

# Unit #2: What is Right and Fair: Ethics in Journalism

Content Area: **English**  
Course(s): **Journalism**  
Time Period: **September**  
Length: **3 days**  
Status: **Published**

## Unit Overview

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Whatever the nature of their medium, journalists are legally restricted and morally bound by some specific laws and guidelines and certain underlying principles. These rules and principles are known as "ethics". In this unit, students will examine and discuss the First Amendment to the *Constitution*, Media Law and Ethics. They will develop a code of journalistic ethics for the class and for themselves as reporters. Slander and libel will be defined and discussed in the journalistic vein. Students will examine, also, the differences between ethics in terrestrial v. satellite radio and television news reporting. We will examine important news cases that deal specifically with scholastic journalism, but also some that address professional journalism.

## Enduring Understandings

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- A code of ethics is a necessity in order to promote trust as a journalist.
- How society is affected by the news media.
- Importance of Reporter Objectivity
- The functioning of Freedom of the Press amendment.

## Essential Questions

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- How are scholastic journalists affected by media laws and trial cases?
- In what circumstances should Freedom of the Press be tempered?
- Why is Freedom of the Press necessary?
- Why should a journalist follow a code of ethics?

## Lesson Titles/Objectives

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- Creation of a Code of Ethics for the class
- Internet to examine court cases that pertain to journalists use
- Reporter Objectivity and the Student Journalist

## Standards

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LA.11-12.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RI.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

LA.11-12.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RI.9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

WORK.9-12.9.1.12.E	Communication and Media Fluency
WORK.9-12.9.1.12.F	Accountability, Productivity and Ethics

## Indicators

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.8	Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., The Federalist, presidential addresses).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.9	Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.
WORK.9-12.9.1.12.1	Gathering and evaluating knowledge and information from a variety of sources, including global perspectives, fosters creativity and innovative thinking.
WORK.9-12.9.1.12.1	Digital media are 21st-century tools used for local and global communication.
WORK.9-12.9.1.12.2	There are ethical and unethical uses of communication and media.
WORK.9-12.9.1.12.F.1	Explain the impact of current and emerging technological advances on the demand for increased and new types of accountability and productivity in the global workplace.
WORK.9-12.9.1.12.F.2	Demonstrate a positive work ethic in various settings, including the classroom and during structured learning experiences.

## Inter-Disciplinary Connections

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- Philosophical aspects of ethics and morality
- US Government and laws
- US History

## Instructional Strategies/Learning Activities

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- Group work to develop a code of ethics
- Handouts on relevant court cases and libel/slander
- Writing assignment on ethical/moral articles

## Formative Assessment

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- Contribution to individual current event folders
- Group work
- Individual written assignments
- Internet research on related topics

## **Summative Assessment**

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- Tests and quizzes

## **Resources & Technology**

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- Internet
- Newseum.org and related web sites
- Smartboard
- Television news broadcasts
- Textbook use