

Ethics

Fundamentals of Journalism - JR 220

Week 2 - Sept. 13

Emerson College - Fall 2012

Ethics

- Absolutely central/essential to any journalist's practice.
- Failing to practice ethical journalism will hurt your credibility and can cost you your job.
- Some things are black and white. Other times there are grey areas.

Black & White

- Plagiarism
 - If you didn't write it, don't make it seem like you did.
- Stick to the facts.
- Don't make things up.
- Don't attack without solid proof.
- Don't distort quotes, information or images.
- Keep your word to your sources.
- Be fair.

Journalism Hall of Shame

I do NOT want to see your name here.

- Jayson Blair
- Janet Cooke
- Stephen Glass

Potential for Ethical Issues

- Freebies
- Checkbook Journalism
- Conflict of Interest
- Misrepresentation
- Private Lives
- Approval

Ethics

- Freebies

Freebies

- SWAG, free meals, free trips, gifts, etc.
 - In short, anything given to you by people you cover.
- Reporter should cover the check.
- Most outlets have a policy on how this should be handled.
 - Generally, anything under \$25 is acceptable.
 - When in doubt check with your editor.

Ethics

- Freebies
- Checkbook Journalism

Checkbook Journalism

- Paying people for stories.
- As a reporter, you should NEVER do this. The decision for this rest FAR above you.
- As a rule, news organizations should not pay people for stories.
 - News org. have found a way to “justify” this by purchasing photos/videos from subjects.

Ethics

- Freebies
- Checkbook Journalism
- Conflict of Interest

Conflict of Interest

Company/News Org.

- Advertisers (or any other outside person or entity) should not determine/influence coverage.
- If a conflict of interest is unavoidable, it **MUST** be disclosed to your audience.
 - Example: Disneyland saw profits rise for the first time in three years. (Disclosure: Disney is the parent company for ABC News.)

Conflict of Interest

Personal

- As a rule, you should not report on stories or events to which you are **DIRECTLY** tied/have personal relationships.
- Any potential conflicts of interest **MUST** be disclosed to your editor.
- If it is a personal conflict of interest, you should remove yourself from the story.
- Do not date people you cover.

Ethics

- Freebies
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- Conflict of Interest
- Misrepresentation

Misrepresentation

- If you are reporting on a story, introduce yourself as a journalist.
 - Likewise, don't identify yourself as something/someone you are not.
- Make sure it is clear to your subjects that you are reporting on the story and what they say may be used in your final article.
- There *may* be times when not identifying yourself may be acceptable. This is NOT a decision you can make your own. Consult your editor.

Ethics

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- Misrepresentation
- Private Lives

Private Lives

- All individuals have the right to private lives.
 - This includes famous people and elected officials.
 - Although, parameters are slightly different for high-profile individuals.
- If something is not impacting/relevant to the individual's professional life, it likely is not news.
- Individuals' families are largely off limits. Children are always off limits.

Ethics

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Approval

- NEVER give sources approval of stories before they run. Same goes for quotes.
- This goes even if...
 - They say they've been burned before...
 - They say they won't speak to you otherwise.
- Reason: What happens if they want you to change something?
- Politely, but firmly decline.