

“Globalization & Media”:
A Research Project Exploring the Role of Media in Globalization

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1. Abstract

The goal of the “Globalization & Media” project is to stimulate and expand students’ intellectual and professional interests and passion by providing them with an opportunity to engage in an interesting research project, including honing their skills at writing a research paper. It is a major assignment of my “Media and Social Change” (COM 341) course, which emphasizes the role of media and communication as one of the major forces driving globalization. In this project, students extensively explore not only how media have influenced themselves and the “global village” in which they live, but also in what ways media have shaped their daily lives and our common communication/media environment. I help students come up with interesting questions or hypotheses, and then show them how to conduct meaningful research by employing relevant methods, such as surveys, interviews, and content analysis. The teaching activity includes the following: (1) A lecture on media research, including social-scientific and cultural approaches; (2) Assistance with proposal writing and idea pitching; (4) Monitoring students’ research progress; (4) Providing guidelines for writing research papers; (5) Facilitating project presentations for improving communication skills.

2. Description & explanation of the activity

The purpose of this project is not only to understand the media’s impact on society and global issues, but also to understand how globalization changes media content and media channels. Students may choose one specific medium or media-related (or multi-national) company they either already know well, or one they know nothing about. There are numerous possibilities: Google, Microsoft, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Amazon, Pandora, iTunes, iPhone, Microsoft Xbox, Wikipedia, WikiLeaks, CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, The New York Times, China Daily, Rolling Stone, etc.

Specifically, the students are encouraged to investigate not only how their chosen medium (or company) promotes social, political and cultural changes in both the American and global contexts, but also in what ways and on what grounds both its business activities and media content are (or can be) criticized; for example, by examining whatever ethical or moral issues may be related to that medium (or company). In order to develop this project more completely, students can ask the following types of questions to spur their research: (1) Is the Google search engine inherently good or evil?; (2) Is Facebook a threat to privacy or not?; (3) Is CNN contributing to alleviating conflicts in the world?; (4) Is Twitter serving our democratic system?; (5) Is FOX News faithful to the basic values—objectivity and fairness—of journalism?

Students should have a good grasp of class materials and understand the complexities of the issues. They should then apply their understanding of those issues to their project. In particular, they should justify why their research questions are important and, thus, deserve to be explored in considerable detail by this project. The project consists of the following assignments:

- (1) Project Proposal: Students write one page outline of the brief facts of the project and lay out some of the important issues they expect to address in it. They need to convince me in one page that this is an issue worthy of being the subject of their project. It should be an issue with some depth, and one that allows them to really grapple with the questions it raises.
- (2) Idea (Proposal) Pitch Presentation: This is a class presentation for a project proposal. Each student needs to explain the significance and feasibility of their research idea. The instructor then challenges the project's appropriateness and viability, as well as its relevance to the goals of the course. In this way, the students are guided to develop meaningful research questions.
- (3) Project Paper
Students must submit a five page paper with a detailed description of their project. In it they will describe and explain not only why their topic is significant, but also what they have found out about it through their research activities. Throughout the semester, the instructor will continue to guide students' projects by, for example, for proposing research questions and hypotheses, data gathering, access to research articles, interpretation of the findings, etc.
- (4) Project Presentation
Students will make a ten minute oral presentation of their project at the end of semester, in which they will explain how their research led to interesting findings. The presentation will be graded on the basis of content, preparedness, visual aids, speech, etc.

3. Rationale

In today's world, globalization is a ubiquitous term that is widely used to define and explain the economic, political and technological forces that are shaping the lives of citizens all over the planet. It is in this context that this project aims at providing students with a valuable opportunity to explore not only the dynamic relationship between media and globalization, but also the use of media technologies to facilitate and enhance globalization across time and distance. By exploring the possibilities and limitations of media, students are able to grasp the ways that these means of communication promote social, political and cultural changes in both the American and global contexts.

4. Learning Outcome

In the context of this project, the students and I worked together by exchanging and refining ideas as "responsible" partners. Helping them to take responsibility for their own assignments was one of the most satisfying experiences I have had as a teacher. Overall, I have always tried to act as a facilitator in the classroom, so that my students can successfully create a viable research product which is relevant to their interests and aspirations.

Through using this project I was able to expand the application of my research specialty (global journalism and international communication) in order to enhance students' learning. I found that this project served as a good opportunity to integrate theory, research methods and communication skills into my teaching. One student who took part in this project wrote that he appreciated my time and guidance: "I credit a lot of that to your direction. Narrowing the topic took considerable thought from both of us. It was really a fantastic experience to participate in such a session." As a scholar from Asia, I would like to emphasize that this research project,

centered as it was on exploring the relationships between media and globalization, served as a good chance not only to improve students' communication skills, but also to understand the potential of media in a global context. In particular, I found this project to be a valuable research assignment which stimulated students' intellectual growth in the current globalized media environment. In addition, it greatly helped my students discover their dreams and to pursue them passionately through participation in this project.