

# Political Journalism Workshop: Ethics, Norms & Practice

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# What Is Political Journalism?

- ▶ Reports on how power is gained, used, abused, and resisted
- ▶ Goes beyond elections — covers institutions, movements, policy, conflict
- ▶ A tool for democracy — or a mouthpiece for power

# Key Areas of Political Journalism

- ▶ Governments, elections, parliaments
- ▶ Social movements and protests
- ▶ Foreign policy and conflict
- ▶ Human rights and public accountability

# Different Forms of Political Journalism

- ▶ **Investigative Journalism** – Exposes corruption, abuse of power, and hidden systems
- ▶ **Daily Political Reporting** – Covers day-to-day developments in institutions and policies
- ▶ **International/Foreign Affairs** – Focuses on geopolitics, war, diplomacy, and conflict zones
- ▶ **Opinion Journalism** – Includes editorials, columns, and expert analysis
- ▶ **Advocacy Journalism** – Driven by a commitment to social justice and change
- ▶ **Data Journalism** – Uses statistics and visual tools to explain political trends

# Core Techniques of Political Journalism

## ▶ Source Building & Political Networks

- ▶ Cultivate trusted contacts among officials, activists, insiders
- ▶ Understand political alliances and behind-the-scenes influence

## ▶ Policy & Document Analysis

- ▶ Interpret legal documents, laws, and government reports
- ▶ Translate complex information into accessible public stories

# Core Techniques of Political Journalism

## ▶ Investigative Techniques

- ▶ Use public records, leaks, and watchdog tools
- ▶ Trace money, contracts, and influence networks

## ▶ Interviewing Powerholders

- ▶ Ask clear, sharp questions
- ▶ Hold people accountable with facts and follow-ups

# Core Techniques of Political Journalism

## ► Contextualization

- Situate stories within historical, legal, and social frameworks
- Avoid reporting events in isolation

## ► Framing & Language Awareness

- Question euphemisms like "clashes" or "conflict"
- Choose terms that reveal power, not obscure it

# Core Techniques of Political Journalism

## ▶ Data Literacy

- ▶ Use statistics, polls, and public data responsibly — and critically.
- ▶ Understand how numbers are framed to support political narratives.

## ▶ Engaging Diverse Voices

- ▶ Include those impacted by political decisions — not just officials.
- ▶ Quote workers, students, refugees, strike leaders — not just ministers.
- ▶ Let the story show lived experience, not just official statements.



# Core Journalistic Ethics

- ▶ **Truth & Accuracy** – Verify before publishing
- ▶ **Fairness** – Don't mislead with imbalance
- ▶ **Independence** – Avoid pressure from power
- ▶ **Minimizing Harm** – Protect vulnerable sources
- ▶ **Accountability** – Correct errors, be transparent

# Common Journalistic Norms

- ▶ "Balance" (both sides)
- ▶ "Objectivity" (no opinion)
- ▶ "Timeliness" (breaking news urgency)
- ▶ "Professional detachment"
- ▶ Often used to appear neutral — but can obscure power

# Journalism Ethics vs Norms

## Ethics

- ▶ Moral principles
- ▶ Should guide decisions
- ▶ Truth, fairness, accountability
- ▶ Serve the public

## Norms

- ▶ Standard practices
- ▶ Often habitual
- ▶ Balance, objectivity, neutrality
- ▶ Serve institutions

# Case Study Discussion

**Scenario:** Editor asks you to avoid words like "occupation" and include Israeli gov quote "for balance"

# Questions:

- ▶ What norms are being enforced?
- ▶ What ethics are being compromised?
- ▶ What would you do — and why?

# Answering the Questions

- ▶ **Norms:** balance, objectivity, avoiding controversy
- ▶ **Ethics:** truth, fairness, independence, accountability
- ▶ **Push back respectfully** — explain that terms like "occupation" are factual and necessary

## 5-Question for Ethics Framework

- ▶ What's the truth — and how do I know it?
- ▶ Who benefits or is harmed by this story?
- ▶ Is it fair or just "balanced"?
- ▶ Am I being transparent with sources/methods?
- ▶ Am I ready to stand by it — and correct it if needed?

## Final Thought!

Ethics are knowing the right thing to do.  
Journalism is having the courage to do it — even  
when the norms say otherwise.

Thank you!