Tess Atkins

JOR 115

Test 1 Essay 1

Press freedom in the United States is a controversial topic. It is obvious that although journalists have the right to report what they want, there are still many restrictions for what they are able to report. It has been said that, “Journalism is the lifeblood of a democracy.” This statement is very true when looking at the First Amendment and journalists such as John Mill and John Milton. Democracy in the United States is fully connected to journalism.

The First Amendment from the Constitution states that as an American citizen we have the right to assembly, speech, religion, press, and petition. All of these rights pertain to every citizen but as for journalists there are two that really stick out. For journalists, the ability to have freedom of speech and freedom of press is very important. Freedom of speech is very important to journalists because it allows them to say and report what they want is appropriate for the story they are reporting. Freedom of press is also very important for journalists because a lot of the times, information that journalists put out to be published are monitored by either the government or buy privately owned companies. Freedom of press gives journalists the right to not be monitored over what they are reporting.

Two philosophers, John Milton and John Stuart Mill paved the way for United States Journalism. To do this, these two philosophers spoke out for what they believe. In the writing, *Areopagitica,* John Milton writes about freedom of speech and why he supports it. Milton wrote to the Parliament to rescind the Licensing Order. Milton wrote about how there is legitimate societal control and freedom over print journalism, speech, and thought. Milton also believed that journalism was a media-dependent culture. “No music must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and Doric,” Milton said. “There must be licensing of dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth, but what by their allowance shall be thought honest.” Here, Milton suggests that if there is no licensing of music, dance, or art, journalism should not be monitored as well. John Stuart Mill also wrote about how he felt in regards to press freedom. In the reading, *On Liberty,* Mill writes about the struggle between liberty and authority. Mill believes that nature and limits of power can be practiced in a society over an individual. Mill said, “Separation has been the creation of class.” From this, one can learn that the people who have authority over what journalist’s write are the people who are in a higher class, for example, those in the government who monitor what journalists report.

Journalists we’ve studied in class such as, Jim Hummel and Dan McGowan do live up to their responsibilities. Jim Hummel did a story on a family that was sending their kids to a high school in a different town when it was not legal to do so. Hummel is living up to his responsibilities here because he is reporting news that makes the public aware of what is going on. He is also practicing his right to freedom of speech and press. Dan McGowan also lives up to his responsibilities of reporting but also uses his freedom of speech and freedom of press while reporting stories.

As journalists try and overcome the hardships of the new media journalism, journalists are also thinking twice about what they are writing. In terms of democracy, journalists have to be careful what they are reporting and what they aren’t reporting. The government monitors a lot of what journalists put out in the news media to make sure that there is nothing said that isn’t true, or that there is nothing said that isn’t supposed to be said. Journalists are not able to give a lot of information on our democracy because they either don’t know the information, or the government will not let them report it.

Press freedom is very important for journalists everywhere. In regards to our First Amendment it is a journalist’s right to be able to report what they want say what they want about a certain topic. Philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and John Milton speak out against the licensing and control the government has over journalists and active journalists today are still living up to their responsibilities by practicing their freedom of speech and press.