

Christians, C. G., Fackler, M., Rotzoll, K. B., & Mckee, K. B. (2004). *Media ethics: Cases and moral reasoning* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

Reviewed by [Joy Chia](#)

This is a sound text on the management of media ethics and one that all students undertaking journalism or public relations ethics studies should include in their ?must read list.

The introduction is excellent; the key theoretical perspectives are set out in this chapter and should be included as key reading for all students of media and public relations ethics courses. There is no doubt that the well-known ethicist and scholar, Clifford Christians, has ensured that this text has academic rigour and that it makes a significant contribution to the understanding of key ethical principles and ethical guidelines important to journalists and communication professionals.

Five core ethical guidelines that include the key ethical stance of Kants categorical imperative and Mills principle of utility form the basis for discussion of all the texts case studies. Therefore, whether truth-telling for journalists or advertising messages are being considered, the Kantian perspective might be discussed or the Utilitarian perspective put forward, so that academic rigour is maintained throughout the text. This format can be a little repetitive but it ensures that the reader embraces theory, understands it, and appreciates the importance of ethical decision making within professional practice.

As the text includes case studies and many examples, this book is especially useful for tutorial discussion. Students can systematically undertake an analysis of cases that point to ethical perspectives of media, advertising, or public relations, as well as encompass other aspects such as the ethics of censorship, profit, and wealth.

The book is divided into four sections and the first five chapters on news and media ethics are excellent. The one disappointing aspect of the following two sections on persuasion in advertising and public relations is that although professional codes of practice are referred to and mention is made of organisational ethical dilemmas, there also needs to be some discussion of the wider ethical demands placed on practitioners in dealing with the media and managing their practice generally.

However, in chapter 6, the ethical dilemma of children being ripped off by advertisers and the role of parents in monitoring their children's television viewing along with the management of responsible advertising, provides an extension of possible ethical perspectives that affects all consumers. The depth of discussion in this chapter and chapters 7 and 8 on advertising ethics was not evident in the chapters on public relations ethics (10-13), or in the final section, chapters 10 to 17. The authors attempted to cover too many topics so that the digital debates that are addressed in Chapter 11, along with managing the Web in a caring way, leave the reader with little opportunity to fully grasp the real issues relating to ethics in cyberspace.

Chapter 13, which focuses on the demands of social responsibility, deals with a very complex topic superficially, as the authors move quickly into a case study without first providing a basis on which organisations become involved in CSR programs.

This text is therefore best approached for the significant contribution that it makes to growing awareness of the need to manage all media ethically and to extend the parameters of ethical responsibility to each consumer. The authors have included an excellent recommended readings list for each of the four sections so that readers can explore those aspects of ethics that are of particular interest or concern to them.

**Purchase information:** Available from good booksellers or direct from [Pearson Education](#).

**About the reviewer:** *Joylene Chia is program director, public relations, in the University of South Australia's School of Communication, Information and New Media. She teaches in the areas of public relations, ethics and corporate social responsibility, communication management, and relationship management. A member of the Public Relations Institute of Australia's National Education Committee, Joy is undertaking Ph. D. research at South Australia and Deakin universities. She holds a Master of Arts (Communication), Graduate Diploma in Communication (PR), and a B. A. SocWK. She has published refereed papers on trust in relationship management, managing clients online and through traditional media, the widening gap of consultant-client relationships, email use by educators and practitioners, online relationship management, challenges for public relations educators in a global communications environment, and gender issues for international students.*