

Ethics in a New Age of Technology, Communications and Politics

research.carleton.ca

Stuart J. Murray, PhD
*Carleton University's
Canada Research Chair
in Rhetoric and Ethics*



Stuart Murray's Research Informs a Fresh Debate on the Late Modern Concept of Life

The first years of the 21st century have been marked by dramatic cultural, technological, and political change. Social media updates, seemingly daily medical and technological advancements, and growing security threats in the form of emergent diseases, environmental disasters, and political instability have transformed the way we understand ourselves and our responsibility to others.

Moral perceptions, social values and respectful governance have undergone a significant shift in the wake of these changes.

Stuart J. Murray's research explores and challenges all aspects of the traditional concepts of ethics by examining the innovations of the modern age from digital communications to applications of genetics-based medicine. Murray works across several fields including the philosophy of technology, politics and identity, communication and culture and the medical humanities.

His research focuses on ethics and health care, including the mental health care of prisoners. One study examined behaviour modification programs in Canadian forensic psychiatry settings. Murray has provided a critique of mental health care in prison settings. This subject has been open to public scrutiny particularly in the death of a young Canadian woman who was mentally

ill and who strangled herself as correctional officers watched—and filmed—the event from outside her locked cell.

Murray's philosophical work asks how to develop a set of ethics that would do justice to the changing ways we have come to understand our relation to ourselves, our bodies and others.

“Through the analysis of texts of various kinds (known as textual studies), including interviews and other evidence, I investigate the ways that ethics is understood and practised between competing claims of incarceration and care.”

One example is solitary confinement – seclusion. How does solitary confinement affect mental health patients in prison? His research, which includes interviews with the prisoners and nursing staff, opens a wider debate on reconsidering ethical practices in mental health care. Murray has also been part of a Canadian study of breast cancer among lesbians and transgender patients where he investigates the barriers they face in receiving culturally competent and ethical health care.

Murray has established a Digital Rhetorics Lab at Carleton University for research, teaching, and active discussion involving the concept of life across a number of disciplines.

THE RESEARCH

What I do

Investigate the ways in which the concept and meaning of life and death are used and understood within the framework of biotechnology, global media networks and politics.

Why it matters

Rapid technological, political, biomedical and biotechnological change raises corresponding ethical challenges.

What it will change

Motivate a reconsideration of ethical practices in health care, political and social advocacy, political decision-making and moral perceptions surrounding human life and end of life.

THE RESEARCHER

2013 Canada Foundation for Innovation grant to establish a Digital Rhetorics Laboratory, Carleton University.

2011-2013 Canadian Institutes for Health Research grant for research on the ethics of seclusion (solitary confinement) for mental health prisoners.

2009-2011 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant for research into professional health-care practices in correctional institutions.

PARTNERS

Partnerships and collaborations include The Royal Ottawa Hospital, University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, Cambridge University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Missouri.

research.carleton.ca

“My research objective is to reorient the conversation about ethics away from the traditional view of liberal humanism with its commitment to the principles of reason and autonomy and instead look at the ways ethics is handled through real human bodies, political identities and communicative networks.”