

WSSR WORKSHOPS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The Role of Media in Democracy

Carole MacNeil

Journalist and Host of CBC News Network Tonight

June 1, 2018

9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

It is often stated that journalism is a key component to maintaining a healthy democracy. That, in order to hold our democratic institutions and representatives to account, our system requires transparency as well as individuals that are willing to dig deep to find the truth.

But do journalists today have the tools necessary to fulfill this important role? Does privatized media have room for in-depth reporting? Is there enough freedom in the press to keep our politicians accountable? Is there strong enough will to cover the important policy decisions that impact our governed life in Canada? And, do citizens even care to watch, listen to, or read the news when it is being reported?

On June 1st, join Host of CBC News Prime Time, Carole MacNeil, to talk about the role of media in democracy today and the ways in which we might seek to improve the role of the media to better serve democracy.

Session 1: What is the ideal role of Canadian media in democracy? From an idealistic point of view, a strong media could save the world. God help us if this is left in the hands of journalists!

Session 2: Media under attack: As an institution at the forefront of free speech, are we doing all we can to protect speech, even the speech we don't like? Or are we conspiring, wittingly or not, to undermine one of the great tenets of democracy, free expression?

Session 3: It all comes down to this: Who's asking the questions? As an experienced interviewer, most recently focused on Canadian and American politics. Ms. MacNeil will talk about how it works at the micro level. What guides our choices in terms of story, including the choice of topics, and the framing of questions? What is the goal of an interviewer? We do fact checks. Do we do enough bias checks? Are we "tough" enough? Too "soft"...or too worried about our own image?

Required readings/viewing:

Canada. Parliament. Senate. Special Committee on Mass Media. 1970. *The Uncertain Mirror: Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media*. Ottawa: Information Canada pp. 1-13 & 252-255

<http://www.albertasenator.ca/flashblocks/data/BT%20Media/Davey%20Report%20Vol%201.pdf>

MacNeil, Carole. 2017. "Andrew Scheer shuns Rebel Media" interview on CBC News, August 19,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCSfe5OKbIU&feature=youtu.be>



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Public Policy Forum. 2017. *The Shattered Mirror, News, Democracy and Trust in the Digital Age*. January. pp.38-45.

<https://shatteredmirror.ca/wp-content/uploads/theShatteredMirror.pdf>

Taras, David. 2001. "Media, Citizens, and Democracy", in *Power and Betrayal in the Canadian Media*. Toronto:

University of Toronto Press, pp. 29-60 <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF21C9>

Recommended reading:

Taras, David. 2001. *Power and Betrayal in the Canadian Media*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, Ltd.

*If you are registered for non-credit and are unable to access these readings, please send us an email at wssr@concordia.ca and we will do our best to assist you.

Workshops on Social Science Research (WSSR)
1455 de Maisonneuve W. – H1 2Z5 3G
Montreal, Qc H3G 1M8
Telephone: 514-848-2424 x7854, x5473

