



MMJC 9200A

Doing Democracy Right or Doing Right by Democracy: Ethics, Theory, and the Public Right to Know

Fall 2022

Instructor: Percy Sherwood (he/him/his)

Office hours: Tuesdays 4:30-5:30 or by appointment on [Teams](#)

Class time and location (f2f): Tuesdays, 1:30 – 4:20 in FNB 3050 (broadcast studio)

Email or DM me on Teams: asherwoo@uwo.ca

For over 15 years, I've lived, worked, and studied on the lands of the Anishinaabek (Ah-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Lūnaapéewak (Len-ahpay-wuk) and Chonnonton (Chun-ongk-ton) Nations, which are lands connected to the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. I respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land. Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) continue to endure historical and ongoing cultural genocidal practices and injustices in Canada. As a doctoral candidate, I accept responsibility to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation and renewing respectful relationships. One way I'm striving to do so is by working with urban Indigenous Peoples in London—many of whom are long-time friends and neighbours—to shed light on what it's like to live in the community. As Western students, what other roles and responsibilities do we have?

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Using theoretical frameworks borrowed from ethics, cultural studies, media studies, and political economy, this course explores concepts of democracy and responsibility in storytelling practices and products. Because both journalists and communicators must gather, evaluate, and disseminate information vital to a functioning democracy, it is essential that both groups understand what it means to operate ethically in the public sphere.

The central idea of this course is that we consider together how information is proposed, created, remade, framed, mediated, abused, interpreted, and recast. If you, as an information handler, interpreter, and provider, are familiar with a variety of ways in which information can be formed and reformed, then you will be equipped to problem-solve as flexibly as one can be—whether the task is to inform, persuade, educate, and so on.

Attention will be paid to developing your own critical interpretations and analyses of various approaches to the ethics of storytelling in its broadest sense. This includes adopting ethical principles, developing an ethics of care, analyzing public spheres, critiquing objectivity, and valuing situated knowledges, subjectivity, and experience as legitimate ways of knowing.

Examining these different approaches by collectively looking at case studies is necessary to help you cultivate your own approach and voice as you become professional communicators, journalists, and storytellers. Setting aside time to consider the grey areas of practice now is essential because in the future, at the end of a workday, you'll need to be able to weigh allegiances, consider alternatives, and offer a reasoned explanation about your decisions to your employer and your public.

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in MMJC, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyze democratic structures and challenge the status quo in ethical and accountable ways.
2. Examine critically communications and journalism in the context of structures of domination and marginalization.
3. Demonstrate an appreciation that personal experiences and feelings are legitimate sources of knowledge by engaging in a process of self-reflection.
4. Respond to principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) and apply them to the practice of communications and journalism by valuing diverse methods, theories, experiences, worldviews, and ways of being.
5. Value and adopt practices that reflect the highest professional and ethical standards with colleagues, sources, and communities.

EVALUATION

Assignment

Due date

Participation (20%)

Ongoing

First response (7.5%)

Mon. Sept. 26 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.

Peer grades for first response

Wed. Sept. 28 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.

Ethics case studies project (30%)

Informal response to another group

Ongoing, starting Tues. Oct. 4

Ongoing, starting Tues. Oct. 11

Second response due (7.5%)

Peer grades for second response

Fri. Oct. 7 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.

Wed. Oct. 12 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.

Storytelling in the digital age project (35%)

Self-assessment for storytelling in the digital age project

Mon. Dec. 5 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.

Fri. Dec. 9 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.

MATERIALS

You will use Office 365, Microsoft Teams, and OWL for this class. All required texts are available on the [OWL website](#).

TEACHING RATIONALE

Storytelling, whether it be from communications or journalism, is a dialogic process that is based on conversations amongst storytellers and listeners. In this class, we will employ “[dialogic thinking](#).” This approach invites you to explore your ideas, beliefs, and perspectives with your peers, to listen carefully, and to gain a sympathetic understanding of the points of views of your interlocutors. In this sense, our class values collaboration. You’ll be functioning as journalists, communications professionals, editors, and managers by peer grading the first two responses. In groups you’ll also host a class session, respond to other groups, and we’ll collectively publish your ethics case studies online for others to learn from. Finally, you’ll also take stock by providing an honest self-assessment of a portion of your final project. This dialogic approach aims to help you learn how you can value different meanings and ethical principles by engaging with others.

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, AND RESPECT

You and your colleagues will have many different perspectives informed by academic background, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, identity, religion, and socioeconomic status to name a few. I expect (1) that all of us welcome and respect these viewpoints, ways of knowing, and experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge.

I also expect you to: (2) read all the assigned readings before each session; (3) attend every class; (4) arrive on-time and stay for the full three hours; (5) and thoughtfully prepare and actively participate in every class. This is a seminar not a lecture, so it will only work if all of us work.

According to MMJC program policies, please be aware “students may fail a course if more than two classes are missed” and “skipping a class in order to meet a production deadline or to complete an assignment for another course is not excusable” ([FIMS Intranet](#)).

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION & ACADEMIC ACCOMODATION

If you have missed or will miss a course-related component (e.g., a class) or a course-related assessment, you may be eligible to request an Academic Consideration to make arrangements to complete the missed course work at a later time. Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) can request Academic Consideration from the instructor 48 hours after a deadline or class has passed or immediately upon their return following a documented absence.

Academic accommodation consists of arrangements that allow a student with a disability a fair opportunity to engage in academic activities and fulfill essential course and program requirements. Students seeking accommodation can do so by contacting the instructor.

**Late work for all assignments without Academic Consideration or academic accommodation in this class receives a 5% per day deduction.*

ASSIGNMENTS

*See the [assignment sheets and rubrics on OWL](#) for detailed guidelines and methods of evaluation.

(1) PARTICIPATION: 20%

Please come and chat! Are you worried that someone will know more than you? Someone will certainly know more than *all of us*! Why bother being here if it isn't to figure this stuff out with some other interested people? So, relax, this isn't a competition. Please check out the indicators of positive and negative participation that are posted on the assignment sheet and rubric on OWL.

(2) TWO RESPONSES: 15%

Write two reflections about assigned prompts of about 500 words each (it can be more). Like newsroom editors and communications managers, you'll grade—and be graded by—two others per response via peer assessment on OWL.

First response: 7.5% - **Mon. Sept. 26 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.; Peer grades due Wed. Sept. 28**

Habermas says that for a public sphere to exist, there must be actors meeting face-to-face (think French cafés and British pubs) who try to “rationally” convince others by means of deliberation. Fraser—along with hundreds of other thinkers—strongly criticizes this idea. Drawing from Percy's lectures and the readings, explain what “democracy” and “public spheres” mean to *you*. How do aspects like authority, exclusion, inequality, invisibility, class, and consensus operate in the context of these two concepts? What groups, peoples, and interests are marginalized and excluded from democratic structures and dominant public spheres?

Second response: 7.5% - **Fri. Oct. 7 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.; Peer grades due Wed. Oct. 12**

Callison and Young provide fresh criticism reflective of scholarly debates about issues of power, structure, and epistemology in the media. Drawing from Percy's lectures and the readings, how do *you* think journalistic ideals like objectivity, neutrality, distance, balance, newsworthiness, and fairness are flawed? How can aspects like *phronesis*, situated knowledges, subjectivity, positionality, and personal experience be important interventions into practices in journalism and/or communications? How could this be done?

(3) AN EDITED COLLECTION OF ETHICS CASE STUDIES: 30% - **Tues. Oct. 4 onwards**

Part A: Lead a class session (30 pts): In groups, you'll lead a session for half of the class time (not to exceed 1 hour) exploring and analyzing the ethical dilemmas of two case studies of your choosing relating to your week's themes/topics. One case study must be a Canadian journalism example and the second must be connected to communications. After your talk, you'll facilitate a discussion with the class. In doing so, either prepare discussion questions or plan an in-class activity. The goal is to collectively discuss the ethical tensions of these cases. Since this is likely

one of your first graduate seminars, this session is low stakes in terms of marks to take some of that pressure off you and to let you be experimental in terms of how you'd like to engage the class (so no sweat, okay?).

Part B: Respond to another group (10 pts):

You'll informally respond to another group's session on a separate week for 15 minutes. No .pptx is needed. I just want you to stand-up—or stay sitting—and orally give your thoughts, connections to other ideas, examples, and help the hosts for that week stimulate further discussion in the class. For this everyone will be grateful to you (me included), and we'll be SUPER SUPPORTIVE!

Part C: Write two case studies (60 pts): After your talk, write two 750-word analyses (1,500 words total excluding bibliographies) about your case studies. The two analyses should each include **(1)** a description of the case, **(2)** a critical analysis of the ethical issues involved, **(3)**, four discussion questions, and **(4)** citations and a bibliography in Chicago style. Strong reports will also **(5)** build upon the feedback you received from the class, your respondents, and me during your talk. Written case studies (Part C) are due one week after your class session via OWL by 11:59 p.m.

I will then post each case study online to our edited collection entitled, "Doing democracy right or doing right by democracy: ethics case studies from journalism and communications" (<https://ethicscasestudies.fims.uwo.ca>). You'll be credited as authors and can put this publication on your resume!

(4) STORYTELLING IN THE DIGITAL AGE PROJECT: 35% - Mon. Dec. 5 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.;
Self-assessment due Fri. Dec. 9 on OWL

By the end of this assignment, you'll demonstrate an appreciation that personal experiences and feelings are legitimate sources of knowledge by engaging in a process of self-reflection. In collaboration with Mark Rayner's dojo course, you'll create a digital/integrated story. For this class, you'll reflect upon the storytelling process itself and critically explore the concepts of "situated knowledges," "public spheres," and subjectivity. The submission requirements for this course include a journal, digital/integrated story, and a 1500-word personal reflective essay. Please note Mark has separate requirements for his class.

Part A (30 pts): **(1)** The first step is to find an idea for the story you'd like to tell. The goal is to select an issue, event, or matter that you are passionate about. **(2)** Once you have a topic, the next step is to create a plan to help organize your ideas and resources. **(3)** Then you'll create an outline in your journal, which will help detail what the story will look like, assist in aligning the story with your perspectives, and determine what details to include and exclude.

Part B: You'll then create your story by gaining access and recording any multimedia materials, editing, and completing the final product. The production and aesthetics of your

digital/integrated story will not be assessed for this course, although you'll still need to submit it.

Part C (70 pts): Further, you'll write a 1500-word reflective essay about your experiences in creating the story and explain why these experiences and feelings should be seen as legitimate sources of knowledge.

You'll also grade your journal via self-assessment shortly after you submit the project. Finally, I'll screen the stories during the last class of the year, where you'll provide a very informal 5-minute overview of what you learned and give written feedback to others about their stories via OWL. This final component won't be graded but will contribute to your participation grade. And, once more, we'll be SUPER SUPPORTIVE!

SCHEDULE

- 1** **Sept. 13** **Introduction: Storytelling, facts, and truth**
Mathewson, Joe. "[Introduction](#)." In *Ethical Journalism: Adopting the Ethics of Care*, 1-4. New York: Routledge, 2021.
---. "[Chapter 7: The ethics of care nicely complements existing codes of ethics](#)." In *Ethical Journalism: Adopting the Ethics of Care*, 70-86. New York: Routledge, 2021.
CAJ Ethics Advisory Committee. "[Ethics Guidelines](#)." The Canadian Association of Journalists, 1 June 2011.
Canadian Marketing Association. "[Overarching Ethical Principles](#)" and "[Universal Marketing Practices](#)." In *Canadian Marketing Code of Ethics & Standards*, 8-16. Toronto: CMA, 2020.

- 2** **Sept. 20** **Democracy and the public sphere**
***First response due (7.5%) Mon. Sept. 26 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.**
Habermas, Jürgen. "[The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article](#)." In *Media and cultural studies: Keywords*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 73-78. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
Fraser, Nancy. "[Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy](#)." *Social Text* 25, no. 26 (1990): 56-80.

- 3** **Sept. 27** **Sources of knowledge**
***Peer grades due Wed. Sept. 28 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.**
Callison, Candis, and Mary Lynn Young. "[Opening up Journalism's Crisis](#)." In *Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities*, 1-23. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
---. "[Chapter 1: Reckoning with the 'View from Nowhere'](#)." In *Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities*, 24-50. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

- 4** **Oct. 4** **Death and suicide**
*** Ethics case studies project begin Tues. Oct. 4 onwards (30%)**
***Second response due (7.5%) Fri. Oct. 7 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.**
Group 1:
Smith Fullerton, Romaine, and Maggie Jones Patterson. "[The traditional 'pickup' or 'death knock' story: Its role, its value\(s\), and the impact of social media](#)." In *Covering Canadian Crime: What Journalists Should Know and the Public Should Question*,

edited by Chris Richardson and Romyne Smith Fullerton, 23-42. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.

Berry, Sarah, and Rob Whitley. "[Representing risk: Criminality, violence, and mental illness in Canadian news-media reporting.](#)" In *Covering Canadian Crime: What Journalists Should Know and the Public Should Question*, edited by Chris Richardson and Romyne Smith Fullerton, 346-365. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.

Group 2:

Baril, Alexandre. "[Suicidism: A new theoretical framework to conceptualize suicide from an antioppressive perspective.](#)" *Disability Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2020).

5 Oct. 11 Gender, identity, and sexual orientation

***Peer grades due Wed. Oct. 12 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.**

Guest speaker: [Hélène Bigras-Dutrisac](#) (she/her/hers) Manager, Knowledge Exchange at The Canadian Women's Foundation.

Group 3:

Puar, Jasbir K. "[Abu Ghraib and U.S. sexual exceptionalism.](#)" In *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*, 79-113. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Group 4:

Baril, Alexandre. "[Confessing society, confessing cis-tem: Rethinking consent through intimate images of trans* people in the media.](#)" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 39, no. 2 (2018): 1-25.

6 Oct. 18 Sexual harassment and assault

Guest speaker: [Hardeep Dhaliwal](#) (she/her/hers) Associate Lawyer, Litigation Group at Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP.

Doolittle, Robyn. "[Unfounded: Why police dismiss 1 in 5 sexual assault claims as baseless.](#)" *The Globe and Mail*, 3 Feb. 2017.

Arender, Lucas, Randy Richmond, and the Western Gazette. "[Western University's dangerous OWeek: An LFP-Western Gazette investigation.](#)" *The London Free Press*, 16 Sept. 2021.

Friesen, Joe et al. "[How sexual-assault allegations at Western University spread rumour and recrimination in a weekend of fear.](#)" *The Globe and Mail*, 30 April 2022.

7 Oct. 25 Indigenous Peoples and storytelling

Guest speaker: [Alessia Passafiume](#) (she/her/hers) Reporter, Toronto Star.

Group 5:

- Callison, Candis, and Mary Lynn Young. "[Chapter 6: Indigenous Journalisms.](#)" In *Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities*, 160-199. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). "[Deeper Dive: Media and Representation.](#)" In *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, 385-396. Vancouver: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019.
- Truth and Reconciliation Canada (TRC). "[Preface](#)" and "[Introduction.](#)" In *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, V-22. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015.
- Hanson, Erin. "[UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.](#)" *First Nations and Indigenous Studies at the University of British Columbia*, n.d.

8 **Nov. 1** **Reading week**
(ideal for napping)

9 **Nov. 8** **Decolonization**
Group 6:

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "[Decolonization is not a metaphor.](#)" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40.

Garba, Tapji, and Sara-Maria Sorentino. "[Slavery is a metaphor: A critical commentary on Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's 'Decolonization is not a metaphor'.](#)" *Antipode* 52, no. 3 (2020): 764-782.

10 **Nov. 15** **BPoC Peoples and storytelling**

Guest speaker: [Temo Primrose Gare](#) (she/her/hers) Television Host & Executive Producer of "Our Stories" on Fibe TV1.

Group 7:

Cole, Desmond. "[Negro frolicks \(january\).](#)" In *The skin we're in: A year of Black resistance and power*, 1-18. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2020.

---. "[Direct action \(april\).](#)" In *The skin we're in: A year of Black resistance and power*, 61-78. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2020.

11 Nov. 22 **Disability and age**

Group 8:

Jones, Chelsea Temple. "[Why this story over a hundred others of the day? Five journalists' backstories about writing disability in Toronto.](#)" *Disability & Society* 29, no. 8 (2014): 1206-1220.

Lu, Wendy. "[What journalists can do better to cover the disability beat.](#)" *Columbia Journalism Review*. 5 Sept. 2017.

Group 9:

Smith Fullerton, Romyne. "[Covering kids: are journalists guilty of exploiting children?](#)" *Journalism Studies* 5, no. 4 (2004): 511-524.

Oostlander, Samantha A., Olivier Champagne-Poirier, and Tracey L. O'Sullivan. "[Media portrayal of older adults across five Canadian disasters.](#)" *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 94, no. 2 (2022): 234-250.

12 Nov. 29 **Crime**

***Storytelling in the digital age project due Mon. Dec. 5 on OWL by 11:59 p.m. (35%)**

Group 10:

Smith Fullerton, Romyne, and Maggie Jones Patterson.

"[Introduction.](#)" *Murder in Our Midst: Comparing Crime Coverage Ethics in an Age of Globalized News*, 1-19. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

---. "[Part 2: The Watchdogs.](#)" *Murder in Our Midst: Comparing Crime Coverage Ethics in an Age of Globalized News*, 85-87. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

---. "[Chapter 5: What the Watchdogs Watch, Why, and Why Watching Matters.](#)" *Murder in Our Midst: Comparing Crime Coverage Ethics in an Age of Globalized News*, 89-106. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

13 Dec. 6 **Storytelling in the digital age sessions**

***Self-assessment due Fri. Dec. 9 on OWL by 11:59 p.m.**

No readings – in class screening and discussion.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).