



Fake News:

on the nature of truth
& objectivity

Media Ethics

Who am I?



About

Master's student in Communication
specializing in Science, Society and Policy.
Executive Director of Pulsar Collective.
Communications Director of the Pelling Lab.
Your TA for this class!



Catch up with me at
@SciCommCassidy



I care about
Pseudo-
science.



Donald J. Trump ✓

@realDonaldTrump



Tonight, [@FLOTUS](#) and I tested positive for COVID-19. We will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately. We will get through this TOGETHER!

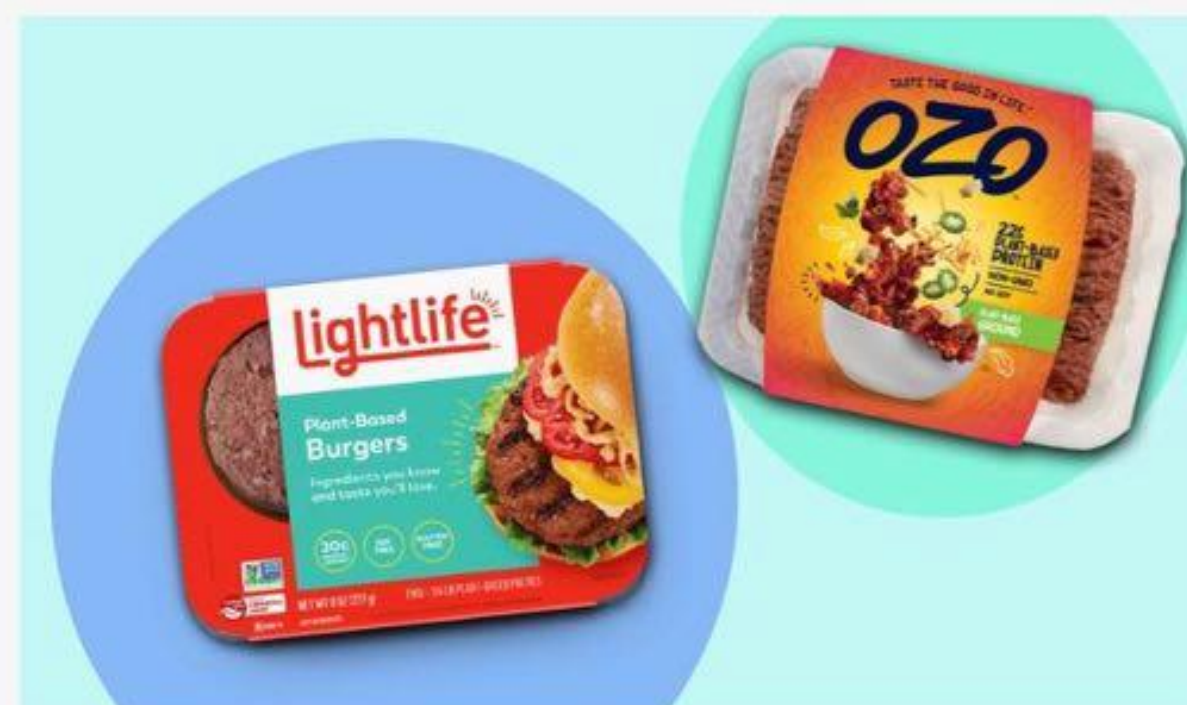
12:54 AM · Oct 2, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

2 Pillars of modern journalism ethics



Truth & Objectivity

*Report in a truthful manner
based on neutral reporting of
objective facts.*



PLANT-BASED COMPANY PLANTERRA DEFENDS BEYOND MEAT, IMPOSSIBLE FOODS AFTER LIGHTLIFE'S OPEN LETTER

Planterra CEO Darcey Macken thanks Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods for paving the way for the plant-based industry after Lightlife's "clean break" campaign stirs controversy.

by ANNA STAROSTINETS KAYA

SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

313 Shares



What is truth?

The House

Chris Hall: There's no path to net-zero without nuclear power, says O'Regan

'The fact of the matter is that it produces zero emissions,' says natural resources minister

Chris Hall · Posted: Sep 19, 2020 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: September 19



Natural Resources Minister Seamus O'Regan responds to a question in the House of Commons Feb. 10, 2020. (The Canadian Press/Adrian Wyld)

POPULAR NOW IN RADIO

- 1 Chris Hall: There's no path to net-zero without nuclear power, says O'Regan
- 2 [Q&A](#)
'I want to puke': David Suzuki reacts to O'Regan's nuclear power endorsement
- 3 Fast, effective and ethically distributed — what we need from a COVID vaccine
- 4 Trump 'the wrong man for the job,' says veteran journalist Bob Woodward
- 5 [AUDIO](#)
Is COVID-19 airborne? The CDC said yes, then no

Are these stories “true”?

Koodo 11:47 37%

cbc.ca Done

Police apprehend David Milgaard

The Story

The pressure is finally off Saskatoon police chief Jim Kettles. His detectives' four-month investigation of the Gail Miller murder has resulted in the arrest of a young hippie named David Milgaard. The RCMP has detained him in Prince George, B.C. without incident. Now, Kettles tells the CBC's Saskatoon affiliate, a police escort will bring Milgaard back to Saskatoon to appear before a judge.

Medium: Television	Program: CBC News
Broadcast Date: May 30, 1969	Guest(s): James Kettles
Duration: 0:35	Thanks to CFCQ-TV/Saskatchewan Archives Board

< > ↺ ↻

Koodo 11:52 36%

abc.net.au Done

Just In Coronavirus Politics World Bus

Fox News removes altered photos of Seattle protest zone formed amid Black Lives Matter protests

Posted Sat 13 Jun 2020 at 10:28pm, updated Sun 14 Jun 2020 at 1:03am



This digitally manipulated image was published on the Fox News homepage on June 12 with stories about Seattle. The image combines screens from a June 10 photograph from Capitol Hill with two May 30 images from downtown.

Seattle Times first reported on the digitally altered images published to the Fox News homepage. (*Seattle Times*)

< > ↺ ↻

Koodo 11:58 36%

cbsnews.com Done

⋮ CBS NEWS LIVE

3rd Columnist On Bush Payroll

JANUARY 26, 2005 / 9:08 AM / CBS/AP

A syndicated newspaper columnist received at least \$4,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services for work in support of President Bush's effort to promote marriage, USA Today reports.

Mike McManus is the third commentator to receive money from a federal agency to boost Bush policy

< > ↺ ↻

Either truth is to be discovered
or it is to be created.

Realism

Realists favour a correspondence theory – “true” beliefs fit in with the world as it really is.

Constructivism

Constructivists believe truth and objective knowledge are constructed by us.

Epistemological eras

17th Century

18th Century

19th Century

1900–1960s

1960s+

Partisan truth and
“matters of fact”

Modern news press
emergence

Claimed impartial
truth but usually
supported the state

Birth of the term
“matter of fact”

Epistemology for
public engagement

Communication of
the public sphere

Becoming the
“fourth estate”

Libertarian ideals of
a marketplace of
opinions

“News for all” – led
to tabloids

Traditional news
objectivity

Removal of bias

Strict ethical
standards

Independence from
the state

Reduce
sensationalism

News through a
sociological lens

Citizen journalism

More value on
subjectivity

Shift to social
constructivism

Traditionally, journalists have been
“common sense realists”



Our senses and perception
are true to reality.



There is one singular
truth to be known.

Skeptics of journalism objectivity

01.

The idea of empirical truth can be considered a Western notion to impose cultural imperialism.

02.

Objectivity cannot exist in journalism, as media always prioritizes profit over ethics.

03.

Objectivity is a myth; subjective and crowdsourced journalism is best.



Lenses of the critiques

Philosophical

What is the nature of truth? Is it a Western construct?

Conceptual

Common sense realism is naïve – the mind organizes information.

Political

Journalistic truths only reflect the needs of the powerful.

Ignorance

Journalists aren't experts in what they're reporting on, lacking nuance.

Social

The search for journalistic truth promotes harmful social attitudes.

Global

Journalism is overly nationalistic and does not prioritize global perspectives.



Why study the meaning of truth?

01.

Denying the existence of truth undercuts every argument, including that there is no truth.

02.

Truth is critical to our semantic understanding of the world.

03.

Now is **not the time** to start challenging the idea that truth even exists.

Loss of trust in the media leads to fragmentation and polarization



Dependence on partisanship



Lack of nuance and balance
in coverage

Free expression

Citizens have the right to express what they want, even lies, without legal accountability.

Press freedom

Freedom of journalists to express what they want – within ethical constraints and following journalistic values.



Transparency

“Conduct that presumes an openness in communication and serves a reasonable expectation of forthright change”.

–Plaisance, 2008

YOUR CBC/RADIO-CANADA

VISION

IMPACT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SERVICES

WORK WITH US

2018-2019 Annual Report

Highlights

Messages

About Us

CBC/Radio-Canada's Commitment to Transparency and Accountability

Who We Are

Our Operations

Our Services

Our Operating Environment

Our Accountability Plan

People and Culture

Technology and Infrastructure

Financial Sustainability

Risk Management and Governance

Financial Reporting

CBC/Radio-Canada's Commitment to Transparency and Accountability

As Canada's national public broadcaster, we take very seriously our obligation to be transparent and accountable to Canadians. To meet our responsibilities, we provide access on our corporate website to information about our activities and the way we manage our public resources.

Responses to Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Requests

Policies and Practices

Ombuds Reports

Proactive Disclosure

Annual Public Meeting

Government

Public

OAG

CRTC

HR Compliance

Corporate Reports

Appearances Before Parliamentary Committees

Office of the Auditor General (OAG)

Reporting to the CRTC

Government

HR Compliance

Annual Review on Implementation of Section 41 of the *Official Languages Act* to Canadian Heritage

Public

Responses to access to information and privacy (ATIP) requests

Policies and Practices

Journalistic Standards

Reporting to the CRTC

Periodic licence renewals

Annual reporting to the CRTC covering each of the Corporation's licensed radio,

RADIO-canada.ca

cbc.ca

Twitter

Facebook

Instagram

CBC Radio-Canada

Transparency is comprised of availability and disclosure.



Making sources and info
available, passive



Sharing how editorial
decisions are made, active

Goals of transparency:

Creating trust.

Reducing inaccuracy.

Fostering dialogue.

Does it work?

How does the
internet impact
transparency in
journalism?



Discuss!

Dangers of transparency

01.

Not everything should be shared – think about your Thanksgiving dinner!

02.

Some information needs to be kept private, like evidence before a trial.

03.

O'Neill (2002) argued that trust and transparency are inverses, it cannot eliminate deception.

04.

Hard to be transparent about motives or processes.

05.

Focus on transparency can overload and detract from the content.



Infotainment?

What counts as modern journalism?

Social media?



Content creators



Blogs?

The fifth estate

Legislative

Executive

Judiciary

Media

Citizens

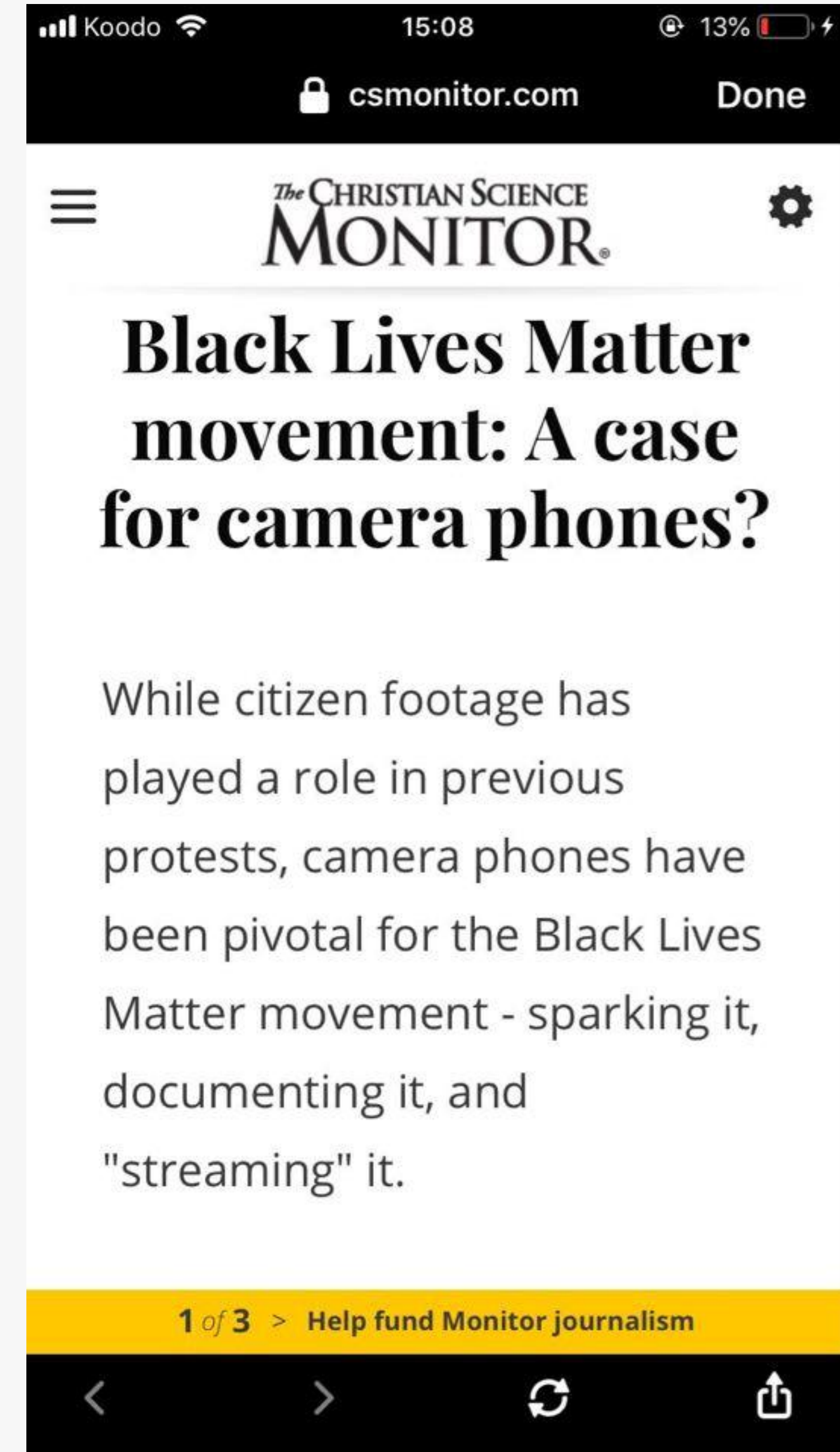
The fifth estate

Citizens who criticize the media are now being referred to as the fifth estate – another branch of checks & balances in society.

Power distribution

Transparency

Verification



Citizen journalism

Multiplatform

Multilevel

Participatory



Dangers of citizen journalism

Conspiracy theories

Verification and integrity

Erosion of trust in media

Should it be censored?

Local

Pizzagate: From rumor, to hashtag, to gunfire in D.C.



Comet Ping Pong customers came out to support the restaurant after a gunman entered it with an assault rifle, firing it at least once. (Video: Whitney Shefte/Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

Most Read Local

- 1

Feared coronavirus outbreaks in schools yet to arrive, early data show


- 2

White House intervened to halt release of Bolton book with flawed classification review, federal official says


- 3

Purple Line construction stops as builders prepare to quit


- 4

The day after her husband died, Ruth Bader Ginsburg went back to the Supreme Court


- 5

Gale Sayers, electrifying Hall of Fame running back for Chicago Bears, dies at 77





INTERVIEWS

'I push people to apply the scientific method to crazy questions'



Tom Ireland speaks to biohacker Andrew Pelling about his unconventional Canadian laboratory, where researchers and artists ask unusual questions about what can be done with living tissues

The Biologist 65(3) p18-21

Thanks! Questions?