HELP US FIND SUNIL TRIPATHI
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Directed by Neal Broffman
2014 | USA | 75 min

TEACHER’S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of Help Us Find Sunil Tripathi by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film

A family’s search for their missing son and the hunt for suspects in a terror attack tragically converge in Help Us Find Sunil Tripathi, a film about truth and community in the age of social media. While in the throes of depression, Brown University student Sunil Tripathi walked out of his Providence apartment and disappeared into the cold Rhode Island night. In a desperate search to find him, his family launched a social media movement that reached across the country and brought together a community dedicated to finding him. In the days following the Boston Marathon bombings, the family’s month-long investigation into Sunil’s disappearance exploded into a virtual confrontation with e-vigilantes, citizen journalists and traditional media eager to feed their insatiable hunger for breaking news. In Help Us Find Sunil Tripathi, the Tripathi family tells a story of the healing and destructive power of social media and director Neal Broffman offers an intimate look at the enduring love that unites a family in crisis.

Source: http://www.helpusfindsuniltripathi.com

The Filmmaker

Neal Broffman grew up in his father’s photographic darkroom where he was mesmerized by the powerful and iconic images of the American Civil Rights Movement his father had taken. For more than two decades Neal has been filming and documenting stories around the world and that early and influential aesthetic informs his work to this day. Neal’s decade with CNN International, while based in London, Rome and Moscow took him to Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East where he covered wars, elections, famines and upheaval in more than 40 countries and where he solidified his credentials as a journalist. Working with One Production Place since its founding in 2001, Broffman’s work has received many domestic and international awards. Hot Spots: Martin Parr in the American South was featured in the Arte Cinema Festival of Contemporary Arts in Naples, Italy, in October 2013 and was screened in Paris at the prestigious Maison Européenne de la Photographie. Hot Spots received a 2012 southeast Emmy nomination for best documentary.

Source: http://www.helpusfindsuniltripathi.com/about/index.htm

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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three subsections are intended to provide you with a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film’s larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Show students the trailer for Help Us Find Sunil Tripathi found on the film’s website (http://www.helpusfindsunitpathi.com). Have students work in pairs or small groups to try to identify themes or ideas conveyed by the trailer. As a larger group, discuss with students how effective/affective the trailer is as a media piece.

Have students create a KWL chart for the following terms: 24 hour news cycle, Boston Marathon bombings, depression, digital witch hunt, mental health, mob mentality, reddit and traditional media vs. new media.

As a class, review the CNN timeline of the Boston Marathon bombings and the aftermath (http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/01/justice/boston-marathon-timeline).

Have an informal class discussion on the pros and cons of social media.

Print several of the questions or quotations from the Extensions Activities section of this guide onto individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or with partners to discuss if they agree with the ideas.

Set a purpose for viewing by having a discussion about one or more of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide. Have them share the statement and what they think or believe about it with the class.

Viewing Activities

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf). Students can revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

Have students take notes on the video footage and photos of Sunil in the introduction. What kind of portrait can be framed of Sunil as a child?

Have students make notes on the different types of footage and techniques that are used throughout the documentary. Students can consider the purpose and effectiveness of news clips, home videos and photographs, interviews (including those filmed on mobile devices and laptops) and screenshots. You may also have students focus exclusively on the headlines that appear throughout the film.

Have students make notes on the tweets, reddit posts and Facebook posts that appear throughout the film. Discuss their effectiveness in a Post-Viewing discussion.

Have students jot down two to three ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Post-Viewing Activities

Show the students their quotations from the Pre-Viewing Activity and see if their opinions were changed, altered or enhanced by the film.

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the various scenes, situations and individuals in the film. Did their reactions change throughout the film?

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf

In the film, a reddit commenter says, “Every single person in all the pictures should be considered innocent. That is what is wrong with this subreddit. We should all be working
backwards from the idea that people are innocent, not that they are guilty. Only when we find evidence that starts to point that they might not be innocent should we make claims to the contrary.” Another commenter wrote, “This is probably just the beginning of modern digital witch hunting.” Using this quotation as a prompt, have students reflect and then write a one-page journal response.

Read about some of reddit’s “self-deputized reporters” (http://nation.time.com/2013/04/23/inside-reddits-hunt-for-the-boston-bombers/). Have a mini-class debate on what constitutes a reporter in the age of social media.

On the board, write down “I read it on the Internet” and “I heard it on the news.” Ask students if they have ever said these phrases before, and discuss with references to the film and real life. Next, discuss how students can verify whether or not news is accurate, especially in the context of social media and the 24-hour news cycle. As an extension, have students create a news evaluation tool.

As a class, view videos from Bell’s Let’s Talk campaign (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLo0H4jLotmp4c-y0cIfb-N6-RGQ9Jod68). Next, brainstorm ways that schools and families can promote positive mental health. You can also have students consider and evaluate initiatives that are already in place in your school and community.

Have students watch a TED Talk by Thomas Insel on understanding mental illness (https://www.ted.com/talks/thomas_insel_toward_a_new_understanding_of_mental_illness). In a discussion or blog entry, have students respond to the talk with references to the film and other current events.
WEBSTIES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

http://www.helpusfindsuniltripathi.com/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Help-Us-Find-Sunil-Tripathi-Documentary-Film/1482643282000776

Twitter: https://twitter.com/FindSunilFilm

Additional Resources

Canadian Mental Health Association: The CMHA promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness through advocacy, education, research and service.
http://www.cmha.ca/mental-health/

Forbes: A piece on the lessons learned from crowdsourcing the Boston Bombing investigation.

Huffington Post: Alejandro Rojas discusses "online vigilantism and the ethics of tweeting a scoop.”

Global News: A piece on online vigilante justice in the age of social media.

Maclean's: An in-depth look at the mental health crisis on university campuses.
http://www.macleans.ca/education/uniandcollege/themental-health-crisis-on-campus/

NPR: A piece titled "Depressed Teens May Need Extra Support to Stick With Treatment.”

NPR: Steve Henn talks to Audie Cornish about lessons learned and whether it’s possible for citizen journalists and sites like reddit to adopt standards of verification of information.
http://www.npr.org/2013/04/22/178462380/social-media-vigilantes-cloud-boston-bombing-investigation

reddit: An open-source community where members vote on the stories and discussions that are important to them.
http://www.reddit.com

TED Talks: After years of patrolling the southern end of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, Sgt. Kevin Briggs offers his advice to those with loved ones who might be contemplating suicide.
https://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_briggs_the_bridge_between_suicide_and_life

The Atlantic: Alexis C. Madrigal examines "how a terrible mistake falsely linking two people to the Boston bombing spread so far so fast.”

The New York Times: This article examines reddit's level of responsibility in the wrongful accusation of Sunil Tripathi by reddit's members.

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

Centre for Media Literacy: A US website which provides resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.
http://www.medialit.org

Media Awareness: A Canadian non-profit media education and Internet literacy resource library.
http://www.media-awareness.ca

NFB: Valuable education resources for the classroom.
http://www.nfb.ca
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

What are the different issues and themes that surface in this film?

The film goes back and forth between phone messages from the press, and memories of Sunil by family and friends. How does this frame your perceptions of Sunil and the press?

What are some of the signs and symptoms of depression?
What are some of the ways that depression can be treated?

How can we help young people combat depression and other issues related to youth mental health?

What is the difference between sadness and depression?
Do you know anyone who has dealt with depression or suicidal thoughts?

What pressures and issues are faced by families of individuals affected by mental health issues?

Discuss the types of mass media and news sources that students encounter in their daily lives. Where do they get their news from? Are there similarities or differences between different news sources and how the same news is presented in different venues?

Do you trust everything you read on the Internet and read in the news? What are some strategies to avoid misinformation?

The film mentions, "Nearly seven million people follow the most prominent journalists, bloggers and social media editors who tweeted the false information about Sunil Tripathi. None of the journalists, social media editors and bloggers contacted would speak on camera about their participation in the misidentification." Why would these people choose not to participate in the film?

Erik Martin mentions, "Someone in the Boston subreddit posted that they thought one of the photos the FBI released looked like this missing Brown University student. That post was removed because it clearly broke our rules about personal information. With journalists and media, just people who were hungry for information scouring Twitter and reddit for other places for any sort of information, it got picked up and that link got shared." What is the danger of journalists who are "hungry for information"?

What are the issues and dangers around "pure speculation" on platforms like reddit?

In the film, social media is seen as a platform for the democratization of news and information, but it is also seen as a platform where unsubstantiated attacks on individuals can occur. What are the positive and negative ways that various forms of social media can be used? How have you personally seen it being used?

The word "truthiness" is brought up in the film. Look up the definition of this word. How does "truthiness" apply to some of the issues in the film?
1. “It’s hard because you’re watching someone struggle and you just want to fix it.” Sangeeta Tripathi

2. “We had built a story around Facebook and social media, and real media picked it up. We knew that media was a tool, they had an interest and there was a place where their interests and our interests aligned.” Sangeeta Tripathi

3. “In the days leading up to the misidentification, people were writing about it. I wrote stuff about it. People were saying, this was a very real possibility, to misidentify a real person, and then they did it. It actually happened. It was a train wreck that could have been avoided.” Alexis Madrigal

4. “What started off as people saying, ‘This image of your brother looks the same,’ became ‘This image is your brother,’ became ‘How are you providing a cover for your brother to do this?’” Sangeeta Tripathi

5. “Decisions were being made basically based on reddit, on Twitter, on Facebook. Mainstream media, to me, was always well above that.” Ravi Tripathi

6. “Things on the Internet last forever and that I’m very aware of, so Sunil being tied to Boston will always be searchable.” Ravi Tripathi

7. “Redditors, as they call themselves, were self-consciously interested in proving that their platform could do something that old media couldn’t do, that established media couldn’t do and that no one else in the world could do.” Alexis Madrigal

8. “The retweet button was easy and it was there and it was a trivial act.” Alexis Madrigal

9. “What was very scary was instead of traditional media holding the line and saying, ‘We are going to stick to corroborated truth and evidence,’ they kind of fell into the same vat of ups and downs that existed in the social media space.” Sangeeta Tripathi

10. “[We are] reminding people in that moment where they’re clicking—click, send—that they are a human being, that the person on the other side is a human being and that this is real.” Sangeeta Tripathi

11. “Sunil never expressed, even when asked, any intention of harming himself. That’s not good enough. We have to realize that the risk is always there.” Judy Tripathi

12. “Standing with someone who is suffering from depression, you’ve got to stand there in the same way you’d stand with someone with heart disease or any other illness that is causing grave pain and really is life-threatening. You can’t stand with that person like they can just snap their fingers and feel better.” Rev. Janet Cooper Nelson
CULMINATING ACTIVITY: VIDEO CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT THE STIGMAS SURROUNDING MENTAL HEALTH

At the end of the film, the following statistics appear on screen: "Globally, more than 350-million people of all ages suffer from depression, making it the world's leading cause of disability. Depression is treatable. Suicide takes a life every 40 seconds worldwide and in the US, it is the second leading cause of death for men ages 15 to 29." First, have students consider why something that is so treatable is also so deadly. Discuss as a class.

Next, have students watch The Stand Up Kid (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SE5Ip60_HJk) and then read about the Time to Change organization (http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/news/young-people-campaign-west-midlands-stand-up-kid), which is working to combat mental health discrimination. Discuss the effectiveness and purpose of The Stand Up Kid as a class.

For the culminating activity, students will be creating one- to two-minute videos to combat the stigmas surrounding mental health based on The Stand Up Kid. Students should consider their target audience and who they need to reach, their overall message and how they will make their claims. Before shooting, students will need to complete a script and storyboard.

After their videos are complete, encourage students to upload their videos to an online platform such as YouTube.

Alternative assignment:
If video and/or video editing is not possible in your school, students can create a poster campaign promoting positive mental health.
## ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC: VIDEO CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT THE STIGMAS SURROUNDING MENTAL HEALTH

### Knowledge/Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>3.4</th>
<th>3.5</th>
<th>3.9</th>
<th>4.0</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of mental health</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a limited understanding of the issue</td>
<td>Student demonstrates some understanding of the issue</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a good understanding of the issue</td>
<td>Student demonstrates an extensive understanding of the issue</td>
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### Thinking/Inquiry

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<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>3.4</th>
<th>3.5</th>
<th>3.9</th>
<th>4.0</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of planning skills (gathering information and research; scripting and storyboarding)</td>
<td>Uses planning skills with limited effectiveness</td>
<td>Uses planning skills with some effectiveness</td>
<td>Uses planning skills with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>Uses planning skills with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
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### Application

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<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>3.4</th>
<th>3.5</th>
<th>3.9</th>
<th>4.0</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making connections within and between the film and personal knowledge and experience, other texts and the world outside school</td>
<td>Makes connections within and between various contexts with limited effectiveness</td>
<td>Makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness</td>
<td>Makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>Makes connections within and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
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### Communication

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<tr>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.9</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>3.4</th>
<th>3.5</th>
<th>3.9</th>
<th>4.0</th>
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<tr>
<td>Communicates for the intended audience(s) in oral, visual and written forms</td>
<td>Communicates for the intended audiences and purposes with limited effectiveness</td>
<td>Communicates for the intended audiences and purposes with some effectiveness</td>
<td>Communicates for the intended audiences and purposes with considerable effectiveness</td>
<td>Communicates for the intended audiences and purposes with a high degree of effectiveness</td>
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Comments: Total: ___________ /20 = ___________ /100
## EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>OVERALL EXPECTATIONS</th>
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| Grade 9–12 English                          | • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.  
• demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Grade 11 Media Studies                      | • demonstrate understanding of a variety of media texts.  
• deconstruct a variety of types of media texts, identifying the codes, conventions and techniques used and explaining how they create meaning.  
• demonstrate an understanding of the impact of regulation, ownership and control on access, choice and range of expression.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Grade 11 Communications Technology         | • demonstrate an understanding of and adhere to laws applicable to creative content.  
• describe privacy and security issues related to the use of communications media technology.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Grade 11 Communications Technology         | • evaluate the societal and cultural effects of converging and emerging technologies from various perspectives.  
• demonstrate an understanding of and adhere to legal requirements and ethical practices relating to the communications technology industry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Grade 10 Introduction to Computer Studies   | • describe key aspects of the impact of computers and related technologies on society.  
• describe legal and ethical issues related to the use of computing devices.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Grade 12 Computer Science                   | • analyze ethical issues and propose strategies to encourage ethical practices related to the use of computers.  
• analyze the impact of emerging computer technologies on society and the economy.  
• research and report on different areas of research in computer science, and careers related to computer science.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Grade 10 Healthy Active Living Education   | • identify warning signs and symptoms that could be related to mental health concerns and describe a variety of strategies for coping with or responding to mental health concerns affecting oneself or others.  
• demonstrate an understanding of factors that enhance mental health and emotional and spiritual well-being.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Grade 11 Healthy Active Living Education   | • describe warning signs for suicide, and identify sources of support that can help people who may be contemplating suicide.  
• demonstrate an understanding of a variety of mental illnesses and addictions, their causes and manifestations, and their effects on personal health and well-being.  
• describe how to use personal and interpersonal skills to deal with personally stressful situations or to help others deal with stressful situations.  
• describe factors that contribute to the stigmatization of mental illness and identify strategies that could be used to reduce stigma in their local community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Grade 11 Health for Life                    | • assess the quality of health information, products, and services, and use information from reliable sources to make informed choices of health-related products, programs and facilities.  
• identify and describe school and community services that offer support related to health and wellness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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<tr>
<th>Grade 11 Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology</th>
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<tr>
<td>• use a psychological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape human mental processes and behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• use a sociological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape individual and group social behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade 11 Equity, Diversity and Social Justice</th>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of how identity is socially constructed and internalized, and of the impact of social norms and stereotypes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of the impact individual action can have on equity, social justice and environmental issues, and of how the media can create awareness of these issues.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade 12 Equity and Social Justice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• analyze, in historical and contemporary contexts, the dynamics of power relations and privilege as well as various factors that contribute to power or marginalization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• assess the impact of media and popular culture on equity and social justice issues.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade 9 &amp; 10 Family Studies</th>
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<tr>
<td>• describe the characteristics of human growth and development in adolescence, and explain their influence on the behaviour and needs of young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate communication and conflict-resolution skills in the context of family and social relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• understand and apply a variety of problem-solving and decision-making skills, grounded in psychological and sociological studies, to family and social problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• use social science research methods to obtain information from various media, technology and human resources in order to examine aspects of individual and family living.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 11 Family Studies</th>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of the multifaceted nature of, and the various influences on, child development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of issues and challenges that concern parents, care-givers and others who interact with children in society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• describe techniques that lead to effective interaction with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of the basic nature of conflict and identify ways in which conflict is resolved.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade 11 American History</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• analyze the interactions among major groups and communities in the United States throughout its history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• analyze the historical process of change in the context of events that have transformed the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• assess the influence of key individuals and groups in shaping American arts and culture.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade 12 Law</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• assess the influence of individual and collective action on the evolution of law.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade 12 Philosophy</th>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of the main questions in ethics, and of the positions of major philosophers and schools of philosophy with respect to some of these questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of connections between ethics and other areas of philosophy, other subject areas and various aspects of society, including everyday life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• use philosophical reasoning skills to develop, communicate and defend their own responses to philosophical questions in ethics.</td>
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</table>

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the Ontario Curriculum. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations, can be found at: [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html)