

AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING APPROACH TO MEDIA LITERACY AND NEWS LITERACY

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LITERATURE

- News literacy is a subset of media literacy (Mihailidis, 2011). The literature regarding news media and goals for media literacy suggest that, ideally, news literacy would help in developing audiences that are better equipped to access, evaluate, analyze, and create news materials if they can understand thoroughly the conditions in which news is produced (Ashley, Maksl, & Craft, 2013). As such, the development of a practice for teaching news literacy that seeks to show students how to access, evaluate, analyze, and appreciate journalism would translate into high level of engagement, greater awareness of current events, and a deeper understanding of journalism (Fleming, 2014).
- In developing a news literacy program, it is important to consider the three challenges posed by Mihailidis (2011) along with some principles that would help create an engaging environment for students. Hobbs (2010) suggested seven learning principles for creating a learning environment in which an individual builds knowledge, critical thinking and communications skills in a way that is relevant to them. These principles include: (1) start from the learner's interest by allowing the students to select the topics to examine; (2) connect comprehension and analysis through close readings with the goal to understand both the news content and its form and structure; (3) allow students to ask critical questions by using reasoning and evidence to support ideas; (4) focus on the way news are constructed and examine the strategic choice of words, images, sounds, and graphics to shape the readers' perception of reality; (5) use new ideas to directly support critical analysis and media composition; (6) use collaborative multimedia composition in order to produce challenging and meaningful content that can be shared with real audiences; and (7) make connections between the classroom and the real world.

METHODOLOGY

- Students enrolled in an upper level course were exposed to the concepts of information and misinformation, social media in journalism, and information literacy before reviewing three core lessons: 1) Deconstructing the News and Evaluating Sources, 2) Balance, Fairness, and Bias, and 3) Truth and Verification. These three core lessons were developed using the 2018 fall public course feed published by the Stony Brook Center for News Literacy Digital Resource Center.
- The experiential learning and service learning approach to news literacy was developed by incorporating an outreach to local high schools. College students enrolled in the course were grouped and assigned a component from the three core lessons around which they were to develop the workshop for the high school students. By doing this, students became active learners using classroom content to facilitate the development of skills relevant to news literacy to groups of students in local high schools at an after-school program for students in grades 9-12.
- Students were tested on their knowledge and level of awareness for the main elements in these three core lectures after concluding the project.
- The assessments used provided respondents with real-world examples of content that the respondents would encounter online while searching for information or browsing social media. Given the nature of the content in these assessments, and the overlap of skills being assessed both as part of Stanford History Education Group's Civic Online Reasoning competencies, and those of the Stony Brook model of News Literacy, a version of these assessments adapted by the Center for News Literacy as part of a curriculum package of four prominent news literacy lessons was used (Spikes & Conlon, 2019).

RESULTS

- Students' knowledge to be above the emerging or intermediate level when it comes to identifying credible sources.
- Students' knowledge is below emerging or intermediate level when it comes to identifying methods of different types of media and news, evaluating reliability of sources, and determining whether the information provided is fair and balanced.
- The student reflections indicated advocacy of media and news literacy lessons and recognition of personal knowledge deficits when it comes to media and news literacy.
- The results of this experiential learning project highlight the importance of combining new models of engaged learning with frameworks for media and news literacy.

IMPLICATIONS

- The results of this experiential learning project highlight the importance of combining new models of engaged learning with frameworks for media and news literacy.

SOURCES

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