# MEDIA LAW AND ETHICS: COMM 3404
## Autumn 2025

*"Education is that which remains when one has forgotten everything he learned in school."*
*Albert Einstein*

Monday 6:00-8:45 p.m./ Journalism 239/ Cell: 216.280.9715/ Off. Journalism 360

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## MEET THE PROFESSOR:

Jay Milano, Esq. | Milano Attorneys at Law | milano.35@osu.edu

Office Hours by Appointment – By Phone or Carmen Zoom-in person appointments are possible, but time is limited to Monday Afternoons.

For over 40 years, I have practiced law with a concentration in litigation (trials), criminal and civil.

For over 30 years I have taught at the university level, at Case Western Reserve University School of Law and, for the last 10 years, COMM 3404 at The Ohio State University.

I have represented and worked with journalists my entire career.

My work and my interests have been built upon an understanding of the ethical obligations of professionals - lawyers, doctors, and journalists. In my opinion, a common set of ethical principles can be applied to all professions-only adapted to the idiosyncrasies of each.

Those principles are:

***Integrity, Honesty, Decency, and Courage***

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

**This course will be taught as a hybrid. There will be online assignments, both video and print. Class will meet on Monday nights at 6 PM. It is possible that a limited number of Monday night classes will be presented by Zoom.**

**OSUCOMM3404** will examine how the media (from social media to international news organizations) deal with the most important issues - race, religion, politics, gender and sexual assault...

The purpose of this class to provide you with a model by which to analyze, understand, and act upon the law and ethical considerations which journalists face. We will use the writings of the Supreme Court, the ethical considerations of the profession, and actual events to build an analytical model.

There is no profession more important to a democracy than journalism - when vigilant and diligent and resolute. A Journalist needs to understand both the law and the ethics that govern it.

If you are willing to do the work, this class will provide you a foundation upon which to build.

The learning experience will be divided into 5 parts.

1. Before-class video assignments
2. Before-class reading assignments
3. Reflection on the assignments
4. In-class discussion,
5. After-class reflection.

**Before-Class Video and/or Reading**
There will be a video (or series of videos)/article or series of articles posted each week that must be viewed in advance of that week's class -Monday at 6:00 p.m. The

before-class video/reading should not exceed a total of 60 minutes.

**Before-Class Video/Reading Assignments & Reflection:**
Before class each week you will be responsible for submitting a synopsis (before-class reflection) of the material assigned for the corresponding class. The writing need not be exhaustive, but should address each individual assignment and ultimately answer the question "What's the point?" The before-class reflection is due for submission in advance of each class on Sunday at noon.

**In-Class:**
We will meet at 6:00 PM Mondays in room 239 Journalism Building. It is necessary that you participate during class time. There will be discussion of the topics covered. Very little of the live class will be done by traditional lecture. Your participation will be important.
We will, often, use the Socratic method, an explanation of which you will find in the "File" section of Canvas.

**After-Class Reflection:**
After class, each of you must submit an after-class reflection related to your original submission and/or the in-class material with something new that you learned during

class. This need not be much longer than a few paragraphs but **must be submitted by Noon on the Sunday following the corresponding class.**

**You must keep up with timely class submissions – each before-class/after-class reflection must be submitted on time in order for you to receive credit.**

**The reflections must be clearly labeled with your name and the date of the class to which you are referring. Submissions that do not include your name and/or the relevant class date(s) will not receive credit.**

**RULES:**
You will be treated as professionals. That means:
1. There is no syllabus for life. Circumstances sometimes force change.
2. You will need to put forth a professional effort.
   a. Read and understand the assignments.
   b. Do every analysis and reflection.
   c. Participate in class discussion.
3. This class will be built upon the ideas and concepts fleshed out in our classroom discussions. You will need to speak fearlessly and argue zealously for your point of view.

     a. We will respect the right of each of us to have an individual opinion (that does not mean we all need to agree).

     b. We will treat each other with the respect due a colleague.

     c. "The essence of the independent mind lies not in what it thinks-but in how it thinks." – Christopher Hitchens

4. You need to show up to every class. If you need to miss, you need to email in advance of class with the reason.

     a. If the reason is legitimate and the occurrences are few (very few) we will be fine.

     b. You need to stay until the end of the class period.

5. There are no facts- there is only evidence.

**Communication:**
Canvas contains all course materials. You will receive announcements periodically and messages from me within Canvas.
**All messages-emails- should be sent through Canvas. That way everything stays in one place.**
**You may call me if you see the need-216.280.9715 When leaving a message be sure to identify yourself as a student.**

## A Model for Ethical and Case Analysis

This is the Method of Analysis that we will use for Ethical and Legal Questions:

For an ethical situation:
- What do I have in front of me?
  - What is the evidence?
    - How reliable is the evidence?
    - What follow-up do I need?
    - What rules or principles apply?
    - What biases might I have?
    - What consequences do I need to consider?

For a writing or video:
- What issues are presented?
- What ethical principles or rules are used?
- Does the speaker/author have a point of view?
- What their conclusion?
- Do I agree?

- o Why?

For a case:

- What are the facts?
- What are the issues?
- Are there extrinsic factors?
  - o What weight do I give them?
- Is there a rule or a precedent that applies?
- What are the arguments regarding the issues?
- What is the rule of the case?
- What is my position

**A Model for source analysis**

> See CRAAP in files

**Hot Topics:**

Hot topics are issues in the news about ethics, law, society, journalism, or anything else interesting that relates to our discussions Individuals or groups will be responsible for presenting and explaining the topic to the class.

They offer each student a chance for extra credit. They are not mandatory, but you should consider presenting.

They are 5 to 10-minute presentations on a topic related to the subject of any given class. You submit to me a possible topic at least 2 weeks before your proposed date. I need to approve the topics and make sure we are not duplicating. We have room for up to 4 presentations per class.

If you wish to present on a given class but are not yet sure of the topic, reserve the class by email. Once you do that, however, you must present on that night.

Note: in lieu of a hot topic presentation based on a particular topic as described above, students are welcome to present on the case assigned for a particular class, but the Method of Case Analysis outlined above must be used for your presentation.

**FINAL EXAM**

The final exam will be an 8-page (more or less) final paper. You will be given the option to choose the subject and then analyze issues and conclusions.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:**

Classes will be audio taped. The purpose is so that I will be able to look back and determine the amount and quality of your participation. When you speak you will give your first name. That will give me the guideline I need.

This course will be structured based upon lively and compelling class discussions. Each student must come to class prepared to ask questions and offer points of discussion based upon the assigned readings. You are all professionals. You will not be graded based upon the "correctness" of your answer, but your participation grade will be based on your ability to give a thoughtful and individualized answer.

Open discussion and the Socratic method are beneficial to both the classroom experience and the way that you will all learn. This method is employed universally

throughout law schools. It involves the professor calling a random student's name from the roster after asking the class a question or upon beginning the discussion for that day.

An article in the Stanford University Newsletter distributed in the fall of 2003 is posted on Canvas. Read it. It is summarized as follows.

> "In the Socratic method, the classroom experience is a shared dialogue between teacher and students in which both are responsible for pushing the dialogue forward through questioning. The 'teacher,' or leader of the dialogue, asks probing questions in an effort to expose the values and beliefs which frame and support the thoughts and statements of the participants in the inquiry. The students ask questions as well, both of the teacher and each other."

Hot topics are not included in the overall grade distribution. They are designed to bolster your grade, if you are reluctant to participate in the class discussions. Don't be reluctant, we will value you are knowledge and understanding and opinions.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

Class Submissions          150
Class Participation         150
Final Paper                 200
The course is graded on a curve. Your work speaks for itself but will be compared to that of other students.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:**

All forms of conduct prohibited by the Code of Student Conduct are likewise prohibited in this classroom and course. Detailed information, including a list of specifically prohibited conduct, can be found in Section 3335-23-04 of the Code of Student Conduct. The online version of the Code can be found at: http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/csc/.

**SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS:**

Any student in need of special accommodations due to a disability should contact me via phone, email, or before/after class to discuss your needs. Students with disabilities should call the Office for Disability Services at 614.292.3307 or visit the office at 150 Pomerene Hall to document those disabilities and coordinate reasonable accommodations.

## Class 1

Read

Syllabus

2 sagan.pdfDownload 2 sagan.pdf

Watch Movie

GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD LUCK

Available on Amazon Prime

While you watch the movie make a list of events and/or insights that echo forward to today. Jot each one down and then think about them - What happened, what was said, and how does it foreshadow or relate to an analogous situation happening right now .

We will discuss your findings in class

No Submission Necessary for First Class

Please upload to Canvas your picture- it will help us all

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## Class 2


**Ethics Across the Spectrum**

From Files. Read and Consider

CRAAP

SPJ Code of Ethics

The Socratic Method

Rolling Stone Article

http://web.archive.org/web/20141119200349/http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-20141119

Be prepared to discuss ethical issues using SPJ Code of Ethics

**Student Assignment: Read and Consider**

**1. CRAAP Test**

CRAAP Test—a mnemonic for evaluating the credibility of information sources:

- **C**urrency: Is the information up to date?
- **R**elevance: Does it relate directly to your topic or purpose?
- **A**uthority: What are the author's credentials?
- **A**ccuracy: Is the information supported by evidence?
- **P**urpose: Why was this produced? Are there biases or agendas? Society of Professional Journalists+13researchguides.ben.edu+13UVA Guides+13libguides.nova.edu+3guides.lib.uchicago.edu+3today.csuchico.edu+3

**2. SPJ Code of Ethics**

Assign the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics. It serves as a flexible framework—not a rigid rulebook—that promotes journalistic responsibility across mediums. Key principles include:

- Seek truth and report it.
- Minimize harm.
- Act independently.
- Be accountable. Society of Professional Journalists+4Society of Professional Journalists+4Society of Professional Journalists+4Society of Professional Journalists+2Society of Professional Journalists+2

**3. The Socratic Method**

Have students explore the Socratic Method, a pedagogical approach rooted in asking probing questions to unwrap assumptions and deepen understanding. Encourage reflection on how this can be applied to analyzing complex texts and ethical issues. The Institute for Learning and Teaching+2TeachThought+2

**4. Rolling Stone Article: "A Rape on Campus"**

Provide the archived Rolling Stone article via the Wayback Machine, as linked: A powerful, controversial long-form report that examines:

- How narrative structure and emotional tone shape readers' perceptions.
- The importance of verifying sources and corroborating evidence.
- The tension between storytelling and factual accuracy.

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**Class 3**

**Putting It All Together -Rolling Stone**

After reading the materials, **Please write a 1–2 paragraph reflection:**

- **CRAAP Application**: Using the CRAAP Test, how would you evaluate the credibility and value of the Rolling Stone article as a source?
- **Ethical Tensions**: How does the article illustrate competing journalistic values—like engaging narrative vs. factual integrity? Can the SPJ Code of Ethics effectively guide such tensions?
- **Legal Ramifications**

**On the Cover of the Rolling Stone**

**Read**

**https://www.cjr.org/investigation/rolling_stone_investigation.php**

**Student Questions on the *Columbia Journalism Review* Article (about Rolling Stone's UVA story)**

1. **Reporting Process**
   o How did Rolling Stone's reliance on a single source contribute to the story's problems?
   o What safeguards could have been used to verify "Jackie's" account?
2. **Editorial Oversight**
   o What role did Rolling Stone's editorial staff play in failing to catch weaknesses in the reporting?
   o How does editorial responsibility differ from individual reporter responsibility?
3. **Ethical Standards**
   o Which parts of the SPJ Code of Ethics (seek truth, minimize harm, act independently, be accountable) were violated or neglected?
   o Should "minimizing harm" have applied differently here—to Jackie, to the accused fraternity, and to the broader UVA community?
4. **Impact on Journalism**
   o What effect did this high-profile failure have on public trust in journalism?
   o How might it have affected reporting on sexual assault survivors more broadly?
5. **Legal and Institutional Fallout**
   o What legal consequences followed for Rolling Stone?
   o How did the University of Virginia and the fraternity respond, and what does that tell us about reputational damage?

# Class 4

**The First amendment and the Courts**

**Readings & Cases**

**Case 1: New York Times Co. v. Sullivan (1964)**

- **Oyez Case Summary**: New York Times Co. v. Sullivan (Oyez)
- **Article**: Samantha Barbas, *Actual Malice and Civil Rights: The Story of Sullivan* (Texas A&M Law Review, 2023) [PDF]Links to an external site.

**Key Focus for Students:**

- What is the "actual malice" standard?
- How did the civil rights movement shape this case?
- Does Sullivan still protect journalism today—or is it under threat?

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## Case 2: Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc. (1974)

- **Oyez Case Summary**: Gertz v. Robert Welch (Oyez)
- **Article**: D.A. Weiler, *Constitutional Privilege and the Private Plaintiff* (University of Illinois Law Review, 1975) [PDF]Links to an external site.

## Key Focus for Students:

- How does Gertz distinguish between public figures and private individuals?
- Why does the Court allow different standards (actual malice vs. negligence)?
- Should private people have stronger protections than public figures?

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## Case 3: Hustler Magazine, Inc. v. Falwell (1988)

- **Oyez Case Summary**: Hustler v. Falwell (Oyez)Links to an external site.
- **Article**: Rodney A. Smolla, *Analysis of Hustler Magazine v. Falwell* (William & Mary Law Review, 1988) [PDF]Links to an external site.

## Key Focus for Students:

- Why did the Court protect parody and satire—even when offensive?
- Where should the line be drawn between humor and harm?
- Compare Falwell to Sullivan: do both expand First Amendment protections?

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## Discussion Prep Questions

1. How did each case expand or limit the press's ability to report freely?
2. Does the distinction between public figures and private individuals in Gertz still make sense in the age of social media?
3. Is there a risk that Sullivan and Falwell protect "too much" harmful speech?

4. How do direct government actions against the press (surveillance, intimidation, lawsuits) compare to private lawsuits?
5. Do these cases suggest that courts are the best protector of press freedom— or should other safeguards exist?

## Student Assignment: Government Attacks on the Press

### Required Readings

- What Paramount's Settlement With Trump Says About Press Freedom (Time)
- "No One Is Happy About It." CBS Staffers Were Tired of the Paramount Drama, but the Settlement Intensifies Media-Capitulation Concerns (Vanity Fair)
- Trump is Waging War Against the Media — and Winning (The Guardian)

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### Writing Assignment (approx. 1 hour total)

Write **short essays (2–3 paragraphs each)** in response to the following questions. Use examples from the readings where appropriate:

1. **Settlement Pressure vs. Journalistic Independence**
   - What concerns are raised when a major network (CBS/Paramount) settles a defamation case brought by a government official or candidate?
   - Does settlement protect press freedom, or does it create a chilling effect?
2. **Legal Tactics as Political Weapons**
   - How are lawsuits and regulatory threats (like FCC approvals) being used as tools to influence or intimidate the press?
   - Are these tactics consistent with democratic values?
3. **Precedent and Power Imbalance**
   - Compare the Paramount settlement to earlier defamation suits such as Dominion v. Fox.
   - What does the scale of these cases suggest about the ability of small vs. large outlets to resist political or financial pressure?
4. **The Sullivan Standard Today**

- *New York Times v. Sullivan* set a high bar ("actual malice") for public figures to win defamation cases.
- In light of current lawsuits and settlements, is that standard still strong enough to protect the press? Why or why not?

# Class 5

**Whistle Blowers**

**Watch the Movie "The Post"**

**OSU Media, Law & Ethics – Class on Whistleblowers**

**Assignment**

**Watch the film *The Post* (2017, directed by Steven Spielberg).**

The movie dramatizes the publication of the Pentagon Papers by the *Washington Post*, raising issues about whistleblowers, freedom of the press, and government secrecy.

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**Issue Questions for Written Response**

Please write **a few paragraphs for each question** (total of 3–4 pages). This should take you about an hour to an hour and a half.

1. **The Role of Whistleblowers**
   - Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers, risking his career and freedom. What role do whistleblowers play in a democracy?
   - Are they heroes, traitors, or something more complicated?
   - How should the law balance the government's interest in secrecy with the public's right to know?

2. **Freedom of the Press vs. National Security**

- In *The Post*, Katharine Graham and Ben Bradlee had to decide whether to publish classified material.

- Should the press always publish information of great public importance, even if the government argues it could harm national security?

- Where should the line be drawn, and who should decide?

3. **Ethics and Courage in Journalism**

- What ethical dilemmas did the *Washington Post* face in deciding whether to publish?

- How does the SPJ Code of Ethics (seek truth, minimize harm, act independently, be accountable) apply in this case?

- What does the film suggest about the courage required of journalists and publishers in moments of national consequence?

4. **Power, Gender, and Leadership**

- Katharine Graham, as the first female publisher of a major U.S. newspaper, was portrayed as having to prove her leadership.

- How does the film connect her personal struggle for authority with the broader struggle of the press against government power?

- What do you think the film is saying about who has the power to make history?

# Class 6

**1. False Equivalence & False Balance**

**Key Sources:**

- **Wikipedia** defines *false equivalence* as an informal fallacy where two things are portrayed as equivalent despite significant differences—often referred to as "apples and oranges."PBS+7mediahelpingmedia.org+7News Literacy Project+7Links to an external site.Wikipedia+1Links to an external site.

- The **Media Helping Media** site explains that *false equivalence* arises when journalists treat two subjects as the same despite differences; *false balance* occurs when fringe or minority views are given equal weight to well-supported ones. Examples include climate-change denial treated as on par with scientific consensus or Trump's unsubstantiated election-fraud claims depicted as credible.mediahelpingmedia.orgLinks to an external site.
- A **NewsLit tip sheet** highlights how media sometimes present sides of an issue as equal, even when evidence heavily favors one—especially in climate science.arXiv+6News Literacy Project+6mediahelpingmedia.org+6Links to an external site.
- The **Wikipedia false balance** page (also known as *bothsidesism*) describes how striving for objectivity can lead journalists to grant legitimacy to unsupported claims, distorting public perception.Wikipedia+1Links to an external site.

- A **Medium article** summarizes:

  "The act of comparing two things that aren't equivalent as if they were. This creates a false sense of balance or fairness, as if both sides are equally valid when they are not."Wikipedia+6Medium+6Wikipedia+6Links to an external site.

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## 2. Horse-Race Journalism

**Key Sources:**

- **Wikipedia**: Horse-race journalism focuses on polls, who's winning or trailing—treating campaigns like sporting events rather than diving into policies. Studies show it reduces public understanding of substantive issuesTIME+4Wikipedia+4Freedom Forum+4Links to an external site..
- **Journalist's Resource (Oct 2023)**: Horse-race coverage harms voters, candidates, and news outlets—viewers get less policy coverage, and such coverage fosters distrust, distracts from issues, and misrepresents polls and election dynamicsThe Journalist's ResourceLinks to an external site..
- **Freedom Forum**: Emphasizes how poll-heavy coverage can misinform, referencing the 2016 U.S. election mispredictions, the lack of issue discussion, and the "race versus stakes" dilemma—whether media should focus on "who's winning" or "what's at stake."Freedom ForumLinks to an external site.

- **New Yorker**: Showtime's *The Circus* effectively illustrates horse-race journalism, depicting campaigns through strategic and theatrical lens rather than deep policy debates.decider.com+6The New Yorker+6Wikipedia+6Links to an external site.

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**For False Equivalence / False Balance:**

1. **What is false equivalence? How is it distinct from false balance (bothsidesism)?**

2. **Identify a real-life example** of false equivalence or false balance in media. Does it appear in coverage of climate change, health, politics, etc.?

3. **Why does this fallacy arise?** Is it journalistic laziness, intent to appear objective, or misinformation?

4. **What's the impact** on the audience? Does it mislead, distort facts, undermine trust, or legitimize fringe views?

5. **How can journalists avoid it?** What standards or criteria should determine when to treat views as equivalent?

6. **What role does bias play?** Are there cases where the false equivalence stems from ideological slant or pressure to be "balanced"?

**For Horse-Race Journalism:**

1. **What defines horse-race journalism?** How is election coverage reduced to polls and standings rather than policies?

2. **Provide an example** from a recent election or media piece that demonstrates this style (e.g., focus on who's ahead, debate winners, etc.).

3. **What are the consequences?** According to research, does this type of coverage erode public understanding, widen cynicism, or misrepresent polling data?

4. **What is the "race versus stakes" framework?** Should journalism prioritize explaining "what's at stake" over "who's winning"?

5. **How did horse-race coverage influence real-world outcomes?** For instance, in 2016, forecasts gave Clinton overly high win probabilities—which may have suppressed turnoutPBS+6mediahelpingmedia.org+6QuillBot+6Links to an external site.PBS+6Democracy Toolkit+6Wikipedia+6Links to an external site.QuillBot+1Links to an external site.Freedom ForumLinks to an external site.The Journalist's ResourceLinks to an external site..

6. **How do journalists improve?** What alternatives exist—issue-based reporting, policy deep dives, context beyond polls?


## Class 7

**Social Media Podcasts Who' sets the standards?**

- **Pew Research on News Influencers** – Found that 65% of Americans say news influencers help them understand current events, especially young adults.
  Pew Research CenterLinks to an external site.
- **FTC Disclosure Shortfalls in Influencer Marketing** – Reports and regulatory guidance highlight frequent mislabeling or omission in paid influencer endorsements.
  arXiv+3AP News+3Wikipedia+3Links to an external site.
  WikipediaLinks to an external site.
- **Students Trusting Influencers Over Teachers** – A UK survey reveals that many students rely on influencer advice (e.g., for exams), often skipping credential checks—a cause for concern among educators.
  Wikipedia+14The Times+14The Guardian+14Links to an external site.
- **Wellness Misinformation & Influence** – Experts emphasize the importance of verifying influencer health claims via credentials and peer-reviewed sources.
  The GuardianLinks to an external site.
- **Podcasts in Political Campaigns** – Politicians increasingly use popular podcasters to share their message—but the casual format may reduce journalistic rigor.
  VoxLinks to an external site.
- **Questions for Student Response**

  1. **Influencers as News Sources (Pew Research)**

- Pew reports that many Americans, especially young people, rely on social media influencers to understand the news. What advantages do influencers provide compared to traditional journalists? What risks or shortcomings does this trend raise for democratic society and informed citizenship?

2. **Transparency and Regulation (AP News)**

   - The FTC continues to find that influencers often fail to properly disclose when posts are paid promotions. Why does disclosure matter for credibility? Should influencers be held to the same standards as journalists when presenting information to the public?

3. **Trust in Influencers vs. Teachers (The Times)**

   - The Times article describes students trusting influencers' advice, sometimes more than their own teachers. Why do you think influencers hold such sway over young audiences? What challenges does this create for educators and institutions that try to maintain authority and credibility?

4. **Health, Wellness, and Misinformation (The Guardian)**

   - The Guardian highlights how wellness influencers spread unverified or misleading health advice. Why might audiences accept health claims from influencers over doctors? Should platforms or governments intervene, or should the responsibility remain with individuals to verify information?

5. **Podcasts as Political Platforms (Vox)**

   - Vox notes that politicians are turning to popular podcasts to reach voters, often in casual, unfiltered conversations. Does this help voters get more authentic insights, or does it bypass journalistic fact-checking in dangerous ways? Compare podcasts as a medium to traditional news interviews.

6. **Comparative Analysis**

- Looking across these articles, how does the influence of social media personalities and podcasters blur the line between journalism, advertising, and entertainment? What ethical standards, if any, should apply equally to journalists, influencers, and podcasters?

## Class 8

Issues Regarding Women

### Assignment Overview

For this class, you will explore how the media reports on issues central to women's lives, focusing on **abortion** and **women's position in the workplace**. The readings and videos below reflect both mainstream coverage and analytical perspectives. Your task is to carefully review them and then respond in writing to the issues posed.

You should plan on **about one hour of preparation time** with the readings, and then write **a few paragraphs in response to each issue**.

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### Readings
### Abortion in the Media

- These Are The Abortion Stories You Don't Hear After Roe v. Wade – *Teen Vogue*

- How a Crop of New Movies Is Changing the Narrative About Abortion – *Time*

- Jessica Valenti Says Her Work on Abortion Isn't "Preaching to the Choir." It's Arming It.Links to an external site. – *Vanity Fair*

### Women in the Workplace & Media Representation

- Women and Leadership in the News Media 2024: Evidence from 12 Markets – *Reuters Institute*

- Shattering the Glass Screen: Women in Media and EntertainmentLinks to an external site. – *McKinsey & Company*

- Gender Bias in News Coverage of Politics Links to an external site. – *Journalist's Resource*
- Media Coverage of Women and Women's Issues Links to an external site. – *MediaSmarts*

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**Issues to Respond To**

Write **a few paragraphs on each**:

1. **Abortion and Media Framing**

   ○ How do the readings suggest the media frames abortion?

   ○ Is it treated more as a political issue than a healthcare issue?

   ○ How does the choice of which stories are told (or not told) influence public opinion?

2. **Representation in Entertainment Media**

   ○ How have movies and popular culture contributed to shifting narratives about abortion?

   ○ Do fictional portrayals have as much impact as news coverage? Why or why not?

3. **Women in the Workplace and Leadership**

   ○ What do the studies say about women's representation in leadership roles in the media?

   ○ How does media coverage of women leaders differ from coverage of men?

   ○ What stereotypes persist, and what effects might those have on career advancement?

4. **Bias and Responsibility**

   ○ Based on these readings, does the media have an ethical responsibility to cover women's issues differently?

- Should journalists aim to correct stereotypes or stick to reporting "as is"?

- How would you apply the SPJ Code of Ethics to improve coverage of women's issues?

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☞ **Submission**: Your response should be thoughtful, analytical, and demonstrate engagement with both the readings and the broader issues of media framing, bias, and ethics.

## Class 9
### Issues related to Gender

1. **Thomas J. Billard (2016), "Writing in the Margins: Mainstream News Media Representations of Transgenderism"** (*International Journal of Communication*).

   - Content analysis of 200 mainstream newspaper articles. Finds frequent misgendering, delegitimizing language, and narrow framing of transgender people. Connects framing to questions of media responsibility and public legitimacy.
   Link to full article (PDF)

2. **Santoniccolo et al. (2023), "Gender and Media Representations: A Review of the Literature on Gender Stereotypes, Objectification and Sexualization"**(*Frontiers in Sociology*).

   - Scholarly review of how media perpetuates stereotyping, objectification, and their social/psychological impacts, even in the face of legal progress in civil rights. Raises ethical implications for media practitioners.
   Read article

3. **Singh, V., et al. (2019), "Gender Bias in Occupational Images on Digital Media Platforms"** (*arXiv preprint*).

   - Computational study showing how algorithms reinforce gender stereotypes. Explores ethical and regulatory responsibilities for digital platforms.
   Read article

4. **UC Santa Cruz / *American Psychologist* (2024): "Social Media's Role in Growing Gender and Sexual Diversity"**

   o Shows how social media both empowers marginalized voices and generates backlash. Raises ethical questions of platform governance, moderation, and liability.
     Summary link

5. **Lestari & Elfattah (2025), "Media, Gender, and Identity: Challenges and Strategies for Equitable Representation"** (*International Journal of Communication Studies*).

   o Narrative review of structural bias, underrepresentation of non-binary identities, and regulatory/media literacy interventions. Useful for connecting media ethics with possible legal solutions.
     Read article

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## Student Assignment

- **Case Brief Exercise**: Choose a recent news article about a transgender/LGBTQ+ issue. Write a short brief identifying the media framing, ethical lapses, and whether media law currently addresses the problem.

- **Policy Memo**: Draft a two-page memo recommending one reform (industry code, legal standard, or platform regulation) to improve representation of gender identity in media.

- **Discussion Response**: Answer 2 of the above discussion questions in 2–3 paragraphs each, citing at least one of the assigned readings.

# Class 10

Media Issues Race

1. Historical Media Representation: Civil Rights Era & Modern Framing

- **Readings:**

- *News for All the People* (excerpts) — Torres & Gonzalez

- Simeon Booker, *Shocking the Conscience* (selected passages)

- Scholarly article: Robert Entman, "Blacks in the News: Television, Modern Racism and Cultural Change" (1989) — examines how local TV news framed Black individuals, contributing to symbolic racism Home - Messiah University+1Links to an external site.Wikipedia+1Links to an external site..

- **Student Response Prompt:**

  - Compare how media framing during the Civil Rights Era (via Torres & Booker) aligns with Entman's analysis of symbolic modern racism in news portrayal. How have these narratives evolved or persisted over time?

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2. Media Bias & Criminal News Reporting

- **Readings:**

  - Wikipedia overview on *Racial Bias in Criminal News in the U.S.*

  - Report by the Equal Justice Initiative on biased crime coverage arXiv+3Equal Justice Initiative+3Wikipedia+3Links to an external site..
  - Scholarly article: Travis Dixon & Charlotte Williams, "The Changing Misrepresentation of Race and Crime on Network and Cable News" (Journal of Communication, 2015) — details statistical framing of Black suspects in crime news Wikipedia+1Links to an external site..

- **Student Response Prompt:**

  - Analyze the ways crime reporting reinforces stereotypes, citing both the broader context (Wikipedia, EJI) and empirical evidence from Dixon & Williams. What editorial strategies could counteract these biases?

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3. Framing Police Violence & Media

- **Readings:**

  - Scholarly article: Caleb Ziems & Diyi Yang, *"To Protect and To Serve? Analyzing Entity-Centric Framing of Police Violence"* (2021) — uses computational framing analysis to uncover differences in how victims of police violence are portrayed across ideological media Home - Messiah University+1Links to an external site.arXivLinks to an external site..
  - Wikipedia background on implicit bias and crime reporting WikipediaLinks to an external site..

- **Student Response Prompt:**

  - Using Ziems & Yang's findings, dissect how framing of police violence differs along ideological lines. Discuss how these narrative frames influence public understanding of race and justice.

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4. Racial Stereotyping in Advertising

- **Readings:**

  - Wikipedia entry on *Racial Stereotyping in Advertising*

  - Scholarly article: A. Rößner, "Ethnic Minorities in Advertising" (2023) — examines ongoing underrepresentation and stereotyping in ads Cupola+1Links to an external site.arXivLinks to an external site.pioneerpublisher.com+2SAGE Journals+2Links to an external site.Taylor & Francis OnlineLinks to an external site..
  - Additional scholarly: E. Rona, "A Critical Analysis of Racial Stereotypes in Global Advertising" (2023) — offers a broader, global critiquepioneerpublisher.comLinks to an external site..

- **Student Response Prompt:**

  - Critically evaluate a recent advertisement (TV, print, or digital) using insights from Rößner and Rona. What stereotypes does it

reinforce or challenge? How would you redesign it to promote inclusivity?

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5. Stereotypes and Perceived Threat in Media

- **Readings:**

  - o Wikipedia entry on *Factors Contributing to Racial Bias in Threat Perception*— explores perceptual grounding of stereotypes pioneerpublisher.com+1Links to an external site.Wikipedia+2Wikipedia+2Links to an external site..
  - o Scholarly empirical study: Joshua Correll et al., "Dangerous Enough: Moderating Racial Bias with Contextual Threat Cues" (2010) — experimental evidence on threat perception tied to race WikipediaLinks to an external site..

- **Student Response Prompt:**

  - o Explain how implicit stereotype activation influences threat perception in media and real-world contexts. Propose media literacy strategies or journalistic practices that could counter this bias.

# Class11

**Documentary Journalism**

**Watch Movie 137 Shots on Netflix**

**More to come on this- Date may vary bases upon , Writer/Producer/Director's schedule.**

**May be Zoom Class**

# Class 12

**This class will be used as an overall discussion of the issues we've examined. There will be an assignment later in the year, once we determine the important issues in real time.**

# Class 13 Final Prep