

### Session 3: TV Journalism

#### Outcomes

- understood the aims of TV journalism, including the social responsibility of the news journalist
  - explored the importance of objectivity and fairness in news reporting
6. ACTIVITY: The aims of TV journalism
  7. ACTIVITY: Journalistic ethics
  8. MASTERCLASS 2: Working in TV journalism – Programme Editor Julie Hulme

#### 6. ACTIVITY: THE AIMS OF TV JOURNALISM

##### Discussion: Objectivity and language



In pairs or small groups, consider the language used by TV journalists, paying particular attention to the use of passive and active constructions and the past tense.

Discuss the language used in the following sentences, encouraging students to circle or underline key words and phrases and to annotate them with suggestions as to why they were chosen:

1. A new Government report suggests that passive smoking may have a more dangerous effect on the health of children and young people than was previously imagined.
2. Critics of Gordon Brown's plans to increase aid given to developing countries to fight childhood diseases have claimed that the plans are short-sighted.
3. According to the Campaign to Protect Rural England, England faces losing most of its real countryside if current trends continue.

Discuss the differences between subjective and objective viewpoints and how this relates to the use of emotive and neutral language. Ask students to complete the table in **Worksheet 3** with emotive and neutral phrases as appropriate.

Consider the different connotations of these words and speculate as to the importance of language selection to issues of accuracy, fairness and balance in TV news journalism.

#### 7. ACTIVITY: JOURNALISTIC ETHICS



The Communications Act 2003 demands "due accuracy" and "due impartiality" in TV news production. As a class, discuss what is meant by "due". For example the OFCOM Broadcasting Code says the following:

"Due" is an important qualification to the concept of impartiality. Impartiality itself means not favouring one side over another. "Due" means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. So "due impartiality" does not mean an equal division of time has to be given to every view, or that every argument and every facet of every argument has to be represented. The approach to due impartiality may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and

channel, the likely expectation of the audience as to content, and the extent to which the content and approach is signalled to the audience.



**Worksheet 4** gives a list of concepts used in discussions of journalistic ethics:

- accuracy
- impartiality
- balance
- neutrality
- objectivity
- fairness
- social responsibility
- bias
- advocacy.

The worksheet asks students to consider:

- the meaning of each concept
- which concepts are similar
- examples news stories where these concepts come into play.

In order to place these concepts in context, watch the online interview with the deputy editor.

<http://www.channel4.com/learning/breakingthenews/schools/channel4newsroom/wwdeputyeditor.html>

#### **Discussion: Ethics in conflict**



Present the group with three hypothetical situations in which the ethical underpinnings of TV news journalism come into conflict with the practical demands of the bulletin. Encourage students to debate possible solutions to these dilemmas in small groups or in a formal class debate or role play. Ensure that reference is made to the concepts listed above and the NUJ Code of Conduct.



1. A news journalist is covering a factory picket line during a heated demonstration against proposed changes to working conditions. Just before a live report is due to be transmitted, the journalist is attacked by a policeman who may or may not have mistaken him for a protester. The journalist attempts to fight back and is pushed to the floor. He then takes refuge in a side street, where he intends to broadcast his live report. Should he be allowed to do so? What sort of ethical issues does this incident raise?
2. In the middle of a secret vote deciding on the leader of the Conservative Party, a TV journalist has been given a piece of important information by one of the MPs involved in counting the votes. The journalist knows that no other TV news programme has been given this piece of information and that if she were to report on it, she would have an exclusive. Unfortunately she has no time to verify this piece of information before her live bulletin goes on air. Should the journalist go ahead with this scoop? What sort of ethical issues does this incident raise?
3. During the floods in the American South, a newsman is reporting on individuals who refuse to move out of their homes from a boat which sails across the flood water. He meets a man who has decided to stay put and wait until the waters die down. The journalist wants to persuade the man to leave his home and sail to safety on the small news boat. He also intends to film this 'rescue'. Should the

journalist go ahead with his plan? What sort of ethical issues does this incident raise?

Ask students to share their opinions with other members of the group and discuss any areas of consensus or disagreement.

### **Ethical safeguards**



Ask students to read and annotate the NUJ Code of Conduct (available from <http://media.gn.apc.org/nujcode>). Encourage pairs or small groups of students to summarise each of the 13 guidelines in a single word or phrase. Use students' responses to begin a discussion of the safeguards in place to ensure that journalism is objective and accountable.



Ensure that students understand the following:

1. Permission is sought from interviewees before interviews are aired.
2. Sources are expected to be checked and verified before they are presented to the TV audience.
3. If an individual or group feels that an issue has been represented unfairly in a TV news bulletin, there are several ways in which they might register their complaint.

### **8 . MASTERCLASS 2: WORKING IN TV JOURNALISM - PROGRAMME EDITOR JULIE HULME**



Find out more about journalistic aims and ethics with programme Editor, Julie Hulme.

<http://www.channel4.com/learning/breakingthenews/schools/channel4newsroom/masterclass2.html>

### Worksheet 3

Complete the following table using emotive or neutral language as appropriate.

Emotive	Neutral
horrific murder	
the minister lied when he said...	
	there has been some disagreement
the victim was savagely butchered	
	the proposal has been criticised
	the alleged attacker
disgusting	
	inaccurate reports

#### Worksheet 4

The following concepts are used in discussions of journalistic ethics. Write a definition for each one.

Concept	Definition
Accuracy	
Impartiality	
Balance	
Neutrality	
Objectivity	
Fairness	
Social responsibility	
Bias	
Advocacy	

Consider the nine concepts above. In the space below, group together words that have similar meanings.

Write down an example of the type of story where it would be important for a journalist to consider whether his or her coverage exemplifies that concept.

Concept	Example of story which exemplifies the concept
Accuracy	
Impartiality	
Balance	
Neutrality	
Objectivity	
Fairness	
Social responsibility	
Bias	
Advocacy	