

Political news is talk's topic

Journalism professor will discuss coverage decisions

By **HOWARD BUCK**
Columbian staff writer

A marathon presidential campaign is down to its final days.

As news coverage peaks, what better time to question the methods and motives of the media than on Election Day?

On Nov. 4, Clark College journalism professor Christina Kopinski will lead a one-hour midday forum, "Politics, the Press and Polarization: How Journalism and Ethics Impact our Culture."

Some hot topics: Do bloggers qualify as journalists? Do different standards apply to public figures (candidates) than to private citizens (say, "Joe the Plumber" from Ohio)?

What about the decision by The Oregonian in Portland to include the "Obsession" DVD, which questions facets of Islamic faith, in subscribers' Sunday newspaper? And what of the resulting public protest?

The free Nov. 4 session, which includes a question-and-answer period, will run from noon to 1 p.m. in the Penguin Student Lounge, or "fireplace room," just off Gaiser Hall at Clark's main campus, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way.

It's the latest in Clark's Faculty Speaker Series, a quarterly event that lets faculty members share their expertise.

Kopinski, 29, is in her third year at Clark. She is active in the Society of Professional Journalists and relates her passion for ethics to students and writers for the school paper, The Independent, that she advises.

"What people need to know is, when they're consuming news, it's not purely ethical and altruistic," Kopinski said. "There are motives behind what (media operations) do, and why they do it."

Corporate ownership is one large issue. The rules of competition have changed, not all for the better or for the worse, she said. Many of those who protested The Oregonian's DVD insert had not viewed the item or were overlooking First Amendment rights, she said.

She hopes to shed light on what's "fair game" in a public election among public figures, quite different under media law and ethics than for private persons — a commonly misunderstood distinction, she said.

A former student and news reporter in Illinois and college instructor in Florida, Kopinski has spoken at several academic conferences, where topics have included, "An Analysis of News Media as Propaganda," "Media Bias and Critical Thinking," and "The First Amendment and News as the Fourth Branch."



Christina Kopinski
Prepared to explain motives of media