

The Ethics Buzz

NEWSLETTER

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The Ethics Buzz: Culture, Commerce & Conscience

written by Elina Crosby

The entertainment industry has long faced ethical questions, particularly as companies continue to produce dramatized content that can exploit real events and historical figures. In recent years, it seems as though exaggerated adaptations of real events have become a defining feature of modern entertainment. The recent release of Love Story JFK Jr. & Carolyn Besette on FX and Hulu is the latest example of how streaming platforms manipulate history and reframe tragedy into entertainment. While these adaptations captivate audiences and turn profits, they also reveal how large media companies monetize inaccurate stories built around real people, tragedies, and histories.



Historical dramas and true story adaptations have been a long standing theme in the industry of entertainment. Real events and occurrences captivate viewers as recognition, remembrance, and emotional connection cause curiosity to pique. However, the exploitative nature of these recounts are deeply unethical. Since its release in the early months of 2026, Love Story has generated quite the following. The tragic love affair of two alluring individuals has turned heads of multiple generations and audience types. Though it is important to consider, at what point does one draw the line between tragedy and content.

Family and friends of John F. Kennedy Jr. and Carolyn Besette have also spoken out against the portrayals presented by FX and Hulu, criticizing what they describe as inaccurate representations of their loved ones. Jack Schlossberg, the grandson of JFK, remarked “I would just want people who do watch the show to watch it with one letter in mind and that’s a capital ‘F’ for fiction”. For relatives still grieving the loss of the couple, the renewed media attention has reopened the wounds of the tragic event that took place over 26 years ago. It was also revealed by Sarah Pidgeon, the actress who was complicit in playing Carolyn Besette, that no form of communication was had with the Kennedy family prior to the release of the series. The retelling of the traumatic event that forever changed their family was completely hijacked by production companies and fabricated to a deeply disturbing extent.

The business behind streaming platforms has much to do with subscription rates, social media recognition, advertising revenue, and relevancy. Though, the exploitative nature of the show’s release extends beyond television and into the industry of fashion and marketing. Since the debut of Love Story JFK Jr. & Carolyn



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Bessette, a new wave of marketing has emerged as established clothing brands, smaller boutiques, and various other business types attempt to capitalize on renewed interest in “90s minimalism” and “quiet luxury.” Some brands have formed official partnerships with the show, while others have begun mimicking the late couple’s signature style through social media campaigns and product positioning. The womenswear company Tuckernuck, for example, recently introduced a product line titled the “Carolyn Bessette Kennedy Collection”. Meanwhile, C.O. Bigelow Apothecaries, a historic New York City pharmacy where Carolyn Bessette Kennedy once shopped, has reportedly experienced a surge in sales of nearly 500 percent following the renewed public interest. Starbucks Coffee Co. has also released campaigns inspired by JFK Jr. with the intent to leverage the series and further intrigue customers.

The increasing popularity of shows like *Love Story: JFK Jr. & Carolyn Bessette* is reflective of a larger trend in the entertainment industry, where real life tragedies are being monetized into profitable content. While companies like FX and Hulu benefit from the attention and revenue these stories generate, the ethical implications behind them cannot be ignored. The renewed focus on the lives of John F. Kennedy Jr. and Carolyn Bessette showcase how painful histories can be altered and commercialized for entertainment and marketing purposes. As these types of productions continue to grow in popularity, it is important to question whether producing engaging content and turning a profit should come at the expense of accuracy, respect, and the memories of those involved. At the end of the day, the history we remember is a direct result of the stories we are told, and so prioritizing accuracy becomes important.

Wuthering Heights Controversy

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/13/movies/heathcliff-jacob-elordi-wuthering-heights-whitewashing.html>



The article analyzes the controversy surrounding the casting of Jacob Elordi, a white actor, as Heathcliff in a new adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*. In the original novel, Heathcliff is described in ways that suggest he was a person of color, though scholars say his racial identity is intentionally ambiguous. Certain critics claim that casting a white actor may be an example of “whitewashing,” while others defend the director’s artistic interpretation of the text. The article also discusses historical theories about Heathcliff’s background, including connections to

slavery, Irish prejudice, and themes of social “otherness.” From an ethical perspective, the debate brings up questions about representation, authenticity, and the social impact of casting decisions in film. In pop culture, controversies like this often gain traction on social media and affect public conversations about diversity and justice in the entertainment industry. This shows how modern adaptations not only entertain audiences but also shape cultural values and ethical discussions.

Bad Bunny

<https://people.com/bad-bunny-reportedly-sued-for-1-million-by-puerto-rican-homeowner-11813239>

A legal dispute involving Puerto Rican artist Bad Bunny draws attention to the actual consequences that can arise when entertainment projects involve people's private lives. An older homeowner claims that after his house was featured in a short film and later recreated as a stage design during the singer's concert, his once-quiet property became a tourist destination. The sudden attention allegedly caused emotional distress, loss of privacy, and feelings of exploitation, especially since he believes he was not fully informed about how widely his home would be used. The case has drawn public interest because it reflects the unequal power dynamics that can exist between global celebrities and ordinary individuals. From an ethical perspective, the lawsuit raises questions relating to informed consent, fair compensation, and the social responsibilities of public figures whose work can unintentionally disrupt people's lives. In today's pop culture environment, highly visible celebrity projects often go beyond entertainment and spark broader debates about influence, accountability, and respect for personal boundaries.

Menendez Brothers

<https://journals.law.harvard.edu/jsel/2025/04/true-crime-false-narratives-the-menendez-brothers-and-monsters/>

Netflix's dramatized series about the Menendez brothers has generated renewed public interest in their decades-old murder case, while also creating controversy over how real events are portrayed in



true-crime entertainment. By blending factual elements with speculative, sensational storylines, the show has influenced how audiences interpret the brothers' motives and personal histories. Although this media attention has contributed to new legal conversations about abuse and resentencing, it has also intensified negative public scrutiny. Because the brothers are legally considered public figures, they face major difficulties in challenging potentially harmful portrayals through defamation claims.

This situation raises important ethical questions about whether entertainment companies should prioritize accuracy and sensitivity when depicting traumatic real-life events. The popularity of true-crime media in modern pop culture shows how storytelling can shape public perceptions of guilt, innocence, and justice, often blurring the lines between accurate journalism and over-dramatic interpretation.



Business Ethics: Events



50th Anniversary

The Hoffman Center for Business Ethics, established by Dr. W Michael Hoffman in 1976, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year! Join us for two days of celebration, beginning on Thursday, October 15 with a reception and dinner. Register for the dinner below. Conference and reception to follow on Friday, October 16, 2026. [Register »](#)

Brown Bag Series

This semester, the Hoffman Center for Business Ethics has hosted a series of Brown Bag Business Ethics Research events, featuring guest scholars who presented their research and facilitated discussions on contemporary issues in business ethics. [Learn more about past and upcoming events »](#)



Rebecca Clark

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF
ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL
SCIENCE

*Do Employers Free Ride
on Caregivers?*



Alejo Sison

UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA

*Designing a Human-centered,
Virtue-focused Approach to AI
in Business*



Marco Meyer

UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG

*The Epistemic Turn in
Organizational Ethics:
Virtues, Vices
and Epistemic
Infrastructure*

Farewell: Graduating Scholars



Elina Crosby

What you will miss most about Bentley?

After 4 years (that went by way too fast!) I cannot put into words what my time at Bentley has meant to me. Graduating feels incredibly bittersweet as I have come to love this campus oh so much. I will miss many things about this university from the beauty of the campus, to the wealth of knowledge my courses and experiences have instilled in me. Though most of all, I will miss the community Bentley has given me. From my roommate, to my sorority sisters, close friends, mentors, and professors, I will always look back fondly

on the people who have made this experience unforgettable. I am eternally grateful and prideful to have attended such a remarkable institution. Once a falcon, always a falcon!

What are your future plans?

I am extremely proud and excited to share that I will be returning to Bentley to complete my MBA!

A Statement of Gratitude towards HCBE

When I first came to Bentley, I had little understanding of the ways in which ethics truly shapes business. The Hoffman Center has shown me that every decision, large or small, is made up of ethical dimensions. I have learned to be insightful and reflective in all things I do and in many ways the HCBE has shaped me into the student and professional I am today. I am incredibly grateful for this foundation as it has provided me with the confidence to navigate the world with integrity and confidence. To Gail, Jeff, and our donors, thank you very much for this opportunity!



Makenna Muigai

What you will miss most about Bentley?

I will miss the proximity and closeness to the people, resources and communities of people that I have grown with through the years.

What are your future plans?

I will continue to build a foundation for myself as a disruptor in the African entertainment industry first growing my media pursuits in currently photography and videography and use that as a tool to grow my network, creative and business skillset. Moreover, I am still seeking opportunities to challenge my capabilities in exploring opportunities at the intersection between business and media.

A Statement of Gratitude towards HCBE

I am grateful to the staff at the HCBE for presenting opportunities to explore ethics at Bentley in my own way and intersecting with supporting scholar passions through the African Business Conference sponsorship in 2023. Additionally, I am grateful to the endowment given to support my education journey that has opened up several learning and growth opportunities.

Business Ethics: Featured News

National Ethics Case Competition

Students from HCBE delivered an impressive performance at this year's National Ethics Case Competition, with multiple teams advancing through the early rounds. The team of Makenna Muigai, Hannia Velasquez, Avery Waterman, and Saniya Cannon successfully progressed past the first round, alongside another strong group consisting of Santiago Cabrera Reyes, Kevin Marchetti, Ayaan Kedia, and Daniel Mena Prada. The team of Ethan Williamsen, Daksh Dalal, Gavin Villa, JP Macrigiane, and Asher Friess advanced through the second round and have earned a spot in the semi-finals, which will take place in Washington, D.C. Their achievement highlights the strength of HCBE's commitment to ethical leadership and competitive excellence. Learn more about the [National Ethics Case Competition](#) »

HCBE Spring Word Search

From media ethics to commercialization, test what you picked up in this edition with our HCBE Spring word search!

QWERTYUIOPASDFGHJKL
MISREPRESENTATIONZXV
CVBNMQWERTYUIOPASDF
PRIVACYHJKLZXCVBNMQ
ASDFGHJKLQWERTYUIOP
SENSATIONALISMXCVBNL
MQWERTYUIOPASDFGHJK
HISTORICALDISTORTIONO
NZXCVBNMQWERTYUIOPA
EXPLOITATIONSDFGHJKK
LZXCVBNMQWERTYUIOPS
COMMERCIALIZATIONDFP
GHJKLQWERTYUIOPASDF
ACCOUNTABILITYZXCVBQ
NMQWERTYUIOPASDFGHJ
PUBLICPERCEPTIONKLZP
XCVBNMQWERTYUIOPASD
HCBEFGHJKLZXCVBNMQW
BNMQWERTYUIOPASDFGH
CONSENTJKLZXCVBNMQW
ETHICSYUIOPASDFGHJKQ

Word List

MISREPRESENTATION
PRIVACY
SENSATIONALISM
HISTORICAL
DISTORTION
EXPLOITATION
COMMERCIALIZATION
ACCOUNTABILITY
PUBLIC PERCEPTION
HCBE
CONSENT
ETHICS



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About The W. Michael Hoffman Center for Business Ethics

Established in 1976 at Bentley University, the W. Michael Hoffman Center for Business Ethics (HCBE) is among the world's oldest and most highly-respected business ethics research and educational institutes. HCBE is a nonprofit educational, research and consulting organization whose vision is a world in which all businesses contribute positively to society through their ethically sound and responsible operations. Our mission is to give leadership in the creation of organizational cultures that align effective business performance with ethical business conduct. We endeavor to do so by the application of expertise, research, education and a collaborative approach to disseminating best practices. HCBE strives to connect ethical thought and action, inspire ethical leadership, enrich ethical knowledge and promote ethical collaboration.

Contributors

Contributing to this edition of the newsletter are Elina Crosby and Avery Waterman—current student interns and HCBE Leon Sullivan Scholars. Elina Crosby serves as the chief editor of the newsletter. Sullivan Scholars work as interns at the W. Michael Hoffman Center for Business Ethics during their undergraduate years to experience the true meaning of “business ethics.”



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