

Teaching ethics activity – My students study a variety of codes of ethics (from professional organizations and professional news outlets). They are then organized into teams and assigned the task of writing their own codes based on the type of news outlet assigned to the team (weekly community newspaper, online only news magazine, local television station, sports news blog, etc.) They must create at least five main categories with at least three entries under each category. The students are encouraged to use the ONA ethics tool as part of their work: <https://ethics.journalists.org/> In a Monday, Wednesday, Friday class arrangement, the students get their assignment on Monday, work as teams outside of class and in class on Wednesday and present their codes on Friday. Following the Friday presentations, I summarize the work and identify common themes and outliers, which form the basis of the following Monday's discussion. I've found that writing their own codes through this exercise removes some of the abstract elements and gets them debating what is most relevant and important to include for their team's situation. They begin to understand more concretely what it means to codify behavior, the strengths and shortcomings of the various codes and why we end up with so many gray areas.