**Course Title:** Media Laws and Ethics

**Course Instructor:** Ms. Zowaina Azhar

**JOURNALISTIC CODES AND ETHICS**

Journalistic ethics and standards include principles of ethics and of good practice to address the specific challenges faced by professional journalists. Historically and currently these principles are most widely known to journalists as their professional "code of ethics" or the "canons of journalism". The basic codes and canons commonly appear in statements drafted by professional journalism associations and individual print broadcast, and online news organizations.

While various existing codes have some differences, most share common elements including the principles of — truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity impartiality, fairness and public accountability — as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent reportage to the public.

**THE CODE**

All members of the press have a duty to maintain the highest professional standards. The Code, which includes this preamble and the public interest exceptions below, sets the benchmark for those ethical standards, protecting both the rights of the individual and the public's right to know. It is the cornerstone of the system of self-regulation to which the industry has made a binding commitment.

It is essential that an agreed code be honored not only to the letter but in the full spirit. It should not be interpreted so narrowly as to compromise its commitment to respect the rights of the individual, nor so broadly that it constitutes an unnecessary interference with freedom of expression or prevents publication in the public interest.

It is the responsibility of editors and publishers to apply the Code to editorial material in both printed and online versions of publications. They should take care to ensure it is observed rigorously by all editorial staff and external contributors, including non-journalists, in printed and online versions of publications.

**Press Complaints Commission**

Editors should co-operate swiftly with the PCC in the resolution of complaints. Any publication judged to have breached the Code must print the adjudication in full and with due prominence, including headline reference to the PCC.

The Press Complaints Commission is charged with enforcing the following Code of Practice which was framed by the newspaper and periodical industry and was ratified by the PCC on 01 August 2007.

**Evolution and purpose of codes of journalism**

The principles of good journalism are directed toward bringing the highest quality of news reporting to the public, thus fulfilling the mission of timely distribution of information in service of the public interest.

To a large degree, the codes and canons evolved via observation of and response to past ethical lapses by journalists and publishers. Today, it is common for terms of employment to mandate adherence to such codes equally applicable to both staff and freelance journalists; journalists may face dismissal for ethical failures. Upholding professional standards also enhances the reputation of and trust in a news organization, which boosts the size of the audience it serves.

Journalistic codes of ethics are designed as guides through numerous difficulties, such as conflicts of interest, to assist journalists in dealing with ethical dilemmas. The codes and canons provide journalists a framework for self-monitoring and self-correction as they pursue professional assignments.

**Codes of practice**

While journalists in the United States and European countries have led in formulation and adoption of these standards, such codes can be found in news reporting organizations in most countries with freedom of the press. The written codes and practical standards vary somewhat from country to country and organization to organization, but there is a substantial overlap among mainstream publications and societies.

One of the leading voices in the U.S. on the subject of Journalistic Standards and Ethics is the Society of Professional Journalists is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility.

The Radio Television Digital News Association, an organization exclusively centered on electronic journalism, maintains a code of ethics centering on -- public trust, truthfulness, fairness, integrity, independence and accountability. RTDNA publishes a pocket guide to these standards. RTDNA publishes a pocket guide to these standards.

Examples of journalistic codes of ethics held by international news gathering organizations may be found as follows:

• British Broadcasting Corporation: Editorial Guidelines

• Canadian Broadcasting Corporation: Journalistic Standard and Practices

• Al Jazeera: Code of Ethics.

• Code of Journalists of the Republic of Slovenia

**Definition Code of Ethics**

A Code of Ethics is a set of standards, rules, guidelines, and values that govern and guide ethical business behavior in a company, profession, or organization of it's employees, interactions among the employees, and interactions between the employees and the general public.

Some codes of ethics have the force of law. Violations of these codes may be subject to administrative (e.g., loss of license), civil or penal remedies. Other codes can be enforced by the promulgating organization alone; a violation of these codes is usually limited to loss of membership in the organization.

Other codes are merely advisory and there are no prescribed remedies for violations or even procedures for determining whether a violation even occurred. Furthermore, the effectiveness of codes of ethics depends on the extent to which the management of the organization embraces and supports them.

The primary themes common to most codes of journalistic standards and ethics are the following.

**Objectivity**

* Unequivocal separation between news and opinion. In-house editorials and opinion pieces are clearly separated from news pieces. News reporters and editorial staff are distinct.
* Unequivocal separation between advertisements and news. All advertisements must be clearly identifiable as such.
* Reporter must avoid conflicts of interest — incentives to report a story with a given slant. This includes not taking bribes and not reporting on stories that affect the reporter's personal, economic or political interests. See envelope journalism.
* Competing points of view are balanced and fairly characterized.
* Persons who are the subject of adverse news stories are allowed a reasonable opportunity to respond to the adverse information before the story is published or broadcast.
* Interference with reporting by any entity, including censorship, must be disclosed.

**Seek the Truth and Report It**

* Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
* Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
* Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrong doing.
* Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources so always question sources’ motives before promising anonymity.
* Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
* Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
* Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
* Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
* Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story

**Never plagiarize**

* Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
* Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
* Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
* Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
* Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
* Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
* Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
* Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to check.