

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

EXAMINATION QUESTION PAPER: MAY 2011 MAIN

TITLE OF PAPER: **MEDIA ETHICS**

COURSE CODE: JMC 312

TIME ALLOWED: TWO (2) HOURS

- INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Answer **three (3)** questions, ONE each from Section A, B and C .
 2. Write **legibly**, that is, **boldly** and **clearly**.
 3. Evince the principles of **composition** and **grammar**.

THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN
GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR.

JMC 312: MEDIA ETHICS

Section A

Each question in this section carries 30 marks.

1. J. Clement Jones (1980), in *Mass Media Codes of Ethics and Councils*, articulates the “threefold” purpose of media ethics, which forms the basis of what may be dubbed, “Media Ethics Triangle.”
 - (i) **Identify** the three aspects of media ethics involved in either Jones’s threefold purpose or its derivation, the Media Ethics Triangle. **(5 marks)**
 - (ii) **Explain** each of the three aspects you have identified. **(10 marks)**
 - (ii) For each of the three aspects of media ethics, **list** two (2) ethical standards, and **discuss** them with regard to the Swazi media. **(15 marks)**

2. Everyday, mass media professionals find themselves in situations whereby they have to make ethical decisions. Dominick (1999) proffers a model which “media professionals can use to evaluate and examine their decisions.”
 - (i) **State** and **explain** the components of Dominick’s model. **(12 marks)**
 - (ii) Attachment A to this question are three situations: A, B, and C. Employ Dominick’s model to **analyse** each situation and the action you would take. **(18 marks)**

Section B

Each question in this section carries 15 marks

3. **Identify** three ethical issues raised in Attachment B and **discuss** each.

4. All mass media professions subscribe to certain general ethical principles and standards, but every media profession has some peculiar guidelines. **Discuss** the depositions of the author in the article in Appendix C, with regard to the “Guiding Principles for the Journalist,” as proffered in the book, *Doing Ethics in Journalism*.

Section C

Each question in this section carries 15 marks.

5. The **Ethical Quad** is a diagram with which the vital elements of ethics may be captured. **Illustrate/describe** the Ethical Quad; then, **comment** on its elements.

6. Because ethics is a branch of philosophy, its essential principles have invariably been expounded by philosophers. **List** three **principles**, and **explain** them, **giving** the names of the philosopher that expounded each principle.

ATTACHMENT A

A

A newspaper reporter investigating a fraud in a Government department discovers that the chief perpetrator is the brother of his editor. He writes the story and passes it to the editor. You are the editor: what would you do?

B

The wife of a convicted murderer of a political candidate has written a manuscript in which she reveals what she knows about the murder, including the disclosure of a top politician who paid her husband to do the job. She submits the manuscript to a publisher. You are the publisher: what would you do?

C

The President of a political association whose organisation has been accused of unpatriotic acts by Government wants to be given a chance to respond to the accusation on the television station that had aired the news. It is a government-owned station, and you are the General Manager of the station: What would you do?

LOCAL MEDIA STRUGGLES AFTER MARTIN'S APPOINTMENT

...Dlamini's departure has seen the decline of good reports about government...

STORIES BY LUCKY NDZIMANDZE

MBABANE: The appointment of Martin Dlamini as Head of the Smart Partnership Secretariat has absolutely destroyed the local media industry.

Following the appointment of Dlamini by government, some editors have been reported to be in bed with the appointing authority, something which has seen the decline of good reports about government in the media.

Most reporters within the main stream publications have cried foul at this, stating that their good stories were being blocked by Editors who are hoping for political appointments.

MISA CONDEMS CORRUPT EDITORS

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has condemned the conduct of Editors who block stories and take bribes while waiting for political appointments.

MISA Swaziland is also concerned about the current situation in the media where stories about government are being kept under wraps.

MISA information officer, Michael Mofusa said the matter had reached his office, but according to their findings it becomes difficult for a media house owned by government to expose corruption within the political circles.

For the media houses owned by government it is very difficult because of their editorial policy. However, as Misa journalists refused reports about government, which now holds regular breakfast meetings with the media. Some stories of public interest have been discussed in hushed tones with the

the claims by the Editor's claims. They indicated that even in cases where they investigated well stories were not being published.

if there are people in power who pay money every month to Editors so that they can protect them if their scandals emerge. Sometimes you find that the story is put aside without convincing reasons. This practice is getting out of hand, and MISA must do something before we conclude that our jobs are being threatened, said one prominent local prominent journalist who is employed by one of the leading newspapers.

This is so painful because the public is being denied information, while some individuals' wallets grow bigger. I think the public should stand up for themselves and demand accurate information," he added.

opposite being reported instead of actual facts.

Lutfo Dlamini, who was accused of misappropriating millions of Emalangi belonging to the King was reported to be on leave yet he was suspended while his matter was being discussed in the royal circles. The Minister has since resumed his duties after the matter was discussed at the highest level of this country's administration.

It is said that this story was known, but it was never reported by the main stream media. The matter raised concerns as to whether some prominent figures were more equal than others. While ordinary citizens are exposed on a daily basis, Lutfo Dlamini was spared by the local daily newspapers, which are regarded as the face of the Swazi media.

Members of the public have a constitutional right to information, but government and the Editors are denying them this right. Some Editors have allegedly been promised political posts on

condition that they drop some of the stories about the state.

Interestingly, the newspapers continue to report on "propaganda" when the actual story is known in every corner. Lutfo Dlamini's saga was well known, but government claimed that he was on sick leave.

He was fetched by police officers together with Phesheya Dlamini, the Swaziland Ambassador to Kuwait. The police were acting on instruction from the Prime Minister, Dr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini. The story was doing rounds in the political circles, but the truth was swept under the carpet.

It could not be ascertained why Lutfo was spared by the same media that came hard on Minister Lindiwe Dlamini over the 31 million land saga, among other scandals.

During his days in the media industry, Martin Dlamini would take on government in his column "Just Thinking", but that has since become a thing of the past.

JOURNALISTS MUST BE HEARTLESS

I love journalism. I wish people could understand this job. I know that a lot of people do not understand it. I also know that past experiences have left many people doubting this noble profession.

Today people claim that we no longer have journalists. This is because a lot of people are aggrieved in the manner their stories were handled. But what is interesting is that, during the time the journalist was doing the story, (it is) either the person involved refused to cooperate or somebody blocked the reporter from seeing the person he or she was writing about.

I know many cases where we try to get hold of people who in turn refuse to either cooperate (neither) even talk to the reporter in front of them. But the moment the story is published they are quick to come and complain.

If I may pose a question, from all those who complain, how many times have reporter attempted to get your side of your story and you refused to talk? How many times have the reporters explained their mission but you



... WITH THE EDITOR

felt the story was not for public consumption.

I was surprised to learn that one of the honourable members of the house of Senate was complaining that why police were leaking information on prominent people who had been nabbed for drink driving.

The honourable member said the high profile people should not be exposed to the public. Gosh! This is a shame! Especially coming from the august house.

Why should we hide someone who did not behave by bridging the laws of the country? Another MP also complained that pictures of the former Minister

maybe I misquoted them or misunderstood them.

Those who simply feel they were untouchable should just go to hell. Nobody is untouchable under the sun (what is very bad is when a journalist does not contact the person they are writing about. I have made my own mistakes I know but believe me I do not repeat similar mistakes. Like I said, I enjoy this job. I do not know what else I would have done if I had not been a journalist. I really enjoy exposing people. My friends say I am heartless because I do not feel for the people I write about. What is important to us is whether the story holds water or not.

Yes journalists should be heartless. There is no room for compassion in this profession. Well it is not for me to feel for you. Mine is to write a story and publish it. I work for the public. We are the real public servants. Our masters are the public and only they can judge us and not culprits who have been caught in the line of fire.

The million dollar question is how do you gauge that the story is of public interest? I have seen people trying to tell the reporter that the story he or she is doing is not of public interest. God forbid.

And then there is the issue of sources where the person you are writing about will demand to know your sources. A real journalist will never reveal his/her source even if demanded by a court of law. I will rather go to jail than reveal my source. And that is my principle. Period.

Some people claim that journalists should look at the source's motive. They say if the source has ulterior motives then the reporter should not do the story. But this is not correct. Journalists do not look at any ulterior motives but the issue at hand. What is important to us is whether the story holds water or not.

I wish my fellow colleagues will learn a lesson to always be cautious and try by all means to be always accurate. I know certain people who claim to be journalists and go around writing one sided stories on opinions insulting and defaming people.

I have seen people coming up with a nonexistent story, and get away with it. And all this shall come to an end if we as journalists could join hands and fight these bogus journalists who are tarnishing the name of the fourth estate.

his or her side of the story. I know the reporter and have worked with her for many years. I am patiently waiting to see how they would react to the minister's response. I still wonder how would someone claim to have talked to the PM when (she) had not?

I think it is really time for journalist to pursue the Media Complaints Commission because it can help those who feel aggrieved on certain stories. The MCC can save some of us because it will always tell the aggrieved whether he/she has a case or not.

I wish my fellow colleagues will learn a lesson to always be cautious and try by all means to be always accurate. I know certain people who claim to be journalists and go around writing one sided stories on opinions insulting and defaming people.

I have seen people coming up with a nonexistent story, and get away with it. And all this shall come to an end if we as journalists could join hands and fight these bogus journalists who are tarnishing the name of the fourth estate.