



Student journalists and the First Amendment

Court cases, shield laws and administrative decisions all limit First Amendment protections for student journalists. Are these limitations a threat to the “teaching hospital” model of independent journalism?

Freedom of expression assignments at three levels:

Flashlight: Class discussion: What are the [First Amendments rights of high school journalists](#)? This chart shows when censors can get away with it. Where would high schools in your city fall on this chart?

Spotlight: Review these articles: [Stop the courts from weakening student journalism](#) and [College students need free speech more than ever](#). Are student journalists at the colleges in your city allowed to experiment and make mistakes at your school? Are they given the freedom to learn? Divide up local colleges, ask students to call the editors to ask if attempts or actual censorship have occurred. Report back to the class.

Searchlight: Free speech issues don’t stop when students graduate. Shield laws only protect journalists from revealing sources when they meet the legal definition of a journalist. [Who should qualify?](#) The nation has a long history of “advocacy journalism.” [But are the lines blurring?](#) Each student should fully answer this question: Who is a journalist?

Extra credit: Columnist [Glenn Greenwald](#) of the Guardian in London broke a [big U.S. story about the National Security Agency collecting massive amounts of data from Americans](#) as it investigates terrorism. [Walter Pincus](#) of the Washington Post [responded with a column questioning Greenwald](#) and his source. Then [Greenwald responded with an email](#). Assignment: Look at the Greenwald and Pincus bios and the stories in question. Write a short opinion column of your own answering this question: If good journalism is, as the author says, the fair, accurate, contextual search for truth, which of the two writers in this case acted more journalistically?