impact of partisan journalism on public broadcasting. Considering the recent (manufactured?) controversies surrounding the Juan Williams firing, Ron Schiller's infamous Tea Party comments and the station's acceptance of a 1.8 million grant from liberal philanthropist George Soros, the timing for a solid discussion on the place of NPR (and public broadcasting in general) in today's partisan media landscape could not have been better. Unfortunately, all panelists, including NPR Ombudsman Alicia Shepard and Raul Ramirez, Executive News Director of KQED San Francisco, were in some way affiliated with public broadcasting. It would have been more engaging for the audience had the panel included a voice critical of NPR, or one who was at least willing to play the devil's advocate for an hour. The panelists made a compelling case for the need of public broadcasting in general and NPR in particular, but the ethical angle sometimes was lacking. Critical voices and questions emerged during the Q&A session ("Why are you needed?"), but by then only a couple of minutes were left in the session.

The second panel of the day had a more outspoken, albeit somewhat narrow, ethical focus when it discussed transparency in nonprofit journalism. Recent years have seen the emergence of nonprofit journalism organizations, often times staffed by laid-off journalists and funded by private sponsors, donations and foundation money. The New York Times, for example, has entered in partnerships with some of these nonprofits, such as the Chicago News Cooperative, to provide it with local content.

The paper's public editor Arthur Brisbane pointed out that while these partnerships provide some alluring economic benefits to his paper (quality content at a low cost), newspapers also need to think about how to integrate third party content in the paper while at the same time upholding the highest of journalistic standards and maintaining credibility.

Andy Hall, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, and Brant Houston, Knight Chair/ Investigative Reporting at the University of Illinois, pleaded for transparency in nonprofit journalism, especially when it comes to revealing the identity of donors. For the balance in the debate, it was unfortunate that none of the nonprofit journalism centers that promise anonymity to donors (such as the Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity) had accepted the invitation to take part in the panel.

Over lunch Tony Burman, former Editor-in-Chief of Canada's CBC News and now chief of strategy for Al Jazeera in the Americas delivered the keynote speech. Al Jazeera has come a long way since Donald Rumsfeld accused it of uncritically airing Taliban propaganda. Its English language sister network, which was launched in 2006, has become a credible source of international news for a global audience. The Obama administration, unlike its predecessor, has a positive relationship with the network. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has even openly praised Al Jazeera. Despite this shift, most viewers in the



United States will not find the channel in their cable line up. Considering the instrumental role the network has played in covering the uprisings in the Arab world, it is hard to argue with Burman that this is a situation that ought to change.

Before Burman took the stage, veteran journalist Dan Flannery was awarded the UW-Madison's Journalism Ethics Award. The executive editor of the Post Crescent in Appleton, Wis. shared some compelling stories of ethical dilemmas his newsroom had faced during his storied career. None of his examples of his ethical decision making seemed to resonate more with the Wisconsin crowd, however, than the anecdote of how he once, as a young reporter, refused a pair of Green Bay Packers season tickets.

The afternoon started off with a refreshing panel in which three scholars and one journalist described the (partisan) media landscape in their respective countries and/or regions of exper-

tise. While these descriptive accounts all were fascinating in their own right, some of the presenters also made some very cogent points comparing the situation in other countries with changes we are seeing in the American media today.

University of Wisconsin-Madison professor Joe Ellen Fair, who was on the panel as expert on the press in Africa, explained how African journalists' partisanship is about more than just allegiance to an ideology or political party. Most African journalists operate in a social and political reality in which the state is not the only political entity to which audiences are loyal. Reporters have to navigate through a political minefield of competing loyalties such as the tribe, the kin, religion and ethnicity. As food for thought, she offered the observation that what we are seeing in the American media landscape today shares similarities with this African reality, and we are perhaps witnessing the Africanization of the American press.

Her colleague Hernando Rojas pointed out that while the media system in his native Colombia has never been less partisan and more professional than it is today, public distrust in the media remains high. Rojas suggested that this may be because the public itself is biased. This "hostile media effect," which states that a more biased audience will perceive the media to be more biased, therefore should be included in any discussion on partisan media, Rojas argued.

This observation was the perfect segue in the final session of the day, in which three experts on political polls and one local news director, Colin Benedict, discussed the quality of polls in general and Wisconsin polls in particular. Of all the

panels of the day, this one was the least structured. When some of the leading experts on political polling such as Charles Franklin, co-founder of Pollster.com and UW-Madison professors Ken Goldstein and Dhavan Shah talked numbers, sparks flew. Even though the references to Wisconsin politics often reeked of inside baseball to those unfamiliar with the state's political landscape, the panel also addressed the importance of correctly assessing poll results.

While numbers and polls seem to speak for themselves, they are in fact open to many interpretations. Franklin remarked in this context that naked poll numbers spawn more debate and discussion on his site than an analytical piece in which he interpreted the poll's results. Neutral information seems biased to a partisan audience. The panelists therefore emphasized that journalists always need to determine the quality of a poll and assess how one poll's numbers relate to those of other polls. Without this critical assessment, Franklin warned, interest groups are being given the opportunity to drive the story line.

Franklin's point is an important one. If news outlets uncritically (but accurately) report unreliable polls, they unwittingly become the mouthpiece of whoever was behind these polls or is pushing them. And therein seems to lie the big challenge for the part of the media that have not embraced the partisan model: how to remain objective in a world whose polarizing sway can be forceful at times? Taking some pointers from the members of this panel about interpreting poll numbers might be a good start.

Stars and Neurons: Using Celebrities, Entertainment and Brain Science To Teach Ethics

Ginny Whitehouse
Associate Professor
Whitworth University

The Media Ethics Division will offer its annual pre-conference workshop this year in partnership with the Magazine Division. The program, Stars and Neurons: Using Celebrities, Entertainment and Brain Science to Teach Ethics, will give participants opportunity to identify ways they can use celebrity and entertainment culture as well as new brain science research to teach media ethics better.

The 2011 workshop will provide new ethics instructors and seasoned veterans with practical approaches for their classrooms. Sandra Borden, Western Michigan University, and Sam Riley, Virginia Tech, will lead sessions on using celebrity and entertainment to teach ethics. Discipline-specific groups will consider People & US celebrity magazines, the Twilight movie and book series, America's Most Wanted, and other entertainment questions. Lee Wilkins, University of Missouri, William Babcock, Southern Illinois University, and Patrick Plaisance, Colorado State University, will introduce ground-breaking research that will give professors new knowledge on how their students' brains process ethics. In addition, Jan Leach, Kent State University, will introduce the Media Ethics Division's Ethics Teaching Resource Web Site.

This workshop will run from 12:30 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 9, in St. Louis' main conference hotel, the Renaissance St. Louis Grand Hotel. Registration is limited to 30, cost is \$50, \$40 for graduate students. Please sign up for this workshop when registering for the AEJMC conference. For additional information, contact Ginny Whitehouse, Whitworth University, gwhitehouse@whitworth.edu.

Meet us at the MED Social in St. Louis

Kati Tusinski Berg, Marquette
Vice Head/Programming Chair

Mark your calendar for Thursday, August 11th. MED will again hold an offsite social at the Over/Under Bar & Grill from 10 p.m. to midnight. The social follows the member's meeting, which is Thursday from 8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. Since the Over/Under Bar & Grill is walking distance from the Renaissance Grand Hotel, many of us will walk over together, but feel free to meet us there as well.

The Over/Under Bar & Grill is located at 911 Washington Avenue. An appetizer buffet and cash bar are planned, along with friendly conversation and networking opportunities. Guests are welcome, and please encourage anyone with an interest in ethics to attend.

Please RSVP on or by July 21 so that we can provide catering with a number of guests (you can cancel later if your plans change). Reply with name and number of guests attending to kati.berg@mu.edu. Thank you and we hope to see you there.

We want to thank Media Ethics Magazine, particularly Cliff Christians, Tom Cooper, Mike Kittross and Manny Paraschos for partnering with MED to once again to co-sponsor this event.