News / Media Literacy Program Assignment

Your final team project involves developing a program on media or news "literacy" for college freshmen, such as ILA students or advanced high school students and/or the general public. The program should include a media artifact that presents of important material that these "users" of your program can understand in ways that will help them become better and more critically thoughtful consumers of media and news information. Your program will take the form of a "stand-alone" PowerPoint slide show or a Prezi (with or without a sound-track).

GOAL: This assignment requires your team to identify a narrowly defined set of concepts about news or other another form of digital information that users of your program can see applied to media they encounter in their lives. The "program" you create should explain the knowledge you have defined and show in a concrete way how that knowledge can be applied to a real-world mediated message. By completing your "program" the user should be able to use that knowledge in responding and making use of news and media he or she encounters in daily life. Thus, your team must design a short program for the users that

1. Introduces your selected topic and shows how it is relevant and important to the students you are training.
2. Provides a concrete example of an interesting and, perhaps, vivid media/news message that the users can view.
3. And engages the users with the material through explanations that show the application of the concepts you have defined to the message in ways that will allow users to apply the same concepts to other media/news messages they encounter in the future so that they will be sure to have a significant "take-away" from your program.

Structure of the Program: The typical program will need to *include the following elements:*

A. An **introduction to your topic that gets attention sets a context** for your program and establishes **why this material is important** to the users you are presenting it for. [A-M-T-O of the AMTOBUL model you studied in COMM 101 may be useful in thinking about this portion of the program.]
B. **A "meaty" set of following "slides"** that lay out the key ideas your team has decided to include. ("Meaty" in this case means that the slides should contain enough information so that the slide show alone could be understood by ANY person who views it, not just members of this class.) The slide show presentation by your team could involve discussion and interaction with the students being trained as you go through it in some settings but should also be understandable to individuals who only see the slide show and view the media/news message.
C. **A link to an actual news story (or other appropriate media information source, an "artifact")** so that users can view the concepts your slides introduce in an actual news or media message.
D. A **set of "applications"** (explanations of how the concepts introduced in B. above apply to the linked message) that reveal to the user how your concepts can be applied in real life. The best programs will be both engaging and be FUN.
E. A "Teacher's Study Guide" to provide guidance for how to use the program in a class, including activity ideas, discussion questions, and additional sources.

<u>Steps</u> in completing this assignment:

1. Begin this assignment by discussing the potential topics suggested below with your team. Determine what each topic might involve and what knowledge your team already possesses that might be useful in training younger students or other users to be more effective consumers of news or other media information. Topics will be assigned to teams on a first come-first served basis. Your team may propose a topic not on the list below with approval from the instructor.

2. Once you have selected a topic and had it approved, you will need to select a news story (or other media message) that will be linked in your "program" and will be an effective example to illustrate the concepts you intend to teach your users.

3. Next, with your selected news story located, you may wish to schedule a meeting with a local expert suggested by your instructor (e.g. Profs. Angotti or Kristiansen, Library Dir. Sayre, Review Atlas Editor Jake Bolitho, etc.).

4. Determine the news/media literacy ideas you will present. Remember, less is generally better. A few important ideas that are well illustrated which the users can clearly understand and then see immediately in your application to the linked news story will serve far better than a lot of material that will be quickly forgotten.

5. Lastly, create an introduction that will be vivid, gain attention, and establish that your program has significance for the users you are training AND a conclusion that encourages students to be better consumers of news and media information in the future by using this material.

6. Include a "Works Cited slide at the end.

7. TEST your program to determine if it is clear and will give the user the kind of understanding of news/media that you intended. To do this, find several people who have no knowledge of the content of your program (naive viewers) and have them "click through" your program without any assistance from you. Determine from your naive user what they found clear, what they found less clear, and what they found confusing or incoherent. Also determine if they learned what you wanted them to learn. Do they remember the key concepts and can they apply them to a new media message? Keep the stuff that is working and fix the problems revealed.

8. Once you have finished the program, create a short (1-2 pages) study guide that would be useful to teachers, librarians or others who might incorporate your news literacy program into a class or other learning setting. The study guide should include definitions of terms, discussion questions, ideas for in-class activities or out-of-class assignments that could go along with the program, and a list of additional resources (e.g. the News Literacy Center)

<u>Advice</u>:
- Keep things thoughtful and useful but SIMPLE
- Use lots of VIVID SUPPORT material to illustrate your points
- Be sure the users you train can see HOW to use this material and WHY it is worth their time throughout the program.
- Keep the students ACTIVELY ENGAGED as they move through your PowerPoint or Prezi. Don't let them become passive observers.

Programs will be graded on the following basis:

1. How well a "user" of your materials can understand and apply the concepts you introduce in your program <u>without additional or previous knowledge</u>,
2. How effective the "program" functions as **<u>a stand-alone learning resource</u>**,
3. How <u>accurate and appropriate are the concepts</u> your team includes in the program,
4. How <u>well illustrated/applied the concepts are through the news story</u> or media message you have selected.
5. How <u>well organized</u> your program is, how <u>vivid and effective support material</u> your team uses is in engaging and clarifying concepts,
6. How effective the program is likely to be at <u>getting users to apply what the just learned</u> in later experiences with news or other media information sources,
7. How <u>involved all members of the team</u> seem to have been in the development and presentation of the training program.

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Information and Media Literacy Resources

The Center for News Literacy: Digital Resource Center (follow other links as well)
The News Literacy Project: Learn Channel
Gateway for Media Literacy Education (check out Reading Room and Best Practices)
Media Literacy Online Project
Information Literacy Resources Gateway **(ACRL)**

ASSIGNMENT EVALUATION FORM

DUE DATES: Thurs. & Tues., Nov. 20 & 25 - in class team reports

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Potential News / Media Literacy Program Topics

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- **Broadcast News: What Makes News News**. Why did this particular story become news for a national American network at the time it was first made available? [I recommend selecting a single, video news story from CNN's or Al Jazeera America's web site for your news artifact as they remain archived and available much longer and more reliably than news stories from the broadcast networks.]

- **Broadcast News: The Visual Impact.** How do elements of the videos, still photos and various graphics (text and otherwise) influence and change the viewer's interpretation of the story. [I recommend selecting a single, video news story from CNN's or Al Jazeera America's web site for your news artifact as they remain archived and available much longer and more reliably than news stories from the broadcast networks.]

- **Broadcast News: Distortions.** How do factors such as ordering, the need for drama, access, source influences, and themes cause news stories to differ from the real events they depict in ways that influence the viewer's interpretation of the story? [I recommend selecting a single, video news story from CNN's or Al Jazeera America's web site for your news artifact as they remain archived and available much longer and more reliably than news stories from the broadcast networks.]

- **Print News: Assembling the Story.** How does a local news event become a story in the newspaper? What are the roles of the reporter and the editor? Where does the information come from and what happens when it's not all there? [I recommend selecting a single, complex or controversial news story from the archives of the Monmouth Review Atlas and interviewing the editor about the story and how it came to be.]

- **The Wikipedia: Can We Trust It?** How is a Wikipedia article constructed and by whom? What methods exist by which the Wikipedia organization attempts to maintain accuracy? When is the information likely to be reliable and when is it not? [I recommend finding a short but substantive Wikipedia article on a topic that may involve some controversy and explore the references and the editing history. Meet with the Library Reference Head to discuss this information source and when it can be trusted.]

- **The News Skeptic: When to Double Check.** What are some clues that material in a news or information article (or web page/blog or political commercial) may not be dependable? What are some strategies to follow in order to check the accuracy of specific facts and the general conclusions of the message? [I recommend selecting a very short web article or blog, esp. a political opinion piece or a political TV ad on YouTube, and working through the fact-checking process including best sources to use.]

- **Background: Getting the Big Picture.** We often encounter news stories that tell us details about something that is currently happening, but how do we find the background that led to these recent events? When events are complex, controversial and have a history, it can be difficult for the news consumer to understand current events. What are strategies the consumer can use to understand the context of current events? [I recommend selecting a single, video news story from CNN's or Al Jazeera America's web site or a short article from a major newspaper, say something like ISIS and "true" Islam or Ebola and epidemics for your news artifact. Then find useful background on the issues and show the steps for finding good background information that your users can follow in other situations. Meet with Rick Sayre, Hewes Library Director to discuss strategies for finding good overview sources.]