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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: **Kati Tusinski Berg**

Vice Head/Programming Chair: **Bastiaan Vanacker**

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Ethical News: Winter 2011 • Volume 15, No. 2

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MED Making Strides to Keep Members Better Connected

by **Kati Tusinski Berg**, Division Chair

Facebook, YouTube, FourSquare, Twitter and Tumblr are social media networks that enable people to stay better connected. Participation in two-way dialogue is one of the distinct features that differentiate social media sites from more traditional media. This feature was also the primary catalyst for my desire to modernize our communication practices in MED. Not only will these changes help to better promote the division but also more



importantly I hope they strengthen the interactions among members. One of the highlights of my year is attending the AEJMC Annual Conference where I get to reconnect with friends and colleagues from around the world whose research and teaching interests overlap with mine. Yet, these conversations shouldn't only take place for a few days in August. Thus, I hope the debut of the division's new website, Facebook page and Twitter account will keep the discussions going throughout the year. Here is a brief overview of our efforts to better connect with our members while also advancing the division.

- Tom Bivins, MED Webmaster, created a new website for the division that enables us to share newsletter articles more easily and link to our social media accounts. If you haven't visited the MED website lately, make sure to check it out because Tom has added a number of links of interest for media ethicists. Here is a link to the new MED website: <http://medaej.weebly.com/index.html>.
- Last year, Jan Leach, Teaching Committee Chair, developed the Teaching Ethics Resources website (<http://www.teachingethicsresources.org/>) that provides a pool of ideas for teaching media ethics. This year Jan's teaching initiative is to establish a new Facebook page for MED members to more readily share articles, insights and ideas. Unlike the website where the content is long-form and more static, the Facebook page will be more fluid and can include things like links to stories on teaching or pedagogy, ideas for using case studies, not the cases themselves, calls for internship applications and the like. Again the focus is on creating dialogue among members. Please read Jan's article for more information.

- And lastly, I created a Twitter account ([@AEJMC_MED](#)) for our division. Again, my hope is that this is another way for us to share information, connect with each other and increase the visibility of our division. Follow us on Twitter!

I look forward to having online discussions about the teaching, research, and analysis of media ethics issues and building relationships with many of you via social media. As division chair, I could not be happier with the effort our officers have made to move MED into Web 2.0. This is just the beginning of a great year for our division. If you have any suggestions for the division, please email them to me at kati.berg@marquette.edu.

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The International Conference of Thomas Paine Studies 2012

by Jack Brislin

Iona College, the home of the Thomas Paine Collection, seeks proposals for presentations for an international conference of professional, graduate, undergraduate and lay scholars to be held October 19–21, 2012. Presentations should aim to be 20 minutes in length. The Conference Committee welcomes proposals for individual papers on any subject related to Thomas Paine's life, legacy [current or past], writings or ideas [e.g. history, literature, politics, philosophy, rhetoric, media studies/mass communication, cultural anthropology, and education]. Please submit a one page abstract of your proposed presentation by March 15, 2012.



While presenters are most welcome to propose papers on any pertinent subject, some possible paper/session themes are:

- Paine in America
- Paine and Freedom of Thought
- Paine and Popular Culture
- The Message, the Messenger and the Media
- The International Influence of Paine
- Paine, his Critics and his Champions in Past and Present
- Paine and Religion
- The Age of Reason and Revolutions
- The Politics of Paine in the Past and Present
- Social Justice and Social Welfare

Iona College is located a quarter mile from Thomas Paine's cottage and burial site in

New Rochelle, NY. Iona's beautiful 35 acre main campus is only a 25 minute train ride from New York City.

Please send all proposals via regular mail or e-mail (e-mail preferred) by March 15, 2012, to: dthiery@iona.edu

or

Daniel Thiery
Department of History
Iona College
715 North Ave
New Rochelle, NY 10801

The Conference Committee will notify presenters of their acceptance at the end of May 2012

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MED's Chicago Line Up Taking Shape

By **Bastiaan Vanacker**
Programming Chair/Vice Head

Early December of last year, Division Chair Kati Tusinski Berg and I traveled to Louisville to attend the AEJMC winter meeting and to partake in the annual chip auction. Despite some last minute scrambling and colleagues backing out of what seemed like solid commitments to co-sponsor, we believe we have compiled a strong line-up for this year's AEJMC conference in Chicago.

This year's pre-conference teaching workshop, hosted by Bill Babcock and Ginny Whitehouse, will be dealing with teaching ethics against the backdrop of presidential campaigning and politics. Please keep in mind that AEJMC has changed its conference days from Wed.-Sat. to Th.-Sun. As a result, the pre-conference workshop moves to Wednesday from its usual Tuesday slot.

We forewent the opportunity to host a scholar-to-scholar session after mixed reviews of last year's session in St. Louis. We will have four regular research sessions spread out evenly over the four conference days with an additional poster session on Friday. This leaves us with a slightly lower number of slots for paper presentations (twenty-one), but with AEJMC usually providing some extra posters to the divisions who need them, we should have enough room to accommodate close to fifty percent of the papers submitted (based on last year's submission numbers).

Since the pre-conference workshop guarantees that a fair amount of our membership is on site in the early days of the conference, we scheduled three co-sponsored panels on the first conference day (Thursday). Friday and Saturday will see two MED co-sponsored panels each, on Sunday there will be just one.

The Law Division and Electronic News Division were our partners in crime this year with two co-sponsorships each. With the Law Division we will revisit a previously successful panel on teaching a combined ethics and law class. The Law Division also will be our co-sponsor on a panel on regulation of indecency in broadcast media, an issue the Supreme Court should have ruled on by then. A teaching panel focusing on storytelling as the common denominator between PR and broadcast journalism and a PF&R panel exploring the question of what happens when news personnel become the news constitute our co-sponsorships with the Electronic News Division.

A panel on the Occupy movement submitted by our graduate liaison Ryan Thomas was picked up by the Cultural and Critical Studies division. With the PR division we are reprising last year's successful panel on military ethics. We honored our division's international focus by co-sponsoring a teaching panel with the International Communication Division on teaching media ethics in countries lacking the Western free speech tradition. The dubious honor to be the closing MED panel (Sunday at 10 am) of the conference will befall a panel co-sponsored with the Minorities and Communication division on covering Native American communities. Stay tuned for more details on these panels in the pre-conference issue of MED news.

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The End of the Chip Auction?

by **Bastiaan Vanacker**
Programming Chair/Vice Head

The evening before the chip auction took place in Louisville, the very existence of the process was topic of discussion at the AEJMC Council of Divisions meeting. For almost a decade, people have pushed to do away with what some perceive to be an arcane and Kafkaesque piece of academic theater and bring the whole planning procedure online instead. This movement has been gaining momentum leading to a spirited debate on the Council of Divisions list serve this year.

During the meeting last December, opponents and defenders made their cases. Critics tended to be younger faculty with high work loads and small travel budgets, while more seasoned members tended to stress the importance of face-to-face contact and the networking opportunities that these get-togethers offer.



Having attended my first chip auction, I must admit that there is something irresistibly quaint and old world-academic about the whole process. It may not be the most efficient way to decide a conference line up, but it certainly has an appeal.

On the other hand, now that computers handily defeat chess masters and Jeopardy champions alike, it might be time to give them a shot at putting together an AEJMC program. Other conferences in our field seem to be able to do it and one has to wonder at what point holding on to tradition becomes anachronistic in a time when we are told to stretch our travel budgets and reduce our carbon footprint. While in the past the meeting allowed for divisions to cement co-sponsorships the evening before the chip auction, most programming chairs now arrive on site with their co-sponsorships established via email.

The debate is ongoing. In the tradition of the best bureaucracies, a committee was appointed to weigh the pros and cons of the chip auction and its alternatives and present its findings to the Council of Divisions in Chicago. The discussion is hampered

by the fact that CoD members only serve for two years (one as programming chair and one as division head), and that this debate has been going on for much longer. Moreover, incoming programming chairs initially have few insights to offer on this issue since they have not yet gone through the experience of a chip auction.

I, therefore, would find it useful to have this debate in the lap of the MED as well, perhaps during our members' meeting or through our list serve. The potential cancellation of the chip auction is an issue that will affect our future leadership – for better or for worse—and therefore is an issue that deserves our attention. In the meantime, feel free to

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Media Ethics Division Conference Submissions

by **Kevin Stoker**
Research Committee Chair

The Media Ethics Division welcomes faculty and graduate student paper submissions on all topics related to media ethics. The Division's work cuts across many professional and scholarly boundaries, and the papers it selects reflect that diversity. The Division encourages submission of all media ethics-related research, regardless of its overall orientation (theoretical, philosophical, pedagogical, methodological, practical), its professional context (journalism, advertising, public relations), or its methodological approach. Those authors who use interdisciplinary methods are strongly encouraged to submit their work. All papers must be no more than 25-pages long (excluding bibliography and appendices) and must otherwise conform to the rules outlined in the AEJMC Uniform Call for Papers. Submitting a paper to the MED implies that the author (or one of the authors) intends to present the paper in person or will make arrangements for the paper to be presented by a colleague familiar with the work.

The Division offers recognition in a number of areas. Except for the Burnett award, all competitions are open to both faculty and students. All submissions will be evaluated in the general paper competition. Authors wishing to be considered for the special competitions described below need not submit their papers more than once.

Carol Burnett Award: The Media Ethics Division teams with the University of Hawaii and the Carol Burnett Fund for Responsible Journalism to sponsor a special paper competition for graduate students. Graduate students are invited to submit papers on any topic related to media ethics.

The winning paper will receive the Carol Burnett/University of Hawaii/AEJMC Prize, which includes a \$350 cash award. The runner-up will receive a \$150 cash award. Authors for the top two submissions will receive a small travel assistance stipend and will be invited to present their papers at the 2012 conference in Chicago. The winner will be invited to accept his or her prize at the KTA Awards Luncheon at the conference.

Burnett competition papers must be marked "Burnett Competition" on the title page (and ONLY the title page).

Professional Relevance Award: Special recognition will be given to the paper that is judged to be the most relevant to working professionals. The recipient will be selected from the general paper competition.

Top Faculty Paper: In addition to the special call, special recognition will be given to the faculty paper judged to be the best paper submitted among faculty authors. The recipient will be selected from the general paper competition.

All questions should be directed to the research chair Kevin Stoker, Texas Tech University. Email: kevin.stoker@ttu.edu. Phone: 801-472-0131.

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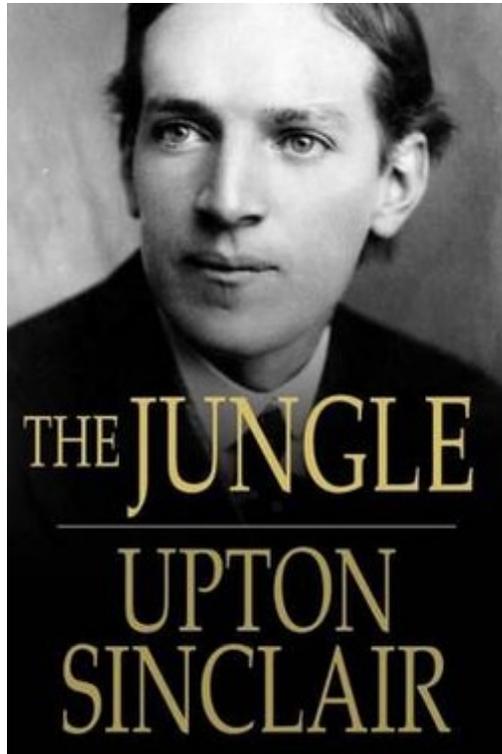
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Using Upton Sinclair To Teach Media Ethics



by **Ryan J. Thomas**

Graduate Student Representative

Upton Sinclair is regarded as a seminal figure in American journalism for his work as a “muckraker,” defining investigative journalism for generations to come. Sinclair is perhaps best known for his fictional work “The Jungle,” which exposed the corruption and exploitation in the meatpacking plants of the Chicago stockyards in the early twentieth century. The controversy raised by the book famously led to the Food and Drug Act of 1906, which established the Bureau of Chemistry (which we know today as the Food and Drug Administration).

Sinclair also wrote a number of works examining the major issues of his time such as “The Profits of Religion,” which looked at religious hypocrisy and demagoguery and

“The Goose-step,” a hard-hitting study of the American education system. Of particular interest to media ethics scholars is his 1919 work “The Brass Check,” a scathing critique of the news media. The title is a reference to a token provided to customers at a brothel. In the book, Sinclair argues that the journalists of his time are little more than prostitutes “bought” by unscrupulous newspaper owners.

When I began teaching an upper division seminar in media ethics at Washington State University in 2009, I asked students to read excerpts from “The Brass Check” we examined the economic pressures facing journalists. I enjoyed the students’ responses so much that I decided to focus on Sinclair in a more substantive manner (a somewhat self-serving goal, I must confess, as I am a big fan).

With that in mind, a few semesters ago I assigned the full text as a mandatory reading and divided students into groups tasked with devising a fifteen minute presentation based on a selection of book chapters. The goal, I told students, was to summarize the key concepts of the chapters they were given and present this to the class.

I tell students that in their presentation they should be addressing questions such as: What are the key issues Sinclair is addressing? What concerns of Sinclair’s remain relevant today? What of Sinclair’s assertions do you agree and disagree with? If Sinclair were to address these same concerns today, how would he go about it and how would he be received? If he were alive today, what would be capturing his attention?

It is important that students are told that this is not an assignment that calls for them to summarize each chapter and recite them by rote, but instead to exercise critical thinking to pull out key themes that they feel are particularly significant. I preface the assignment by telling students that this was, and remains, a very important book, and that their goal is to show the rest of the class why.

By splitting the book among the various groups, I ensure that the whole book is covered and we get the full flavor of Sinclair’s critique. To guard against the possibility that students will read only their portion of the text and not the whole book, I devote the class period after the presentations are over to a discussion of the book as a whole, which handily doubles-up as a way of providing oral feedback to the students on their presentations.

What students discover from this assignment is that the concerns that Sinclair had in the early years of the twentieth century remain prominent concerns in the early years of the twenty-first: the pressures faced by journalists to produce copy that satisfies newspapers owners; an overwhelming focus on sensationalistic and unedifying “gossip”; corporate dominance of the marketplace of ideas; the pernicious influence of advertising; and reporting that tarnishes reputations while providing no right of reply.

“The Brass Check” provides students with a window into a journalism that, in Sinclair’s view, abdicated its role as a socially responsible institution in favor of a framework driven by corporate and advertising interests. It demonstrates to students that we should not uncritically romanticize the past as some kind of “golden age” of journalism when Murrows and Cronkites (and, for that matter, Sinclairs) roamed the earth but instead understand that the cause of media ethics is, and always has been, one of continual struggle for a more responsible, robust, and accountable press.

Students have reported to me that they thoroughly enjoyed this assignment. In particular, they enjoy Sinclair’s provocative, often savage, style. They tell me that while on the one hand it is somewhat depressing to discover that comparatively little progress has been made in one hundred years, they feel empowered that it rests upon them as both producers and consumers of news to continually strive for ethical news output.

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Teaching integrity helps gird students for pressures of newsroom culture

by **Matt Duffy**
PR&R Committee Chair

It's not been a good year for ethical standards in journalism. The British [phone-hacking](#) scandal, superstar reporter [Johann Hari's plagiarism](#) admission and the [Telecrunch conflict-of-interest](#) case made 2011 one of the most ignoble in recent history.

Obviously, these examples provide journalism professors with interesting and relevant classroom discussion about media ethics.

One important component of any discussion of a lapse in good journalism ethics is the role that group norms plays on the decision-making. Oftentimes, a newsroom that collectively remains silent helps enable the journalist who behaves unethically.

When teaching future journalism and communication professionals, it's useful to point to scientific research on group norms. For instance, Solomon Asch's landmark 1955 experiment in which he asked group participants to choose which of three lines matched the length of another line (see illustration). All of the participants except one were told to give the same palpably wrong answer. An amazing 76 percent of participants conformed with the group on at least one of the trials.

Many subsequent studies have supported the validity of Asch's study—creating a rich literature that points to the powerful enticement of group conformity.

Given this pressure to conform, it's important to ground students with a discussion of integrity—how to make good ethical decisions that might go against group norms. In Yale Law prof Stephen Carter's book "[Integrity](#)," he identifies three steps to make integral decisions.

First, Carter states that we must slow down and discern right from wrong. This step is the easiest to avoid—often we just don't both to stop and think about our actions. If our peers appear to be in agreement, we have even less motivation for reflection. Journalists can fall into this trap. As a news copyeditor at the *Boston Herald*, I remember how we ran a photo on the front page of a dead body pulled from a fire despite a well-known policy against this. I didn't see any reason to voice strong objections since no one else seemed too bothered.

Second, Carter says that we must struggle to live according to the sense of right and wrong following our discernment. This step can be tough because often doing the right thing involves personal costs—generally, time and money. After all, it's cheaper to download music and movies illegally over the Internet. For a journalist, it takes less time to change the wording of a quote to make it perfect rather than call a source back for a follow-up interview. Or a photographer may be tempted to use Photoshop to revise a picture with an unwanted obstruction rather than go back and take the shot again.

Third, Carter stresses that we must be willing to say what we're doing and why we're doing it. Often this guidance can help us see if our actions are truly justified (it plays on [Kant's publicity principle](#).) A phone-hacking reporter may think he's discerned ethical justification by providing for the "greatest good for the greatest number." However, would he be willing to state publicly that he gathers information by secretly listening to other people's voicemail?

The final principle also directs people in an organization to speak up when they see ethical violations. While their concerns may not be heeded, they will have done their duty by speaking publicly. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* suffered great embarrassment with their 1996 report falsely accusing Richard Jewell to be the Olympic Park bomber. As [one case](#) study notes, a copy editor in the newsroom spoke up about one of the later-maligned columns that heavily implied Jewell's guilt. "I think this column is libelous, and we need to kill it," Patricia Koester said. The column ran anyway, but Koester acted with integrity.

In this post-modern era of moral relativism, we sometimes get squeamish about the idea of teaching ethics or integrity. Obviously, differing philosophies justify differing ethical actions—we can't teach the "correct" approach to all dilemmas. (However, there are certain absolutes—cheating and plagiarism are indisputably wrong, after all.)

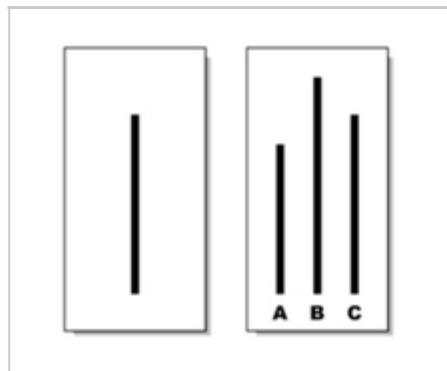
But, integrity appears to be a universal concept. When I talk about it in the United Arab Emirates, my students tell me its Arabic equivalent is "Nazahah" (نزاهة), which essentially means doing what's right no matter the situation. Interestingly, both my students in the UAE and in United States agree that Nazahah is something their culture is lacking. One of the overriding points of Carter's book is that we simply don't speak enough as a culture about the importance of integrity.

As professors we should not abdicate our duty to discuss integrity. We must prepare our students for the situation when their lone voice may save their organization from the next embarrassing scandal.

Duffy teaches communication ethics at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi, UAE. You can follow him on Twitter: @mattjduffy

Click [here](#) to see Duffy's case study on a PR agency in Dubai that suffered a terrible lapse in ethics.

Asch's group norm experiment instrument:



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Connect with the Media Ethics Division on Facebook

by **Jan Leach**
Teaching Standards Chair

Find us on Facebook!

That's right. We're again turning to technology to spur discussion and exchange ideas about teaching media ethics. Last year, the Media Ethics Division developed its Teaching Ethics Resources website, <http://www.teachingethicsresources.org/>, and this year we're setting up a Facebook group, MED Educators, to quickly and easily trade information and share perspectives.



The Facebook group is called MED Educators and it's a "closed" group, meaning only members and invitees can converse there. Think of it as a meeting place for current issues related to teaching and research in journalism ethics.

Members can post questions, announcements or links for other members. Other members can respond directly or to the whole group. For example, if you were seeking ideas about how to incorporate movie clips into a discussion about media ethics, you might post a question like this:

- "Is anyone using current movie clips to teach the concept of loyalty? I'm considering the first part of "Gladiator" and the ferry boat scenes from "The Dark Knight." Other suggestions?"

That could begin a thread of responses from other MED members with suggestions, links, clips, articles and more. Another entry might go like this:

- "Do you have service project requirements for a grade or for extra credit in media ethics? Our provost is pushing 'experiential learning' options like this."

Again, such a question could spark a debate about the value of experiential learning or the drawbacks of requiring service of ethics students.

Only those in the group can comment but comments are not required. That means you don't have to be tied to Facebook all day or even every day to get valuable teaching advice.

The MED Educators group also can be helpful for announcements about upcoming events, activities, speakers, paper calls, graduate programs, position openings, scholarship deadlines or study opportunities. Here's a real example (and please pardon the blatant promotion):

- "Save the Date: The 2012 Poynter KSU Media Ethics Workshop, this year focusing on political media ethics, will be Thursday, Sept. 20 in Kent, Ohio. For more info contact Jan Leach." <http://mediaethics.jmc.kent.edu/2011>

Professors also can use the Facebook group to generate interest in their students' work or to draw attention to their own articles, blogs or research. A post might look something like this:

- "Students in my Global Media Ethics class will be blogging for the next three weeks from London, Geneva and Rome. Follow us here (insert url)."

The MED Educators Facebook group is the idea of member David Craig, professor and associate dean at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma. Craig is a member of a similar group formed by the Online News Association (ONA Educators) and he finds it practical and effective.

"People were talking (in the ONA group) about how to teach journalism – specific, useful ideas," Craig says. That triggered thoughts about teaching ethics. Craig suggested the ethics group so MED members could have similar, helpful exchanges with like-minded ethics educators.

"Whether I'm commenting or just watching the discussion (in ONA Educators), I find it really stimulating, and I thought if we did it within the MED it could bring us together in important and meaningful ways," Craig says.

Kati Tusinski Berg, MED chair and assistant professor in the Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University, sees people using the Facebook group as a forum to throw out ideas and build connections. "One of the advantages of MED is it's a pretty tight group and this is a good way to keep in touch," she says.

Craig envisions the Facebook group hosting topics members might discuss individually or in a group meeting. With the Facebook forum, "we can open the discussion to more people," he explains. He suggests online dialog about best practices in the classroom or how to work with cases and practical advice on things like how to get a quiet group engaged or how to deal with a student who dominates a discussion.

Ethics education can only benefit from experience and expertise and the MED Educators Facebook group is a new way to share your talents and expand your

teaching tools.

To join MED Educators, contact Teaching Chair Jan Leach at jleach1@kent.edu or phone 330-672-4289.

Visit Our New Facebook Site

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/179687322133203/>

To join the group, contact Teaching Chair Jan Leach at jleach1@kent.edu.

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