

Toward Flourishing: A Theoretical Reset for Journalism Ethics

[The Public Communication Department of the Universidad de Navarra](#) and the [Western Michigan University Center for the Study of Ethics in Society](#) invite abstracts for an interdisciplinary workshop on journalism ethics theory to be held June 6-7, 2024, in Pamplona, Spain.

The workshop, **“Toward Flourishing: A Theoretical Reset for Journalism Ethics,”** will gather a community of scholars interested in philosophical approaches to theory at the nexus of journalism, ethics and politics. In particular, we are interested in proposals for repairing, restoring, redefining and even inventing basic concepts in journalism ethics going forward; for example, different meanings and uses of the term “public” in phrases such as the “public sphere” and the “public interest,” among other concepts. The aim is to make a space for seeing things differently so theory can better inform the practice of journalism -- particularly its political function -- in the context of systematic disinformation, news avoidance, and political polarization in contemporary democracies.

Partly motivated by growing interest in new approaches to virtue ethics, this project is grounded in a broadly Aristotelian philosophical framework understood in contemporary terms and authors. We seek to reframe and reinterpret journalism ethics theory as it relates to a politics of the common good. From this perspective, concepts in journalism ethics are “thick concepts” that are intelligible within specific social, political and historical contexts. This perspective entails a focus on concrete, existing roles, relationships and activities, rather than on ideal types. It also means that our concepts must change when social life changes. The standard for rethinking moral concepts, in neo-Aristotelian thought, is flourishing. So, in a way, we are proposing an exercise in backward design guided by these questions:

- Do we have the journalism we need to live well as individuals and members of political communities?
- Does journalism have the contexts it needs to flourish as a practice?
- What ethical concepts and theoretical approaches can journalism define to create an adequate ethos for practitioners, allowing them to accomplish their mission in the current historical context?

We seek proposals from scholars from diverse geographic, political, cultural and disciplinary orientations who are using a similar approach to study journalism and politics. From a neo-Aristotelian perspective, we understand journalism to be a practice whose moral excellence consists of helping individuals and communities to know well in their roles as citizens and politics. Politics, in this framework, goes beyond political parties and procedural fairness. Rather, it is conceived as a kind of practical knowledge that we can act on ethically by jointly pursuing the common good so all can flourish. We are also interested in proposals addressing adjacent topics, such as: communication technologies, media systems, political cultures, sociology of knowledge, political philosophy, philosophy of language, and democratic processes. We welcome non-

Aristotelian approaches that can inform and stimulate critique and discussion relevant to broader themes in neo-Aristotelian thought, including flourishing, virtue, traditions, exemplars, the common good, practical reasoning, public deliberation, and human or social development.

Scholars will present their works in progress for feedback to refine their ideas. The workshop will also include keynote speakers (to be announced) who will contextualize the project and set the tone for the workshop discussions.

Possible topics for proposals include, but are not limited, to:

- Specification of key journalism ethics concepts in relation to political cultures, media systems, professionalism, digitalization, economic arrangements, and other important “thickening” agents in specific democratic contexts.
- Comparative works that look at the variety of ways in which journalism can promote (or obstruct) flourishing in democracies in different historical eras, cultures and media systems.
- Proposals to systematically interrogate, clarify, and critique existing concepts in journalism ethics using flourishing as the standard.
- Proposals to systematically repair, expand, recover, appropriate or invent journalism ethics concepts using flourishing as the standard.

A goal of the workshop is to identify and gather authors who want to discuss philosophical approaches to journalism’s ethical mission in the current context and may want to submit completed papers for possible publication in a special journal issue and/or edited academic volume.

The workshop will run from June 6, 2024, to June 7, 2024, in the Central Building at the [Pamplona campus of the Universidad de Navarra \(Spain\)](#).

Abstracts of 200-350 words should clearly and concisely summarize a theoretical argument related to the nexus of journalism, ethics and politics. You can send your submissions through this [online form](#).

Submission deadline: February 15, 2024

Applicants will be notified by March 15, 2024.

Registration fee: 70 euros

For more information, contact mcodina@unav.es

Mónica Codina, director of the Department of Public Communication, Universidad de Navarra.
mcodina@unav.es

Sandra L. Borden, director of the Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, Western Michigan University.
sandra.borden@wmich.ed