

The Future of Global Journalism

Submission for:
International Communication Division Teaching Contest 2016

**Lea Hellmueller, Assistant Professor, Jack J. Valenti School of
Communication, University of Houston**

This specific activity that I would like to propose for this award was developed for a class on the "Future of Global Journalism". Since then I have applied this activity in three classes on global journalism.

1) Title of the Activity

Become an expert and win a grant for your country of expertise

2) Abstract

This assignment combines a real-world grant opportunity with what students learned in class on global media systems. By the end of the semester, students develop a grant proposal for a grant opportunity launched by the *Journalists and Writers Foundation* to support innovative international media projects up to US\$50,000. They become experts of one media culture and develop a project that improves the situation in their country of expertise. The panels simulate international conferences with country flags and students compete within the same geographical region (four groups of each region such as Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, etc.). The professor's role is that of a moderator. The class gets to judge who wins the panel. The most effective learning outcome is the Q&A session at the end of the panel in which panelists have to answer questions of the other students.

3) Description and explanation of activity (discussion of the learning objectives)

The panel discussion was designed to have students apply and transfer their knowledge of a specific country to a particular project and to discuss the project simulating an international conference and panel discussion.

The Assignment:

Become an expert and win a grant for your country of expertise (300 Points)

Students become experts of a journalism culture of one country. They develop a presentation to pitch a grant that would be awarded to improve the situation of media freedom or communication freedom in that country (for example, a group developed newspaper ideas in the language of refugees in Germany). The grant should be used to improve the state of journalism or communication in the country of expertise. Students need to think strategically about what they would need

(requires knowledge of the country's challenges and opportunities), how to implement it (requires knowledge of the legal, political and economic system), and what the outcome and benefits would be (requires knowledge of the culture). This requires students to have a good understanding of the state of press and net freedom in that country, and what people expect from journalism. All winning teams receive automatically 100 points for the students' evaluation category. Students also submit a final report based on the comments received during the panel session.

The Grant program students participate in

Peace Projects is a grant program launched by The Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) to support innovative conflict resolution and peace building projects focused on preventing, managing and resolving violent conflict and promoting post-conflict peace building through the training and improvement of journalism in a particular country. Peace Projects Grant Program awards support projects up to US\$50,000 that apply a broad range of disciplines, skills and approaches promoting peaceful coexistence through dialogue and reconciliation through innovative media projects.

The students devote about the following amount of time to each section during the panel:

1. Introduction of panelist and introduction of country: 4 minutes (recent cases in which net freedom was under attack / recent cases in which press freedom was under attack)
2. Project presentation and SWOT analysis / cooperation and research activities with local people: 5 minutes
3. Expected outcomes: 2 minutes
4. Timeline and financial timeline: 2 minutes
5. Evaluation of outcomes: 2 minutes

Learning objectives:

What students will learn:

- To be able to define the main features of a media system
- To apply and transfer this knowledge to a real world example (the grant opportunity)
- To understand the process of grant writing and what it includes
- To strategically think about a project that improves the situation in a country

- To know about a country's legal, economic, political and cultural environment
- To develop an understanding of a financial timeline of such a project
- To evaluate the performance of their classmates
- To produce profound feedback to other students
- To examine the quality of the panel project through a feedback system
- To encourage other students to improve their project

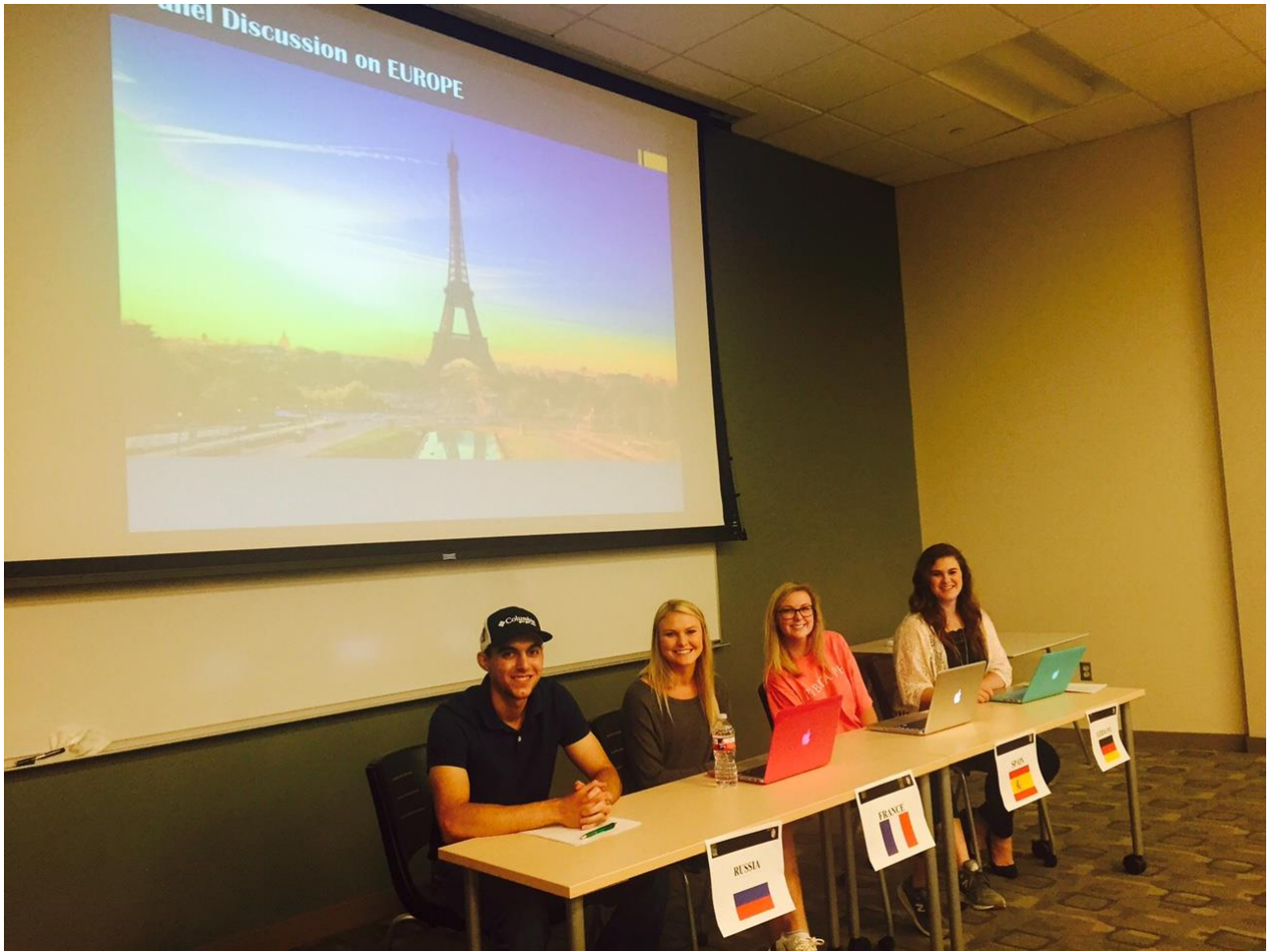
4) Rationale

The main reason I came up with this activity is the fact that I used country reports before, but students applied more descriptive knowledge in mainly stating what is going on in the country they picked. With this revised activity I truly believe that students are much more engaged (particularly as judges) and also apply and transfer their knowledge to a particular project. In that sense, they can longer remember theories about media system and also have a better idea of how complicated a country's situation can be when they actually have to think about implementing a project in that particular country.

5) Learning outcomes

The competitive nature of this assignment (if they win the panel, they automatically get 100 points) helped to improve the quality. Students wanted to become experts of their country and wanted to be able to respond to questions from their classmates. The students would meet with the instructor two days before the panel to pitch their ideas. I made them aware of several pitfalls during the grant development phase. They showed strategic planning while they presented their pitches. I have never seen so many students providing feedback and questions to the groups. Students judged the performance of the panelist and this increased the interactivity of the assignment (see learning objective: feedback culture). On the other hand, students were encouraged to come to class, because not only the panels were graded, but also students received participation points for their feedback and help in judging the panels.

Comments in the evaluations let me believe that the panel was a great learning experience, something students have not experienced before. Students wrote: "the panel project really let us to get hands on experience" (that relates to the learning objective of real world example). "This was such an enlightening course that I would recommend to anyone inside and outside the college. We had to do a group project that was difficult and scary and she [the instructor] framed it so it told a bigger pictures story and every project was extremely well educated. Truly awesome learning experience".



Picture: Set-up of a panel discussion on Europe (April, 2016)