Ethics at Indiana

The Newsletter of the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions at Indiana University, Bloomington

Fall 2014
Changes for Poynter

2014 has been a year of transition and exciting new directions for the Poynter Center. On July 1st, we became a part of the Media School, a new unit at Indiana University uniting the faculty of the former Journalism and Telecommunications Schools with the Film Studies portions of the Department of Communication and Culture (CMCL). The Poynter Center was previously located in the Office of the Vice Provost for Research.

The Poynter Center has roots in the world of media, having been endowed by Nelson Poynter, a highly respected publisher and IU alumnus. For over forty years, he produced newspapers in St. Petersburg, Florida, including the Congressional Quarterly. His company, the Times Publishing Company, lives on and today publishes the Tampa Bay Times. In addition to establishing the Poynter Center at Indiana University, Nelson Poynter also endowed the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg, Florida.

“We’ve been enthusiastically welcomed into the Media School,” says Interim Director David Smith. “As part of our commitment to our home school, we will initiate projects focused on ethics and media. The School administration is also eager that we maintain our reputation and momentum on investigating important ethical questions in other fields, such as medicine, law, and business.”

Charting the Course

During this year of transition, David Smith serves as Interim Director, while a search is conducted for a permanent new director. Smith served as the Poynter Center’s second director from 1983-2003, building a strong legacy. Constitutionally incapable of retiring, Smith then served as Visiting Professor of Bioethics at Yale University (2003–4), and Friedricks Distinguished Visiting Professor of Ethics at DePauw University (2004–6), where he helped establish the Prindle Center for the Study of Ethics. From 2006 to 2012 he returned to Yale, serving as Director of its Center for Bioethics from 2007–2011. In returning to the Poynter Center, David Smith will build on the existing strengths of the Center while creating a vital role for ethics in the Media School.

David says, “The Poynter Center has been a central part of my life now for a quarter of a century. At first I was hesitant to assume the mantle of Director back in the 1980s ... but ever since I realized the possibilities,
it’s been a joy. The Center has evolved through several significant phases since I first came here, and it’s particularly exciting to have a small hand in shaping its directions for the future. I’m very lucky.

“Over the years, my staff colleagues have been too good to be true. The current cohort is no exception. Our most recent serious loss was Glenda Murray [to retirement]; that was a body blow. But the remaining personnel, Ken Pimple, Emma Young, and Karen Boeyink, have been particularly able at making do with less. The collegial mood in the Center refreshes me on a daily basis. This group can direct and cope with any director lucky enough to come in in 2015. We are also extremely fortunate in working closely with the exceptional staff of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, Stuart Yoak and Beth Works.”

**Exploring Media Ethics**

To contribute to the enculturation of the new Media School, the Poynter Center has created a special seminar on “Meaning and Media” for the 2014–15 academic year. This seminar brings together faculty from the various disciplines comprising the School, and stimulates interdisciplinary inquiry around a broad theme of public importance: how media reflects and reshapes cultural and social values, creates meaning through messages, and challenges and redefines social standards.

The faculty fellows are: **Terri Francis** (CMCL), whose work focuses on race, media, and non-narrative film; **Kelley Benham French** (Journalism) and **Tom French** (Journalism), both with prestigious careers in investigative and narrative journalism; **Bryant Paul** (Telecom), who is working on a mass content analysis of sexually explicit film; **Rob Potter** (Telecom), with interests in information processing and the cognitive and emotional effects of media; **Steve Raymer** (Journalism), an award-winning photojournalist; **Craig Wood** (Journalism), an expert on advertising and public relations; and **Stuart Yoak**, an IU Senior Scholar and Director of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics. The Seminar also includes three graduate student fellows: **Zachary Vaughn** and **Roshni Verghese** from Journalism, and **Yanyan Zhou** from Telecom. **David Boeyink**, Associate Professor Emeritus of Journalism, is a guest contributor.

David Smith says, “The Meaning and Media group comprises a diverse group of faculty—in age, professional training, and intellectual style.” As Fellows share their work with each other at each session, they are able to learn about their new colleagues and identify shared questions and concerns that connect their different disciplines.

“We’ve also initiated a more novel seminar focused on ethics and the mediated life,” adds Smith, “which studies the ways in which our selves are extended and therefore made vulnerable and powerful through media worlds. That’s been new territory for me, and territory I’ve found remarkably provocative.” A series of discussions on these topics over the course of Fall 2014 brought together faculty from Informatics, Telecom, Anthropology, Business, and more.
Given that the worst effects on employment don’t hit until after the peak of a “recession,” are the terms the media uses adequate to reporting the public interest?

*  
Is the public interest served by facilitating young adult access to mental health services via the Affordable Care Act?

*  
What does the existing healthcare system imply about American values?

---

**Staff Profile: Emma Young**

After wishing a happy retirement to long-time Program Associate Glenda Murray in May, the Poynter Center welcomed Emma Young as the new Program Manager.

Emma had worked part-time at the Center for the previous three years, managing the office and gradually taking a role in program planning. Her background also includes more than four years’ experience working in academia as a copyeditor, preparing over a dozen full-length manuscripts for university presses, including a new translation of Aristotle’s ethical works, as well as numerous articles, theses, dissertations, and letters.

Emma’s background with the Poynter Center goes even further back, beginning when she first discovered the field of ethics through courses taught by former Poynter Center Director Richard Miller. She went on to compete on the IU Ethics Bowl Team for four consecutive seasons, and was involved in other programming at the Center. Returning to the Center as an employee three years later was, she says, an excellent decision.

Ken Pimple says, “Emma is the whole package. She has everything you want from an office manager – she’s organized, she knows the how to work the system, she keeps us informed, and she gives me a kick when I need one. Even better, she’s wicked intelligent, she understands the academic mind, her critical and interpretative faculties are top-notch, and she expresses complex issues clearly. And then there’s the cream on top—she’s pleasant, funny, and friendly, and she clearly enjoys working here.”

In her new full-time role, Emma coordinates all of the Center programming and administrative functions, serves as fiscal officer delegate, and co-coaches the Ethics Bowl Team, in addition to her previous role as office manager. “I like to think of my role as being a ‘para-academic,’” she says. “In publishing, I gained competence in reading critically and communicating effectively in a wide variety of disciplinary contexts. My experiences with the Poynter Center in different capacities have given me both an enduring passion for ethics and interdisciplinary inquiry, and training in the logistical requirements of a research center. Thus, as an academic support specialist, I provide the holistic facilitation needed for our faculty and students to realize challenging and important projects.”
Ethics Bowl Regional Championship

Indiana University took first place in the Central States Regional Ethics Bowl! The competition was hosted at Marian University in Indianapolis on November 1st! The Poynter Center has sponsored a single team of 4-6 students since 2001. This year, for the first time ever, the Center decided to sponsor two IU teams to allow more students to participate in the Ethics Bowl experience. Both teams did exceptionally well, scoring first and second in total points out of 24 teams from 14 colleges and universities, thus netting IU the first place in the competition.

The IU teams debated the ethical issues involved in Haiti's demand for reparations following the introduction of cholera by peacekeepers; prominent feminist website Jezebel's posting of a bounty for unretouched photos of celebrity Lena Dunham; the use of public shaming as punishment; and more.

Based on the two teams’ scores, Indiana University was named the Regional first place winner and will be one of four Central States schools admitted to the National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl in 2015. This national competition is hosted by the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, in conjunction with its Annual Meeting. It will take place on February 22nd in Costa Mesa, California. Each qualifying school sends a single team of five students.

The Ethics Bowl format, while competitive, is unique in its emphasis on civil dialogue and substantive ethical analysis of real-world issues. IU Ethics Bowl alumni have gone on to prestigious careers in government, business, law, and education, and consistently rank the Ethics Bowl competition as one of the most important and enjoyable experiences in their undergraduate career. The skills students develop in analysis, moral reasoning, and engaging with differing views continue to serve them throughout their professional and personal lives.

Grant Manon, a senior in Finance, Political Science, and Economics, in his fourth year with IU Ethics Bowl, provided an experienced perspective, while the remaining six students were all new to the competition:

Radhika Agarwal, a senior in Biochemistry and Biology.
Shayna Goldsmith, a junior in Studio Art.
John Hanks, a sophomore in Econ, Math, and Philosophy.
Ali Henke, a sophomore in PoliSci and Chemistry.
Nikhil Nandu, a freshman in Finance and Management.
Rafal Swiatkowski, a senior in Religious Studies, Sociology, and Germanic Studies.
According to Joe, “Ethics Bowl’s emphasis on substantive reasoning rather than superficial rhetoric is one of its most important assets. In an often-toxic media culture in which careful analysis frequently takes a backseat to canned partisan talking points, it’s heartening to know that there are young people who take real, critical analysis of ethical issues seriously. It is, especially, a pleasure to know that IU students in particular are leading the way in this push to resist the cheapening of our public discourse; I could not be prouder of the young men and women who make up our team.”

New Partnerships and Collaborations

One of the new mottoes for the College of Arts and Sciences is “Live Ethically,” reflecting Indiana University’s goal of stimulating ethical reflection across the curriculum. The Poynter Center is committed to supporting this initiative, and regularly partners with other units to do so. In addition to our work with the Media School, we continue regularly to consult and cooperate with other units, including the Graduate School, the Hutton Honors College, and the professional schools.

This Fall saw the establishment of the Consortium for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Society (CRSES), an interdisciplinary association of scholars, academic programs, and research centers from the eight campuses of Indiana University, under the direction of Lisa Sideris, Professor of Religious Studies. The Consortium’s mandate to further understanding of religion, ethics, values, and spirituality in society creates a natural synergy with the Poynter Center’s established interests. Therefore, we have been proud to partner with CRSES on two programs this fall:

**The Public Ethics of Healthcare Reform:** How does the national debate around the Affordable Care Act reflect competing visions of a just society? On September 26th, David Craig, Professor of Religious Studies at IUPUI, presented on his recent book, *Health Care as a Social Good: Religious Values and American Democracy* (Georgetown University Press, 2014), based on interviews with providers at a variety of hospitals.

**Schopenhauer and the Moral Considerability of Animals:** What moral consideration do animals merit? Sandy Shapshay, Professor of Philosophy at IU Bloomington, discussed her work on Schopenhauer’s approach on December 12th.

In addition, the Poynter Center has been pleased to support some truly outstanding student initiatives this semester, including providing ethics consultation to the new IU Journal of Undergraduate Research (http://iujur.indiana.edu/), supporting the creation of a new pre-professional student discussion group focused on bioethics, and hosting the Phi Delta Epsilon pre-med fraternity at one of our Healthcare Ethics Seminars.
Upcoming Opportunities

For IU Instructors: The Jesse Fine Fellowship, supporting the development or revision of courses in all disciplines to include ethics. Accepting applications through January 31. See: http://poynter.indiana.edu/research/jesse-fine-fellowship/.

For IU Undergraduates: The Poynter Center Undergraduate Research Prize in Practical Ethics: http://poynter.indiana.edu/student-programs/research-prizes-for-undergraduates/.

For non-IU Faculty: Non-stipendiary residential Fellowships, please contact eayoung@indiana.edu for more information.

Poynter Center Advisory Committee

- Jeffrey Alberts, Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences
- Charlene Brown, Hutton Honors College and Wells Scholars Program
- Daniel Conkle, Maurer School of Law
- Russell Hanson, Department of Political Science
- Josh Perry, Kelley School of Business
- Sandra Shapshay, Department of Philosophy
- Lisa Sideris, Department of Religious Studies
- Rob Stone, IU Health Bloomington Hospital

Keep in Touch

Poynter Center for The Study of Ethics and American Institutions
618 E. Third St.
Bloomington, IN 47405

poynter.indiana.edu/ 812-855-0261

812-855-3315 FAX

Please direct queries to eayoung@indiana.edu