

## Global News literacy: The Educator

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### **1: Finding the global in global news literacy**

Educators face the same shifting landscape of global news as do professional practitioners, citizens, and media scholars. The rapid changes in technology have given rise to new media platforms and greater interconnectedness while dramatically altering traditional news institutions and eroding professional boundaries. This raises new questions about the potential for cross-cultural understanding and the values of cosmopolitan citizenship. This interconnectedness is one of the hallmarks of globalization, which along with a simultaneity and synchronization of communication contributes to our impression of the world as a single place. These networks of international journalism support what I've called a "global news arena," (Reese, 2008) which brings about pressures toward transparency, both on the part of governments and from journalism. Slanted or false reports are now more rapidly challenged or augmented—not only by other news organizations but by thousands of readers and viewers who circulate and compare reports through on-line communities. Old criticism of news "bias," although still fervently expressed in the U.S. political debate, are now more multi-layered and carried on communication platforms that themselves cut across national boundaries. The popular 2011 uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and throughout the Middle East, were facilitated by internet communication, even when the regimes tried to regulate traffic outside the country. The Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television news service provided some of the best coverage of the Egyptian revolt, but its availability in the U.S. was limited by cable operators failing to provide it to their subscribers. In spite of being deemed anti-American by some U.S. critics, the value of its coverage in a critical world hot-spot gave it new professional prestige and led to heightened demand for internet streaming of its programming.

International communication long has been a research subject in many academic programs, introducing students to various media systems from a comparative perspective. And certainly global news literacy requires a basic awareness of how national media contexts differ. This kind of cross-national comparison is firmly embedded in the rankings of countries in, for example, their relative levels of press freedom. Beyond *within*-country descriptions, other analyses have examined how news flowed *among* these countries, and the relative imbalances in that transmission, producing distorted images both within and across countries. World news coverage was often limited to the developed world, only paying attention to the "third world" when something bad happened, commonly during political unrest or large scale natural disasters. The dominant Western news agencies were seen as exerting "hegemonic" power over the world's news images, causing developing

countries to receive even news about themselves through non-indigenous professional filters. More recent research, however, has tried to capture the complex inter-relationships at the subnational, extranational, and transnational level that characterize globalization.

In many ways, pedagogical trends have tracked these changes in the communication world and the related research. As global news becomes more complex and multi-layered, however, the subject challenges even the most conscientious instructor to cover the material adequately and with sensitivity toward other national contexts. In this respect, news literacy is not unlike many subjects where the explosion of knowledge makes “covering the material” impossible. Even those courses and texts that are sensitive to the broader global phenomena still often seem limited to presenting an inventory of media phenomena across a range of countries. True comparative analysis is rare. Volumes in the area of the growing field of globalization studies itself often treat media as an afterthought, regarding CNN, for example, as an exemplar of “global media.” Global, however, is more than something really big, beyond the national levels, or something that simply happens in some other country. A global perspective also means taking concrete local circumstances into account while being aware of how they differ from other areas, and how global forces bring “influence from a distance.”

If we are to take news literacy in a global direction, then, it must go beyond traditional critiques of international news. Citizens are able as never before to be reflexive about news, given their access to alternative sources and perspectives, making interest in news literacy a world-wide phenomenon. The likelihood of citizens becoming news literate, however, is not a foregone conclusion. News is still domesticated through national frames of references, often taken for granted, and media globalization skeptics have argued that no truly transnational news platforms have emerged, permitting the kind of cross-boundary dialogs associate with a public sphere (e.g., Sparks, 2007). Indeed, critics like Hafez suggest that regional enclaves, linguistic divides, and parochial zones of ethnocentric discourse have become even more sharply defined (Hafez, 2007). Such skeptics point to the continued weaknesses of international reporting: elite-focused, conflict-based, and driven by scandal and the sensational, leading them to conclude that the “global village” has been blocked by domestication (reviewed in Reese, 2010). Even in the U.S., where the press system is advanced and highly professionalized, elite journalists reinforced the discursive echo-chamber supporting the decision to go to war in Iraq by internalizing the War on Terror frame promoted by the Bush administration (Reese & Lewis, 2009).

Thus, news literacy, even in the midst of more journalistic sources than ever before generated by both citizens and professionals, must be taught and cultivated. By news literacy I essentially mean an understanding of how news “works,” including the underlying media and technological systems that support certain meanings embedded in media “texts” and the creative process that yields them. Although an incredibly loaded term, “literacy” is a social practice, and that means locating it within a set of power relations while considering its moral, political, and cultural context.<sup>1</sup> Global news literacy, then, means the ability to understand, “decode,” and create media with particular awareness of one’s social location within an international context. We need a deep understanding of how news is working in certain particular cases but understand how to connect these cases to a larger framework. In teaching, in spite of the complex and abstract-sounding concepts within globalization, a case-oriented approach is often helpful

for such purposes. In this chapter I consider some ways educators can adapt to the teaching of news literacy in a global context, drawing from my own analysis of the globalization of journalists (Reese, 2010). And I will note some approaches in my own teaching experience, both at the University of Texas and the Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change<sup>1</sup>, that seem relevant to this challenge. We obviously want to approach news literacy with full consideration to the global context, and find appropriate instructional strategies, but how do to this is often a challenge.

## 2: Media literacy teaching trends

The media literacy movement, examined elsewhere in this volume, intersects with a number of trends in education, and provides a fruitful way to tackle the issues raised by media globalization. The educator must consider how the theoretical insights from media research map onto the pedagogical strategies available under the umbrella of media literacy. Indeed, the changes in media facilitate the very advances in teaching advocated by so many: critical thinking, active experiential learning, writing across the curriculum, and collaborative inquiry.

For the educator, these pedagogical trends have been supported in large part by changes in technology. One of the main strengths of the web is that it can help foster individualized learning. Kozma and Johnston (1991) acknowledged this early on in the web's development, observing that "the computer's processing capability can be used to create procedural systems in which information provided by the user determines what happens next." (p. 12) Such an individualized approach has changed the role of the instructor in the learning process. Branson (cited in Menges, 1994) argued that this shift away from the professor as the center of the classroom was part of a new paradigm for education, with a new center occupied by a collective, "accumulated knowledge" to which the students (as well as the professor) have direct access. (This models today's wider on-line communities.) Students learn through interaction with peers, with professors and through the use of new technology. Internet connectivity allows students to discuss their research with other students from different geographic regions, ethnic groups, government systems and economies. The combination of a multiplicity of resources and viewpoints pushes students to consider "facts" as presented by media as transitory and problematic rather than as static and opaque as textbook information. This is a perfect illustration from

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<sup>1</sup> The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, mentioned throughout this text, has worked over the past four years to build pedagogical models for media and news literacy that address global audiences. For three weeks every summer, more than fifty students and a dozen faculty from fifteen universities worldwide gather to explore media's role in global citizenship and civil society. The primary outcome of the Salzburg Academy is a student-created curriculum on Global News Literacy. This curriculum is founded on the notion that global citizenship and responsibility require individuals to have an understanding of media's necessary role in society and an awareness of the ways in which media influences cultural ideologies both locally and globally. Through the creation of dynamic educational content that investigates media's role in global society, the participants at the Salzburg Academy enter into cross-cultural dialogue that, at its core, reflects new understandings of media from diverse perspectives.

a technological standpoint of the teaching style called for in conjunction with news literacy. As Kozma and Johnston note, “with technology, students are moving away from the passive reception of information to active engagement in the construction of knowledge.” (p. 16)

Media literacy can be regarded as a subset of critical thinking, which according to the Foundation for Critical Thinking on its website is defined as “the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it.” To the extent that it involves questioning, reasoning, discerning the strength of claims, evaluating evidence, and taking multiple perspectives, media literacy necessarily is thinking critically, a process we presume leads to better informed citizens, who can evaluate the strength of political arguments and detect faulty logic as they make decisions. The public sphere concept of Jürgen Habermas emphasizes this thinking by posing a normative ideal of a discursive space, widely accessible to ideas that compete on the basis of reason. In news literacy, we wish to promote a pedagogy of inquiry, to make “asking critical questions about what you watch, see, and read” stand at the center of what it means to be media literate (Hobbs, 1998, p. 28). Thus, media literacy shares with critical thinking initiatives the promotion of intellectual autonomy on the part of the student/citizen. The broader goal of critical thinking guards against taking the mediated environment for granted. We want people to be able to stand back from news media objects, aesthetically, politically, and intellectually.

Looking back, it seems the world has caught up with media literacy, and many of its concerns now have become familiar issues. The concept of “literacy” itself seems straightforward, people should be able to “read” and “write.” Applying this idea to a broader array of media, beyond the traditional printed word, signals that they are also important and that the messages they contain (particularly visual) are not altogether obvious. Daily media consumption, although often deemed less important in the past as “mass” or “popular” culture, carries its own invisible curriculum along with more highbrow texts that are studied in the canon. Young people were considered at risk from the power of media, particularly television in the early years, and needed some self-defense tools. As university professional schools in communication have grown steadily these skills have become institutionalized, rooted in the various departments training students to analyze media texts, understand their social context and power, and produce media themselves. Digital media, now small and cheap enough to be widely available, have made this participatory part easier, and in doing so brought a heightened critical awareness to the other areas as well. Media literacy always had at least an implicit political agenda, often liberal but seldom radical. In the early going, do-it-yourself media projects could be regarded as a mild reformist impulse, holding out an emancipatory potential for the student-citizen-community producers while drawing attention away from the more deleterious media effects and leaving the entrenched commercial and corporate basis for the media intact. Now, the spread of citizen journalism available across the political spectrum has not only vastly increased the volume of media critique but itself encroached on these media structures by redrawing professional boundaries (e.g., Allan & Thorsen, 2009).

### **3: Global thinking/global teaching**

Just as in media literacy we are led to no longer take media for granted and in critical thinking to no longer take the thinking process for granted, so does globalization

itself bring greater reflexive awareness of ourselves in a larger network. We have more with which to compare ourselves and do so in real time--thus, problematizing the local. Becoming aware of the world as a “single place,” an intuitively appealing marker of globalization, causes us to stand in ironic detachment to ourselves. Such globalization insights help guide instructional strategies. In particular, I have observed and would like to suggest that using case-oriented instruction, at the Salzburg Academy adapted to a lesson-plan technique (described later in this volume), encourages a useful teaching culture where so many perspectives intersect. It mirrors in some respects the theoretical distinction between the global and the local.

The “global village” perspective regards the global as one within a nested hierarchy of levels of analysis based on size: the global then lies beyond the local, regional, and national. Against this expectation that media report and reach the entire globe, however, little evidence exists for a world communication system with an undistorted view of the world. The global village also implies global consciousness, which implies a homogeneity of world views, or at least a diverse “dialog of cultures.” Again, the global media system, particularly international broadcasting, doesn’t live up to that hope: homogenization loses out to domestication. The “networked society” theorizing of Manuel Castells (Castells, 2007), for example, is interpreted by some to necessarily require a giant cluster of inter-linked world, state and cultural entities, but it should rather be seen as yielding different lines of cross-border articulation. Rather than assume that globalization means a uniform imposition of a global (village) standard across a range of local circumstances, we should more realistically consider it as a complex interplay between local and cultural forces from a distance.

Satellite news channels have figured prominently in the “media globalization” debate. This has led to these platforms often being regarded as a “space apart” in a new “global” realm. Volkmer (1999), for example, tied global news to an emerging world civil society structure. In her study of CNN International, she argued that global political communication constructs a global public sphere, from which emerges global civil society. She further argues that the global public sphere is a new political space, with the capacity to pressure national politics and provide communication not otherwise possible on a national level--with, for example, the Arab television network Al-Jazeera’s interview with Osama bin Laden, or extra-territorial websites set up by Chinese dissidents (Volkmer, 2002). No doubt that’s true, but calling it a new “sphere of mediation” can also be misleading.

This globalization theorizing implies that there is some global space apart from the local, which led Robertson (1995) to propose the helpful concept of the “glocal.” Observing the globalization process means finding where the global intersects with the local, where the universal meets the particular. This is helpful because when it comes to media globalization, many are inclined to expect a special communication platform that serves as a virtual global space. But the global public sphere is not some new autonomous zone, operating like national public spheres only on a broader supranational scale (most obviously in zones like the European Union). When globalization “skeptics” define it that way, of course they are led to deny its existence. Hjarvard (2001), rather, claims it is a process of restructuring and recasting public communication. Globalization of the public sphere means the *process* by which the national spheres become deterritorialized, not the creation of a new and separate global public sphere but a “multi-layered structure of

publicity” (p. 34). As appealing (and utopian) as the concept may seem, there is no “global” public sphere per se, floating free of localities, and attempts to theorize one break down in the absence of a more defined and observable social space.

This raises the question then of where to go to observe these relationships and how to teach them. We are embedded in communities beyond the ones we live in, ones not defined by place. That doesn’t mean, however, that physical place has ceased to matter for global level processes. The work of globalization theorists in geography and sociology leads us to seek the workings of the global in specific local places, where the universal and global become particularized and local. Global networks don’t exist virtually but connect local nodes, where people interact in real places with key members of other networks, and where they develop common norms and logics necessary for the functioning of complex global exchanges. Thus, Castells’ network society (2007) embraces the “space of flows” and the “space of places” and their interactions, capturing the seeming paradox that in the face of so much on-line communication such global cities as London and New York have become even more important, where the global and local come together in the interaction of cosmopolitan elites.

Teaching global news literacy means following these connections, not simply laying claim to CNN or Al-Jazeera as themselves prima facie evidence of global influence. This is a challenging task for the educator, but encouraging in the sense that the global can be tackled through an analysis of concrete cases in local circumstances. No matter where students are from, they can understand the global through its connection with a specific familiar local context. They cannot think about it only in the abstract, but must find those insights through the concrete particulars.

#### **4: Global news literacy case: China**

A global news literacy perspective is particularly helpful in understanding the complex process of social change in countries with highly controlled press systems now being witnessed in a number of regions. That goes both for those in the middle of such changes and onlookers like myself. My own scholarly understanding of the globalization process has been enhanced by working as an educator with insiders via the Salzburg Academy, but this has been a mutually influential process in a way that illustrates some of the unexpected kinds of learning that a focus on news literacy can bring about.

In understanding global news processes, it is not always helpful to divide countries into free and unfree, but rather we should consider the introduction of new “spaces” for public deliberation that are made possible by global interconnectivity and communication technology (Reese, 2009). The remarkable online changes in China, with the world’s largest group of “netizens,” have also brought about unexpected deliberative openings in the public sphere. The rising number of “mass incidents” fueled by the internet brings pressure to bear on government corruption and other public concerns. The government still has many tools for controlling communication, but these changes are moving inexorably toward greater societal openness. Even in one of the most carefully stage-managed events, the Beijing Olympics, the director of the Asian Studies at Georgetown, Victor Cha, claimed that social change had been brought about in one of the world’s most rigid systems, a seismic shift that cannot be undone (Cha, 2008). The Chinese netizens have shown how media criticism, or “news literacy,” can go viral with significant new consequences. Driven by nationalism, the government encouraged criticism of foreign

press performance in covering China, but the tools of news literacy are not so easily confined to external targets and can easily be redirected toward more homegrown media problems. These tools include the ability to evaluate, critically analyze and compare media portrayals, as supported by a variety of digital platforms, blogs, bulletin-board systems (BBS), forums in traditional news sites, and social media. Thus, rather than see social change as the result of a “McDonaldization” process of world homogenization, a cultural globalization process is taking place not in a directed top-down imposition of force but through spaces of mutual awareness, in which standards evolve in a reflexive process (Robertson, 1995).

I understood this dynamic better after hearing first-hand from Chinese colleagues. In teaching at the Salzburg Academy in 2008, I heard a presentation by the professor and delegation of students from the Chinese partner university on the international press coverage leading up to the Beijing Olympics. One of the issues at the time concerned how foreign news reports were depicting social unrest in Tibet, and CNN had been a particular target, serving as exemplar for other Western media. CNN commentator Jack Cafferty inflamed this sensitivity by calling the Chinese government, “the same bunch goons and thugs they have been in the past fifty years.” The Chinese amateur website, Anti-CNN.com, was established to help collect what were considered lies and distortions, aided by thousands of contributors, or “netizens,” in a process sometimes called “human flesh search engine.” The most remarkable action taken was the establishment of online petitions against the Western media (especially CNN) which reportedly accumulated tens of thousands of signatures and comments. Netizens wanted Western media to respond to their petition, stop publishing irresponsible comments, and apologize for biased news coverage.

The Chinese group’s analysis at the Academy reflected their more general concern toward how the country would be viewed on the world stage, and some images were shown illustrating errors and distorted emphasis in media coverage. Although motivated by national sensitivities, it struck me that the Chinese were discovering “news literacy” techniques and applying them on a scale never seen before. The problems of ethnocentrism, news sensationalism, dramatic visuals, reporter pack mentality, lack of historical context, reliance on a narrow group of sources, and distorted emphasis were not peculiar to coverage of China. They are tendencies of news media more generally and the subject of numerous Western-based research critiques. I was led to do my own analysis (an essay I shared with the instructor and later published) of how that same enthusiasm for media criticism could easily be turned inward after Olympics fever subsided, giving rise to greater demands for media accountability inside China (Reese & Dai, 2009). The ever increasing number of internet-amplified “mass incidents,” many of which have included incident of journalistic malpractice, suggest this is the case.

The following year another delegation of students came to Salzburg with a different professor, and I was intrigued to see a new presentation on how Chinese netizens, as citizen journalists, were monitoring and helping change incidents of corruption and violation of social norms. For example, a local official was seen in one image posted on the Internet wearing an expensive watch, one not affordable at the salary he was paid in his government post. In another incident, an official was smoking a similarly pricey cigarette. Ferreting out and commenting on such images spurred investigations into local corruption. Like the army of bloggers in the US and elsewhere, Chinese citizens were scrutinizing information available on the Internet in the interest of better government. I was

particularly interested that the students had quoted me in their presentation making reference (in the chapter above) to a telling quote I had found provocative from the *New York Times*--that a revolution was coming to China, only that the revolution is experienced “mostly as one of self-actualization: empowerment in a thousand tiny, everyday ways” (Thompson, 2006, p. 64). A case-style approach to news literacy, which I take both years’ presentations to be, had yielded valuable insights in being seeded across national contexts.

##### **5: News literacy instructional directions**

A number of related pedagogical initiatives in recent years, with which the author has been involved, have spoken to this problem of how best to engage with a globalized news media. They don’t stem specifically from a media literacy context per se, but they do relate to the same objectives of how to get students to be more intellectually rigorous in their relationship with media. The common thread for three of these initiatives has been the Knight Foundation, a philanthropic power with roots in the newspaper industry. Knight shared our view in journalism education that the best way to improve news literacy is through the schools, laying the groundwork early for informed citizens. That fits with the somewhat evangelical quality of the media literacy movement, which seeks to disseminate media understanding through the schools, and that means taking pedagogical strategy seriously. In two Texas projects we aimed to teach teachers as a way to seed valuable ideas in the classroom, organizing the projects for participants around having them construct lesson plans around what they had learned. The Salzburg Academy has taken a similar approach in compiling lesson plans from participants, using a case or story to introduce broader principles.

##### ***Media & American Democracy project***

Teachers must increasingly engage with students as co-investigators. Rather than a repository of information that students tap for knowledge, the teacher guides them in their own discovery. This can feel like giving up control and diminishing the leadership role, but it requires its own special skill. It’s also a constant process of balancing structure with freedom.<sup>ii</sup> Between 1997 and 2000, the Media and American Democracy Project brought the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, and the Kennedy School of Government together to train high school teachers in a multi-day institute. The goal was to expose teachers to the latest ideas and research related to the press, politics, and American policy: how media are used in the democratic process, and how new media technologies affect the political process. In this respect the emphasis was learning “about” media and their institutional importance in the political system, but when we partnered with them to carry out a Texas program we added the goal of teaching students to be “savvy and critical news consumers.” As the professional news industry has changed dramatically in the last decade it has only increased the importance of schools of journalism to pay as much attention to citizen news literacy as to training industry practitioners.<sup>iii</sup>

This project had a strong pedagogical dimension in showing how to develop course instructional methods centered on media topics. At the heart of this approach was the Teaching for Understanding Framework, developed by Howard Gardner and others at Harvard. The key from a news literacy perspective was the focus on a spirit of investigation. Teachers developed curriculum units using Generative Topics (What is the



subject? E.g., some news media issue), Generative Objects (What object(s) evoke images central to the focus of the unit?: e.g., a news story or image), Understanding Goals (Essential Questions and Critical Engagement Questions), and Performance of Understanding. The rationale for this approach is to provide intellectual coherence to what is being learned, so that the student is pushed toward understanding beyond basic knowledge of facts (information on tap). Teachers develop essential questions to which the material contains the answers: “What makes news?” “Is it possible or desirable to have ‘unbiased’ news?” “To what extent are journalists free to write what they please?” Such questions suggest investigation beyond the more rigid and directive term “objectives,” which imply preset answers. Such guiding questions are better able to lead to understanding, where one can think and act flexibly with what is known.

A framework with this kind of “optimal ambiguity,” according to David Perkins of Harvard’s educational Project Zero, provides enough structure and flexibility to meet the needs of classroom teachers, who are encouraged to personalize their innovations. I suspect teachers may have been doing similar things before, but having the imprimatur of Harvard helped certify its value and give them permission to be more open-ended in their approach and less a slave to having to “cover the material.”<sup>iv</sup> (Blythe & Perkins, 1998)

### **High School Journalism Institute**

A similar approach was taken when we designed an institute for high school journalism teachers, in a project for the American Society of Newspaper Editors (also sponsored by Knight) designed to revitalize secondary school journalism (and in turn, it was hoped, the profession). We asked the participants to design curriculum units as part of their learning process, and these have been posted on the organization’s website over the last several years. Using the same Teaching for Understanding Framework as with the Harvard project, we directed them to develop these lesson plans around journalism issues but based on finding key generative objects and essential questions, from which broader discussions and student projects could grow. Of course, when it comes to news there is no end of specific instances of coverage that can serve a jumping off point. Without being too strict with pedagogical theory, the lesson project provided a way for these teachers to adapt what they learned to their own needs, developing specific and practical classroom resources that would help them when they returned to their campuses.<sup>v</sup> As our Salzburg students have developed their own lessons plans, we imagine that they will have a similar sense that their work has been organized around issues of concern to them and motivated by the expectation that it will be publicly available.

### **Critical Thinking/Case Studies**

In my own teaching I have been influenced by these initiatives, particularly in cultivating a style of questions in the classroom that helps with critical engagement. In that respect, I find intersection between the Teaching for Understanding approach and case-studies. In both, one can start with specific facts (or generative object) and from there in a Socratic process develop guiding questions that bring out larger principles and deeper understanding.

In my school of journalism, we experimented several years ago with a new class called “Critical thinking for journalists.” Given the importance of clear thinking for aspiring journalists we had high hopes for a class where thinking itself was at issue, with

significant attention to informal logic, fallacies, and multiple perspectives. As the instructor I soon saw the point of one of the criticisms of the critical thinking movement, that it's too self-referential and become too sealed off from substantive issues. Not doubting the value of sound reasoning, can we think about thinking itself or must we always be thinking about something? As enrollment grew it became impractical to teach those skills in a large format courses. Thus, in due time the course evolved into something more general, "Critical *Issues* in Journalism," but I retained an interest in getting students to think more critically about their future profession.

After several years away from teaching that course, I incorporated upon returning a case-study approach. Within journalism education, reform efforts were underway to introduce the same kind of reflective teaching methods more common in other professional schools like law and business, long accustomed to using cases. This was part of a more general movement from inside the profession to recuperate, in the face of stagnation and ethical drift, the essential qualities of journalism: Project for Excellence in Journalism. A few years later, a special initiative was launched in 2007 with support from the Knight Foundation and housed at Columbia's School of Journalism, with the goal of developing high quality case studies and encouraging faculty to consider them as a way of cultivating critical thinking, through the lens of the professional, to train "reflective practitioners" (Schoen, 1983). Journalism educators, like others, are not quick to change their teaching culture, and so the case method, which requires some significant teacher retooling, has not yet been widely embraced. According to its promotional materials, "The goal is to train students to think like managers and leaders. Case-based courses develop students' analytic, decision-making, management and leadership skills. Through class discussion, students have the opportunity to examine in depth a wide range of editorial, ethical and economic issues. Students have a chance to exercise the muscle of judgment, strengthening it for the time when they will have to use it in a newsroom or other professional setting."

I have used a collection of textbook cases, including classic journalistic moments such as Watergate, the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal, and the Columbine school shooting tragedy (Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2003), supplementing them with more recent cases from the Columbia collection, including one that explored, for example, the ethics of reporting the presumed sexual orientation of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq. In using these cases as the basis for the course, it is easy to introduce critical thinking skills into classroom discussion: how well justified was the decision, what other perspectives are possible, why did the journalist decide as he or she did and what were the ethical implications? When I have students develop their own case studies, they learn to better discern the "professional issue" from a set of facts. For many of them, having only recently left high school, this is often a challenge.<sup>vi</sup>

The case study approach lines up with the Salzburg-Harvard-ASNE lesson-plan strategy in allowing students to begin with specific concrete circumstances (generative objects) and build from there to broader understandings. In the case of news literacy subjects, they start from something accessible and build out from there. In my first experience with the Salzburg Academy in 2008, I could see that the diversity of students and national perspectives made something like this teaching approach necessary. Although it is helpful for students to have a common grounding in certain knowledge, there is no practical way to "cover the material" in a subject so broad as "global media," especially when handling a group coming to the table with such different levels of prior

knowledge. But the range of generative objects in the form of “stories” that they begin with is wide, and with the media tools at their disposal they can take the information they acquire and develop their own “performances” to deepen their understanding.

## **6: Conclusion**

In teaching global news literacy educators face a complex but engaging subject, but have at their disposal a array of teaching strategies ideally suited to the task. By engaging students in their own deep reflection about news media issues, using materials particular to their interest and cultural setting, this approach is readily adaptable to any cultural context. It engages students, facilitates active learning, and gives them greater appreciation of how their experience fits into the larger framework of global news. I have considered some of these principles and tied them to the pedagogical process as used in the Salzburg Global Academy and my own institution at the University of Texas. In my reference to specific projects, I hope in this admittedly personal narrative to have shown how these approaches relate to the challenges of teaching news literacy, especially in a global context.

If it were ever possible to “cover the material” of any classroom subject in the past, explosion of knowledge has made that day long past. Instead there are habits of mind, intellectual self-defense skills, that can be taught in ways that we hope are engaging and lead to more self-directed learning. In the case of news literacy, we can emphasize understanding growing out of specific cases and exploit students’ already easy familiarity with the ubiquitous media in their lives to use it as a window into broader issues. Although our scope is global we can still approach news literacy through local frames of reference; indeed, how could we do otherwise? As considered in my examples above, using lesson plans projects, as in the Harvard and ASNE initiatives, or the case studies that are becoming more integral to journalism education oblige students to learn what is necessary in order to answer the fundamental questions about how they live their lives both *in* and *through* media. The Academy model, itself, may not be possible everywhere, but it shows how a single subject (as in, for example, my China case) can be engaged by a diverse set of students bringing their own unique perspective and building a model for news literacy understanding. The juxtaposition of perspectives brings about richer insights, which are particularly needed as we confront the complex web of media and citizen connections in a more globalized world

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<sup>i</sup> For a review of recent work in media literacy education and research see the volume by my University of Texas colleague, Kathleen Tyner (2010).

<sup>ii</sup> In one of my Salzburg experiences, the US students were asked, apart from the other curriculum, to prepare a presentation about the American media system to share with everyone else and gathered to discuss how to proceed. As a faculty leader I was inclined to give them wide latitude and let them “self-organize,” (after all, they should be the experts in the U.S. media) but after an hour of chaotic discussion they clamored for some guidance and structure (at which point I dispatched my wife, Carol, a master middle-school teacher!).

<sup>iii</sup> With support from Knight and Carnegie Foundations my school has launched new courses in recent years intended to introduce these concepts to the wider campus.

<sup>iv</sup> I suspect there is a countervailing pressure among public school teachers who have in recent years been subjected to increasing assessment measuring and the need to “teach to the test.” College level teacher, although increasingly obliged to implement their own assessment culture, are relatively more free in their instructional style.

<sup>v</sup> See [http://www.hsj.org/modules/lesson\\_plans/](http://www.hsj.org/modules/lesson_plans/) for numerous examples of such lessons.

<sup>vi</sup> A range of news stories and commentary that often serve as the basis for case studies can be found on my occasional class blog: “press conference,” <http://sdreese.wordpress.com/>.