

***Ithaca College Television***

***CODE OF ETHICS***

*Preamble*

In spirit of the First Amendment and the role of the press in a free and informed democracy, this Code of Ethics is put forth as a way to maintain the integrity of those journalists who convey these ideals at Ithaca College Television. Journalists shall combat both corruption plaguing democratic processes and their own moral biases through transparency, thoroughness and objectivity, in order to heighten the level of public discourse in the communities they serve. Journalists shall act being mindful of the influence they carry, knowing the public expects honesty and forthright correction when the opposite is delivered. Journalists shall humbly and heartedly lead local conversation as to hold those with power accountable and seek to bring light to the issues that are the root of communities’ problems, and also to highlight those who serve them.

1. Defining “Journalist”
   1. On-air talent are not the only people that can be considered journalists. Journalists consist of those who have any connection in serving a show in the news department. That includes editorial, technical, executive and administrative arms. Everyone held within that large sphere should be held to equal ethical standards. In addition, any person outside the News Department participating in any information gathering operations are subject to this code.
2. Plagiarism
   1. Plagiarism is unacceptable under any circumstances.
   2. Plagiarism includes representing someone else’s work or ideas as one’s own with or without the proper owner’s consent. It can be intentional or unintentional.
   3. Journalists who are caught knowingly plagiarizing content must be subject to disciplinary action. Accidental plagiarism must be called out and treated seriously as well.
3. Attribution and Sourcing
   1. All content not directly produced for or legally purchased by ICTV News programming should be attributed properly. This includes the following:
      1. News information only being reported by one outlet that isn’t verified directly
      2. Media not created or taken by a credited photog
      3. On the record statements made on behalf of officials
   2. Attribution can be made verbally or visually but should be clear in either regard.
   3. Sources should only be granted anonymity in rare instances. They should be thoroughly vetted for both the accuracy of their information and to reveal any potential bias they may hold or reason to fabricate such information. Stories involving anonymous sourcing should be vetted through additional news department and ICTV leadership.
   4. Sources should be given a fair comment period before expressing that they did not return request for comment. This may vary depending on the circumstances. For example, on a weekend, a source using an office landline shouldn’t be expected to respond as fast as they would during the week. Whereas emailing a source during the work week could be given a smaller window.
4. Fabrication
   1. Knowingly generating false facts or other components to journalistic content is a major ethical breach and must be subject to disciplinary action. This include details both small and large as they pertain to a story or topic.
   2. Fabrication can also occur in less direct ways such as reenacting or purposely manipulating footage. It is journalists’ responsibilities to find and disseminate real quality content, not create their own.
5. Conflicts of Interest
   1. Any journalist involved with editorial say in a particular story where they may hold a conflict of interest should immediately report such to the show’s producer and the News Director.
   2. Caution should be exercised to avoid conflicts of interest as much as possible. Conflicts could include relationships that are financial, personal, professional, and organizational in nature.
   3. In instances where a conflict of interest is unavoidable, extra steps should be taken to ensure the journalistic fairness and objectivity of the reporting. That could mean having a standards team vet a piece or making the potential conflict of interest clear in the product itself.
6. Objectivity
   1. Journalists should recognize all sides of a story which hold a substantial prominence. The means to determine whether a facet to a story is prominent should be weighed by evaluating several factors including:
      1. Pertinence to a relatively large group of people
      2. Potential impact on the local community
      3. How voters may consider it when choosing elected officials
      4. Any theoretical or academically backed claims
   2. Journalists should seek to understand their own personal biases or lapses in understanding on any particular issue and expel them to provide the most accurate recreation of such issues in a final product.
7. Opinion
   1. Opinion-based content and purely informative news content should be easily distinguishable when airing on news programming. Opinion-content in particular should be labeled visually.
   2. Opinion-based content should be enriching, substantive and provide viewers with a more thorough outlook on one or more sides to a particular issue. Opinion pieces should be aired sparingly and only to positively further the public discourse on an important issue.
   3. ICTV journalists who cover specific beats should refrain from expressing their personal opinion about those beats on ICTV programing.
8. Privacy, Trust and Respect
   1. Sources have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Journalists should inquire and make attempts to solicit information from sources in a persistent manner. However, caution and care should be exercised especially in matters dealing with health, crime and personal loss.
   2. Theft, recording without consent, spying, hacking, blackmail, coercion and harassment must not be used as tools for newsgathering, and using these tactics will result in disciplinary action.
   3. Though New York state law allows one party consent for recording another person, journalists should always inform sources that they are being recorded, even if not for a final product. Exceptions can be made in circumstances where the benefits of using such a recording outweigh the detriments.
   4. Journalists are not superior nor are they (in most cases) entitled to anything. They should show respect to sources both as an ethical principle and a good practice.
   5. Journalists should build trust in the community in which they report. Especially since ICTV is a college outlet, its work is often accompanied by a negative preconceived notion that coverage may be out of touch, inconsiderate of actual opinions and void of relevant facts. At all times, journalists must work to gain respect in order to reverse these preconceived notions. It’s also important to remember that students will work on the foundation journalists set for years after they’ve graduated.
9. Errors
   1. Journalists should not make errors. However, they are inevitable. The best way to correct an error is to prevent it from happening in the first place. News operations should remain under constant scrutiny to root out potential errors before they happen and prevent them in the future.
   2. In the event a factual error is aired it should be corrected as soon as possible either verbally or visually in consultation with the News Director.
10. Social Media
    1. Journalists’ behavior on social media is a direct and conscious action. As a result, the Code of Ethics is applicable to any social media content a practicing ICTV journalist produces. Journalists involved with editorial decision making should be even more mindful of their social media profiles.
11. Sexual Harassment
    1. There is no place for sexual harassment or similarly charged actions at ICTV or anywhere.
    2. All ICTV and Ithaca College policies against sexual harassment are considered to be a part of this Code. All reports of sexual harassment should be given to the Station Manager and Manager of TV and Radio Operations.
12. Scope
    1. The Code is meant to provide a written description of the moral goals and vision this organization’s members and products should reflect. Should there be a disagreement, infraction or general discussion about ethics, the code should be the base upon which these issues are debated and decided from a moral perspective.
    2. ICTV journalists need to follow all local, state and federal laws especially as they pertain to news gathering, along with all ICTV, Roy H. Park School of Communications and Ithaca College policies. However, fear of reaction by governing authorities including Ithaca College should not be reason to kill stories, cease coverage or otherwise alter legally produced news products.
    3. This Code of Ethics has been approved by the ICTV Executive Staff and remains in effect until amended or replaced by the Executive Staff. Any infractions of this Code should be reported to the producers, the News Director, Station Manager, and Director of Radio and TV Operations, depending on its severity.

Rev. 8/18