



Code of Ethics Journalism Program

July 2022

Student journalists and journalism professors at St. Thomas University must follow the fundamental principles of Accuracy, Fairness, Right to Privacy, Independence, Transparency, and Accountability as they are presented in the Ethics Guidelines of the Canadian Association of Journalists (caj.ca). They must also act in a manner that is consistent with the standards and obligations outlined in *The Mission Statement of the University*, *The Statement of Mutual Academic Expectations of Instructors and Students*, and the *Collective Agreement*.

government offices or private spaces in which public access is restricted. St. Thomas University is committed to fostering positive and respectful relationships with Indigenous Nations communities. Thus, in the spirit of the TRC's Call to Action, we should educate ourselves on protocols and best practices for working with Indigenous communities in pursuit of a journalistic assignment. See the "Journalist's Tool Kit" on (d)-1.3 p.4 (the)-1.6 (s)2.9 (n) <https://www.reconciliationandthemediacanada.ca/journalist-s-tool-kit>

Accuracy is the moral imperative of journalists and news organizations and should not be compromised by the relentless pressure of deadlines or the professional competition to be 'first with the story.' Journalists must respect the rights of people involved in the news. They must also avoid stereotypes relating to Indigenous status, race, sex, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status. They must take special care when reporting on children or those who are otherwise unable to give consent to be interviewed. They must not allow their biases to impede fair and accurate reporting and must not manipulate people who are thrust into the spotlight because they are victims of crime or are associated with a tragedy. Nor should they indulge in voyeuristic stories. Journalists serve democracy and the public interest by reporting the truth. Defending the public's interest includes promoting the free flow of information, exposing wrongdoing, protecting public health and safety, and preventing the public from being misled. Journalists

public interest, and put the needs of audiences – readers, listeners or viewers – at the forefront of newsgathering decisions.

As a Student in the Journalism Program, you pledge to abide by the following core principles of journalism ethics. Moreover, as a journalism student you are, like all your peers at St. Thomas University, bound by the Codes of Student Conduct of the University. (See the *University Calendar*, Section Seven: Regulations, Subsection D. Codes of Student Conduct).

Always identify yourself as a journalism student on a class assignment and inform your source *you will publish the story if possible*. Do not gather information on the basis that your stories won't be published. Rare exceptions may be made for investigative stories, but only with your instructor's approval. Do not lie or mislead a source about the nature of the topic to obtain an interview unless it is an investigative story and you have your instructor's approval. Don't take advantage of the naivete or vulnerability of people who haven't been interviewed before. Inform them about the subject. When interviewing minors, seek permission from their parents or their custodians if the subject is of a serious nature. Be aware that, from the perspective of the court, minors are not considered legally capable of providing *fully informed* consent.

Be sensitive to your personal biases. Avoid stereotypes and references to a group or person's Indigenous status, race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender self-identification, disability, physical appearance or social status, except if this information is crucial to the story. Tell sources how the interview may be used, but do not provide questions in advance. Never give a source control over other interviews or allow them to see or hear stories in advance. Don't stage or recreate events. Don't prompt subjects to wave signs or feign emotion. Don't ask friends to voice quotes you need. Don't fake audio, video or photos. You may crop or digitally enhance photos, but never alter the subject's appearance, including skin colour. Do not remove or add anything to photos.

News tips from friends/family are valuable, but you should not write them into stories without the instructor's approval. Do your own research, use original sources and verify second-hand information. Do not surreptitiously tape or video a source *for broadcast* — unless approved by your instructor as undercover work. However, you may freely record/video any public or media event without seeking permission. You *should* record interviews even when not for broadcast, and as a courtesy explain to your source you are doing so for accuracy *only*. You may also record phone interviews *without* permission, again for accuracy, but not for broadcast. If taped interviews are for broadcast be sure to explain and obtain agreement from the source. Ensure quotes are accurate and fairly reflect the speaker's views. Quotes may be altered to correct grammar or avoid dialect that would make the speaker look foolish, unless that is your intention. Ellipses may be used for brevity, but not to alter the meaning of the original statement. Always aim to name sources in your stories. Anonymous sources may only be used with the instructor's permission, but the sources must agree their names be given to the instructor. Where privacy of a source is an issue, you must weigh an individual's rights against the public's need for information. Use "common sense, humanity and relevance." (CAJ Ethical Guidelines 2011). Keep promises made to your sources. *Always ask* if off-the-record information may be checked with other sources to get it on the record.

Always explain to sources exactly what is meant by:

- "not for attribution" (use the information, *including non-specific information* about the source)
- "background" (use the information under conditions negotiated with the source)
- "deep background" (use the information without any attribution)
- "off the record" (information cannot be published)

Do not abuse your role for personal gain, or that of friends/family by requesting or accepting favors, fees, free travel or special treatment from a source. Don't accept gifts exceeding \$15. Free tickets/books constitute access *only if you are covering the event or author*. Do not pay for

