Media Ethics

Module HANDBOOK
Module Code: LAMC421
20 credits

Session 2009-10
Module Leader: Dr Douglas Chalmers M309, d.chalmers@gcal.ac.uk,
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Cultural Business Division
LAMC421 Media Ethics - Summary of Content
This course explores the constraints within which journalists and others working within the media operate in Western society, and considers the ethical dilemmas which arise in their work, and how these might be resolved

Learning Outcomes
- Understanding of the socio-economic and cultural contexts within which the western media operate
- Ability to analyse the nature of ethical issues.
- Ability to analyse a range of ethical issues within Journalistic and media practice, and consider possible solutions

Teaching / Learning Strategy
The module utilises lectures (audio or e-lectures), seminars (and tutorials where appropriate). The primary class contact will be a one-hour weekly seminar (Wednesday, 12-1pm). Tutorials, guest tutors & other classes will be held in an additional one-hour slot each week, utilised as when required (Mondays, 4 pm not every week). 50% attendance (at Wednesday seminars) is a prerequisite of entry to first diet examination. All coursework is required: failure to complete it may lead to disbarment from first diet examination

Syllabus / Structure of Curriculum
- What are ethics? What are media ethics? Moral-decision making; reactions, resistance, evasions - egotism, relativism, cynicism (week 1)
- Theories of the media - libertarian and social responsibility; their origins and philosophical bases (wks 2 + 3)
- Ethical theories and philosophical approaches; consequential and non-consequential theories; Kant; Utilitarianism; Virtue Ethics; the philosophical basis of codes of practice and regulatory agencies; contrasting approaches/cases in the UK, Europe and North America (wks 4, 5, 6)
- The economics of the media: media as a business; audience size and audience taste; intervention in the market by government and government agencies. (wks 7, 8)
- CASE STUDIES: Ethical dilemmas in practice: the tension between ethical and professional imperatives; selected case studies drawn from contemporary examples in the press and broadcasting; reconciling conflicting demands; self protection and self respect (wks 9 and 10; Hutton; The War Game)
- STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: personal journalistic or media case studies of moral decision making in light of all the above (wks 11 and 12)

Transferable skills
- Awareness of Strengths and Weaknesses
- Independence
- Ability to Reflect
- Integrity
- Ability to Prioritise Tasks
- Time management
- Presentation Skills
Assessment

Coursework  50%
Unseen 3-hour examination  50%

Coursework to consist of:

Blog and class contribution (25 % of module)

✓ Continuous assessment of your contribution to the blog and in the class, throughout the module, based on weekly monitoring of your attendance, the extent and quality of your blog contributions and your verbal contribution to discussion throughout the course. Contributions to the blog are mandatory – failure to contribute will mean you will not pass the module.

- Seminar contribution: (25 % of module) to be assessed from the following two components equally

✓ A 10-minute seminar presentation, during normal class slots in Weeks 11 and 12, ideally on any incident / decision / issue experienced by you during your work experience / placement / freelance journalism or media work at any time since joining the BA Journalism programme, or the BA Media /Communication programme, which in your judgement now, in the light of any material in the module syllabus, might merit ethical analysis or reflection. If you have no direct work experience to base this on, a discussion with the module leader to find an appropriate subject will be necessary.

✓ A short, 1200-1500 written report / version of this presentation, to include bibliography, handouts, powerpoint slides, etc, as appropriate

Seminar Presentations will be on the following dates:
   Monday 30th and Wednesday 2nd December; Monday 7th and Wednesday 9th December, weeks 11 and 12

Seminar Presentation Written Reports are due:
   No later than Friday 11th December, but preferably within 2 working days of the date of your Presentation

Module Tutors
Dr. Douglas Chalmers (module leader), lecturer, Cultural Business Division
Dr John Cook, senior lecturer, Cultural Business Division
On-line resources:

The Blackboard site

which can be found at: http://blackboard.gcal.ac.uk/

In addition to this we have important additional on line resources which include:

The Course Blog

This can be reached via Blackboard or directly at http://caledonianblogs.net/Mediaethics09/

Contributions to the blog are obligatory and count towards your class work mark (see previous page)

We also use Delicious tagging:

http://www.delicious.com (see handout), Our Tag is MediaethicsGCU

and Refworks as our bibliographical software (see handout):

via the library Database page (under ‘R’ - or if you want to copy this into your own delicious tags or other bookmarks) :

http://www.gcal.ac.uk/library/resources/database.html#R

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Workshop Wednesday Week 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>There will be a training workshop to make sure everyone is registered on the blog and can post to this at 12-1 pm on Wednesday 30th September (Week 2). This will be in Lab W603. This will take the place of the seminar in Week 2, which will be postponed till Monday Week 3 at 4pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>We will also use this session to ensure everyone can use Delicious Tagging and Refworks</td>
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Getting Started Thinking About Ethics

This module demands a lot of reading, and a lot of philosophical, ethical and theoretical reading at that. Some of this stuff can seem hard going at times. While Aristotle is a joy to read in Thomson’s 1959 translation (the Penguin edition of the Ethics), even fans of his ideas admit that Kant, by contrast, is almost unreadable. There are, however, easier and more pleasurable ways to get your mind in the state where it might be more readily amenable to such reading and ideas. Three such books are the following, all in print and available in most good bookshops, and on order for the library. You can read them in handy 10 or 15-minute sections or chapters, on the bus or in bed, for pleasure as well as profit. They are all quite rightly critically-acclaimed and much-loved by readers in English the world over.


World-wide bestseller and award-winning Norwegian novel: a little girl starts getting strange messages and notes left for her, that lead her into a discovery of philosophy and how difficult it is to make decisions. Sounds creepy, but it isn’t


World-wide paperback smash hit by French philosophy professor (not often you can write a sentence like that). A beautiful collection of 19 short essays on the newly-fashionable (and highly appropriate for this module) area of ‘virtue’ or ‘practical’ ethics (see seminar programme below) – ‘Fidelity’ ‘Prudence’ ‘Justice’, and so on.

Thompson, Mel. 2003. Teach Yourself Ethics. London: Hodder Arnold

A snappy, bite-size chunks intro to all major ethical philosophers, philosophies and ideas. It’s in the library already and much-specified on reading lists for our university’s nursing and medical programmes, because it is accessible and assumes no prior familiarity with the area at all. But not just a dictionary or reference guide – you can read it too
**Seminar Programme (details)**

**Week 1: Wednesday 23rd September**

#1: What IS Ethics?
Seminar tutor: DC

Moral decision-making; communication & ethics; the media are not us; Obligations; excuses, evasions, resistance: relativism, subjectivism, metaphysics, egoism, linguistics & metaphysics, nihilism

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)
REQUIRED READING (Handout supplied):
Extracts from Chapter 1, pp. 1-22; *There is a link to a scanned version of this extract on Blackboard.* & 75-77; 92-93

**Week 2: Wednesday 30th September**  Please note there is a lab tutorial on this date you all have to attend which uses the Wednesday seminar slot. Seminar no. 2 therefore takes place on Monday at 4pm in Week 3.

#2: Theories of the Media (1)
- The Libertarian Theory
Seminar tutor: DC

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)
REQUIRED READING (Handout supplied):
Siebert, Fred S. ‘The Libertarian Theory’, from Schramm, W et al. 1956. Four Theories of the Press. Urbana: Uni of Illinois Press, pp. 39-71 *There is a link to a scanned version of this on Blackboard.*

FURTHER READING
Week 3: Wednesday 7th October

#3: Theories of the Media (2)
- The Social Responsibility Theory

Seminar tutor: DC

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)
REQUIRED READING (Handout supplied):

FURTHER READING

Week 4: Wednesday 14th October

#4: Key Ideas from Ethics (1) ‘How should we Act?’
- Deontological or ‘non-consequential’ Theories

Seminar Tutor: DC

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)
REQUIRED READING (Handouts supplied):
Kant; Immanuel The Moral Law, part 1, plus commentary & analysis by H J Paton (from Routledge Classics edition, 2005)
Martin-Clark, Nick. 2003. ‘When a journalist must tell’ British Journalism Review, 14:2; pp. 35-39 Available at: http://bjr.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/14/2/35 (Needs Athens log-in)

FURTHER READING

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Week 5: Wednesday 21st October

#5: Key Ideas from Ethics (2) ‘…but actions have consequences…’ - Consequential theories
(Seminar Tutor: DC)

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)
REQUIRED READING (Handouts supplied):

FURTHER READING

Kepplinger, Hans Mathias, and Knirsch, Kerstin. 2001. ‘The Relevance of Weberian Ethics for Contemporary Journalism’, *European Journal of Communication,* Vol 16(1): 5–23  Found at: [http://ejc.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/16/1/5](http://ejc.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/16/1/5) (you will need your Athens log-in)


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**Week 6: Wednesday 28th October**

#6: Key Ideas from Ethics (3) ‘…and it’s me who has to make the decision’ – Virtue ethics (Seminar Tutor: DC)

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)

REQUIRED READING (Handouts supplied):


FURTHER READING


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**Week 7: Wednesday 4th October**

#7: The economics of the media (1)- Why economics
The structure of the paper and broadcasting industries in the age of globalisation. Regulation or control - the real Big Brother? Audience size and audience taste. Catering for minority interests.

This seminar will look at the conflicts that may arise from the business format of media organizations (corporations) and their actions. We will examine particular issues that media throw up for economic analysis, and the tensions that arise between any 'public purpose' of the global print media in general and the economic imperatives of those who own or control the sector.

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)
REQUIRED READING (Handouts supplied):
Bakan Joel 2002 *The Corporation*, London Constable, pp 28 – 59 *There is a link to a scanned version of this on Blackboard.*

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**Week 8: Wednesday 11th October**

#8: The economics of the media (2)

Public service and the public purpose
Seminar Tutor: DC

Value for money versus Value. Commercialisation and the economics of future broadcasting.

This seminar will examine some of the issues behind current changes being suggested in the public service remit of the broadcast media, and attempts to reconcile economic viability and 'public purpose'.

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD Lecture)
REQUIRED READINGS(Handouts supplied)
Curran James, and Seaton, Jean 1997 *Power without Responsibility* London Routledge extracts pp 209 – 236) *There is a link to a scanned version of this on Blackboard.*
Week 9: Wed 18th November
CASE STUDY #1: Andrew Gilligan, the BBC & The Kelly Affair, & Hutton Report
Seminar Tutor: DC

The terrible consequence of events that led from one single live “two-way” on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme to an eventual report that ultimately led to the suicide of a senior MoD civil servant, an investigation and report, and the later resignation of both the chairman of the BBC Governors and its director-general, is an extraordinary object-lesson in many complex issues of journalistic ethics, public service broadcasting, and government media policy and political communication. This case study seminar will seek to tease out some of the central ethical issues arising from this.

REQUIRED READING:
Crook, Tim. 2003. ‘Is your source ever really safe?’ *British Journalism Review*. 14:4, pp. 7-12  Available at: http://bjr.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/14/4/7 (You will need your Athens log-in)
BBC Governors Transcript of relevant meetings

FURTHER READING:
Foreign Affairs Committee. 2003.*The Decision to Go to War in Iraq: Evidence from Mr Andrew Gilligan to the Committee's Inquiry (House of Commons Papers).* London: The Stationery Office Books
Week 10: Wednesday 25th November

CASE STUDY #2: The War Game – The Corporation & the FilmMaker
Seminar Tutor: Dr John Cook

This seminar will explore issues of corporate and public service documentary and public information ethics, objectivity and subjectivity in TV feature making, arising out of the celebrated case of the “banning” by the BBC of its own 1960s commissioned film on what might happen in the event of a nuclear attack on Britain, directed by Peter Watkins.

VIEWING: (For screening details please see module leader)

Peter Watkins' The War Game, BFIVD543 (British Film Institute, 2003), includes commentary and extra 'The War Game - The Controversy'.

REQUIRED LISTENING (CD lecture)
REQUIRED READING:
Patrick Murphy, 'The War Game - The Controversy', Film International 3 May 2003, pp. 25-28 (photocopy to be supplied).

FURTHER READING / RESEARCH (all non-website items in GCU Library)
James Chapman, 'The BBC and the Censorship of The War Game (1965)', Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 41, no.1, January 2006, pp.75-94. {Pro-BBC article}
On-line version of this article accessible through University computers with Athens password: http://jch.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/41/1/75.pdf
Alex Cox, 'Not in our Name', The Guardian, 9 July 2005,
http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,1524200,00.html
Peter Lennon, 'Hate and War', The Guardian, 25 February 2000,
http://www.guardian.co.uk/friday_review/story/0,3605,230196,00.html
Peter Lennon, 'War and Attrition', The Guardian, 15 January 2003,
http://film.guardian.co.uk/features/featurepages/0,4120,875094,00.html
Peter Watkins, 'Peter Watkins - Filmmaker and Media Critic', {Peter Watkins' own website}, http://www.mnsi.net/~pwatkins/ and especially Watkins' own account of The War Game controversy at http://www.mnsi.net/~pwatkins/warGame.htm
Weeks 11 and 12: Mondays and Wednesdays 30th November & 3rd December; 7th & 9th December

ASSESSED STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

You are asked to research and prepare for assessment a 10-minute seminar presentation, during these normal class slots in Weeks 11 and 12 (which however may be extended by an hour and re-located, to ensure sufficient time), on any incident / decision / issue experienced by you during your work experience / placement / freelance/ part-time employed / full-time employed journalism or media work at any time since joining the BA Journalism programme or the BA Media/Communications programme, which in your judgement now, in the light of any material in the module syllabus, might merit ethical analysis or reflection

It could be as simple as your decision to use or not use a particular source; or an instance when the commercial context of the publication or broadcasting organisation meant the treatment of the story was conditioned in a way that differed from your original individual ethical preference, and so on. It might be your experience working in PR or another media field. Or, it could be a more complex issue of ethical conflict involving / centring partly on others in the organisation, and not necessarily involving yourself as the prime reporter or writer or editor, but in this case must be an event which you observed some part or consequences of first hand, and can therefore reasonably be expected to be able to obtain primary interviews and response / reflections on from some of the participants

Your presentation, while briefly recounting the incident, should strive to place it in ethical context by reference to and reflection on any relevant codes, practices, values, ideals and philosophical and theoretical approaches in operation in journalism and touched on by this module

If you have no personal or direct work experience in this field, please see module leader Dr Douglas Chalmers as soon as possible, in order to mutually agree on a similar presentation which will raise the same issues in a relevant context.

You are also required to prepare and submit a short, 1200-1500 written report / version of this presentation, to include bibliography, handouts, powerpoint slides, etc, as appropriate, no later than than Friday 11th December, but preferably within 2 working days of the date of your Presentation

The presentation plus report are together worth 25% of the overall module mark.
The Course Blog

In addition to your week to week seminar contributions, we will assessing your contributions to the course blog.

In terms of the course blog, we will be expecting students over the 12 weeks to contribute short comments continuing the issues discussed during the seminars. More details of this, together with password details will be given at the first seminar.

Together with your verbal contributions to the seminars, your contributions to the blog will count for 25% of the mark for the whole module.
Main Reading List

All of these texts are either in the Library or on order.

This Bibliography is available on line and downloadable from RefWorks. at:

http://www.refworks.com/refshare?site=014501142406000000/RWWS6A368360/Media%20Ethics

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Bakan Joel 2002 The Corporation, London Constable
Chapman, James 'The BBC and the Censorship of The War Game (1965)', Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 41, no.1
Cox, Alex 'Not in our Name', The Guardian, 9 July 2005, http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,1524200,00.html
Crook, Tim. 2003. ‘Is your source ever really safe?” British Journalism Review. 14:4
Davies, Nick 2008, Flat Earth News London, Chatto and Windus
Foreign Affairs Committee. 2003.The Decision to Go to War in Iraq: Evidence from Mr
Andrew Gilligan to the Committee's Inquiry (House of Commons Papers). London: The Stationery Office Books
Hobsbawm, Julia. 2006. Where the truth lies. London Atlantic
Johannesen, Richard L. 1996. Ethics in Human Communication. Prospect heights:
Waveland Press, 4th ed
Kant, Immanuel. 1948 ed. The moral law: or, Kant's Groundwork of the metaphysic of morals. London: Hutchinson University Library
Lennon, Peter 'Hate and War', The Guardian, 25 February 2000, http://www.guardian.co.uk/friday_review/story/0,3605,230196,00.html


Useful websites
These sites all link into others: there is a vast amount of global material and briefing papers on journalism as an ethical and social practice, not just lists of various organisation’s codes of conduct. But these are some of the most useful places to start:

UK based:

www.mediaswise.org.uk
www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/
www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/
www.communication-ethics.org.uk/
www.cfoi.org.uk/
www.allmediascotland.com
www.pcc.org.uk/
www.nuj.org.uk

International:

www.medialens.org/index.php
www.presscouncils.org
www.uta.fi/ethicnet/
www.article19.org/
www.poynter.org/
www.cjes.ru
www.journalism.org/
www.freemedia.at/
casey.umd.edu/index.cfm
casey.umd.edu/index.cfm
www.jmme.org/
Journal of Mass Media Ethics

This journal has been ordered for the module and programme and by the time of the first lecture, our electronic subscription should have begun. Below are the titles and abstracts of some of its back articles that seem potentially most relevant to themes of this module (the journal covers all aspects of media ethics, including public relations, advertising, web media, and so on). See the journal’s website:http://www.jmme.org/

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Journal Year : 1985-86 (volume 1) : 1.1

Ethics in Sports Journalism: Tightening Up the Code
by K. Tim Wulfemeyer, San Diego State University

Many Americans don’t hold journalists in very high regard these days, and sports journalists are often viewed in the least favorable light. The general public does not perceive any visible, unified, and concerted effort among sportswriters to practice their craft in a consistently ethical manner. Efforts to upgrade the craft include the Associated Press Sports Editors ethical guidelines, which cover freebies, moonlighting, community involvement by sports journalists, and commercial sponsors of sporting events. This study examines the APSE code and suggests additional, more specific, and enforceable guidelines in ten areas: freebies, moonlighting, newsgathering methods, news sources, direct quotes, privacy, gambling, special interests, self-interests, and involvements. Sports journalists should be as ethically accountable as any other journalists, the author concludes.

Journal Year : 1988 (volume 3) : 3.1 Special issue on Journalism Moral Philosophy

What Should We Teach About Formal Codes of Communication Ethics?
by Richard L. Johannesen, Northern Illinois University

First, this article summarizes major arguments levied against codes. Second, standards for a sound ethical code are presented. Third, a trend is described toward more concrete codes developed by specific communication organizations. Finally, positive functions of codes are examined, with special emphasis on two: the argumentative function and the character-depiction function.

Journal Year : 1988 (volume 3) : 3.1 Special issue on Journalism Moral Philosophy

The 'Golden Mean' in Journalism
by Sandra H. Dickson, University of West Florida

The pattern of criticisms of the press over the decades underscores the problems caused by the absence of universal ethical standards. Situation ethics, or "adhocracies," are an insufficient moral compass to guide a fast-paced, technologically-driven, bottom-line oriented industry. It is suggested that journalists take a lesson from Aristotle, who argued for practical experience and theoretical substance. Aristotle's "moral mean" is recommended as a moral compass that will serve journalists who seek to be virtuous and avoid both defective and excessive practices. Several instances in which the "moral mean" should prove especially useful are outlined.

Journal Year : 1988 (volume 3) : 3.1 Special issue on Journalism Moral Philosophy

Power--The Key to Press Freedom: A Four-Tiered Social Model
by John C. Merrill, University of Missouri; David Gordon, Emerson College

Raw (pragmatic) and potential (theoretical) power is seen as the key to press freedom in various global settings. Because the locus of power determines the locus of freedom, the
authors suggest a model to understand where the raw and potential power resides within a matrix consisting of the State, the Media Elite, the Journalists, or the People. Numerous questions concerning accountability and ethics are raised concerning the practical application of a model that purports to overcome cultural biases inherent in traditional theories of press and society.

Journal Year: 2004 (volume 19) : 19.3 / 19.4 Special Issue: Ethics Across the Professions

Power, Ethics, and Journalism: Toward an Integrative Approach

by Peggy Bowers, Clemson University; Christopher Meyers, University of California--Bakersfield; Anantha Babbili, Middle Tennessee State University

While we think one of the basic purposes of journalism is to provide information vital to enhancing citizen autonomy, we also see this goal as being in direct tension with the power that news media hold and wield, power that often serves to undercut, rather than enhance, citizen autonomy. We argue that the news media are ethically constrained by proceduralism, resulting in journalists asserting power inappropriately at the individual level while unwittingly surrendering moral authority institutionally and globally. Anonymity, institutionalization, and routinization cloak power relationships among citizens, journalists and the institutions of which they are a part, ultimately inculcating these distinctly Western values in the global community.

Journal Year: 2004 (volume 19) : 19.3 / 19.4 Special Issue: Ethics Across the Professions

Three Essays on Journalism and Virtue

by Stuart Adam, Carleton University--Poynter Institute; Stephanie Craft, University of Missouri; Elliot Cohen, Indian River Community College

The authors are concerned in these essays with virtue in journalism and the media, but are mindful of the tension between the commercial foundations of publishing and broadcasting, on the one hand, and journalism’s democratic obligations on the other. Adam outlines, first, a moral vision of journalism focusing on individualistic concepts of authorship and craft. The next essay by Craft attempts to bridge individual and organizational concerns by examining the obligations of organizations to the individuals working within them. Finally, Cohen discusses the importance of resisting the powerful corporate logic that pervades the news media in the U.S. and calls on journalists to be courageous.

Journal Year: 2003 (volume 18) : 18.2

Normative Conflict in the Newsroom: The Case of Digital Photo Manipulation

by Wilson Lowrey, Mississippi State University

Digital photo manipulation is often treated in the literature as a problem that occurs when individuals stray from a single set of ethical standards. It is proposed in this study that the newsroom comprises various subgroups, each with unique norms and values, and each seeking to shape newsroom decision-making. It is expected that photo manipulation should result from subgroups' perceptions of, and reactions to, this plurality of newsroom norms. This expectation is assessed through both in-depth interviews and a national phone survey of visual journalism managers. In-depth interviews reveal the existence of various sets of norms; these include integrative norms, which reflect the needs of the organization, art norms, and journalistic norms. Journalistic norms are perceived as dominant, but where art norms are stronger, photo manipulation is slightly more likely. Findings also suggest photos
are more likely to be manipulated when newsrooms are large and complex and when visual journalists strain to fit visuals with story theme.

**Privacy Invasion by the News Media; Three Ethical Models**  
by Candace Cummins Gauthier, University of North Carolina at Wilmington
In this article I provide an overview of philosophical conceptions of privacy and suggest 3 models to assist with the ethical analysis of privacy invasion by the news media. The models are framed by respect for persons (Kantian), the comparison of harms and benefits (Utilitarian), and the transfer of power. After describing the models I demonstrate how they can be applied to news reporting that invades the privacy of public officials.

**Universal Ethical Standards?**  
by Herb Strentz, Drake University
If a quest for universal ethical standards in journalism is to be productive, we should first be able to articulate an over-arching set of universal ethical standards that can apply across cultures, across ethical schools of thought, across professions. This paper offers four likely universal standards that have relevance to journalism, suggesting universal journalism standards can also be identified. While these and other standards will not be panaceas for the ethical dilemmas journalists often face, they provide needed anchors for decision making.

**A Universal Code of Journalism Ethics: Problems, Limitations, and Proposals**  
by Roberto Herrscher, Les Heures--University of Barcelona, Spain
As the worlds of economics, politics, culture, and communications face a growing wave of globalization that will likely continue, ethical challenges for journalists have also gone global. The author proposes a clear division between ethics codes for media owners, the public, and professional journalists, and presents a set of considerations and specific rules applicable only to the last group. This paper advocates a universal code of journalistic ethics, but points out problems and warns against dangers that have made the application of such codes difficult in the past. A universal code should consider the voluntary nature of such an endeavor, the cultural and economic differences in various journalistic traditions, and the problem of producing solutions acceptable to all involved.

**A Model for Evaluating Journalist Resistance to Business Constraints**  
by Sandra L. Borden, Western Michigan University
Should journalists resist business constraints they perceive as a threat to their professional integrity? This article suggests that the answer, at least sometimes, is yes. But in choosing a resistance strategy, journalists should not consider the "take this job and shove it" stance as the only option with moral integrity--or even as the best ethical option. This article develops a model of resistance strategies using the experiences of journalists at one newspaper to illustrate the range of options available for resisting business constraints within a news organization. The types of strategies identified vary along the ethical dimensions of (a) consideration of organizational, as well as professional, goals; and (b) openness with regard to journalists’ preference for professional goals.
Below you will find the questions from a recent Media Ethics Exam. You may wish to ponder on them as the lectures and your studies progress.

1 From your knowledge of the British media, which of the two traditional theories - libertarian or social responsibility - seems to you to be the one on which EITHER the press OR broadcasting currently base their operations?

2 Like utilitarianism, mass market television entertainment would seem to seek “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”. Why then do British television broadcasting organisations bother with creating codes of conduct from their production staff?

3 Because virtue ethics focuses on the agent, not the action or its consequences, for what kinds of media professionals, with what level of responsibility might this philosophy be appropriate, while remaining inappropriate for others?

4 "I buy newspapers to make money to buy newspapers to make more money.......As for the editorial content, that's the stuff you separate the ads with" (Lord Thomson of Fleet). How accurate a picture does this point of view give of the corporate basis of today’s media? What are the main ethical dilemmas this point of view poses for those working in the media today?

5 Given the recent scandals in which the BBC have been involved, is it still possible to claim that Public Service Broadcasting has a greater ethical dimension than non Public Service Broadcasting?

6. “The inauthenticity paradox at the heart of much of PR is that in order to work it has to pretend to be something it’s not”. (Sherwood). If true, what professional and ethical dilemmas could this fact pose for those working in PR