

Teaching Civic Engagement in Politically Polarized Times



**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**
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Context

- ◆ I teach upper-division undergraduate and graduate courses, including 'Media Law, Policy, and Ethics' and 'Ethical Problems in Mass Media,' and 'Foundations in Mediated Communication.'
- ◆ Classes of 25-30 students / Graduate Class is up to 12 students.
- ◆ New Civic Engagement exercises have been incorporated into my Fall 2021 syllabus after CTLT training.



Teaching Civic Engagement in Politically Polarized Times

1. Civic Engagement, Polarization, and Media Law
2. Revising a Course for Civic Engagement
 1. Learning Objectives
 2. Course Content
 3. Exercises and Assessments
3. Student Reception of Civic Engagement Components

Civic Engagement, Polarization and Media Law

Knowledge of media law and policy is important for the development of civically-engaged students because:

- ◆ New digital media platforms (Google, Facebook, Twitter) play an increasingly significant part in civic life.
- ◆ These platforms – and the online actions and activities they elicit – are subject to legal regulation.
- ◆ Because of these changes, issues around free expression are being revisited now with a passion unequalled in the last 50 years, and knowledge of the law can increase our ‘expressive agency.’

This website (<https://www.thelaurenboebert.com/>) needs to be taken down since the photos on here are copyrighted property of the U.S. Federal Government. They are the property of the office of Congressman Lauren Boebert, and your use of them is unauthorized and illegal.

Additionally, the entire website is a defamatory impersonation, and it goes against relevant terms of service and U.S. law. Please remove immediately or face further action.

Sincerely,

Jake Settle | Press Secretary

Rep. Lauren Boebert (CO-03)

Longworth 1609 | (202) 510-3233 (cell)

Enewsletter Signup [HERE](#)

<https://boebert.house.gov>



Civic Engagement, Polarization, and Media Law

Civic Engagement, Polarization, and Media Law

“Americans are going to have to re-engage the debate about the meaning and scope of the First Amendment. This could be a turning-point moment for freedom of expression in America; the state of the First Amendment could become a defining social-political issue for the next generation.” – Eric Uglund



Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this course are:

- To explain the First Amendment and its foundational role in democratic governance and civic processes.
- To identify the free expression rights of professional communicators and the limits to those rights.
- To grasp how current laws and regulations developed historically through courts, legislative bodies, and administrative agencies and in response to changing cultural, technological, and economic circumstances.
- To determine the ethical commitments and rationales for key dimensions of mass media law and policy.
- To create a productive, respectful, exciting, creative, and enjoyable learning environment and intellectual community.

On completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a wide range of knowledge of American mass media law and policy and its role in democratic governance.
- Use key legal tools available to journalists and media professionals to better understand political and governmental processes.
- Produce professional, thoughtful, and informed arguments about mass media law.

Free Speech and Insurrection

Media Law and Digital Platform Regulation



Iowa Reporter Found Not Guilty By Jury After Arrest At Black Lives Matter Protest

March 10, 2020 2:38 PM ET

SCOTT NEUMAN

RF REGISTERED PRESS

United States

Despite Improvements, Troubling Vital Signs For Press Freedom Persist

44

GLOBAL NEWS

+0.08

CONTACTS

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The First Amendment and Fake News

“It may be time to ask whether this fundamental aspect of First Amendment theory, crafted in an era when news circulated primarily via interpersonal contact and print media, and in which electronic media were just beginning to develop, is effectively transferrable to today’s radically different media environment.”



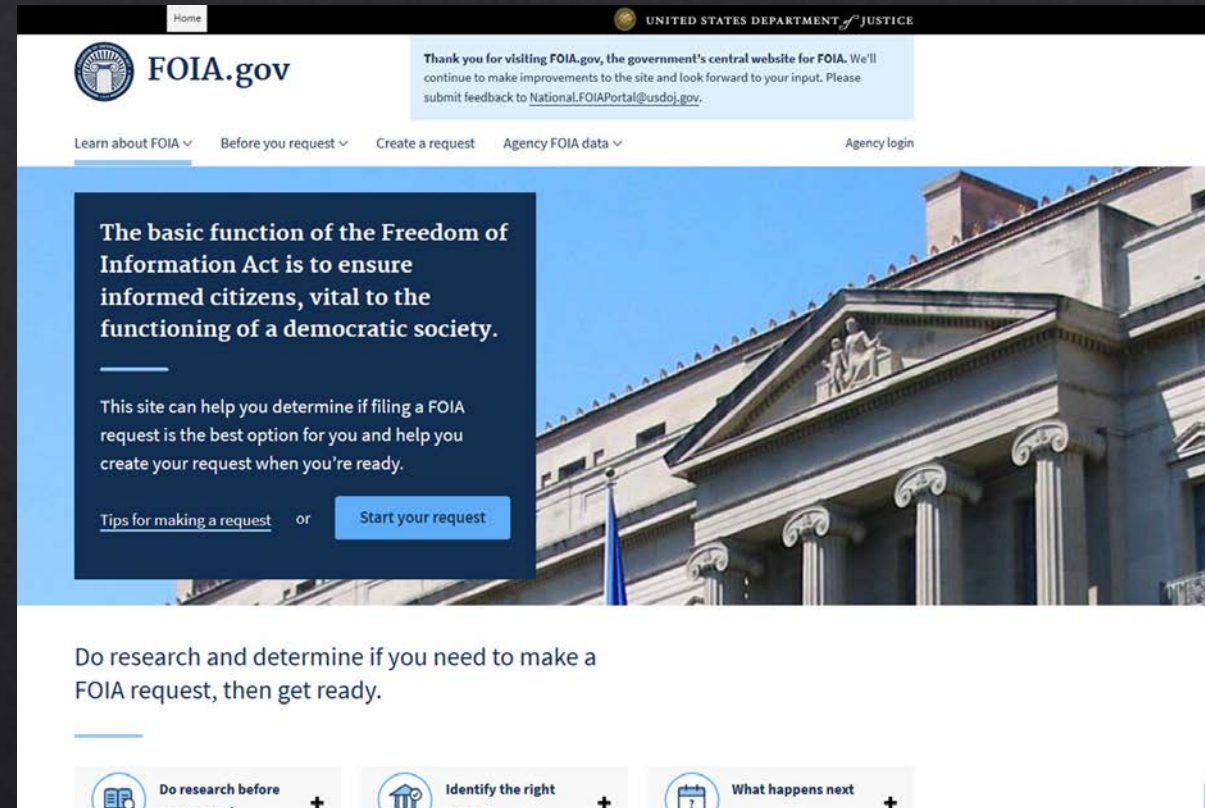
Coursework

Quizzes and Civic Engagement Exercises: Some classes will be organized around exercises and activities designed to familiarize you with key legal tools available to media professionals and to help you understand the role that media law plays in broader civic processes. These exercises are delineated in your class schedule below. Other classes will conclude with a short quiz, covering the assigned reading and in-class lecture. Each quiz is worth 10 points. A quiz cannot be made up if class is missed that day. Five quizzes will be given and six civic engagement exercises. Ten will be counted with either the lowest score dropped or making up for a missed class. (100 points)

Filing a FOIA Request

Assignment: Explore the FOIA.gov website including the videos providing guidance on how to make a FOIA request. Then, create a FOIA request that might realistically return valuable information from a government agency. To demonstrate completion of the assignment, you can either take screen captures of your request or write down in a Word document what your request would look like (including the agency from whom you are requesting data, what documents or types of documents you are requesting, etc.).

Due: Thursday, November 9 at 11:55pm



The screenshot shows the FOIA.gov website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a "Home" link and the "UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE" logo. The main header features the FOIA.gov logo and a thank-you message: "Thank you for visiting FOIA.gov, the government's central website for FOIA. We'll continue to make improvements to the site and look forward to your input. Please submit feedback to National.FOIAPortal@usdoj.gov." Below this is a navigation menu with links for "Learn about FOIA", "Before you request", "Create a request", "Agency FOIA data", and "Agency login". The main content area has a blue background with a white text box that reads: "The basic function of the Freedom of Information Act is to ensure informed citizens, vital to the functioning of a democratic society." Below this text is a sub-header: "This site can help you determine if filing a FOIA request is the best option for you and help you create your request when you're ready." There are two buttons: "Tips for making a request" and "Start your request". The background of the main content area is a photograph of a classical building with columns. At the bottom, there is a section titled "Do research and determine if you need to make a FOIA request, then get ready." followed by three steps: "Do research before", "Identify the right", and "What happens next", each with a plus sign indicating further steps.

U.S. PRESS FREEDOM TRACKER

[ABOUT](#) [FAQ](#) [ALL INCIDENTS](#) [BLOG](#)

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2021 QUICK FACTS

55

arrests/detainments of journalists

134

assaults of journalists

20

journalists/news organizations subpoenaed

34

journalists with equipment damaged

FEATURED ARTICLES

Change filters to search the incident database.

[CHANGE FILTERS](#)

RECENT INCIDENTS

CBS journalist shoved by University of Colorado football coach

October 2, 2021

Bangladeshi journalist assaulted during press conference in New York

September 22, 2021

Border Report correspondent detained photographing outside Texas Air Force base

September 19, 2021

Independent journalist harassed, equipment damaged



PHYSICAL ATTACK



Covering Protest Free Write [Due 11/2]

Examine one of the incidents listed in the U.S Press Freedom Tracker or at the end of the Silha Center article on the Minneapolis racial justice protests. Explain what the incident was and analyze whether you think the incident involved an unconstitutional restriction on freedom of the press or was justified based on public safety or other legal rationales. Make relevant connections to concepts or cases explored elsewhere in the 'Covering Protest' unit.

OTHER INCIDENT

Eight charged in connection with

Mahanoy v. B.L. (2021)

As you read the opinion, take notes here:

Case:	Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L. (2021)
Date:	June 23, 2021
What was the legal question at the center of this case and how did the Supreme Court resolve it?	
What prior cases were cited as precedent?	
What is Justice Alito's argument in his separate concurrence?	
Why did Justice Thomas dissent? What argument does he present there?	
What was the argument presented by the SPLC in their brief in support of B.L.? What did they perceive as the potential effects of a ruling against B.L.?	
Questions or Comments:	

Student Reception of Civic Engagement Components

FOIA Response

Wed 11/10/2021 4:06 PM

To: Ventimiglia, Andrew

Hi Professor Ventimiglia,

I got a response from the Department of Education. I know you wanted us to send our response if we received one so here's mine! My issue was that I was not specific enough which is understandable.

This was a really cool thing and I am excited to use it more in the future.

Thank you.



**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOIA Service Center

November 10,
2021

RE: FOIA Request No. 22-00806-F

TUE 9/28/2021 9:57 PM

To: Ventimiglia, Andrew

Hello Professor Ventimiglia,

I wanted to share something I found out today that I thought I would share with you. As I was writing my case study for com 361 tonight, I was talking to my mother who is a lawyer. She asked what case I was covering and I told her I was doing the Hustler v. Falwell case. She told me that my grandpa who is also an attorney did a case with Hustler for an actress named Robyn Douglass in 1987. I thought this was a really cool fact about my family and was curious if you had heard of this case or thought anything about it! I love your class so far so I wanted to share this cool news with you! See you in class on Thursday!

COM361

T,TH 9:35-10:50am

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