General Philosophy and Practice

I am a firm believer that knowledge is constructed rather than received. In the classroom it is my responsibility to create a learning environment in which each student acquires the tools to construct their knowledge to the best of his or her ability. My goals as an instructor are threefold: 1) to inspire curiosity and the drive to learn; 2) to foster critical thinking and analytic skills; and 3) to provide a comprehensive and interdisciplinary exploration of communications, media and society.

Students do their best when they are eager to learn. My lessons are designed not only to instruct but to engage both substantively and technologically. Communications is a field rich in competing theory and interdisciplinary debate, so while I make sure to provide a conceptual foundation for my students, I consciously step away from reiterative lectures and presentations and draw the students into discussion and debate. Here both world events and technology fuel classroom conversation. During lecture, I use online documentaries, embed YouTube clips, satire and pundit video streams, and incorporate contemporary political issues that are "ripped from the headlines" to motivate students to think about the material, to think about the media, and most importantly to think for themselves.

Critical thinking is perhaps the most valuable tool we can give to our students thus it is inadequate to rely solely upon a top down method of instruction. I am as interactive with my students as the classroom will allow using technology alongside the Socratic Method to inspire independent ideas, analyses and solutions that are based on both theory and fact. Personal interaction- that give and take between student and
instructor-helps introduce concepts and pose questions that require students to reach their own conclusions rather than to give pat answers. Most recently I used the Bradley Manning Case, Wikileaks, Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street as backdrops for my lectures. The interaction of media, activism and politics in both these movements richly complemented my lessons regarding comparative world media systems and international communications, and most recently mass communications law. More importantly, however discussion of these movements in the context of my courses inspired intellectual introspection in the students and facilitated comprehension and critical thinking.

My teaching method is straightforward. In class I carefully go over material which my students are expected to know and will see on homework, quizzes and exams. I do not rely solely on power point presentation as I like to stimulate debate rather than encourage rote learning. However I do regularly provide online power point presentations, video lectures and study outlines in order to aid in their understanding of material and to equip my students with the information skills they require to be successful my courses.

I am engaged with my students outside the classroom as well. Using ANGEL, our course management system, I post relevant and interesting links, documentaries and news coverage to further illustrate the substance of class and to keep students interested in the larger world around them. I check the websites of Freedom House, Reporters Sans Frontieres, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the Oyez Project daily and almost always find relevant literature, which I post in the ANGEL lessons tabs as well as tweet them to my student followers. In addition I follow multiple international activists and
nonprofit media and human rights organizations on Twitter so that my students remain up to date on world politics and global communications.

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of our field it is imperative that I teach holistically and offer a comprehensive view of the subject matter at hand. I design my courses to examine communications through alternative and sometimes contrary lenses. I make sure to provide an overview of communications that encompasses historical, theoretical, economic, political, global and legal perspectives. This is reflected in my reading and material assignments, which include literature from across the academic spectrum as well as from print, broadcast and social media platforms.

**Pedagogical Tools**

In spring 2009 I took the pedagogy course offered by the College of Communications in which we observed, studied, debated and utilized various pedagogical methods of teaching. Three methods I found particularly suited to my course material and teaching style are detailed below.

*Student-driven/collaborative learning*

The courses I teach challenge students not only with competing theoretical perspectives, but also philosophical and subjective conundrums. My goal is to evoke critical analyses of the intersection of global media, international relations, corporate transnationalism, and new technologies. Not surprisingly, lively discussion and debate are the norm. For example, when I presented my students with competing frames of the "Occupy Wall Street Movement," the students had an animated and politely contentious discussion about the substance of the movement itself; who these people were, why they were there, what was their message, and to what effect was it delivered? Similarly when
presenting instances of hactivism as a tool for political protest, the class engaged in ethical deconstruction and grappled with the dilemma of relativism.

Comparative Research

Communications courses are inherently comparative and provide an excellent opportunity to instruct students in cross national research methods. Utilizing Kohn's typology of comparative research (Kohn, 1944) as framework for a final research paper and interactive project, I introduce the students to the competing methods of analyses used to dissect global media landscapes and media phenomena. Students learn how to examine a media system theoretically and empirically from one of the following perspectives: nation as the object of study; nation as the context of study; nation as the object of analysis; and, recalling world systems theory, nation as a part of a larger, transnational system.

Case studies

Case studies provide invaluable context in my courses. For each unit covered I provide a broad lecture on the topic or region and follow up by presenting a micro-level case study to enhance the students' understanding. For instance, in studying media in authoritarian regimes, I begin the unit with a historical, political and ideological explication of authoritarianism and the authoritarian media model. I then conclude with a descriptive and critical examination of the media system in a particular authoritarian regime such as Cuba or Saudi Arabia.

In my classroom I require a lot of myself and of my students. I strongly believe in self-determination and accountability; a gift from my undergraduate institution. I am deeply committed to teaching and encouraging personal responsibility in the classroom.
As a teacher, it is not only my job to teach academic substance but also to foster proper work habits that will lead to the development of professionalism that will lead to post graduation success. Therefore I try to teach by example. In addition to office hours, I make myself available via virtual chat rooms and online office hours and am similarly available to meet by appointment or when a student needs accommodation. I find it extremely important to provide timely feedback to my students whether that is in the form of answering emails, handing back and reviewing exams, line-by line editing of papers or assignments, or just by providing advice or direction. Providing such feedback creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect which allows me to be an innovative, effective and stimulating instructor but more importantly, gives my students the confidence to construct their knowledge.