

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2017-18

Philosophy 2730G: Media Ethics

Winter Term 2018
Mon 1:30- 2:30, Wed 1:30- 3:30
UCC 37

Instructor: Dean Proessel
Office Hours: TBA
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DESCRIPTION

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, in particular, are the duties and responsibilities of those engaged in disseminating information? Should journalists be considered professionals, and how have new communication technologies shaped the practice of journalism? 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? 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?

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.

TEXTS

Custom Course Package, available at The Bookstore at UWO

REQUIREMENTS

Two short essays, 7 pages in length. Each essay is worth 35%
Final exam worth 30%

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES