Wendt Annotated Bibliography

Truth and Honesty in Journalism
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As the Wendt course unit developed for Webcasting (and for use in the Journalism class) focused on truth and honesty, I have limited my annotated bibliography here to these subjects.

Articles


As technology has advanced reporting into a sophisticated art, greater opportunities exist to provide the public with more enhanced coverage, something they have come to expect. However, situations such as manipulating images to convey the essence of the story in order to attract the public’s attention have increased. Examples here include NBC’s “Dateline” program, which rigged a truck to explode upon collision, as had been verified by previous studies, and Time magazine modifying O.J. Simpson’s appearance so that he would appear more threatening. Albeit brief, this article points out the importance of honesty in broadcast journalism and photojournalism.


This article reviews the cases of reporters Stephen Glass and Patricia Smith, who both lied in their respective publications. The author points out that even though both cases are reprehensible; the author felt that Glass, who worked for The New Republic, was less odious than Smith, who worked for the Boston Globe. Leo delineates Glass’s exploits as representative of the Washington scene where the goal is to become well known and entertaining through articles, promoting human interest rather than political substance. Although Smith also fictionalized characters in her column, Leo feels that her contributions were more dangerous because she used this method to bring across a point. Thus, Leo points out, she was continuing a growing precedent that objectivity is not needed in journalism, which further distorts the lines between journalism and literature.


Beginning with historic examples of dishonesty in the press, this article discusses the lack of ethics within the journalism profession. Although The American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Society of Professional Journalists have established a code of ethics, the author criticizes both for their focus on public knowledge rather than journalistic conduct. Jennings then elaborates how a lack of values-based decision making among student and professional journalists needs
to be directed by the five most important principles in journalism: honesty, independence, fairness, productiveness, and pride.

Books


Because of the growing concern over journalism as a profession that is digressing into entertainment rather than information, a committee of journalists joined forces in 1997 to gain both the public and journalists’ input in order to define what this profession should be. This text reports the results gleaned from public meetings and detailed interviews with 100 journalists. The main conclusion was that journalism is a profession of contrasts. For example, although reporters receive salaries from their organization, their first responsibility is to the republic and its people. These and other conclusions are worked into a framework of defining the medium, discussing truth, verifying facts, the independent nature of the profession, the responsibilities that come with the role of reporter, and other tenets of a free press.


With the character of journalists currently undergoing examination, this author discusses the ethics of the profession across its various mediums (e.g. print, broadcast, and Internet). Beginning with a review of ethics and accountability, the textbook goes on to include an examination of practices that include articles relying upon only one resource, the practice of altering visual images, the use of covert reporting, and trends in conglomerates owning news outlets. In addition, one section of the text is devoted to “Telling the Truth” with chapters devoted to “Truth and Objectivity”, “Errors and Corrections”, and “Faking the News”.

Movies


With the spread of Communism following World War II, the United States became obsessed about communists living in this country during the years following the war and into the early 1950s. Enflamed by Wisconsin Junior Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy, many everyday citizens and individuals in the entertainment industry stood accused of being communist sympathizers and supporters. Edward R. Murrow, pioneer radio broadcaster during World War II, not only brought to light McCarthy’s tactics during a series of televised reports, but also pointed out the inaccuracies in an honest and truthful manner.
Historically accurate in its portrayal of Murrow’s television transcripts dealing with McCarthy, this film strongly portrays the positive power of the press.


A comedic film version of Ben Hecht and Charles McArthur’s popular play *The Front Page*, whereupon the authors drew upon their experience as reporters in Chicago, Illinois during a time when reported news was sensationalistic. This movie portrays the exploits of character Hildy Johnson, a star reporter, and her unprincipled editor Walter Burns in the wake of a police officer’s death. The plot revolves around a corrupt mayor and police official bent on using the murderer’s execution to further the mayor’s re-election campaign, balanced by a governor from the other political side of the aisle. Although a comedy, its significance remains important, as many parallels still exist with today’s news coverage. This film provides an excellent illustration of yellow journalism, where making headlines took precedence over truth and honesty.


As the title suggests, this movie deals with the subject of one of the categories required to meet the standard for libel or slander. In this film, character Michael Colin Gallagher, whose deceased father had a criminal reputation, is alleged to be the focus of a murder investigation in an article written by reporter Megan Carter. As Gallagher is innocent, Carter stands accused of malice, one of the conditions that must be met to prove a reporter guilty of slander or libel. However, as false information was leaked to her, she is innocent. Although the movie centers on malice on the part of the media, there also is an excellent lesson here about the importance of fact checking, and the situation of honesty and truth not only among journalists, but also among their journalistic sources.


Based on a true story, this movie reviews the life of reporter Stephen Glass during the late 1990s. Considered a talented young writer during his tenure with *The New Republic*, Glass also wrote pieces for *George*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, and *Rolling Stone Magazine*, before he was caught fabricating a piece on a computer hacker by another publication’s reporter. Eventually found to have concocted parts of, or entirely made up 27 of his 41 articles for *The New Republic*, the film portrays how he blatantly disregarded a reporter’s duty to report the truth. In addition, the film reveals his dishonesty in not admitting that he did this and also points out the depth of his obsessive behavior to avoid discovery and the excessive methods he utilized to avoid detection. In addition to the film, the DVD also contains the CBS “60 Minutes” interview with Stephen Glass.