

Early in the semester, I have the class watch an old (1930s) “B movie” called “The Headline Woman” — a real potboiler type film about no-holds-barred journalism (it’s a murder mystery), and I have them write a short “issue spotting” essay (3-5 pages or so) about it, identifying the media ethics problems they see. This is a great way to set a sort of benchmark of their ethics sensibilities.

Then, for their final writing project at semester’s end, they choose another film from a very long list I’ve compiled (films from 1930 to the present) and write a somewhat longer analytical essay (around 10 pages), also spotting the ethics issues, and demonstrating what they’ve learned. The assignment is called “Media Ethics Goes to the Movies” and it is one of the most popular assignments I give — the class evaluations bear this out