COMMS 201

THE FOURTH ESTATE and MEDIA ETHICS

CORONAVIRUS

If you have a respiratory infection of any kind, please stay away from university.

Latest advisories at:

https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/notices/2020/coronavirus-outbreak.html?_ga=2.103729152.146405260.1583284518-6060766668.1517288302

All classes are now being recorded and posted to Canvas

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE 4TH ESTATE?

Journalist: Brent Edwards: long running political reporter for Radio New Zealand states:

- 'Speaking truth to power and keep this country's citizens fully informed'

Scholar: Mark Hampton: The Fourth Estate Ideal in Journalism History

- 'Any concept of the press as a Fourth Estate would require the accessible presentation of serious information and an independent perspective'.

ROLES OF JOURNALISM

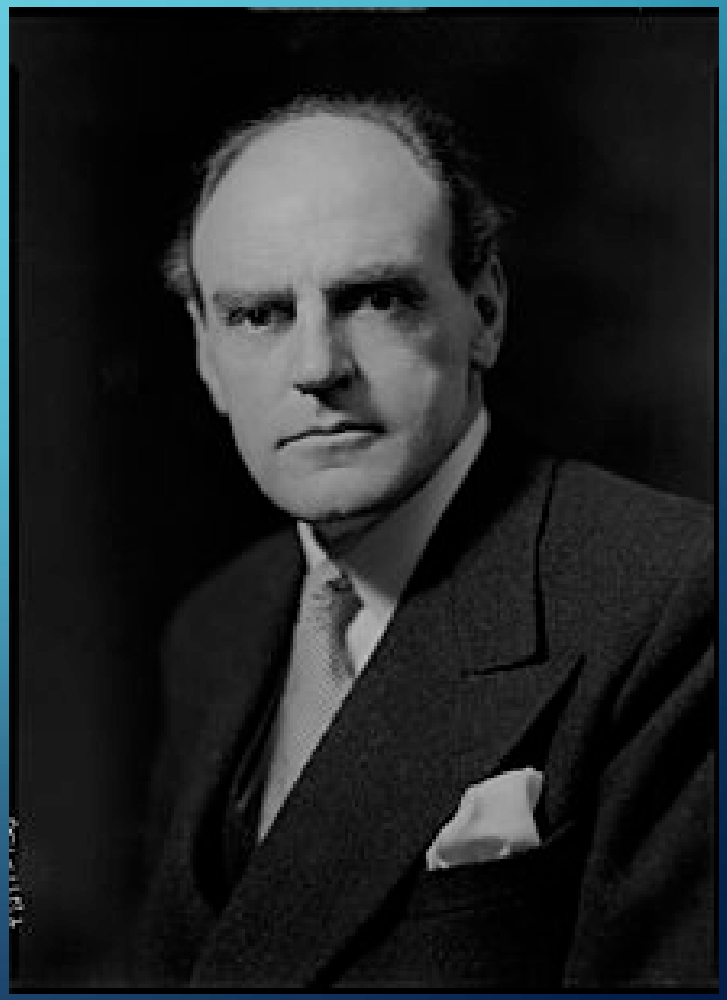
- Informing us about our world, and about each other.
- Getting information, presumably accurate and objective, to the public quickly.
- Acting as a watchdog, holding the powerful in society to account.
- Allowing for public discussion of ideas, letting people have their say
- Providing interpretation and analysis of complex material (data overload)
- Entertainment

“REITHIAN” PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING

1. Inform

2. Educate

3. Entertain



TVNZ CHARTER (2002-11)

"…programming across all genres that

INFORMS

ENTERTAINS

EDUCATES

New Zealand audiences

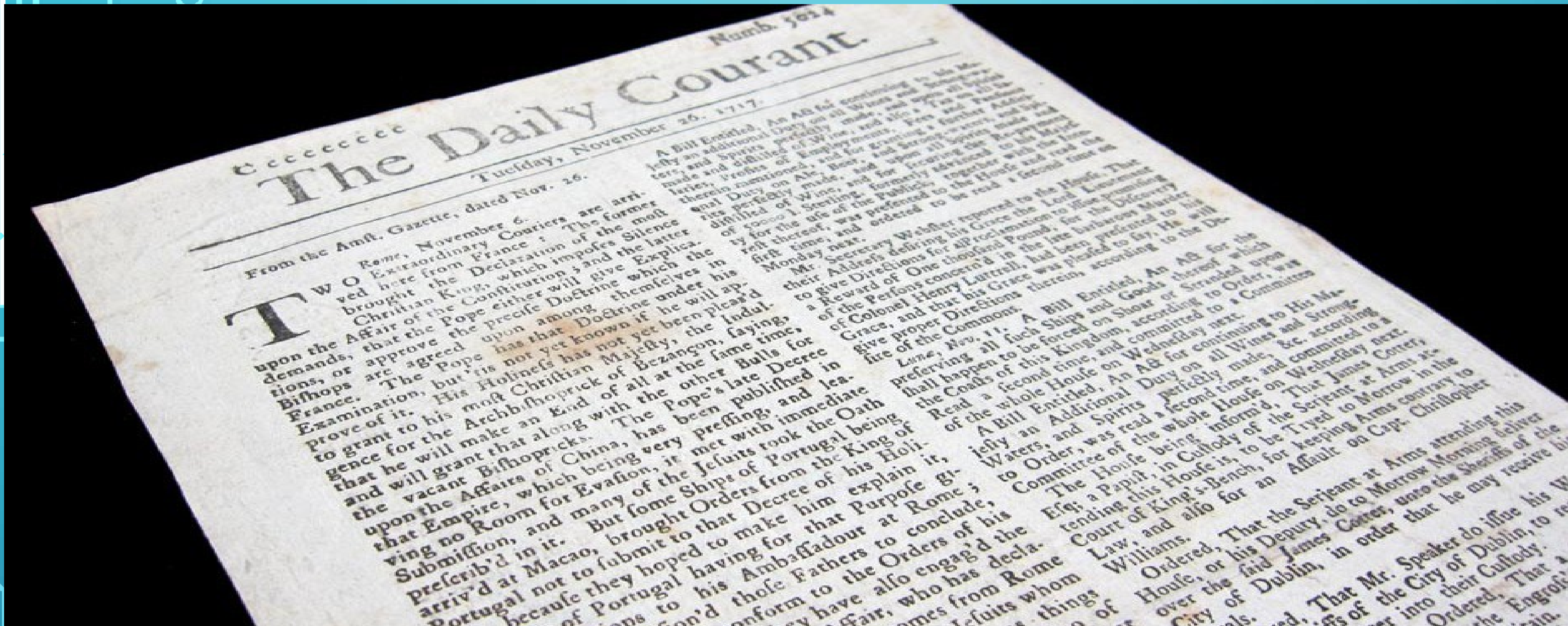
THE ORIGINS OF JOURNALISM: THE FOURTH ESTATE

- Journalism was initially a critical response to earlier dominant forms of authority and knowledge.
- Emerges early to mid-1600s, along with a mercantile and later capitalist bourgeoisie.
- We can see an interlinking of capitalism, democracy and journalism.

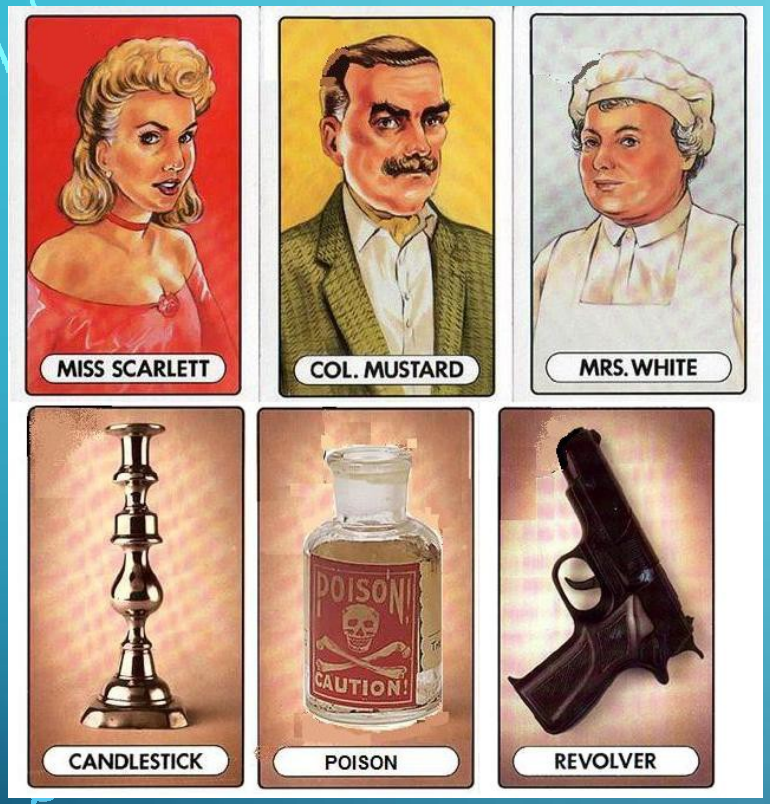
STRANDS THAT FUSED TO FORM JOURNALISM

Empiricism: means the gathering of evidence from which to test universal cause and effect relationships.

Newly popular form of *essays and commentary*, so not on evidence collected like empiricism, but on an individual writer's own powers of observation, reasoning, writing skill.



Reportage, a long-standing practice of hiring agents to travel to distant lands and report back to their benefactors on situations that had bearing on their interest.



- A fourth source of journalism was the *evolving standards of legal processes* and arguments, which fixed rules for establishing evidence or claims.

- Empiricism + essays + reports from overseas + processes of law and evidence

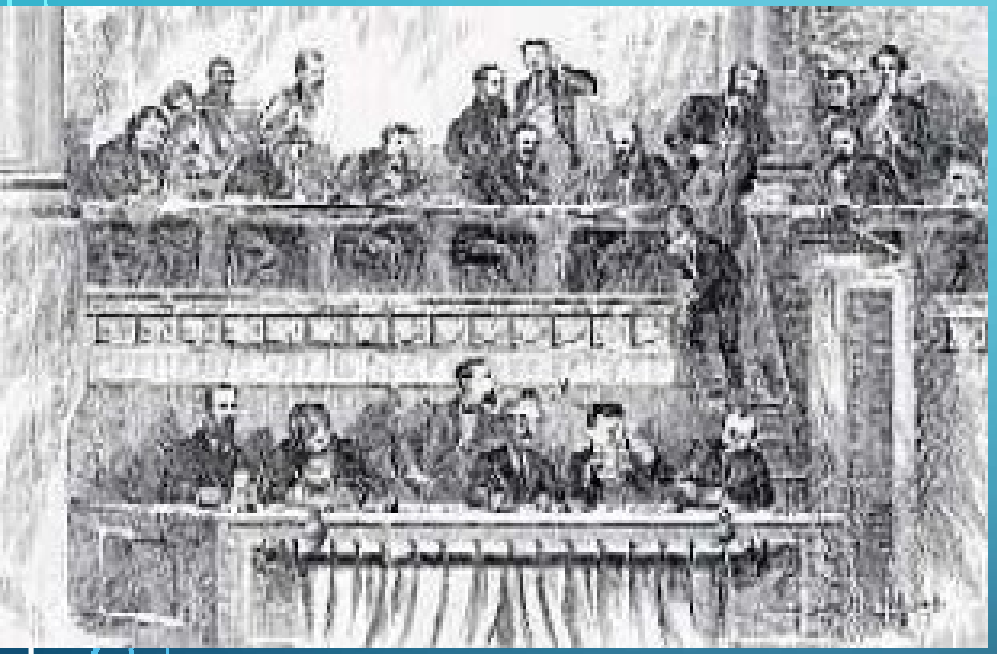
= The origins of journalism.

WHEN DID THE TERM FOURTH ESTATE FIRST ARISE?

Edmund Burke

In 1841, Thomas Carlyle wrote,'Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.' Burke appeared to apply the term to the press gallery sitting alongside the other three estates in England – the Clergy, Aristocracy and Commoners.

PRESS GALLERIES – ABOVE THE FRAY



ENGLAND, 1880S

WELLINGTON, TODAY

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION - 1791

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

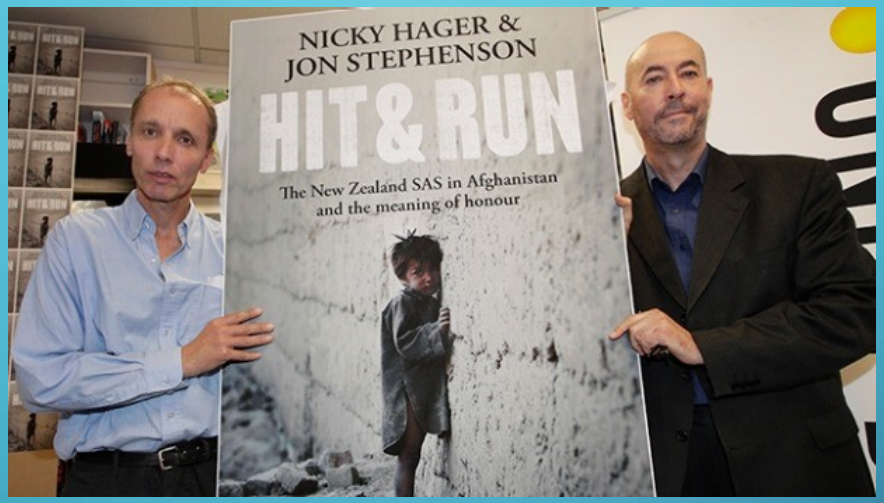
CONCEPTS BEHIND THE FOURTH ESTATE

Mark Hampton: The Fourth Estate rested on two differing ideas of relationship between the press and its readers.

- First, the press as agency of public discussion, rival ideas and interests. Recast more recently as the ‘public sphere’.

The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1961)
– Jurgen Habermas

- Second concept of the Fourth Estate - the press reflecting public's interest, by publicising corruption, scandal (by the powerful) or government inattention.



Both understandings of the Fourth Estate based in providing accessible serious information from an independent perspective.

EDWARDS: EROSION OF THE FOURTH ESTATE FUNCTIONS

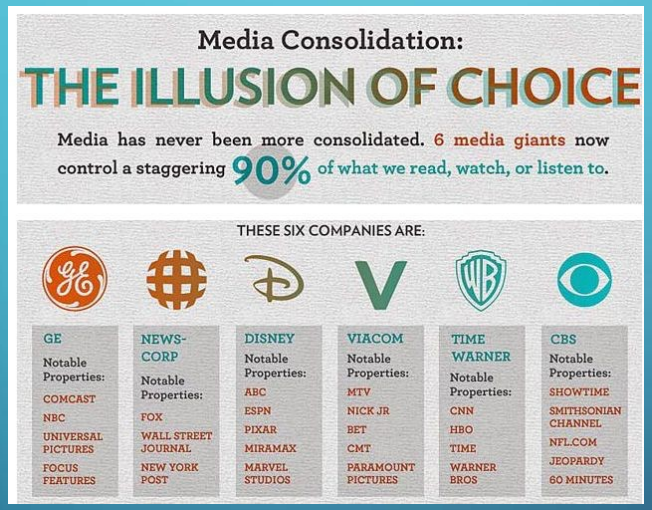
- News media mergers reduce diversity
- Celebrity news, rather than public interest, has begun to dominate
- Very little local coverage at all
- Fewer reporters and the rise of ‘spin’
- Focus on personality of politicians, not policies
- Rise of opinionated journalism
- New media dominated by powerful corporations

RNZ TE REO IRIRANGI O AOTEAROA

HAMPTON: BUT DID THE FOURTH ESTATE EVER EXIST?

Commercial restraints:

- High entry costs lead to ‘oligopolies’, a market dominated by very few powerful players reducing ‘marketplace of ideas’



- News part of non-media conglomerates – how can the news then critique its owners? (Hollywood movie: The Insider https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rkvxi5hdbA)

HAMPTON: COMMERCIAL RESTRAINTS (CONT).

- Dumbing down argument: populism intending to maximise readership/profit

- Drive for profits undermines investigative journalism (see reflected in multiple Hollywood movies, such as Spotlight)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56jw6tasomc

HAMPTON: DID THE FOURTH ESTATE EVER EXIST?

State control over media also restrains investigative ad fourth estate functions:

- Newspapers first criticizing the US war in Vietnam were bullied (Hager called ’left wing conspiracy theorist’).
- Stephenson accused of fabricating news: successfully sued the military.
- ‘National security’ or ‘commercial sensitivity’ are used to prevent the release of information.

HAMPTON: DID THE FOURTH ESTATE EVER EXIST?

State control (cont).

Spin doctoring: Government & PR companies are adept at getting their perspectives into the media.

- Releasing complex info. close to a news cycle
- Developing EPKs that are free and readily useable
- News cutbacks make this an easy ‘solution’
- Journalists’ fear of alienating Government sources

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_FrQnQv0Vw (The Thick of It – British parody about spin doctors)

HAMPTON: DID THE FOURTH ESTATE EVER EXIST?

State control (cont): Embedded and non-embedded journalists

IS THE FOURTH ESTATE REAL OR IDEAL?

Hampton:

- Aspirational rather than ‘real’ but that can keep the powerful in check
- Maybe alternative and dissident media is the real Fourth Estate?
- These ideas can be taken up in the mainstream but takes time.

Edwards:

- Emergence of collaborations such as the Panama Papers
- New organizations, such as the Ethical Journalism Initiative, that emphasis ethics.

“The Ethical Journalist Initiative recognizes that good journalist is more about illumination than advocacy, embracing the human virtues of wisdom, courage and fairness …our case is it should be watchful and committed to truth, alert to injustice, jealous of its own independence and above all else a champion of public interest.”

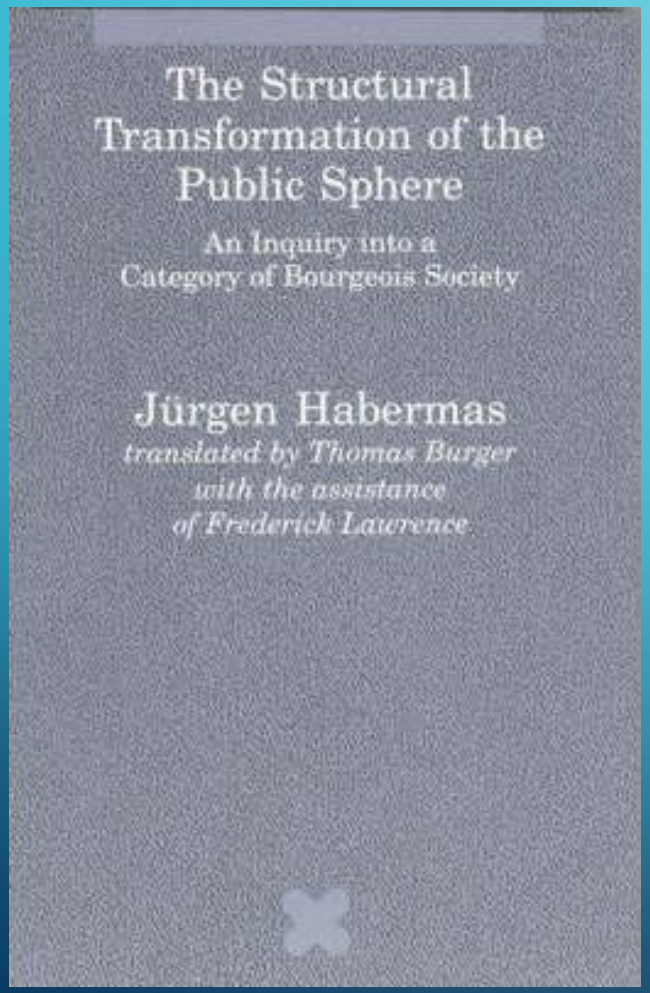
“If a strong pluralistic journalist community cannot just survive but thrive, nor can the democracy so many of us take for granted”

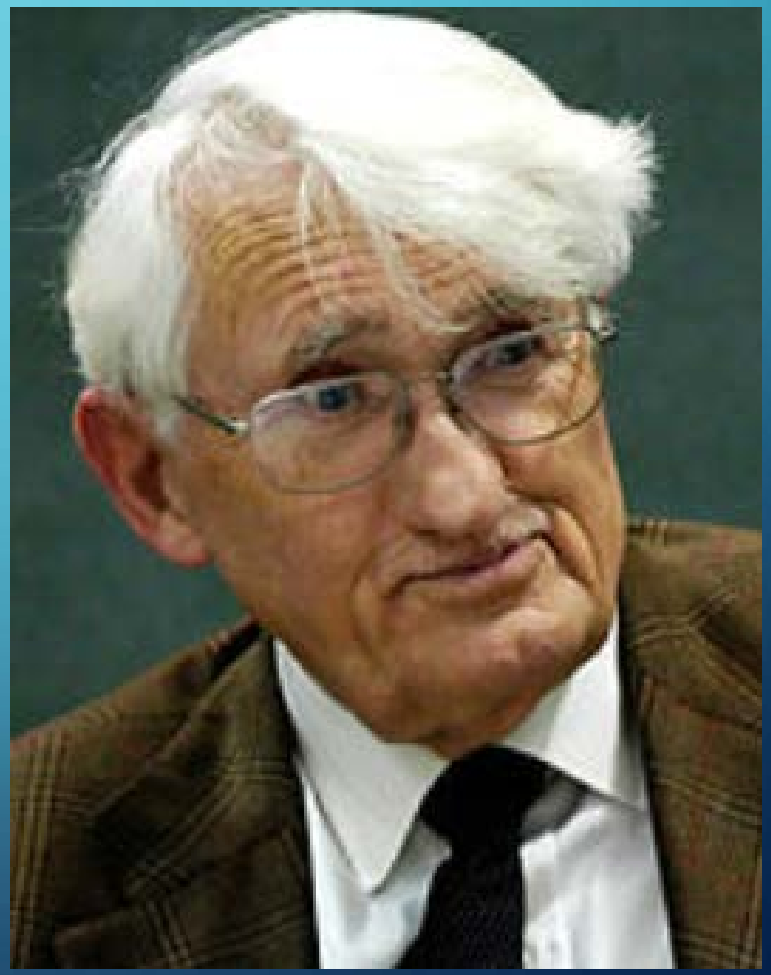
Hegemony – Antonio Gramsci

“I'm a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will.”

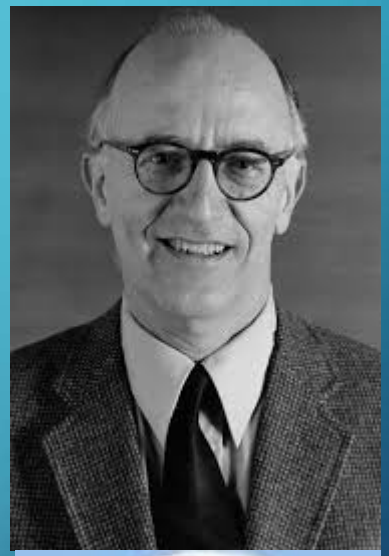
“If you beat your head against the wall, it is your head that breaks and not the wall.”

Public Sphere - Jürgen Habermas





Propaganda Model (Herman & Chomsky)



5 filters:

1. Corporate ownership
2. Reliance on advertising
3. State/elite sources
4. ‘Flak’
5. ‘Ideology’

   e.g. anti-communism, anti-Islamism

Media Theory

Agenda setting	McCombs
Priming	Iyengar
Framing	Entman
Gatekeeping	Shoemaker
Mediatization of Politics	Strömbäck

COMMS 201

MEDIA ETHICS

Legal and ethical constraints (not identical)

„Law - legal and illegal

„Ethics – right and wrong

(for example, it might be legal to film a funeral, but maybe unethical to capture peoples' grief when vulnerable but sometime something unethical is also illegal)

Codes that guide responsible journalism

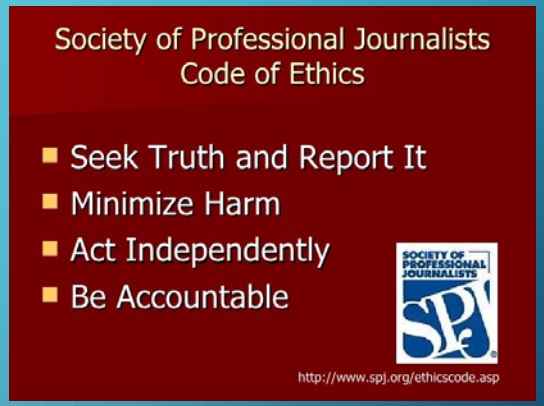
„A bargain between media and society

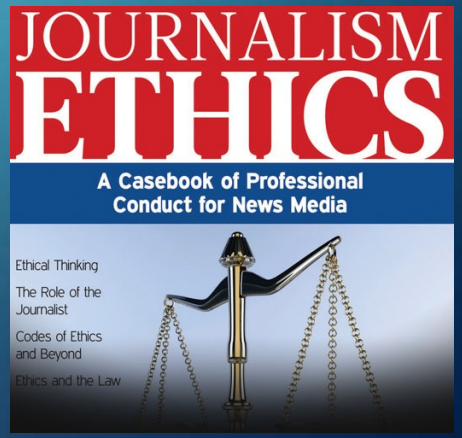
„Freedom but also responsibility

„Lots of ‘grey’ areas

„http://etu.nz/journalist-code-of-ethics/

CODES OF ETHICS

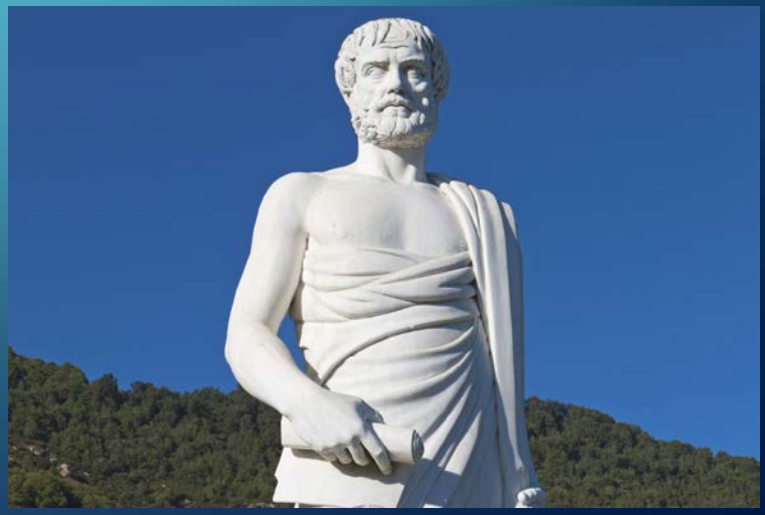




- Theories have shaped our understanding of ethics – from Aristotle through John Stuart Mill to Judeo-Christian religion

- Codes help journalists given the pressure of immediacy, competition that does not encourage reflection
- Social attitudes and hence ethical standards can shift – attitudes towards sexuality, language and violence.

MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS



To seek truth and to report the truth as fully as possible

„To act independently

„To minimize harm

Public would expect: fairness, honesty, impartiality, independence, diversity, cultural sensitivity, compassion.

Ethical journalism can also be good journalism.

THREE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

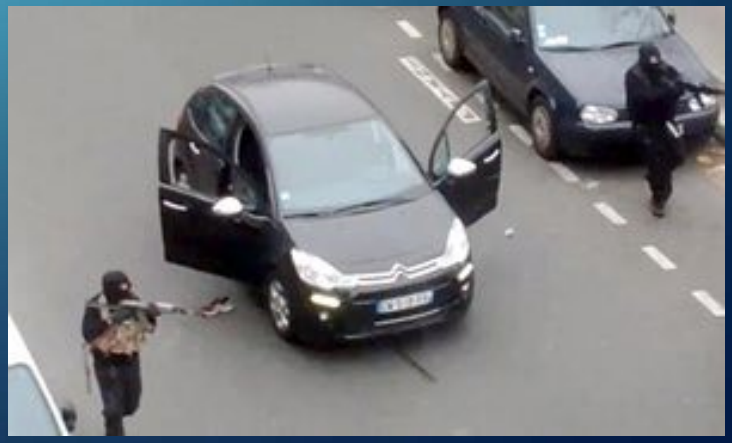
Written codes since the 1970s

„ Competition and technology has caused new ethical dilemmas

„ Use of watchdogs of the media (who watches the watchers?) – the NZ Media Council (newspapers and online) and the Broadcasting Standards Authority (broadcasters)

„ Complication of monitoring the Googles and Facebooks.

CODE OF ETHICS



„Accuracy: more than ensuring facts are correct.

„Fairness: treat others as you want to be treated.

„Balance: all sides of the story.

GEORGIA HARRISON AGAINST THE WEEKEND HERALD

CASE NUMBER:	2258
COUNCIL MEETING:	MAY 2012
VERDICT:	UPHELD
PUBLICATION:	THE WEEKEND HERALD
RULING CATEGORIES:	COMMENT AND FACT DISCRIMINATION BALANCE, LACK OF OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE ACCURACY UNFAIR COVERAGE

Introduction
1. The New Zealand Press Council has received seven complaints against a Paul Holmes column in The Weekend Herald of 11 February 2012 headed "Waitangi Day a complete waste". The standfirst was: "It's time to cancel our repugnant national holiday". While some of the complaints refer to other principles, the complaints in the main are based on the Council's Principle 1 (accuracy, fairness and balance) and Principle 6 (discrimination and diversity).
2. The complaints are upheld.

OPINION

Leighton Smith: Climate change alarmists push their barrow over fires

16 Feb, 2019 5:00am

4 minutes to read

The hand of human stupidity played a major part in the damage to Townsville during this year's floods. Photo / Queensland Police

NZ Herald

ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE

Deception

„The way information is gathered

„When deception can be justified? Investigative reporters, public interest argument?

„Fabrication and plagiarism never justifiable.

„Must be in public interest and you need to be fair and balanced

ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE

Der Spiegel reporter who faked stories returns awards

Claas Relotius apologises, as far right says exposure calls all German news into question

At least 14 articles by Claas Relotius for the German news magazine Der Spiegel were falsified, according to its editor. Photograph: Golejewski/Eventpress/EPA

„ https://www.aljazeera.com/investigations/howtosellamassacre/

„ Filming undercover, using a plant

„ Do the Public interest issues outweigh the ethical issues?

„ https://www.smh.com.au/national/al-jazeera-s-one-nation-sting- was-dramatic-but-was-it-ethical-20190327-p5180a.html

ETHICAL BREACHES AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Public figures

- „Higher level of public scrutiny – power, influence and privilege
- „Test: whether info is relevant to public duties
- „ Idea of 'limited-purpose public figure' – lose right to privacy in area related to their fame, some measure of protection.
- „https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2018/10/the-jami-lee-ross-and-expenses-leak-mega-scandal-a-timeline.html

https://www.noted.co.nz/currently/politics/jami-lee-ross-saga-questions-over-media-cover-up/

Ordinary people

- Thrust into media spotlight (crime, grief, disaster)
- Inexperienced, vulnerable or disabled.
- Journalists must balance sensitivity with seeking information.
- Can re-victimize, saying things in heat of moment, intrusiveness.

Children

„Not competent to give informed consent until they are 16

„If details included about them in news stories, must not be identifiers.

„Who represents the children's interests? If the parents are culpable, then it is complex.

„Journalists must consider the best interests of a child.

Conflicts of interest

„Journalists most often do not join political parties.

„Perception of bias may be as important as the reality.

„The commercial interests of a media organization might also compromise a journalist.

„Difficulty because journalist is also a citizen/consumer.

Conflicts of interest

„Friendships and sources – ‘captured by politicians’ or organisations.

„Disclosures allow readers to make a decision.

„Gifts, freebies and junkets.

„Payments and cheque-book journalism.

„Freelancing and ‘moonlighting’

Matters of taste

„Use of swearwords now acceptable

„Tests are *context* and *relevance* – if an expletive is included in a quote or report.

„Outlets – 95 bfm vs. Morning Report

„Graphic material – BSA ruling on the Tunisia terrorist attack.

„Instance seen on Al Jazeera showing dead Marines.

NEXT WEEK – MEDIA OWNERSHIP

READING:

Ellis, Gavin (2010). Who owns the Media? In Miller, R. (ed.), *New Zealand Government and Politics*. (pp. 399-412). Melbourne, Oxford University Press.

New Zealand Media Ownership 2019 – JMAD (AUT)
https://www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/329770/JMAD-2019-Report.pdf

UPCOMING

March 30

Quiz 1 – 40 multiple choice and yes/no questions – online

April 8

1,000 word essay on News Values due