One Week to Better Photography

Lesson 5 – Photo Ethics

The objective of this lesson is to help students make decisions about taking and editing images that reflect an understanding of ethics of honest reporting with images.

This lesson has one handout, four related readings and one exercise.

Related Readings
Cover Ethics First
http://www.walsworthyearbooks.com/idea-file/6790/rights-in-balance-cover-ethics-first/

Photo Ethics – A Blurry Line
http://www.walsworthyearbooks.com/idea-file/3690/photo-ethics-a-blurry-line/

Photoshop, Photos and Ethics
http://www.walsworthyearbooks.com/idea-file/3120/photoshop-photos-and-ethics/

Teaching Ethics
http://www.walsworthyearbooks.com/idea-file/3910/teaching-ethics/

Photo Ethics Handout – Developing a digital imaging ethics policy

Read the Code of Ethics from the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), which can be found at nppa.org/code_of_ethics. Work with your adviser, classmates and staff photographers to develop and write a realistic digital imaging ethics policy for your yearbook.

As you develop the policy, be sure to consider and include the following:
- Guidelines for composing storytelling images to avoid visual deception
- Guidelines for cropping storytelling images to avoid visual deception
- Guidelines for the use of Photoshop
    - Defining acceptable image correction techniques
    - Defining acceptable image manipulation techniques
- Guidelines for labeling images that have been manipulated and the content message altered or enhanced
    - Defining the acceptable uses of photo illustration
    - Defining the acceptable limits and types of manipulation allowed for photo illustrations
- Guidelines for encouraging the collaboration of photographers, editors and designers in decisions regarding the processing, alteration and editorial use of original image files

You will probably add to this policy as ethical decisions arise that are not covered. The important point is to work to have a policy in place before difficult ethical decisions need to be made.

Photo Ethics Exercise – What would you do?

With digital images, the ability to do is not always what should be done.

As technology continues to evolve, the question of what is right and wrong regarding digital imagery is always being asked. So ask yourself, ethically, what would you do in these circumstances?

1. In the best image you have of the girls track team, a light pole appears to be growing out of the head of one of the girls on the back row. Should it be removed?

2. A staff member notices that the president of the Community Service Club is missing from the group picture. Since there isn't enough time to take another group picture, he wants the photo editor to take a picture of the missing student and add her using Photoshop. Should the photo editor add the missing student?

3. Would changing a few facts in the previous scenario affect your decision?
    The president of the Community Service Club is missing from the club's group picture. She missed school that day because she was in the hospital and, eventually, she died. The mother has asked that you take her image from another club picture taken earlier in the year and add it to the other group. It is important to the mother because her daughter was devoted to this club and believed strongly in its purpose.

4. Acne is a common teen problem. Consider these scenarios.
    A. Should acne and other blemishes be removed from student portraits?
    B. Should acne and other blemishes be removed from the senior portraits only?
    C. If you do not agree that acne and other blemishes be removed from all senior portraits, would you do it at the request of a parent whose daughter, who does not usually suffer with acne, happened to have one large zit the day the senior portrait was taken?

5. Both the National Honor Society and the Debate and Forensics Team collected toys before the holidays to give to needy children. The toys were in two different classrooms. A student photographer, in an attempt to show the entire amount of toys collected, puts all the toys together in one room before taking pictures. Should photographers move items to improve scenes?

6. Your school's cross country team won state this year. The designer of the spread of the state meet wants to use COB images of runners on the team as artwork. The COB images came from images taken earlier in the season. Is it OK to use them on this spread?

7. Wouldn't it be cool if two people who never met got together? *Newsweek* put an image of Princess Diana and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, on their cover, the mother and wife of Prince William of Great Britain, to go with a story about the two women. Diana's image is even altered to what she might look like at age 50. Is this an ethical illustration?

8. A staff photographer goes to several fast-food restaurants to take pictures of students enjoying meals in some of the favorite local establishments. As the photo editor, you are looking through the images the photographer brought back, and notice that the editor-in-chief's boyfriend is eating in a back-corner booth with another girl. What do you do?