

Western University
Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 2730G: Media Ethics
Winter 2021

Instructor: Dr. Dean Proessel
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Course Objectives:

This course is an introduction to various political and ethical issues that arise when considering the function and practice of the media. These include: What is ethical theory and what are the duties and responsibilities of those engaged in disseminating information? What is the relation between the media and the market? Is the news a mere commodity? Is the mass media a “propaganda machine” representing the commercial interests of the property class? Or, is the media an instrument of democracy, a “fourth estate” fostering the pursuit of truth and objectivity? What are the foundations and limits of freedom of the press in a liberal society? What is the role of the media in the formation of social, civic and moral space? Do we live in a post-truth world and how is this related to the phenomenon of fake news? What might it mean to say that our experiences are *mediated* and how in a globalized world do such mediations construct and make possible the appearance of distant others? What risks and promises do these mediations pose for the other? What, for instance, is the connection between the media and political violence or between the media and minorities? What role can the media play in the construction of a just moral order? Should journalists be considered professionals, and how have new communication technologies shaped the practice of journalism?

In examining these sorts of questions and issues our aim will be to develop skills of critical reasoning and thus a way of thinking that can be applied to *all* walks of life. Specifically, students will learn to identify arguments and to assess their plausibility. Above all, they will learn to see issues from a variety of perspectives and to critically respond to claims made by others by formulating their own arguments.

Required Texts:

Custom Course Package, available at The Bookstore at UWO both as a hardcopy and in digital format.

Course Requirements:

Two short essays, each 7- 8 pages in length. Each essay is worth 35%

Take home exam worth 30%