

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES

MEDIA ETHICS: (IJM 1202)

MAY 2006 EXAMINATION

TIME ALLOWED: 3 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

1. Section A is **compulsory**.
2. Answer **any three** questions from section B.
3. Start each answer on a new page.
4. Poor spelling and grammar will be penalised.

SECTION A: COMPULSORY

Question 1

- a) Briefly explain the following terms:
- | | |
|----------------------|------------|
| i) Press embargo | [2 marks] |
| ii) Off the record | [2 marks] |
| iii) Deep background | [2 marks] |
- b) You are a sports reporter and one of the big teams in your town is running out of money and they decide to have a big show at the stadium with a number of local and foreign musicians. The team will also be selling a lot of sports paraphernalia to raise money. You are asked to be on the stage to keep it all together, introduce the band, take bids and tell the audience about the team. You will also make interviews with some of the star players. You will wear the team jersey and get paid.

What ethical problems arise from this situation? **[10 marks]**

- c) Read the following story and answer the questions below.

In 1987, *The Tampa Tribune* published the name of Eliana Martinez, a child involved in a highly publicised struggle for entry into the public school system. The *Tribune* made the difficult decision despite impassioned entreaties from Eliana's mother Rose Martinez, who feared her daughter – who is mentally retarded – would be mercilessly harassed. Rose adopted Eliana as a baby from her native Puerto Rico, where the child had contracted the AIDS virus from blood transfusions. Through intense love and attention at her mother's home, Eliana evolved from a mute, staring vegetable to an active, laughing child – though one without the ability to speak, read or control her bowels. With fierce resolve, Rosa entered into a fight with the school board to have Eliana placed in special-education classes – the only place, she felt, her daughter would reach her full potential. The school board, fearing Eliana's lack of toilet training would pose a health threat to other children and teachers, denied the request.

Rose took her struggle to the Tribune, giving a reporter an exclusive interview on one condition: Her daughter's full name and address be kept a secret, at least until the case made it to the court.

Lawrence McConnell, the assistant editor ordered that the child's full identity be revealed and the next morning the story was published with all the details. His argument was that Rose had opened the case to the public, therefore, anyone who wanted to could attend the hearing and learn the child's name. He also believed that the story was of public interest and the mother wanted to take too much control over the media in an attempt to further her own agenda.

- i) Identify four key ethical issues that arise from this story? [8 marks]
ii) What effect is this story likely to cause? [16 marks]

TOTAL: [40 marks]

SECTION B: ANSWER ANY THREE QUESTIONS

Question 2

“Because images evoke almost immediate emotional responses among viewers, pictures have tremendous impact. With well-chosen words, visual messages combine to educate, entertain and persuade. But the flip side to such visual power is that images can also offend, shock, mislead, stereotype and confuse.”

With reference to this statement and with the aid of examples discuss key ethical issues in photojournalism. [20 marks]

Question 3

“Not all lies are condemned; however, they must be proven to be a necessary last resort.”
Discuss the validity of the above statement citing relevant examples. [20 marks]

Question 4

Journalists in Zimbabwe face several challenges which hinder good and ethical reporting with reference to this statement, discuss some of the challenges that hinder ethical reporting in Zimbabwe. Discuss the problems affecting ethical reporting in Zimbabwe. [20 marks]

Question 5

Discuss the claim that balance and objectivity in journalism are idealistic and generally difficult to attain. [20 marks]

Question 6

MISA Zimbabwe has hired you as a consultant to draw up a code of conduct for journalists in Zimbabwe. Discuss some of the key issues that the code must address. [20 marks]