# MA22 – NC – Subjectivity

## 1NC

### Framework

#### I negate.

#### First, this debate is not a question of whether objectivity as an ideal is good – it’s about whether objectivity should be the guiding principle. Advocacy does not mean nonresponsiveness to truth; rather, you are bringing your best judgement and the things you think are valuable to shape reporting.

#### Second, the aff may show objectivity is important but that does not show the free press as a whole ought to prioritize it. For example, in the UK, the BBC has hard objectivity guidelines and they’re publicly funded, providing a universal source of information while the rest of the free press is advocacy.

#### I value democratic ideals. Democracies cannot be bound by a single conception of truth. All things should always be subject to contestation or the structure of democracy itself will always be eroded.

#### Accordingly, value criterion is maintaining an open marketplace of ideas. Prefer my criterion for two reasons:

#### First, only a press that accepts opposing views can ever be open to radical revision – other systems insist on their own foundation and can’t accommodate changing views that make them exclusionary or illegitimate.

#### Second, enabling the acceptance of views is key to maintaining legitimacy and freedom. Otherwise, political institutions can always silence opposition, violating freedom and democracy.

#### Contention 1 is subjectivity

#### First, even if we achieve something approximating objectivity, there will be a bias in terms of what they choose to report. This agenda setting power has no objective metric that’s not dependent on who is assessing what to report. Therefore, appeals to objectivity will always hide the real biases. Forefronting advocacy ensure the public knows what those biases are. This makes the process a shared conversation which is easier to validate.

#### Second, democracy as a procedure should never appeal to the idea objectivity. there’s no correct idea of democracy, so only advocacy instead of fake objectivity is legitimate – it opens up spaces for diverse interpretations, Political theorist Chantal Mouffe writes in 2000:

Chantal Mouffe, [Chantal Mouffe (French: [muf]; born 17 June 1943)[1] is a Belgian political theorist, formerly teaching at University of Westminster.[2] She is best known for her contribution to the development—jointly with Ernesto Laclau, with whom she co-authored Hegemony and Socialist Strategy—of the so-called Essex School of discourse analysis,[3][4] a type of post-Marxist political inquiry drawing on Gramsci, post-structuralism and theories of identity, and redefining Leftist politics in terms of radical democracy. Her highest cited publication is Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics.[5] She is also the author of influential works on agonistic political theory, including Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically and The Democratic Paradox.] 2000, “The Democratic Paradox” //LHP AV

I submit that this is a crucial insight which undermines the very objective that those who advocate the 'deliberative' approach present as the aim of democracy: the establishment of a rational consensus on universal principles. They believe that through rational deliberation an impartial standpoint could be reached where decisions would be taken that arc equally in the interests of all." Wittgenstein, on the contrary, suggests another view. If we follow his lead, **we should acknowledge and valorize the diversity of ways in which the 'democratic game' can be played**, instead of trying to reduce this diversity to a uniform model of citizenship**. This would mean fostering a plurality of forms of being a democratic citizen and creating the institutions that would make it possible to follow the democratic rules in a plurality of ways**. What Wittgenstein teaches us is that **there cannot be one single best**, more 'rational' **way to obey those rules and that it is precisely such a recognition that is constitutive of a pluralist democracy.** **'Following a rule'**, says Wittgenstein, **'is analogous to obeying an order**. **We are trained to do so**; we react to an order in a particular way. **But what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order and the training? Which one is right?**'" **This is** indeed a **crucial** question **for democratic theory**. **And it cannot be resolved**, pace the rationalists, **by claiming that there is a correct understanding of the rule** that every rational person should accept. To be sure, we need to be able to distinguish between 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it'. But **space needs to be provided for the many different practices in which obedience to the democratic rules can be inscribed**. And **this** **should** not **be envisaged** as a tempor-ary accommodation, as a stage in the process leading to the 73 THE DEMOCRATIC PARADOX realization of the rational consensus, but **as a constitutive feature of a democratic society**. **Democratic citizenship can take many diverse forms and such a diversity, far from being a danger for democracy, is in fact its very condition of existence**. This will, of course, create conflict and it would be a mistake to expect all those different understandings to coexist without clashing. But **this struggle will not be one between 'enemies' but among 'adversaries', since all participants will recognize the positions of the others in the contest as legitimate ones**. Such an understand-ing of democratic politics, which is precisely what I call **'agonis-tic pluralism'**, is unthinkable within a rationalistic problematic which, by necessity, tends to erase diversity. A perspective inspired by Wittgenstein, on the contrary, can contribute to its formulation, and this is why his contribution to democratic thinking is invaluable.

#### Contention 2 is social justice

#### First, if objectivity is prioritized, it’s unfair and will always targets minorities as their “objectivity” is always in question, Williams 20:

Williams, Kat. “Objectivity In Journalism: Ethical Requirement Or Impediment?.” The University of Texas at Austin, Center for Media Engagement. July 15, 2020. Web. Accessed February 12, 2022. <https://mediaengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/85-Objectivity-in- News-Case-Study.pdf>.

In contrast, there are those who believe strict **objectivity should not be a priority in journalism**. On a philosophical level, it has been argued that neutrality or **objectivity** in judgment **doesn’t actually exist and therefore is an impossible standard to meet.** Regardless of their profession, **reporters are still human beings who have unique experiences and stakes in political processes.** **To be held to a level of superhuman objectivity is unfair** for anyone, **but perhaps even more concerning for minority journalists reporting on issues that affect them directly**. **As trans reporter** Lewis **Wallace** has **argued**: “**I can’t be neutral** or centrist **in a debate over my own humanity**” (Li, 2020). **Even when news appears to be objective**, freelance writer Jack Mirkinson urges consumers to “look at the questions people ask [or] the stories people choose to write. **All of these things are inherently suffused with opinion and political judgment**” **even if the journalist doesn’t outright put forth their beliefs** (Li, 2020).

#### Second, the ideal of objectivity is not the neutral view from nowhere it claims to be – instead, it normalizes the status quo, preventing radical change, Raeijmaekers writes in 2017:

Raeijmaekers D, [Daniëlle Raeijmaekers, Department of Communication Studies, University of Antwerp] Maeseele P. In objectivity we trust? Pluralism, consensus, and ideology in journalism studies. Journalism. 2017;18(6):647-663. doi:10.1177/1464884915614244 //LHP AV DOA: March 4, 2022

By now, we have demonstrated that **the notion of objectivity is rooted within a paradigm of social consensus**, both socio-historically and analytically. Thus, the analysis of news media is taking place within a broader basic framework of consensus and within the conventional understandings6 of society: ‘It is not the vast pluralistic range of voices which the media are sometimes held to represent, but a range within certain distinct ideological limits’ (Hall et al., 1978: 59). In that sense, we can state that the ideal of **objectivity only allows for evaluating pluralism ‘within the box’, that is, within the limits of existing social consensus**. We start this paragraph by illustrating this using the popular concept of partisan media bias. Subsequently, we begin with a search for alternative analytical concepts that allow to evaluate journalism about and beyond the limits of social consensus (i.e. pluralism ‘outside the box’**). Since this implies moving from a conceptualization that premises social consensus to an approach that acknowledges ideological contestation, both in terms of its scope and form, the framework of de/politicization is put forward as a potential alternative**. From pluralism ‘within the box’ ... Although journalism research these days primarily starts from a post-ideological understanding of society, the notion of ideology is not absent in positivist empirical studies. Mostly, it is analyzed as ‘ideological bias’ or ‘partisan bias’ since ‘[i]t is partisan bias in the news which has attracted the most public interest and attention’ (D’Alessio and Allen, 2000: 134). The partisan media bias approach is characterized by quantitative content analyses into the extent of unbalanced and partisan political coverage, which is operationalized as the varying levels of attention for specific politicians, political parties, or policy positions in specific news outlets (Groeling, 2013; Groseclose and Milyo, 2005). However, such an approach allows media researchers to only gain insights about pluralism ‘within the box’. **To start with, the partisan bias approach adopts a limited understanding of ‘ideology’: it explicitly focuses on politicians, political parties, and exclusively politically driven issues, that is, the field of institutional politics. Quite revealing in this regard is the following motivation by D’Alessio and Allen (2000) in a paper reporting on a meta-analysis of studies on partisan media bias**: ‘Unlike opinions on the nature of the economy, where it would appear that there is a large preference among Americans for capitalism rather than communism, opinions on political matters are widely divergent’ (p. 134). Not only does this imply that the economy is excluded as a ‘political matter’ but also that the benchmark for evaluating the level of ideological pluralism in news coverage is dependent on the ideological divergence between political parties. **Moreover, this latter category is generally restricted to those parties with most parliamentary seats. For example, in American studies on partisan media bias, the classic aim that news media should strictly reflect the outcome of social consensus can be found in the implicit or explicit definition of fair coverage as the equal treatment of Republicans and Democrats, which comes down to a 50/50 coverage** or a coverage that is in line with the number of seats each party possesses: Although no one expects there to be no biased statements in 100% of reports, a 50-50 breakdown of them would be indicative of a deliberate attempt to achieve balance, and thus deviations from the 50-50 pattern would arguably be an indication of bias of some kind. (Groeling, 2013: 143) **Clearly, the notion of partisan bias is rooted within a framework of objectivity and social consensus: pluralism is not interpreted as a matter of conflicting values, norms, and political preferences vis-a-vis a given social and political order, but about the disagreements which are allowed within that given social and political order**. Or, to put it simply, about those issues that Democrats and Republicans choose to disagree about. In other words, **since the analytical concept of partisan media bias excludes those matters where there is ideological convergence between both parties (say, global neoliberal capitalism and American imperialism), it only allows for evaluating pluralism ‘within the box’, that is, within the limits of existing social consensus**. In the end, such an approach to media pluralism does not appropriately take into account the democratic role of news media (definitely not in times of global economic and geopolitical crisis, like we are experiencing since the start of the financial–economic crisis in 2008**). It does not allow for a genuine democratic debate among citizens as ideological issues are monopolized by politics and political parties and framed within the status quo.** Therefore, it is imperative to evaluate the level of media debate using a conceptual framework that allows for pluralism ‘outside the box’. … to pluralism ‘outside the box’ **The objectivity benchmark should not only be challenged because of the ideological limits it sets, but foremost because of the fact that these limits are not perceived as such. Rules of objectivity reflect and shape an assumed social consensus about a hegemonic ideological project, while simultaneously disguising or camouflaging its ideological character**. This is most problematic since **ideology is at its strongest when it is no longer defined and perceived as such, when its assumptions and preferences appear evident and logical**, that is, hegemonic or depoliticized (Atton, 2002; Maeseele, 2013). Therefore, ‘no longer objectivity can be taken as the opposite of ideology in the media, if indeed the forms and **rhetoric of objectivity help to reproduce dominant political frameworks’** (Hackett, 1984: 253). In that sense, we are urgently in need of news analysis about and beyond the limits of objectivity and social consensus, that is, for pluralism ‘outside the box’. Clearly, such a shift in journalism studies requires breaking with traditional assumptions and approaches. As Downey et al. (2014) argue, ‘[…] if ideology critique is going to have any purchase, if it is to change hearts and minds in the field, then a more fully worked-out theoretical and methodological approach will be necessary’ (p. 6). Therefore, we choose to make this exercise both regarding specific assumptions about society (normative assumptions) and how these are operationalized toward journalism (analytical concepts). First, regarding normative assumptions, **we have shown that the notion of media objectivity is rooted within a belief in ideological harmony** – ‘the end of ideology’ – and the ideal of social consensus. **However, such an understanding of society does not recognize the irrefutable presence of the ideological limits to a consensus and, more specifically, the involved mechanisms of exclusion: ‘There is always an “outside” to discourse, a set of meanings, practices, identities and social relations, which is defined by exclusion and against which discursive boundaries are drawn’** (Dahlberg, 2007a: 835). **Obviously, the recognition of such an ‘outside’ is essential to arrive at and evaluate pluralism ‘outside the box’**. If we accept that society is inevitably marked by conflict and asymmetries of power and that every social order is the result of hegemonic practices, dominance, and exclusion, then **this implies that we need to start from a framework with ideological hegemony (instead of harmony) and contestation (instead of consensus) as basic concepts. Following such an interpretation, consensus is perceived as the temporary result of a provisional hegemony**, which, from a perspective of pluralist democratic politics, is – and must be – continuously questioned (Mouffe, 2005). Contestation,7 on the other hand, refers to how we can only speak of pluralism when there is a confrontation between clearly differentiated ideological positions. **Second, regarding analytical concepts, it is necessary to replace the widely adopted benchmark of objectivity with the identification of ideology in order to reflect on media pluralism** ‘outside the box’: ‘In any theory which seeks to explain both the monopoly of power and the diffusion of consent, the question of the place and role of ideology becomes absolutely pivotal’ (Hall, 1982: 86). **Journalism should not be evaluated on the extent it leaves out – thus, camouflages – ideological positions, but on the extent to which it makes these ideological positions explicit**: ‘It is important for audiences to be shown that there are different views; people should not be told “this is the correct interpretation”; there are always different interpretations’ (Mouffe in Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006: 973). **Therefore, the notion of objectivity and its counterparts ‘balance’ and ‘impartiality’ should be reconsidered in favor of a terminology that benchmarks ideological contestation. Indeed, to change dominant modes of thinking, we are in need of an alternative analytical vocabulary: a new language outside the confines of the old paradigm is precisely the way to break boundaries and shape new understandings** (Jones, 2013).

#### Third, Advocacy journalism has a long history of strengthening movements for social justice. Frio 21:

Froio, Nicole. “How Journalists Are Challenging Ideas Of Objectivity While Empowering Their Communities.” Current. May 20, 2021. Web. February 12, 2022. <https://current.org/2021/05/how-journalists-are-challenging-ideas-of-objectivity- while-empowering-their-communities/>.

‘Neutrality is impossible for me’ The term “**movement journalism**” and the concept was formalized in a 2017 report by Project South, a Southern organization dedicated to cultivating strong social movements in the region. But Project South noted that **a tradition of alternative media in the U.S. that seek to advance social movements goes back to at least 1827, when free African Americans in New York founded the newspaper Freedom’s Journal**. Movement journalism also has **roots in Hispanic movements for emancipation** (the first Hispanic-owned newspaper in the U.S., El Mensagero Luisianés, was established in 1909), **Indigenous** **struggles** (The Cherokee Phoenix, the first Indigenous newspaper, debuted a year after Freedom’s Journal) **and labor movements** in the 1820s (labor journalism gave a platform to unions and people fighting for better working conditions). The work of investigative journalist and anti- lynching activist Ida B. Wells also foreshadowed the development of movement journalism. More recently, **proponents of movement journalism have identified noncommercial radio** **as a potential seedbed** for the practice. In its 2017 report, Project South pointed to low-power FM stations in the South as “a promising platform.” At the time, two Project South board members sat on the board of WRFG, a community radio station in Atlanta. The organization also had a relationship with WMXP, a low-power FM station in Greenville, N.C. Since 2016, Project South has planned a news outlet for social justice coverage that would syndicate programs to community radio. It has yet to launch that platform, but as a first step, Project South has started working with more than 50 Black-owned noncommercial radio stations in the South. The Black Radio Project gives the stations technical assistance, informational spots and public service announcements, according to Angela Oliver, Project South’s communications coordinator. PSAs have covered topics such as COVID prevention, voting rights and the need for civic engagement beyond elections. In addition, Project South is working on a database of experts to help producers in the network find diverse sources for stories. It is also organizing events to bring together DJs, artists and activists to strategize about movement building. “**The idea is to create a space for them to be able to strategize and help each other** — how can radio help get the message out?” Oliver said. “**How can activists provide content to the radio based on whatever work they’re doing at the time?” While public media may offer a forum for movement journalism to grow, Wallace risked his job in the system to highlight the shortcomings of traditional newsgathering.**

## Case