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Integrating Media Literacy into General Education Core Courses for Undergraduates

Christen Pudlewski Embry

Ed.D. Degree Program in Teaching and Learning

Major in Postsecondary Teaching and Instructional Leadership

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of the

Doctor of Education Degree

National College of Education

National Louis University

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DISSERTATION

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Submitted for Approval

October 12, 2022

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NLU Digital Commons Document Origination Statement

        This document was created for the dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Ed.D. degree in Teaching and Learning with a major in Postsecondary Teaching and Instructional Leadership. The National Louis University EdD with a Postsecondary Teaching focus is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement a major project within their educational institution that relates to a problem of professional practice. The three foci of the project are:
- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership
- Policy Advocacy

For the **Program Evaluation** focus, candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their learning institution. The "program" can be curriculum; a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership** focus, candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy** focus, candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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Abstract

This study aimed to understand the essential nature of media literacy, evaluate pre-developed higher education classes for existing media literacy context, and recommend best practices for incorporating media literacy into an undergraduate curriculum. This mixed-methods study of media literacy in undergraduate college courses explored the presence and absence of media literacy lessons within core classes by auditing 15 online course shells accessed through the university's Learning Management System (LMS). Specifically, all the courses surveyed included the first skill of media literacy, Access; 33% of the classes included Analyze; 27% included Creation; 20% included Reflection; and 20% included Action. Once the audit was complete, the author interviewed media literacy experts to contextualize the importance of media literacy.

The author recommends integrating media literacy into existing core classes through assignments, discussion prompts, and updated Program and Course Level Outcomes. If followed, the recommended addition of assignment and discussion prompts would more than double the media literacy skills included in the core classes. In addition, the changes could emphasize the higher-level thinking arenas of education as set forth in Bloom's Taxonomy. Separately, the author advocates for the addition of professional development for educators at all levels on how to add media literacy into their subjects.

Preface

My relationship with the media is a tumultuous, love-hate affair with aspects of complete devotion and occasional overwhelming horror. In other words, I am a media fan and former creator who is also media literate. My career in media began when I worked as a newspaper reporter, continued into wire-service reporting, veered into marketing/public relations/advertising, and ended in event management. While I worked in media, I was also a parent. I knew children could be especially vulnerable to damaging media messages. In fact, the project created for my graduate degree focused on the impact of media on the self-esteem of tween girls.

When I left the world of media creation for education, I brought along my love-hate relationship. I teach several core communication classes: public speaking, intercultural communication, and introduction to communication, for example, but I also develop and teach classes focusing on media analysis, such as *Reality TV & Society*, *Women in Media*, and *Comics, Cons, and Cosplay*. For a long time, my view of media literacy was blinkered to see the primary importance of media analysis. I have since expanded my viewpoint to understand that media literacy is much more than "just" analysis.

As a communication professor, I am almost exclusively limited to teaching media literacy methods to students studying within the communication department. Students focused on math, English, computer science, nursing, early childhood education, or any other subject are not receiving media literacy. Experiences with media and with my students led me to the premise of this dissertation: Can media literacy be taught within other subjects? Does it need to stand alone to have an impact? After completing my study, I can definitively say that by integrating parts of

it into other classes, we can effectively teach media literacy. In addition, I have found many

educators eager to learn how they can include media literacy in their teaching.

Acknowledgments

Like all great endeavors, a dissertation is not something we do alone, in a bubble. Many people have contributed to my success in the Postsecondary Teaching and Instructional Leadership program.

I first must thank my husband, Shawn, who stood by me during my breakdown moments, listened to me rant about my research issues, and stepped in when my energy was waning. This is for us, my love.

I also need to thank my child, Meridith. You were the spur that drove me to my first investigations of media. I needed to know what my baby was absorbing from hours of the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon; you are a full-fledged grown-up now, but without you, none of this would have occurred.

My parents, who first showed me the importance of education, cannot be forgotten. I fought against joining the "family business" of teaching for years, but you always knew where I would end up. Thanks, Mom and Dad.

I cannot leave off my "doctoral girls." Your support means everything. Thank you, Cheryl, Jill, Ramona, and Toni.

The friends who put up with my rants, canceled plans, massive mental distractions, and moments of panic cannot be overlooked. Thank you all, especially Rose, for listening and nodding along, even when I made zero sense.

Finally, I must thank the National College of Education faculty members who have supported my journey. My dissertation chair, Dr. Stuart Carrier, has put up with a lot! Without Dr. Antonina Luckenchuk and Dr. Geri Chesner, my research would never have been completed.

The road has been long, full of potholes and detours. But we have arrived.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my students. Without you, I would not be who I am today.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Topic Overview

Media[1] is, quite literally, everywhere; in our living rooms, plugged into our cars, next to our beds, and riding in our pockets. Perhaps once, we could escape the media stream by turning off our televisions or radios, but now with cell phones, laptops, and tablets, we take media with us everywhere. Media comes in many different forms and is almost inescapable. A popular meme asks, "Could you live in a cabin in the woods with no internet for a year for a million dollars?" Many of us would say, "Sure!" However, in reality, it is hard to imagine life without the constancy of media. Media saturation is our new world. The media's influence on all of us cannot be understated. We live in a world with near-constant exposure to information.

According to the 2015 publication *The Common Sense Census: Media Use By Tweens And Teens*, teens aged 13-18 consumed on average 8.58 hours of media for entertainment per day. Any media viewed for homework or while at school was not included in these hours (Rideout, 2015). Almost nine hours per day is a staggering amount of time engaging in something teens may not fully understand or be able to interpret critically. People in this age group are "digital natives"[2]. However, having grown up in a technological landscape does not make them media literate. Since I began teaching higher-education communications, public speaking, and media classes in 2008, I have discovered most of my students have a disturbingly low media literacy level. Many college students were not taught to look at media critically in

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[1] "Media" is defined by Dictionary.com as "the main means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the internet) regarded collectively." Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online tells us that "media" is the plural for "medium," but that it is used as a singular noun in popular usage (Merriam-Webster Online, 2021). "The singular *media* and its plural *medias* seem to have originated in the field of advertising over 70 years ago; they are still so used without stigma in that specialized field. In most other applications *media* is used as a plural of *medium*. The popularity of the word in references to the agencies of mass communication is leading to the formation of a mass noun, construed as a singular."

[2] "Digital natives" are those who have grown up with technology always available and omnipresent. Generally considered to be members of the late-Millennial generation born after 1990 and later. (What is a digital native?, n.d.)

earlier classrooms, even though media literacy is included in the curricular guidelines and recommendations for public school education in all fifty states (Kubey, 1998). As a result, higher education has to step in to fill this knowledge gap.

Confusion abounds when it comes to the question of "What is media literacy?" Many people focus solely on the "analysis" aspect of media literacy, i.e., Is this piece of news true or false? Is this source biased? While these questions are valuable, drilling down to only the analysis aspect is limiting. In fact, media literacy is defined in many different ways and has multiple aspects. I am using a definition created by Renee Hobbs, one of the preeminent media literacy researchers in the United States. According to her definition, media literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, analyze and produce both print and electronic media and to use what has been learned about media to be a more informed citizen. Media literacy includes five different competencies (Hobbs, 2010). Figure 1 shows the competencies and their definitions in graphic format.

1. **accessing** media effectively
2. **analyzing** and evaluating media
3. **creating** media
4. **reflecting** on media usage, consumption, and creation
5. **acting** through and with media for social change.

For the purposes of this dissertation, these will be referred to as Access, Analyze, Creation, Reflection, and Action. Simplifying these terms is not meant to detract from the meaning of Hobbs' definition, but for reader clarity.

Figure 1

Essential Competencies of Media Literacy
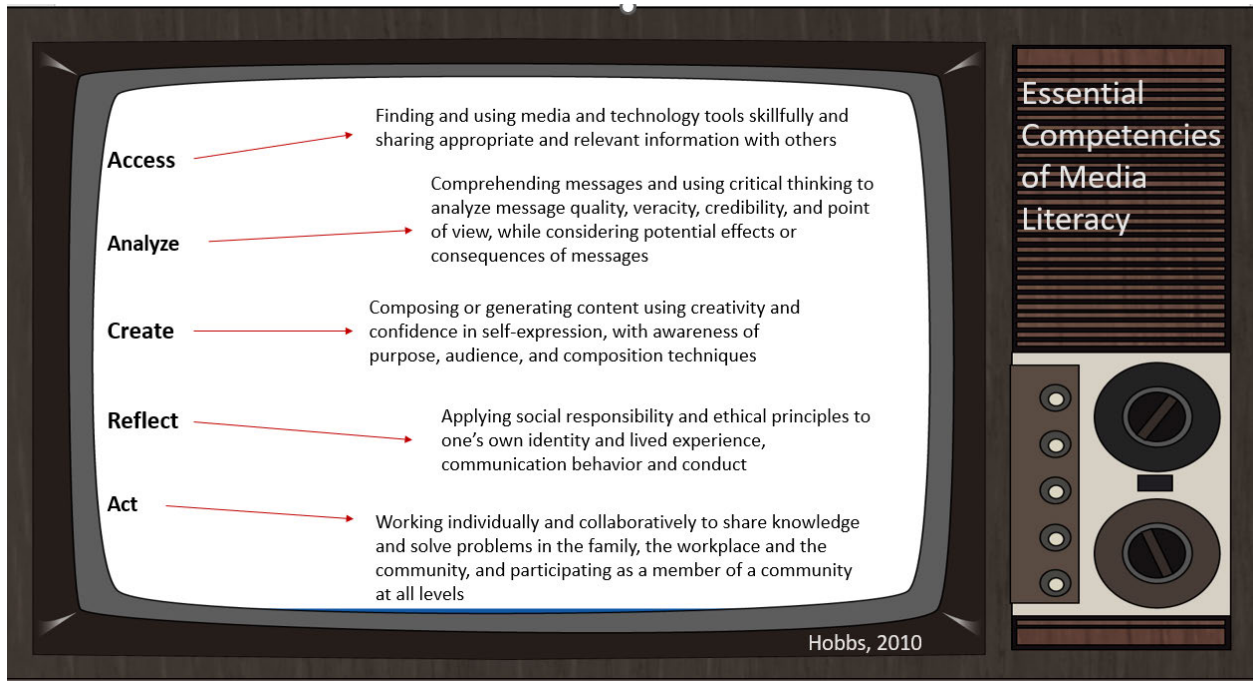
Rationale

When someone is not media literate, they take media at face value, whether we are talking about television news, reality shows, social media posts, or the plethora of other media options. The messages contained in media, both implicit and explicit, can be negative, positive, or neutral. An essential part of media literacy is simply having the ability to judge the potential impact of messages. Arke and Primack (2009) found that college students who had participated in a media literacy course could better view media critically. Their study linked high critical thinking ability to high media literacy levels. Being a better critical thinker benefits students beyond the classroom, making them better employees, parents, and citizens.

One of the goals universities hope to fulfill, in addition to teaching students to think critically, is to graduate moral students who can positively participate in society. As a college

professor, my definition of student moral development will differ from someone who works in an administrative position. I impact 10-30 students for 6-16 weeks, depending on the university, semester or quarter, and class. I am not making decisions that affect student development at large, but only in a small arena: my classroom. Therefore, my definition is narrower than it would be for campus leaders.

> *Student moral development: Encourage students to make ethical choices by demonstrating moral decision-making, and hope my students continue to make moral and ethical choices when they leave my care.*

Moral development has three main components: *Moral sensitivity*, characterized by concern for others; *moral motivation*, deciding to follow a moral path; and *moral action*, carrying out a moral plan (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). The Kohlberg theory of moral development argues for three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Pre-conventional can last until age nine and features a black-and-white, self-focused concept of morality. The conventional level alters the focus to the good of the community and others and occurs between the ages of 10-15. Post-conventional includes abstract thinking, the ability to concern oneself with more significant concepts of morality, and can be entered into as early as age 12. Ideally, college students should have reached a post-conventional level of moral development before attending college, but that is often not the case (Graber, 2012). Several ways to help students develop to the post-conventional level of moral development exist, with education being the first and foremost method (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016).

While all three components of moral development could play a role in media literacy, *moral action* is most directly connected to Action because this competency assumes a moral compass and a willingness to act. One way civic engagement occurs is by contacting the media, a

4

straightforward method of applying Action (Mechler & Burke, 2011). Therefore, media literacy can play a role in assisting students to achieve post-conventional moral development.

While I speak somewhat disparagingly of the media literacy of my students, I have noticed an interesting trend in my work as a media and communication professor. One of the courses I developed and have taught for several years at State U (pseudonym) is called *Reality TV & Society*. The course description in the syllabus reads as such,

> As reality shows become a larger part of the overall entertainment market share, the question of what is "real" becomes increasingly more important. The nature of entertainment and of celebrity has been forever altered by the prevalence of reality shows on television.
>
> Before, people became famous for doing things (such as Michael Jordan, Elizabeth Taylor and Michael Jackson) now they become famous simply for being famous (Kendra Wilkenson, Kim Kardashian, Paris Hilton). This major shift in culture has affected not only what we watch for enjoyment, but how we react to the world around us.

When I began teaching the class in 2011, announcing to my class that reality TV was not "real" brought gasps and shock. My students were flabbergasted to realize someone scripted reality TV, the participants were unpaid actors, and stories were pre-written or at least pre-planned. When I taught the class most recently, in Fall 2021, none of my students were surprised by this announcement. They already knew reality TV was not "real." The course has lost some value to the students because it is common knowledge that reality television is just as "fake" as non-reality television. As a result, I will be replacing this special topics class with a new one in Fall 2022, about fandoms and the influence of fans on pop culture.

Based on my anecdotal experience, my students are more literate about media than they used to be. The process is incomplete, but media literacy is more common than it once was, at least for these students. Specifically, I have found students can better manage Analyze, Creation,

and Reflection now than when I began teaching. Expanding media literacy education can create more people like these students, who are less likely to be fooled by false media narratives.

The university I am using for my evaluation is a private, not-for-profit institution in a significant midwestern American city. Harrison University (pseudonym) serves approximately 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students in four colleges, including an undergraduate college, which "prepares students to succeed as professionals and engaged citizens in the 21st century" (website redacted for confidentiality, 2020). The Undergraduate College features several unique structures not found in other higher-education programs. These include embedded career preparation, a flipped classroom structure, and cohort teams of instructors and success coaches. "The model… is a four-year program that aims to close the degree attainment gap for traditional-age students who are low-income, often the first in their family to attend college, and predominantly underrepresented minorities" (citation redacted for confidentiality, 2018, p. 1).

In 2017-2018, 82% of students in the Undergraduate College were Pell Grant eligible, 82% were first-generation college students, and students were 70% Latinx and 24% African-American (citation redacted for confidentiality, 2018).

Goals of the Program Evaluation

My research purpose is to engage in curriculum analysis and program evaluation to assess the presence of media literacy in a representative undergraduate curriculum of General Education Core Courses at Harrison University (citation redacted for confidentiality, 2018). These courses align with the "minimum requirement for general education" stipulated by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC Assumed Practices, 2017), which serves the United States as one of six regional accrediting agencies commonly recognized as the organizations validating quality higher education throughout the nation.

Students who begin as freshmen at Harrison University take 12 required courses as part of the Undergraduate College General Education Core: three in communications, three in humanities, one in mathematics, two in physical and life sciences, and three in social and behavioral sciences (citation redacted for confidentiality, 2018). Multiple class options are offered in some categories, totaling 15 courses.

An alternative to creating an integrated media literacy curriculum would be adding another class to the required core courses, specifically addressing media literacy. However, students already take at least two years of required courses before entering their major. Adding a class could extend that time or even require eliminating another core class. Spreading lessons across the curriculum without ever identifying them as "media literacy education" to the students may make their understanding of media more seamless. Therefore, I am recommending the integration method: adding assignments, discussion questions, and tools using media literacy to teach the subject.

Research Questions

My dissertation seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the potential benefits to society of adding media literacy competencies to undergraduate core courses?

2. How can media literacy assist with the higher education goals of expanded critical thinking skills and student moral development?

3. What role does media saturation and social media play in the necessity for media literacy?

4. How can media literacy be effectively integrated into a general education curriculum?

Reflection

Media is as ever-present as the air we breathe and the water we drink, but unlike those naturally occurring phenomena, it is wholly manufactured by humans, with their fallible natures, conscious and unconscious agendas, and deeply held values. In my dissertation, I will show we can link media literacy and undergraduate education in the effort to develop students as fully formed and active citizens of their world. Media literacy will be a skill they will use unconsciously because it has been taught in a non-subject-specific manner.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

The sheer volume of literature available on media literacy can be overwhelming. Books, journals, articles, websites – there are thousands. In my literature review, I attempted to drill down to the specific areas on which I needed to focus. As a result, my review of literature relevant to this topic focuses on the following themes: 1) historical roots of media literacy; 2) defining media literacy; 3) media usage by teens and college-aged students; 4) methods of teaching media literacy; 5) measuring media literacy; 6) categorizing media literacy in comparison to information literacy or digital literacy; and 7) media literacy and student moral development.

My focus in these seven areas has provided me with an extensive overview of media literacy's meanings and essential points. My interviews and research reiterate much of what is addressed in this literature review.

Historical Roots of Media Literacy

Before beginning my research, if I had been asked when the first media studies began, I would have guessed the late 1980s. I would have been off by more than thirty years. The term "media literacy" first appeared in 1955 in a column in the newsletter of the American Council for Better Broadcasts (Media Literacy Clearing House, n.d.). It was shortly followed by two definitive books on the subject, *Television and the Teaching of English*, by Neil Postman and the Committee on the Study of Television in 1961, and *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, by Marshall McLuhan in 1964.

Postman (1961) and McLuhan (1964) took very different approaches to analyze the role of media in the United States at the time. McLuhan's writing was dense and sometimes

contradictory and often seemed to go in circles. He mastered the art of the clever phrase ("the media is the *message*" later became "the media is the *massage*," for example, emphasis added). Postman was more sarcastic and confrontational than McLuhan and more straightforward in his writing. He also addressed media in the classroom, while McLuhan focused more on the world at large.

For example, McLuhan wrote the following in 1967 in a graphic depiction of his works: "All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the massage" (The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects, p. 26).

In comparison, we have this passage from Postman's "Teaching as a Subversive Activity," first published in 1971: "One of the most dangerous men around at the moment – dangerous because he seems to be subverting traditional assumptions – is Marshall McLuhan…he is not generally thought of as an educationist. If he were, he would probably lose a sizeable portion of his audience. Nobody likes a smart educationist" (p. 16).

Whatever the differences between the two authors, Postman and McLuhan are together the "fathers" of the modern media literacy movement.

Sister Elizabeth Thoman was also part of the creation of modern media literacy. Her magazine, *Media & Values*, *was* published from 1977 to 1993. She founded the Center for Media Literacy in 1989 (Center for Media Literacy, 2016). She served as a mentor for many media literacy scholars, including Renee Hobbs, whose definition of media literacy I use throughout my dissertation.

Defining Media Literacy

The source of my definition of media literacy comes from a white paper by Hobbs (2010) written for the Knight Foundation. Other definitions of media literacy exist, using different terminology. I choose Hobbs' definition because it is accessible to the layperson and in-depth enough for experts. The paper sets out in more detail the five pieces of media literacy identified in my introduction (italics added):

> In this report, the term "digital and media literacy" is used to encompass the full range of cognitive, emotional and social competencies that includes the use of texts, tools and technologies; the skills of critical thinking and analysis; the practice of message composition and creativity; the ability to engage in reflection and ethical thinking; as well as active participation through teamwork and collaboration. When people have digital and media literacy competencies, they recognize personal, corporate and political agendas and are empowered to speak out on behalf of the missing voices and omitted perspectives in our communities. *By identifying and attempting to solve problems, people use their powerful voices and their rights under the law to improve the world around them* (p. 18).

The author and the Knight Foundation are concerned about what might happen if people are not educated about media, as we see in the italicized section. This concern was predictive; a lack of understanding of media and false, misleading social media advertisements and articles affected the outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election (Alcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

The topic of the 2016 election is further explored in a critical media article that appears in the *Radical Teacher* journal. In this article, Juhasz reports on her experiences using media literacy to oppose "fake news" in what she terms "the post-truth era." Her main focus is on how

citizens and voters can use their media knowledge to fight back against false reports perpetuated mainly on social media. Her article includes "Anti-Trump" in the headline, leaving the reader with no questions about her critical stance (Juhasz, 2018).

Before the Hobbs white paper, a 2008 research study attempted to quantify media literacy. I will discuss the results of that attempt in the section on measuring media literacy. However, it is helpful to note how media literacy was defined in that study. This definition is slightly different in wording from Hobbs' definition but similar in concept.

Thus, from a holistic, critical, contextual perspective, it may be argued that a media literate person understands:

- *what* sorts of persuasive messages are found in media,

- *why* media messages look, sound, and read the way they do,

- *who* creates and benefits from these messages,

- *when* we are affected by media,

- *where* they can find alternative media, and

- *how* to actively work to change the media system (Duran, Yousman, Walsh, & Longshore, p. 51).

Again, we find the emphasis on using what is known about the media to change society or to change media.

Media Usage by Teens and College-Aged Students

As previously mentioned, *The Common Sense Census: Media Use By Tweens And Teens* found that teens in the study aged 13-18 consumed on average 8.58 hours per day of media for entertainment (Rideout, 2015). This study is the most recent one that quantifies teen media usage directly. However, in 2018, a quantitative survey by Pew Research found 95% of US teenagers

have a smartphone. Moreover, the survey found 45% of teens report they are online through their phones, laptops, tablets, or home computers, while 44% say they are online several times a day. While online, these teens most often access YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat (Pew Research Center, 2018).

An earlier ethnographic study considered not how many hours a day or week teens use media but what they do with media during those hours. The 2011 study focused on teens who used the internet at the library. "The findings of the Digital Youth Project identified three primary genres of participation, or modes of engagement, that emerge when young people have the freedom to pursue their interests and motivations with media: hanging out, messing around, and geeking out" (Tripp, p. 332). "Hanging out" was defined as using media to communicate with friends or participate on social media platforms; "messing around" described exploring media without a specific goal in mind; and "geeking out" referred to creating media specific to the interest of the user. "Hanging out" and "messing around" can both be defined as Access, while "geeking out" is Creation. Depending on the teen's interests, "geeking out" could also be Action, if they are promoting a particular agenda to their followers.

Methods of Teaching Media Literacy

Most research I reviewed found media education is essential, but did not all agree on the best form for teaching it. One article I read argued that media literacy should emphasize solely critical aspects. The author believes current media literacy education is insufficiently critical and focuses more on content than meaning (Nam, 2010). Some studies emphasized incorporating media literacy into multiple subjects, such as language arts and social studies, rather than only as a stand-alone course (Aufderheide, 1993; Cronin, 2011; Duran, Yousman, Walsh, & Longshore, 2008; Juhasz, 2018). I used what I learned from these papers to help design my suggestions for

integrating media literacy into classes on other topics. They also provide triangulation of the data from my interviews by reinforcing both the importance of media literacy and how we can integrate it into other subjects. However, most studies focus on standalone media literacy courses, not on integration.

Many media literacy organizations have created curricula for varying grade levels and students; most of these free programs focus on standalone lessons. Searching "media literacy curriculum" in Google results in 73 million hits. Media Literacy Now has items for educators and parents; also divided by topic and state (Resources for Teachers, 2022); National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) has an entire webpage devoted to resources for media education (Media Literacy Resources, 2022); as does Common Sense Education (Media Literacy Resource Center, 2022). Some online education and teacher sources offer suggestions for integrating media literacy into various subjects (Beebe, n.d.), but as stated earlier, most are solely media literacy instruction. Some states, including Illinois, California, and New York, have websites with free media literacy lesson plans for teachers and homeschoolers.

Measuring Media Literacy

Measuring media literacy quantitatively is a difficult task; measuring media usage is more common. Most media literacy research is based on qualitative data. However, I did find a quantitative study of media literacy in college students conducted in 2008. The study included a pre-test and post-test of the students in a media literacy class and a control group of students who did not take the class and only took the post-test. The media literacy course focused on five objectives: 1) Understanding basic media economics; 2) Understanding media impact; 3) Deconstructing the content of various media; 4) Influencing media institutions; and 5) Creating

alternative media content (Duran et al.). These goals reflect the items defined as essential for media literacy as per Hobbs.

The tests asked students three open-ended questions about the content of an advertisement. Those questions focused on the ad's design, items missing from it, and values or points of view shown in the ad. Secondarily, the tests assessed more generally the students' understanding of media structures and influence (Duran et al.).

The results of the study showed "students who complete a holistic media literacy course are significantly more sophisticated and critical viewers of a televised advertisement than students who do not have exposure to holistic media education" (p. 60). It also found students who completed the course were "significantly more aware of media structures, including issues of ownership and control, alternative media, and media activism and reform movements, than students who do not have exposure to holistic media education" (p. 59). In summary, students who took the course were more aware of media structures and messages than those who did not.

While the study's sample size – two classes totaling 41 students and a control group of 45 students – is small, it provides exciting results about teaching media literacy. The students who took the class learned to be more critical media consumers. Replicating this study with a larger sample size would be difficult, however, as it would probably require teaching the same curriculum across multiple universities.

Media Literacy Compared to Other Forms of Literacy

While my research and career focus on media literacy, it is necessary to acknowledge that other forms of "literacy" overlap with my studies. Digital Literacy, Information Literacy, Technological Literacy; all these and more are types of literacy being investigated and studied

for the development of students of all ages. A chart created by the Center for Teaching, shown in Figure 2, best defines the differences between the types of literacy.

The five literacies in the chart are media literacy; computer literacy: using a computer to accomplish tasks; digital literacy: possessing the cognitive skills to access and understand online materials; information literacy: understanding when more information is necessary; and technological literacy: utilizing technology responsibly.

Figure 2

Types of Literacy

CENTER
for
TEACHING

Types of Literacy[1]

Type of Literacy	Brief Definition & Description
Media Literacy	Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, & produce communication in a variety of forms. In essence, a media literate person can think critically about what they see, hear, and read in books, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, movies, music, advertising, video games, the Internet, and new emerging technology. *Kaiser Family Foundation*
Computer Literacy	The ability to use a computer and its software to accomplish practical tasks. *National Forum on Information Literacy*
Digital Literacy	Digital literacy is more than just the technical ability to operate digital devices properly; it comprises a variety of cognitive skills that are utilized in executing tasks in digital environments, such as browsing the Internet, deciphering user interfaces, working with databases, and chatting in chat rooms. *Eshet-Alkali & Amichai-Hamburger*
Information Literacy	Information Literacy is defined as the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand. *National Forum on Information Literacy*
Technology Literacy	Technology literacy is the ability to responsibly use appropriate technology to communicate, solve problems, and access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to improve learning in all subject areas and to acquire lifelong knowledge and skills in the 21st century. *State Educational Technology Directors Association*

[1] Adapted from "Media Literacy - Definition Matrix" Leadership Summit Toolkit 2007

(Center for Teaching)

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed technology literacy standards for students and teachers. The student standards are

- Empowered Learner: Using technology to take an active role in learning.

- Digital Citizen: Recognizing and living in ethical ways.

- Knowledge Constructor: Using digital tools to create meaningful learning experiences.

- Innovative Designer: Solving problems using technology.

- Computational Thinker: Developing and testing solutions using technology.

- Creative Communicator: Using digital tools to achieve goals.

- Global Collaborator: Collaborating with others locally and globally through digital tools. (International Society for Technology in Education, n.d.)

I see a clear overlap when comparing these standards to the five competencies of media literacy. Access connects with Empowered Learning; Creation shows up in Knowledge Constructor, Innovative Designer, and Creative Communicator; Action is part of Digital Citizen and Global Collaborator. While there are differences between technological literacy as defined by ISTE and media literacy, the similarities are apparent. In my experience, each type of literacy is crucial but emphasizes different concepts. In order to better understand media literacy, it is essential to identify where it overlaps with other forms of literacy and where it is different. Based on the readings in this section, perhaps it is possible to enable students to become more visually, technologically, or informationally literate while teaching them media literacy. Leaning into the overlapping topics might also create a synergy between advocates for each type of literacy.

Moral Development through Media Literacy

  As stated in the introduction, media literacy can assist students in achieving post-conventional moral development. In his paper about media ethics, Strate suggests educating students about media during the conventional level of morality. He argues people who produce media for children should include media literacy in their programs as part of their moral obligation to society (2014). Mintz's paper echoes this. He identifies media and its role in promoting consumerism as the "barbarian at the gates" and argues the only counter is the education of children (2011). Mintz rallies parents and teachers to battle media and consumerism in school through critical media literacy. According to Strate and Mintz, educating younger students about media messages prepares them to take their place in a democratic society as moral adults. Researchers in Serbia reinforce the connection between media literacy and informed citizens, stating media literacy contributes to adopting positive social values, such as active participation in democracy (Ivanović, 2014). While this reiterates what was addressed earlier in the literature review, it is useful to add an international viewpoint rather than being solely centered on US media and US education.

  In contrast, UCLA professors Carducci and Rhoads support using media literacy in college to create "critical citizenship." They define critical citizenship as (emphasis added): "a form of citizenship that empowers each ***individual's identity*** and advances democracy and the pursuit of ***social justice***" (2005, p. 3). Moral development as part of student identity is essential within this definition. In their paper, they review popular media that aired during the 2004-2005 television season. One of the shows the authors analyzed is *The Apprentice*, which they call out for its outdated gender and leadership roles. They also point out Donald Trump's moral compass always has money as its true north. We can extrapolate this to mean he never progressed beyond

the pre-conventional form of morality espoused by Kohlberg. This is further reflected in the article by Jewett Smith about "teaching Trump" written 15 years later, while Donald Trump was president.

Jewett Smith is concerned explicitly with the anti-democratic statements made by Trump through the media, and how teachers address them with their students through three different frames: motivational, diagnostic, prognostic. "Collectively, whether comments or actions, these messages suggest Trump's tolerance of white supremacy, malicious characterization of immigrants, willingness to violate international law to kill innocents, sexist discrimination, Islamophobia, comfort with sexual assault, and intolerance of patriotic dissent" (2020, p. 3). The author recommends schools using media literacy to counter the impact of these immoral statements. In theory, students who can discern the views are immoral are better equipped to move to a post-conventional moral level.

Moral development may also be linked to developing an involved citizenry. I additionally investigated moral development and citizenship; I found resources that draw different connections between morals, media, and aware citizenship.

The Consortium for Media Literacy is one of several associations seeking to spread the skills inherent in media literacy. Each quarter they publish "Connec!ions", a newsletter that delves into some aspect of media literacy. In April 2013, the topic was ethics, and one of the articles specifically considered media literacy and civic responsibility. The authors state media literacy can help members of the public determine which media sources are trustworthy. Identifying unbiased and factual media allows consumers of media to trust their sources. "Mutual trust online creates opportunities for productive mentorship, demonstrations of competence, and

respectful criticism and dialogue. All these make citizenship possible" (Consortium for Media Literacy, 2013, p. 6).

A Canadian study of at-risk high school students in a "socio-culturally responsive media studies curriculum" (Ng-A-Fook, Radford, Yazdanin, & Norris, 2013, p. 38) echoed the concept of trust. The curriculum designed and studied by the authors is specifically designed to help students meet four "character goals" as part of a national curriculum, one of which is citizenship development. In their application of the curriculum, the researchers found the students had a low level of trust in media because they could not discern accurate media from inaccurate media. Once they had the tools to tell the difference, the students were better able to take action as citizens because they had formed a basis to judge media messages.

Another view about moral development and active citizenship comes from a paper that seeks to draw connections between Holocaust education and citizenship values. The paper mentions media as one way to educate people about the Holocaust, but media literacy is not the main focus of this paper. The researchers used a 30-item survey to measure citizenship values, adapted from an extensive survey created by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) for their Civic Education Study (Starratt, Fredotovic, Goodletty, & Starratt, 2017). They then compared respondents' citizenship values to their exposure to knowledge about the Holocaust from in-school education programs, media, personal experience with a Holocaust survivor, or visiting a Holocaust museum. They found a direct correlation between people taught about the Holocaust and those with high citizenship values.

Reflection

My review of the literature available indicates a connection between student moral development, engaged citizenship, and media literacy. While media literacy is not the only

method by which we can help students achieve post-conventional moral levels, it certainly

appears it can play its part. The literature review results confirm my belief in the importance of

media literacy to developing well-rounded students who can affect change in their world.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

My research purpose was to engage in curriculum analysis and program evaluation to assess the presence of media literacy in the representative undergraduate curriculum that presents General Education Core Courses (citation redacted for confidentiality, 2018) in alignment with the "minimum requirement for general education" stipulated by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC Assumed Practices, 2017). Once I determined the presence of media literacy skills in the Harrison University undergraduate core curriculum, I could recommend how to include more media literacy competencies in the courses.

My mixed methods study combined content analysis and structured interviews. I evaluated the goals and structure of the required courses to determine where media literacy instruction could be included without disruption to the original objectives of the courses. Triangulating my data took place mainly by theory (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). I focused on three main theories for my research: first, media literacy is essential; second, media literacy can be taught; and third, media literacy can be integrated into other subjects. My qualitative data, especially the interviews, support these three theories, creating pattern matching and credibility.

The quantitative data I included are demographic data about the students in the undergraduate program, statistical data about the number of courses that include media literacy, and an audit of which program-level and course-level outcomes can be applied to media literacy. In addition to curriculum analysis and literature review, I gathered data using interview protocols to query media literacy experts.

Finally, after collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from these sources, I recommended specific assignments or materials to incorporate media literacy into as many required courses as possible. In order to meet all five competencies of media literacy, the suggestions included a variety of assessments and projects, readings, videos, and interactive activities. Additions were as basic as accessing media or as complex as designing a social media campaign for a cause, depending on what fit best within the curriculum.

Data Collection and Analysis

As an initial stage of my study, I audited the online course curriculum, searching for areas where the five parts of media literacy could be integrated and for those areas that may already include such media-literacy-related lessons. I then sought a deeper understanding of media literacy through interviewing experts. Interview responses were subjected to Qualitative Content Analysis (Bhattacherjee, 2012), including cyclic analysis in which themes and concepts emerge from the data. Interviews followed adaptive qualitative methodology, which includes "emergent flexibility" (Bhattacherjee, 2012) that enables the researcher to explore ideas and assertions discovered in the interview process.

In preparation for collecting research data, I completed CITI training on research ethics. Maintenance of appropriate human subjects protections and protocols, including maintenance of confidentiality, was considered throughout my research process. Participants were not subjected to any risks beyond normal life circumstances and no interview participant was subjected to any form of coercion. I did not have a supervisory relationship with any interviewee and I did not interview any of my students.

Recruitment

I found potential interview participants through media and digital literacy organizations such as NAMLE and ISTE. They were invited via email to participate in my study. Four experts were approached, and three responded positively to my inquiries. I conducted remote interviews with subject matter experts in media literacy education. I maintained confidentiality and safeguarded all digital and hard-copy research data generated by my study, including interview videos, interview transcripts, interview coding, and Excel spreadsheets, in a secure private hard drive and physical file location under my exclusive control. I will destroy all original data within three years after data collection.

The Research Invitation (Appendix A) served as a documented explanation of my research project's nature, framework, and ethical safeguards. I used a structured interview protocol to guide recorded interviews. Prior to conducting interviews, an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) was signed by the interview subjects. Confidentiality has been maintained by personally controlling secure interview-related documentation. I recorded and transcribed the interviews, analyzed the transcripts and coded the content, seeking themes and issues. After conducting and documenting formal interviews, I engaged in "member checking" to validate my interview data by seeking interviewee confirmations of accuracy.

Data Collection

I received LMS access to the course maps and course masters for all 15 core courses offered to first- and second-year students at Harrison University. In order to determine the presence or absence of media literacy in the existing courses, I audited all course objectives, assignments, discussion prompts (those for online discussion boards and those for in-class discussions), and materials provided for students. I compiled my results into an Excel workbook.

The workbook has four separate sheets: 1) general information about each class, including the course code, title, course description, and Course Level Outcomes (CLOs); 2) existing assignments or discussions that use media literacy competencies and the number of the skill used; 3) CLOs pertaining to media literacy or critical thinking; and 4) a statistical breakdown of the results of the evaluation.

Interviews

My interviews were conducted over two weeks in October 2021 via Zoom. Remote technology was the best choice because my participants were located in other parts of the country, and the interviews were completed during the pandemic. The interviews were 45-60 minutes long.

Interview Questions

1) Please tell me about your background and work in media literacy. What brought you to the study of media literacy?

2) What are the benefits to the individual of being more media literate?

3) How can media literacy support the formation of critical thinking skills?

4) One objective of higher education is to lead students to strong moral development. What part can media literacy play in that effort?

5) How has the prevalence of social media changed what we know about media literacy?

6) Media literacy can be taught in stand-alone classes or integrated into other courses. Which do you feel would be more effective for higher education classes/students, and why?

7) Is there anything I did not ask you that you would like to share with me?

Participants

I shall refer to my participants as Anna, Robin, and Cherise. These are pseudonyms

chosen for their privacy. Some aspects of their biographies are vague to protect their identities.

Robin

Robin has an Ed.D. in Human Development and is the author of a dozen books on media

literacy. She has thirty years of experience in media literacy education. She teaches media and

media literacy classes to undergraduate and graduate students and oversees a major media

literacy education organization that sponsors several events for educators each year. She is

located on the East Coast.

Cherise

Cherise has a Ph.D. in Critical Studies. She is the director of a media literacy program

that focuses specifically on analyzing representation in media, including gender, sexuality, and

race. She has 15 years of media literacy education experience. She is the author of one media

literacy book and teaches classes on media, pop culture, and visual culture. She is located on the

West Coast.

Anna

Anna is the executive director of a large media literacy organization that sponsors several

events for educators and others interested in media literacy each year. She is an adjunct instructor

of media. She first became involved in media literacy due to the publicity surrounding a family

tragedy. She has twenty years of media literacy education experience. She has a master's degree

in media and communication and has worked in television production. She is located on the East

Coast.

Risks and Benefits

No anticipated interview participant risks were associated with this study, no more significant than those encountered in daily life. Further, as potential benefits, the information gained from this study could be helpful to Harrison University's Undergraduate College and other institutions seeking to refine their incorporation of media literacy concepts into their courses and programs. The researcher's sharing of data results, analysis, and recommendations with interview participants who are subject matter experts may also present a curricular benefit to designers of individual courses.

Consent and Assent

In order to comply with Informed Consent requirements as they apply to my doctoral research, I created an Informed Consent Form to document voluntary informed consent by adult participants in my protocol-driven interview process. My primary data collection methodology of Content Analysis examined published curriculum data in the public domain and did not trigger an Informed Consent requirement. Regarding Assent forms, the research plan for this doctoral study did not include any research interactions or data collection from minors under the legal age of consent, so no Assent Forms were called for in this study.

Reflection

I collected both numerical and interview data for my curriculum evaluation and recommendations. In doing so, I followed all required protocols for the safety of my participants. In the next chapter, I will present my findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Before deeply exploring the benefits of media literacy to students, universities, and society, it is crucial to understand where media literacy already exists within the core courses of the Undergraduate College under discussion. I have split my findings into two sections: first, numerical data about "Harrison University" and its core classes; and second, the voices of media literacy experts. Finally, I will offer my interpretations, observations, and reflections based on the previous two sections.

As previously stated, Harrison University serves approximately 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students in four colleges, including an Undergraduate College, which "prepares students to succeed as professionals and engaged citizens in the 21st century" (website redacted for confidentiality, 2020).

To reiterate, students who begin as freshmen at Harrison University take 12 required courses as part of the Undergraduate College General Education Core: three in communications, three in humanities, one in mathematics, two in physical and life sciences, and three in social and behavioral sciences (website redacted for confidentiality, n.d.). Multiple class options are offered for some categories, creating 15 classes in total, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

List of General Education Core Classes

ART 101	Art Appreciation
ECO 200	Macroeconomics for Today's Professional
ENG 101	Beginning English Composition
ENG 201	Intermediate English
ENG 203	Effective Speaking for Undergraduates
HIS 102	Civics and American Government
HIS 103	History Across the Globe
MTH 101	Intro to Math Concepts
PHI 107	Ethics, Logic/Critical Inquiry
PSY 101	Intro to Psychology
SCI 101	Physical Science
SCI 102	Survey Biological Science with Lab
SCI 225	Human Impact on Environment
SOC 101	Foundational Sociology
SOC 222	Culture and Identity

In order to make recommendations about the inclusion of media literacy into the core courses, I needed to understand where media literacy already exists in these classes. I audited the pre-designed course shells within the university's LMS. I reviewed CLOs, learning materials, assignments, in-class discussion prompts and activities, and recommended in-class lecture topics in my audit.

To review, media literacy includes five different competencies (Hobbs, Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan For Action, 2010):

1. **accessing** media effectively

2. **analyzing** and evaluating media

3. **creating** media

4. **reflecting** on media usage, consumption, and creation

5. **acting** through and with media for social change.

   In this dissertation, I identify them as Access, Analyze, Creation, Reflection, and Action.

   My analysis of the 15 general education courses offered by the Undergraduate College of Harrison University to meet the core requirements found all the classes featured Access. Students were required to access videos (such as movie snippets and educational videos), newspaper or magazine articles, blogs, or other forms of media. Some of this access was passive or pre-class viewing or reading. For other classes, the access was active or part of an assignment or in-class discussion. For example, in ENG 203: Effective Speaking for the Undergraduate, students watch videos of speakers online, and in ART 101: Art Appreciation, the students access online tours of museums. Seven of the 15 classes included media literacy competencies beyond Access (Figure 3). Some of the classes included more than one of skills:

   - Analyze appeared in five classes (ART 101, HIS 102, HIS 103, PHI 107, SOC 101).

   - Creation appeared in four classes (ART 101, ENG 101, ENG 201, SCI 102).

   - Reflection appeared in three classes (ART 101, HIS 102, SOC 101).

   - Action also appeared in three classes (ART 101, ENG 201, PHI 107).

   The skills are used differently in each class. For example, Analyze is included through a study of art as propaganda in ART 101; the history and impact of the Pepe the Frog meme in SOC 101; and an in-class media assessment in HIS 102. Creation appears in the form of creating an online art show in ART 101; a slideshow of images of lab activities shared virtually with classmates and the instructor in SCI 102; and an online portfolio of work in ENG 101. Reflection is used in ENG 201 to consider text-based campaign activism on social media and to understand a social issue through art in ART 101. Action is applied in ENG 201 through the discussion of

using media for civic engagement and in PHI 107 when media is used in class to forward concepts of taking ethical actions.

As an educator, it is interesting to note how the five competencies connect to Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956; 1984). Widely used by educators for six decades, the Taxonomy contains six levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Under each of those levels are many subcategories. Bloom's Taxonomy is often shown graphically as a pyramid (as shown in Figure 3), with Creating at the top and Remembering at the bottom, indicating that Remembering is the simplest level and Creating is the most complex, highest-level thinking.

Figure 3

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy

create — Produce new or original work
Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

evaluate — Justify a stand or decision
appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

analyze — Draw connections among ideas
differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

apply — Use information in new situations
execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

understand — Explain ideas or concepts
classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

remember — Recall facts and basic concepts
define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state

Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching

(Armstrong, 2010)

If we apply this concept to the five skills of media literacy, we see some obvious correlations: Analyze is written as "analyzing and evaluating" in Hobbs' definition (2010), for

example. Creation and "creating" are the same while "evaluating" and Reflection are related. Action can also be connected to "creating," as the definition relates to using media for social change. The results of my audit mean more of the "lower levels" of Bloom's Taxonomy are reflected in the courses.

Figure 4

Media Literacy Competencies in Existing Core Courses
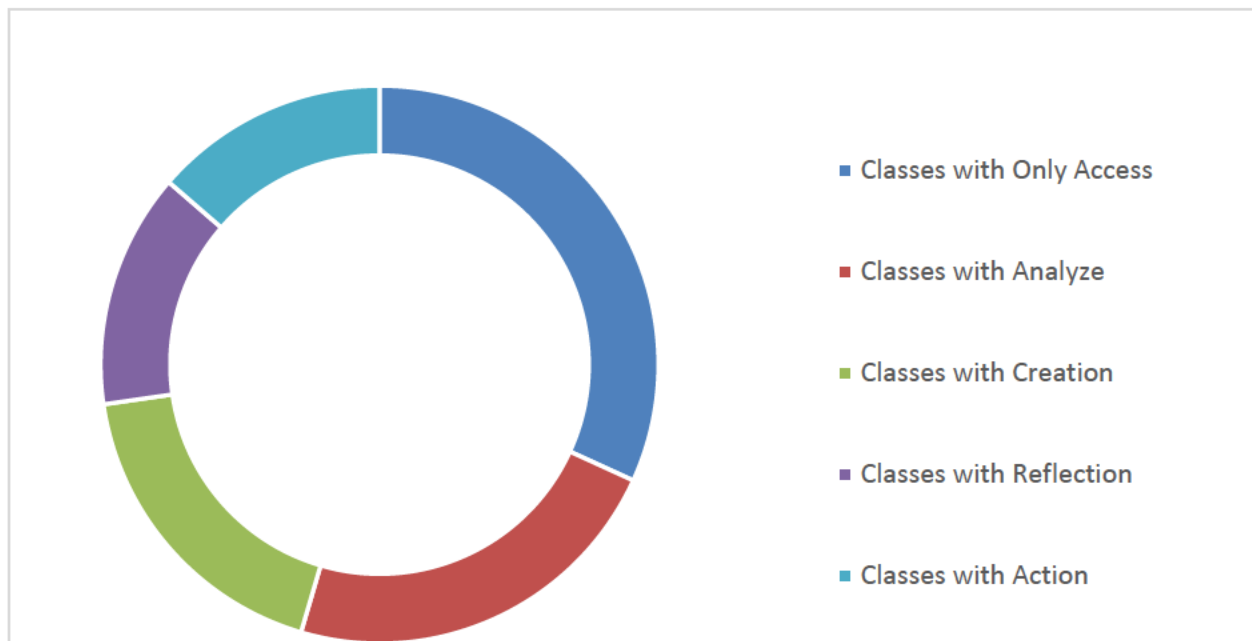
The percentages of existing courses (Figure 4) including both Access and another media literacy skill are broken down as follows:

- 33% of the courses included Analyze;

- 27% included Creation;

- 20% included Reflection;

- 20% included Action.

Figure 5

Existing Courses With Competencies Other Than Action
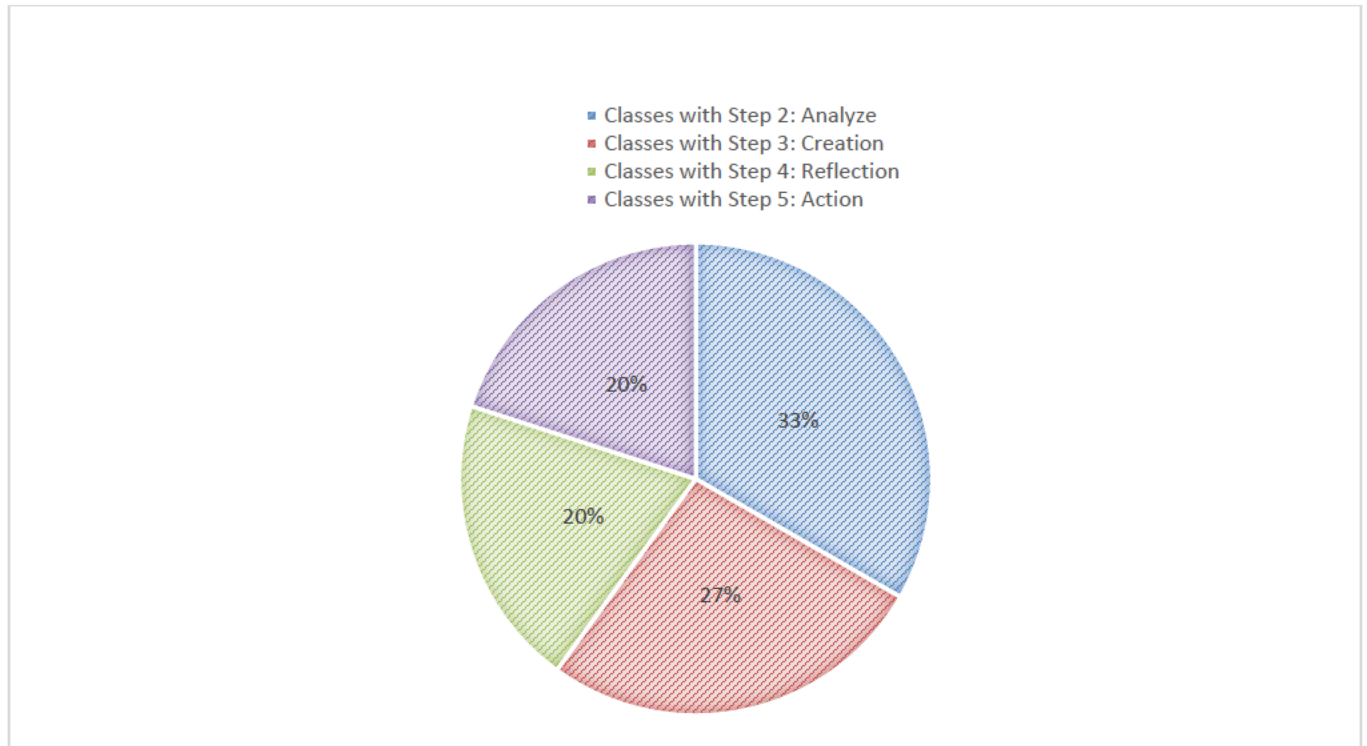
In addition, my audit found four of the classes (ENG 201, ART 101, PHI 107, SCI 101) include CLOs related to critical thinking. Critical thinking is essential to applying media literacy, as shown in the literature review and below in my interviews. Those CLOs (website redacted for confidentiality, 2021) are:

- ENG 201: Use critical thinking to effectively read, evaluate, analyze, blend and make use of texts in support of an argument.

- ART 101: Write and discuss how art is used by different cultures and in different contexts while engaging in critical thinking.

- PHI 107: Describe the basis of critical thinking.

- SCI 101: Students will examine current scientific issues on a personal, local and global level, applying the skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, ethical reasoning, and integrating the concept of environmental justice.

One class (HIS 102) includes a media literacy CLO: "Examine the role of the media and other social influences in shaping public opinion and spreading political ideologies" (website redacted for confidentiality, 2021). That is the only media literacy CLO in any of the courses.

Some of the Program Level Outcomes (PLOs) for the Undergraduate College at Harrison University can be directly tied to media literacy if we agree media literacy is an ability that leads to student moral development and, therefore, to a more informed and involved citizenry. Specifically, the following PLOs apply to media literacy: "Ethical Reasoning," located under "Intellectual Skills," and "Collaboration on Civic Issues," located under "Civic and Global Learning." In Chapter 6, I recommend the addition of a "Media Literacy" PLO in the Civic and Global Learning category.

Once I knew media literacy skills did not exist beyond Access in several core classes, I needed to better understand media literacy and how it can be incorporated into undergraduate core classes. I conducted three video and audio interviews with experts in the field. All my interview participants are media or media literacy professors, who also work in the field with a major media literacy organization, as authors, or both. Their biographies are included in Chapter 3. What follows is an analysis of our discussions, divided into five themes: 1) "media literacy is literacy"; 2) media saturation; 3) critical thinking; 4) moral development; and 5) media literacy integration. I chose these specific themes because they reflect both my literature review and my goals for the dissertation and because they came into clear focus when coding my interview transcripts. The five themes are central to my efforts to reach media literacy integration.

Themes

"Media Literacy is Literacy"

My participants agreed that media literacy is essential to surviving in a media-saturated world. The participants emphasized "media literacy is literacy," as significant as other forms of literacy, such as reading and writing. I did not specifically ask about the connection between media literacy and other types of literacy, but this discussion occurred organically with all three interview participants.

Anna stated, "We know how disadvantaged illiterate people are, we have done that research…having media literacy skills is a necessary, essential part of navigating the world today."

Robin added, "literacy enables us to express and share meaning across the generations and reflect on our fundamental humanity." Cherise expanded upon this concept by adding that when we talk about media literacy, we are also considering whether people are literate in other ways, such as reading, listening, and even simple mathematics. By this, she means reading and listening are required tools for parsing the meaning of media.

Robin summed up the importance of labeling media literacy as a form of literacy by stating that, historically, "literacy [has] empowered people to attain critical consciousness and to basically challenge the status quo, an institutional power that was oppressing people that was creating profound inequalities socially, politically, and economically."

My literature review sources confirmed the view of my participants that media literacy is another form of literacy and we must consider it as such. They reiterate the role of media literacy in creating a society where all citizens have a voice.

Media Saturation

Media saturation, the idea that media is everywhere, all the time, and we are unable to escape it, played an essential role in the necessity for media literacy for my participants. In their view, we are all completely immersed in media, so it is even more vital that we fully understand it. Interestingly, this topic arose with all three of my interview participants even though I did not specifically ask about media saturation. The participants brought it up mainly during the question about social media, but sometimes when discussing the benefits of media literacy. Social media has contributed to media saturation, as have streaming services available through the internet and the plethora of television channels. However, social media adds a different aspect to media saturation because it is driven by algorithms and media tracking. In addition, we are simultaneously creators and consumers of social media, unlike other media types, which are less participatory.

Anna reflected on the role of social media in this saturation by saying, "we are now participants in the system as opposed to passive consumers. We are not just sitting and letting media come at us; we're participating, we're engaging, we're in it."

Robin pointed out every individual's media consumption differs from anyone else's. "Media literacy, pedagogy, and practices have to adapt to this increasingly personalized kind of media consumption that has created the filter bubbles[3] and increased the polarization," she said.

Cherise responded, "it [is] really difficult to understand the object of study because it's not only diverse but so ubiquitous and so widespread." She concluded by saying, "we are in a world where we are saturated with media on so many levels in terms of not only our media diets

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[3] According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a filter bubble in the context of media is an environment, especially an online environment, in which people are exposed only to opinions and information that conform to their existing beliefs (Merriam-Webster Online, 2022).

but also our learning. You know, our learning can be through Zoom, through different technologies."

When we constantly interact with something we do not truly understand or cannot accurately analyze, such as media, we risk falling into false narratives. Teens and young adults still developing mentally and morally are at increased risk, making media literacy essential.

Critical Thinking

One of the areas in which media literacy can prove valuable to all undergraduate students is emphasizing the importance of critical thinking. Therefore, this was one of my specific interview questions. According to Robin, one of the instructional practices media literacy cultivates is dialogue and discussion. People who are media literate are using those tools in critical ways, "to listen, to understand, to empathize and to contribute, to participate. So dialogue and discussion are absolutely foundational to the practice of democracy," she emphasized.

Cherise added, "Media literacy is rooted, especially critical media literacy, in critical thinking and in inquiry and in, sort of, perspective taking. You look at something you see every day or is part of the media landscape, and you're able to see it differently, and you are able to question it and not just take it in."

Anna expanded upon this concept by adding that communication, thinking, and engagement skills are necessary to become fully active in today's world. She continued by saying, "[Critical thinking] is at the very core of media literacy skill. Building the habits of inquiry is developing the muscle of asking questions, and that is the core. We want people to be curious. We want people to be skeptical. We want people to ask critical questions about all media messages."

Harrison University already includes critical thinking in its PLOs and CLOs for its core classes. Media literacy could be one method by which those could be met. In addition, the existence of the critical thinking PLOs and CLOs highlights the importance of critical thinking to the university. Students who can think critically are less likely to be "taken in" by false information.

Moral Development

As discussed in the Literature Review, many universities see their role as promoting students' moral development. Media literate people are better prepared to participate fully in society, so media literacy plays an essential role in such development. As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the questions I asked during the interviews focused explicitly on moral development: "One objective of higher education is leading students to strong moral development. What part can media literacy play in that effort?"

Robin stated the connection between moral development and media literacy can be posited as "kind of a citizenship and democracy argument." She continued, "in a democracy, we need people who can critically analyze information and evaluate sources and make informed judgements and come to consensus…Media literacy was always about social justice. It was always about values. It was always about challenging inequalities. It was always about looking carefully at power relationships."

Anna concurred with Robin's statements, expanding to add media literate people are more civically engaged than those who are not, while Cherise added that because of media saturation, we are no longer passive recipients of media, but we are also producers of media. This means we need to think ethically and morally about what we produce and who we provide it to.

If we accept that universities are obligated to help their students develop into moral citizens, then we accept that media literacy is one way to meet that goal.

Media Literacy Integration

This dissertation's center is the question of whether media literacy for undergraduates must be taught as a stand-alone class or if it can be integrated into existing core classes. My participants agreed that undergraduate students need to be taught media literacy for the many reasons addressed previously. Adding media literacy lessons to other subjects struck them as a logical option, but they also anticipated difficulty with such integration.

When discussing the current norm for media literacy courses, Robin pointed out, "in general, in higher education, media literacy is taught in media and communication classes. It's almost become a replacement for what we used to call the 'Media and Society' class, which was the very first course that introduced students to fundamentals like the business model, and the legal and regulatory framework, the history of media going back to Gutenberg."

In this model, the students who take media literacy courses are majoring in communications, media, journalism, or similar subjects. A student outside those areas of concentration would typically not receive media literacy lessons. While the Humanities Indicator from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences shows that 25% of all humanities degrees issued in 2018 were majoring in communications, meaning 75% of humanities students are not educated in media literacy (Humanities Indicator, 2021). STEM students may not receive any media literacy education unless they take a media literacy class as an elective.

The main issue Robin saw with integrating media literacy into other college subjects was that higher education is very "siloed" or "tribal," meaning each department sees value only in

their own areas but not in others. They are therefore resistant to including anything outside of their subject.

Anna, however, pointed out that writing skills and reading comprehension are two topics often required to be incorporated into other subjects in an interdisciplinary format. She felt media literacy could be required similarly, especially given her belief that "media literacy is literacy," as discussed above. "[We need to recognize] that at this point, we're doing a disservice if we're not giving students [media literacy] skills, especially because you need them no matter what it is that you are doing," Anna said, adding, "there is incredible value in incorporating media literacy into the core subjects…What is important is that there are certain skills that our college students need to get before they leave our campus."

Both Robin and Cherise gave examples of classes where media literacy was incorporated into lessons in other subjects. Cherise shared her experience with a middle-school math class that taught ratios using the race of catalog models (Analyze). Students counted the total number of human models in a catalog, counted how many people were of color, and created a ratio from the numbers. Robin talked about an undergraduate epidemiology class where students researched and created informational posters about tick-borne diseases (Creation).

Robin concluded, "I do think media literacy can be integrated into general education…I think media literacy pedagogy can be integrated into any subject matter."

My proposal to integrate media literacy follows in previous efforts to include writing and reading literacy lessons in all classes. My research confirms that we can include media literacy in existing classes, but only if we can overcome the tribal nature of higher education.

Observations

If, as stated by my interview participants, media literacy is another necessary form of literacy, it makes logical sense to include it in undergraduate classes. We require students to read and write fluently, to be able to speak publicly, to be able to do basic math, to understand the scientific method. Why not expose them to media literacy while we are teaching them these other subjects? We do not need to add the burden of an extra class to an already-packed undergraduate course structure. Instead, we can incorporate media literacy into the existing classes, avoiding adding another required course.

Two challenges appear apparent when adding media literacy to these classes based on the results of my interviews. First is the desire of professors and subject-matter experts to focus solely on their subjects. I do not blame these professors; I would be unhappy to find a math lesson in one of my public-speaking classes. Nevertheless, I believe we can integrate media literacy in such a way that the subject is being taught simultaneously, as described in the two examples mentioned by my interview participants. Rather than distracting from the main subject, in this format, media literacy could be used to further explore the course topic.

The second potential issue is that by encouraging students to challenge media, we can also give them the tools to challenge university authorities. Media-literate people are better equipped to speak the truth to power. People who are literate in media use their voices to change the world. People who can read and write (traditional literacy) can participate fully in society. The same holds true for someone who is media literate. Are we prepared as educators to allow our students to challenge us? I think it is a small price to pay for a media-literate citizenry.

Interpretation

My interpretations are two-fold. First, they are based on the quantitative audit of the core classes. Second, they are focused on the results of the qualitative interviews I conducted with media literacy experts.

Media literacy already exists in some of the 15 core classes I reviewed, with Access being present in all course shells in the LMS. Action, Creation, Reflection, and Analyze are also included, but in fewer courses. Only one course, ART 101, includes all five competencies. Four classes have critical thinking CLOs, but only one has a media literacy CLO.

The themes that arose in my interviews with media literacy experts reiterate the importance of media literacy to college students in several areas, including critical thinking and moral development. They also emphasized the challenges and benefits of integrating media literacy into existing classes.

Reflection

Undergraduate students who are media literate would be better able to participate in a democratic society. They are less likely to be duped by false media narratives. In addition, people who are media literate can think critically and are better morally developed. These findings correspond with the articles in my literature review chapter on media literacy and citizenship.

Media is ever-present in our lives, especially in traditional college students' lives. By teaching the five skills of media literacy, we are handing them the tools they need to navigate a media-flooded landscape. Media saturation, as defined by my participants, is also reflected in my literature review; teens and young adults interact with media for hours each day. Without a media literacy "filter," they have no way of understanding the truth of the media they absorb.

Imagine unfiltered drinking water; that is what watching media without literacy is like: murky, potentially dangerous, and disguising any number of hidden germs.

My goal of integrating media literacy into the undergraduate curriculum is possible. Media literacy can be effectively incorporated into existing core classes, but support will be needed from faculty and administration. Adding PLOs or CLOs reflecting the importance of media literacy could assist with these efforts. In addition, by adding more competencies, we are creating additional higher-level thinking lessons, as per Bloom's Taxonomy. Critical thinking is an aspect of both media literacy and higher-level thinking.

The five skills of media literacy should be added to all undergraduate core courses. Each course should include at least three competencies: Access and at least two of the other four skills. I recommend creating a media literacy PLO that could be incorporated into CLOs for each course.

Chapter 5: As-Is/To-Be Framework

Introduction

What would a media-literate world look like? In my dream world occupied by a populace that has conceptualized the five competencies of media literacy into their lives, Q-Anon no longer exists, people are no longer obsessed with their cell phones, and self-esteem is no longer under attack by Instagram models. Perhaps it is too much to hope for a world where everyone is media literate, but my vision of media literacy integrated into undergraduate core classes is certainly achievable. While the change may be incomplete, it could start a trend toward universities prioritizing media literacy in their courses.

Framework And As-Is/To-Be Comparison

I am applying Wagner's 4Cs model to my analysis. This will take the form of breaking down the "As Is" of the current curriculum and state of media literacy and the "To Be" of the achieved goal of adding media literacy to the courses. The four C's of Context, Culture, Conditions, and Competencies can be understood as follows (Wagner & Kegan, 2006):

- Context: Factors that influence an organization or curriculum under study.

- Culture: The patterns, shared assumptions, and interpretations that may direct organizational behavior.

- Conditions: The tangible elements that shape the health of the organization.

- Competencies: The skills and knowledge required for people to carry out specific tasks.

Context: Why Is Media Literacy Important to Students

When I first began teaching as an adjunct professor of media and communication in 2008, I was shocked to realize how little my students knew about media. For many, media was an ever-present force in their lives, but one they did not understand. As I grew older and my

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students grew younger (I began teaching more first-year classes), I faced a generation of students who had been using their parents' phones or tablets for entertainment since birth. However, few had ever learned to think critically about their viewing. Even students who create media through forums like YouTube, TikTok, and Discord may not understand the implications of their messages.

Students with low levels of media literacy may accept false or misleading messages at face value. Although they are digital natives with a lifetime of media viewing under their belts, understanding media is another step. Even students who create media may not fully understand the power of media in their lives.

Culture: The Undergraduate College and Media Literacy

Generationally, traditional students enrolled in Undergraduate College classes have been exposed to media their entire lives but may never have learned how to consider media critically. The students in my case-study undergraduate classes are mostly "traditional" students, meaning they are 18-20 and coming to college straight from high school; they are the ideal candidates for media literacy lessons. Harrison University is already concerned with the ability of students to reason critically, read and write fluently, and develop morally, as shown by PLOs and CLOs in the core classes. Adding media literacy to the culture is an obvious next step.

Conditions: Existing Course Structures

The core classes within the Harrison University Undergraduate College all follow the same structure: Ten weeks of classes in-person with support through an online LMS. Classes meet for three hours each week, either a three-hour class on one day or two 90-minute classes on two separate days. Due to the pandemic, all classes moved online temporarily in 2019. When the university returned to in-person classes, some classes were still offered in an asynchronous,

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online format. In those versions of the classes, topics that would have been covered in class are addressed through video lectures or discussion boards.

In-class time is divided into thirds: one-third activity, one-third discussion, and one-third direct instruction. Major assignments are due every other week. Most assignments are submitted online. Some classes have smaller assignments also due weekly. Often, courses also have adaptive learning and multiple readings/viewings per week. Lesson plans are predesigned as part of the course shells, and instructors are directed to follow those plans. Students may access media prior to class meetings or view media during class meetings. The classes do not explicitly include media literacy, except HIS 102, which, as stated previously, includes the CLO "Examine the role of the media and other social influences in shaping public opinion and spreading political ideologies" (citation redacted, 2021).

Competencies: The Five Stages of Media Literacy

As shown in Chapter 4, the Undergraduate College offers 15 core courses in language arts, philosophy, social studies, science, economics, and math. Students must take 12 classes (60 quarter hours). Some classes include critical thinking or media literacy CLOs, but most do not. One course includes a CLO related to media literacy. Most students, as digital natives, can be assumed to be able to access media (Access). All courses reviewed have some media access required, whether through YouTube videos, news articles, or pop culture items, such as movie clips or memes. The other four competencies have appeared in approximately half of the courses. The program is perfectly aligned to add media literacy.

To Be

Context: Why Media Literacy Is Important to Students

As shown previously, college students who participated in a media literacy course were better able to view media critically (Arke & Primack, 2009). The study linked high critical thinking ability to high media literacy ability. Being a better critical thinker benefits students beyond the classroom, making them better employees, parents, and citizens.

In addition, the research completed for this dissertation tells us media literacy is essential to living in a world where media is everywhere. Teaching media literacy also leads to students who are more likely to be developed morally, increasing the likelihood that they will be active democratic citizens. If people have the tools to break down political advertising, for example, they will have a more precise viewpoint and a better understanding of who and what they are voting for when choosing candidates.

Ultimately, students who are taught media literacy will carry that knowledge into the world, potentially educating others about the importance of understanding the media. Without teaching media literacy, the status quo will continue.

Culture: The Undergraduate College and Media Literacy

The ultimate change in culture would be a curriculum that serves the students' needs in core areas such as language arts, history, math, and science but simultaneously includes competency in media literacy. An updated curriculum would recognize that students need to be media literate to function as full members of society, as much as they need to be able to read, write and do math. We could accomplish this by encouraging professors and subject matter experts in other departments, such as math, science, social studies, and psychology, to recognize

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the importance of media literacy, potentially leading to the addition of university-wide PLOs and course-specific CLOs.

Other options for expanding media literacy within the culture are addressed in-depth in Chapter 6. These include approaching the administration and faculty with evidence about the importance of media literacy, working directly with course developers to add media literacy skills to existing classes, and offering professional development for instructors to add media literacy to their own classes.

Conditions: Existing Course Structures

Fitting media literacy into an already-packed schedule may require eliminating existing assignments. Replacing assignments with media literacy work that meets the course objectives may be challenging. I do not wish to undermine existing course structures. If professors feel their subjects are being undermined or attacked by changes to their courses to add media literacy, they may consciously or unconsciously alter the lessons and materials to eliminate the additions. Faculty and administration would need to be brought on board to realize the vision of integrated media literacy. The recommendations offered in Chapter 7 of this dissertation would enhance the teaching of subject matter, rather than undermine it. Ideally, the addition of media literacy skills to the classes would help teach the topic, not detract.

Competencies: The Five Skills of Media Literacy

The final curriculum recommendations for the 15 courses will include two competencies beyond Access in each course shell. Ideally, students would be offered multiple opportunities to use each of the five competencies by the end of their core courses and before moving into their specific subject matter courses. The subtle addition of the other four skills across the entire curriculum would make students accept it as just another part of their learning rather than

requiring them to take a media literacy course. Just like we teach reading and writing across the curriculum, media literacy could become an integral part of a university education.

Envisioning the Success

Can we create a fully media literate world, where everyone who sees media can break down the messages contained within, create their contrasting media, and know when the media is lying? Probably not. Something that is everywhere often goes overlooked; this is the issue with a media-saturated world. However, can we reach the undergraduate students at Harrison University? Definitely yes. And it must be noted that if those students become media literate, they will eventually pass what they learn to friends, family, and even their children. Educators know what we teach one person does not stop there; knowledge is interpreted, shared, and acted upon by many more people than that single student.

Reflection

My vision of a fully media-literate world may be grandiose and unlikely to come to fruition. But the beginning of that vision – educating the undergraduate students at Harrison University – is not a bridge too far. Instead, incorporating media literacy into the 15 undergraduate core courses is an innovative and feasible starting point toward achieving a broader mastery of media. It may be fantasy now, but it will always be unachievable if we take no steps. We must reach for this future, as unlikely as it may be at this moment.

Chapter 6: Strategies and Actions

Introduction

The goal of my research is to convince other educators of the importance of media literacy and to encourage the integration of media literacy into other subjects. When considering integration of an external topic into other courses, it can be instructive to look to past literacy incorporation efforts. For example, the original concept of "reading and writing across the curriculum" dates to the mid-to-late-1980s. It was reinforced by the Common Core State Standards, which rolled out in the mid-2000s (National Council of Teachers of English, 2011). Integrated literacy may have begun in primary and secondary schools, but it has long since been part of undergraduate classes as well. It seems reasonable to assume, like "reading and writing across the curriculum," media literacy across the curriculum could also trickle up to higher education. This is already beginning in K-12 education. For example, in 2021, the state of Illinois legislated that "beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, every public high school is required to include in its curriculum a unit of instruction on media literacy" (Media Literacy Now, 2022).

Policy Statement

As stated in this document, a CLO related to media literacy already exists in HIS 102: "Examine the role of the media and other social influences in shaping public opinion and spreading political ideologies (citation redacted for confidentiality, 2021)." While this is a good start, it is too limited. The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to argue for teaching media literacy to all undergraduate students. Adding a PLO would be the most effective method to accomplish this. The current PLOs used by Harrison University to guide the Undergraduate College are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Program Level Outcomes for Undergraduate Core Classes

Intellectual Skills

- Integration and Application of Knowledge
- Use of Information Resources
- Engaging Diverse Perspectives
- Ethical Reasoning
- Quantitative Fluency
- Communicative Fluency

Specialized Knowledge

- ✓ Content Mastery
- Application of Tools and Technology
- Discovery and Investigation
- Evaluation
- Written Communication
- Oral Communication

Applied & Collaborative

- Integration and Application of Knowledge
- Problem-Solving
- Teamwork
- Critical Thinking

Professional Practice

- Data Skills, Interpretation, & Management
- Decision Making/Problem-Solving
- Leadership
- ✓ Persuasive/Negotiation Skills
- Teamwork/Team-Building Skills
- Detail-Oriented

Civic & Global Learning

- Civic & Cultural Sensitivity
- Explain Diverse Perspectives
- Develop and Justify Position
- Empathy
- Collaboration on Civic Issues
- Integration of Knowledge and Skills at the Local, National, and Global Levels

Broad & Integrative Knowledge

- Synthesis of Knowledge
- Questioning
- Creativity
- Application of Concepts to Society at Large
- Evaluation from Multiple Perspectives
- Formulation of Evidence-based Arguments

(citation redacted for confidentiality, 2022)

I suggest adding Media Literacy Skills under the Civic & Global Learning section. Creating a media literacy PLO would guide course creators and instructors to incorporate the concepts outlined in this dissertation into their courses.

This could lead to CLOs for courses that specifically related to the five competencies. For example: "Access media that provides alternative viewpoints;" "Analyze news reports for racial bias;" "Reflect on individual media usage;" "Create a social media campaign;" and "Act by developing a petition."

An alternative option would be to add media literacy to the University-Level Outcomes, either under Intellectual Skills, which includes "Use of Information Resources," or under Civic and Global Learning, which focuses on becoming an active and informed citizen (citation redacted for confidentiality, 2022).

Strategies and Actions

Achieving my goal of integrating media literacy into the existing undergraduate core classes requires a great deal of outside support; it is not something I would be able to accomplish on my own. For it to succeed, three groups would need to participate in this plan: undergraduate college administrators, faculty members, and course developers.

First, the administration must agree that media literacy would be a valuable addition to the courses; ideally, a media literacy PLO would be added. Second, faculty would have to be convinced to agree, or at least go along with, the administrative decision. Third, developers would need to alter course shells in the online learning management system to add media literacy.

Achieving all three goals will require diplomatic discussions with administration and faculty and collaboration with course designers. Therefore, my first step will be to approach the

administration with my research into the role of media literacy in increasing student critical thinking and moral development. I will develop a research-based argument for adding media literacy to the core classes, and I will have this plan vetted by at least one media literacy expert. Armed with this research, I would present this plan orally, preferably in person, with visual aids in support. My main suggestion will be a PLO directly addressing media literacy would help the University's goal to "prepare students to succeed as professionals and engaged citizens in the 21st century" (website redacted for confidentiality, 2020), but also that instructors be educated on the importance of media literacy with the goal that they could add the skills to their classes.

If my first action were successful, my next step would be to approach the faculty with a similar argument. While I know the administration could simply issue a directive, not involving the faculty in the decision-making process, I am also aware this could result in annoyed instructors who overlook, accidentally or purposefully, the media literacy additions. Bringing the plan directly to faculty, and providing them with examples of how media literacy can be used to promote teaching their subject, rather than detracting from their subject, could bring them onboard with the changes.

Alternatively, I could offer professional development to faculty members, teaching them how to integrate media literacy into their courses. I have already done this at one of the universities where I teach in the form of a 60-minute online teaching and learning workshop titled *Integrating Media Literacy Into Any Subject*. More details on this workshop, including the feedback I received, is included in Appendix C. I have also developed a six-week online professional development workshop for K-12 teachers and higher education instructors on the same subject. Either or both of these could promote my ultimate goal of integrated media literacy.

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Finally, I may need to assist course developers with best practices for adding media literacy to the online course shells, possibly requiring specific suggestions for how they could add various media literacy competencies to the courses. It would be less obtrusive to make the changes during the regular course revision cycle; classes are reviewed and updated every two years. As a result, the roll-out of media literacy would take place over time, not all at once. Table 2 depicts these strategies and goals.

Being able to point to the connections between Bloom's Taxonomy and the five competencies of media literacy could provide me with additional evidence to support the inclusion of media literacy into courses. Instructors may struggle to include the higher-level thinking aspects of Bloom's into their classes. Media literacy could offer a method by which to approach those areas.

Table 2

Goal, Strategy, and Action Plan

	GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTION
1	**Convince the administration to add a media literacy PLO to undergraduate core classes.**	Compile research on the role of media literacy in critical thinking and student moral development.	Present administration with a completed plan for integration, vetted by at least one media literacy expert.
2A	**Address faculty concerns about media literacy detracting from teaching their subjects.**	Using the same research above, address the faculty directly about the importance of media literacy.	Provide suggestions for adding media literacy skills to classes in ways that help to teach the subject itself.
2B	**Encourage faculty to integrate media literacy into their own classes.**	Develop a media literacy workshop/professional development program.	Offer media literacy instruction to faculty, allowing them to integrate media literacy into courses beyond the core classes.

3	**Complete alterations to course shells within the LMS to add media literacy.**	Provide curriculum developers/course SMEs with examples of how media literacy can be added to the course shells.	Offer assistance in adding media literacy to those altering the shells.

Reflection

I believe my goal of adding media literacy to core undergraduate classes at Harrison University is achievable. However, it will require substantial participation from others to be accomplished. Reaching out first to administrators, then to faculty, and finally, to course developers could lead to this change. If, at the same time, I taught media literacy integration to instructors at all grade levels, my approach would be even more effective.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

  Media is ever-present in our lives. That is not in question. But understanding media? That is a completely different issue. Not everyone who watches the news, searches the internet, views social media posts, or enjoys pop culture actually knows the implications of what they are absorbing. The goal of increasing media literacy among college students drives this dissertation and research and drives my career as a media and communication professor.

Discussion

  My goals for media literacy education are expansive and perhaps unachievable. As previously stated, it is unlikely that everyone exposed to media can become completely media literate. However, it is achievable to teach undergraduate students at Harrison University media literacy as part of their core classes. I have shown in this dissertation media literacy is essential and can be integrated into other subjects. Table 3 indicates how adding media literacy to the current undergraduate core classes can be accomplished without distracting from the subject. In fact, some of the suggestions in Table 3 could help teach the class subject. Some of Creation suggestions are inspired by Renee Hobbs' 2017 text, *Create to Learn: Introduction to Media Literacy*. At the bottom of Table 3, I have included three Creation suggestions that could be integrated into any subject or course.

  For brevity, I have shortened Access to ACC, Creation to CRE, Analyze to ANA, Reflection to REF, and Action to ACT in the following table.

  Additions are not recommended for four courses that already include three or more of the five skills: ART 101: Art Appreciation; ENG 201: Intermediate English; HIS 102: Civics and American Government; and SOC 101: Foundational Sociology.

Table 3

Recommendations for Adding Media Literacy Skills to Core Classes

Code	Class Title	Skill(s) Included	Skill(s) Added	Method
ART 101	Art Appreciation	ACC, CRE, ANA, REF, ACT		
ECO 200	Macroeconomics for Today's Professional	ACC	ANA, REF	*Analyze* and *Reflection:* View media from various countries that deal with economics and consider how wealth is portrayed internationally.
ENG 101	Beginning English Composition	ACC, CRE	ANA	*Analyze:* Students write an analysis of their media usage in the form of a short essay practice in class.
ENG 201	Intermediate English	ACC, CRE, ACT		
ENG 203	Effective Speaking for Undergraduates	ACC	CRE, ACT	*Creation and Action:* Update the persuasive speech topic to reflect a media focus.
HIS 102	Civics and American Government	ACC, ANA, REF		
HIS 103	History Across the Globe	ACC, ANA	REF, CRE	*Reflection and Creation:* Identify historical events in Billy Joel's *We Didn't Start the Fire.* Assign students a 5-year time block from 2000-to 2020. Have them write a verse for an updated *We Didn't Start the Fire* for their time frame.
MTH 101	Intro to Math Concepts	ACC	REF, CRE	*Reflection:* Track the number of hours spent on various types of media and use for percentages or ratios. *Creation:* Students film videos using math in everyday life.
PHI 107	Ethics, Logic/Critical Inquiry	ACC, ACT	REF	*Reflection:* Review media ownership and consider the

				media's role in ethical reporting.
PSY 101	Intro to Psychology	ACC	ANA, CRE, ACT	*Analyze:* Students read about the "Thinstagram" movement and its impact on the mental health of vulnerable teens. *Creation* and *Action*: Students create and write a blog about mental health issues in vulnerable populations
SCI 101	Physical Science	ACC	CRE, ANA, REF	*Creation:* Research a physical science topic and film an educational video. *Analyze* and *Reflection:* Show movie clips of fictional scientists and have students compile a list of common characteristics. Compare list to biographies of real scientists.
SCI 102	Survey Biological Science with Lab	ACC, CRE	ANA	*Analyze:* Compare media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 to coverage in March 2021 and March 2022.
SCI 225	Human Impact on the Environment	ACC	ANA, ACT	*Analyze:* Evaluate media coverage of global warming from different media sources. *Action*: Approach media outlets about coverage of global warming.
SOC 101	Foundational Sociology	ACC, ANA, REF		
SOC 222	Culture and Identity	ACC	ANA, REF, ACT	*Analyze* and *Reflection*: Watch media pieces from different eras and compare how identity is depicted (for example, gender role models from the 1950s versus today). *Action:* Develop a social media campaign to urge media creators to better portray cultures and identities.
Options that could be applied in any class			CRE	*Creation*: Research and film a video about a class topic.

|		*Creation*: Research and write social media-style posts about a course topic. *Creation*: Design a movie poster about a class topic.

The changes I suggest in Table 3 at least double the percentages of classes featuring each competency.

- Initially, 33% of the classes included Analyze, with the changes, 67% of the classes would include Analyze;

- 27% included Creation, which would increase to 60%;

- while 20% included Reflection, increasing to 60%; and

- 20% included Action, increasing to 47%.

These percentages are in graphic format in Figure 7. Each class now includes at least three competencies: Access and a minimum of two other skills, as per the goal set at the beginning of my research.

Figure 7

Audit Results Versus Recommended Changes
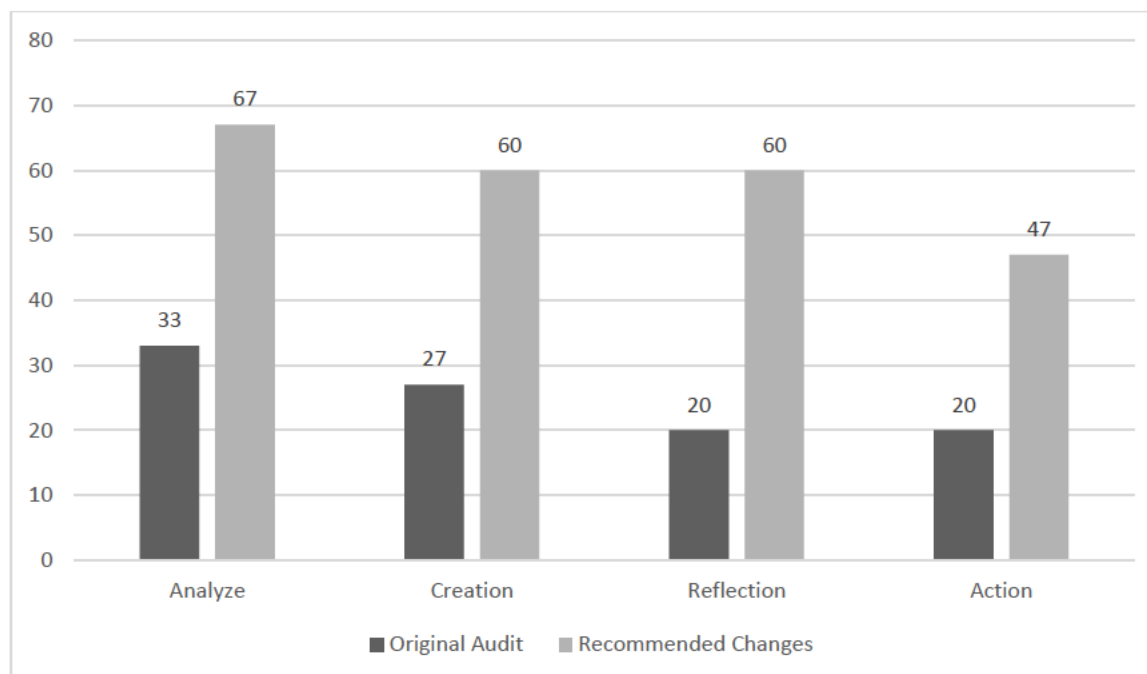
While these changes double each competency included within the core classes, they should not detract from the courses. In fact, they should help teach the subject in which they have been embedded.

For example, the addition of "*Analyze:* Students write an analysis of their media usage in the form of a short essay practice in class" to ENG 101: Beginning English Composition means the students are not only writing about their media usage but would be learning to write numerical data within an essay correctly.

Adding "*Creation:* Students film videos using math in everyday life" to MTH 101: Intro to Math Concepts helps students answer the age-old questions of "Why am I learning this? How is this useful?"

Including "*Analyze* and *Reflection:* View media from various countries that deal with economics and consider how wealth is portrayed internationally" to ECO 200: Macroeconomics for Today's Professional shines a spotlight on the difference in wealth in various countries, a vital distinction for anyone seeking to work in international business.

Some items may not directly assist with teaching the subject but will not distract from it. For example, in ENG 203: Effective Speaking for Undergraduates, the addition is "*Creation and Action:* Update the persuasive speech topic to reflect a media focus." The persuasive speech already exists in the class; adding media does not detract from learning how to prepare and present a persuasive speech. Offering additions that either enhance or support an existing course may overcome reluctance from the "tribal" professors mentioned earlier.

These changes increase the higher-level thinking in each class as well, reflecting Bloom's Taxonomy (1956; 1984). Specifically, Analyzing and Creating are emphasized by these additions, with Analyze doubling and Creation tripling.

In addition to the challenge of siloed or tribal instructors within the university, I may face those who prefer to emphasize digital or information literacy rather than media literacy. During a session I presented for a research symposium at Harrison University, I spoke to a university librarian who stated those within the library supported the addition of Information Literacy to the curriculum. This push could help or hinder my efforts. Help, if we can work together to support a combined PLO for media and information literacy. Hinder, if the tribalism of subjects divides us and leads us to fight only for our preferred literacy focus.

Teaching instructors and teachers how to incorporate media literacy into their subjects is also achievable. To that end, I have been developing a workshop-style course for teachers that will help them add media literacy skills into their existing lesson plans. Rather than disrupting their teaching, media literacy can be a support that helps them teach their subject. Figure 8 highlights questions instructors can ask when adding media literacy skills to their classes, emphasizing the role each of the five competencies plays. This reaches beyond the 15 core classes and could be applied to any class, subject, or grade level.

Figure 8

Questions for Instructors To Consider About Adding Media Literacy
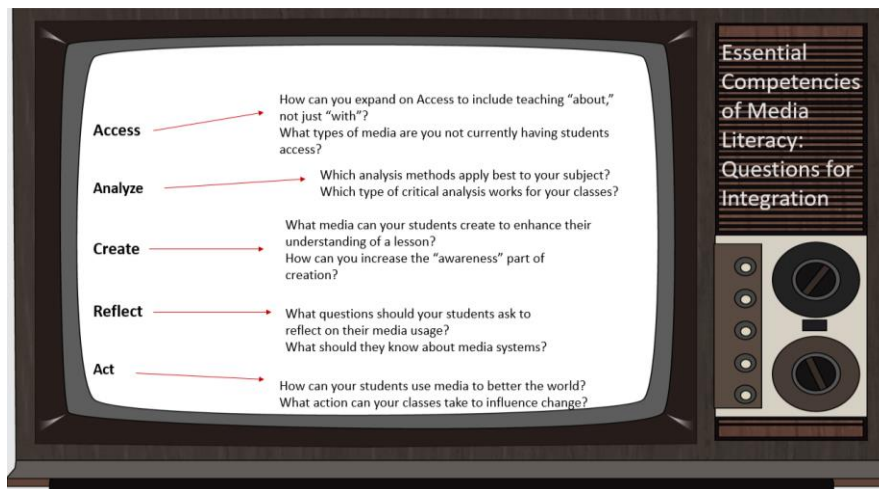
Instructor Lessons

Throughout researching and writing my dissertation, I have expanded my understanding of media literacy, talked to some fantastic people about media literacy, and had the opportunity to teach others about media literacy. My teaching has expanded beyond the undergraduate classroom. I have had the opportunity to instruct other professors and teachers about media literacy and how it can be applied within their classes.

In addition, my class studies have taught me a lot about how to teach. I am a better instructor than when I began working toward my doctorate.

Reflection

At various points in this dissertation, I have compared media to polluted air, murky water, or an ever-present and overwhelming behemoth. This may lead to the logical conclusion that I hate media. In reality, the opposite is true. I am a reality show aficionado, a superhero movie fangirl, and a lover of pop culture and fandoms. I am also a former journalist, so I understand the importance of a free press. However, at the same time, I see media with clear eyes. How can both be true?

Because I am media literate.

I do not want to take the joy of media from my students. However, I think we can supply Gen Z and upcoming generations with a dash of skepticism and a grain of caution by teaching them media literacy skills while teaching them other subjects. Loving media does not require being blind to its faults. By teaching media literacy, we give students the keys they need to create a genuinely democratic, moral society where media can be appreciated and enjoyed but not accepted with a blind faith. The tools exist; it is time to pass them on to the next generation.

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Appendix A: Email Request for Participation

Dear Dr….:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Post-Secondary Teaching and Instructional Leadership program at National Louis University. In my dissertation, I am considering how media literacy lessons can be added to existing undergraduate courses. My dissertation title is *Integrating Media Literacy into General Education Core Courses for Undergraduates.*

I would like to interview you as an expert in media literacy and media literacy education. Increasing my understanding of media literacy will assist me in making informed recommendations in my dissertation. The interview would be held remotely, via Zoom, and recorded for transcription.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. Please see attached the Consent Form related to my dissertation study, which will provide more details about the study goals, the format of the interview, and the research parameters.

Sincerely,

Christen Embry

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY
National College of Education
School of Advanced Professional Programs

Doctoral Research Project: Christen Embry
Research Invitation and Informed Consent Document: Interview Participants

Dear prospective participant:

You are invited to be part of a qualitative research project titled *Integrating Media Literacy into General Education Core Courses for Undergraduates* conducted by Christen Embry, a doctoral student in Postsecondary Teaching and Instructional Leadership at National Louis University, for the purposes of collecting data for her doctoral dissertation research project. The purpose of this limited narrative study is to review the current undergraduate curriculum at NLU and to consider ways to integrate media literacy into that curriculum.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any time with no penalty to you. The study does not have any known or potential risks. You are invited to participate in an individual semi-structured qualitative interview that may last approximately 45-60 minutes in a virtual format. You will be asked to respond to a series of questions pertaining to your educational background, media literacy and curriculum design. The interview will be audio-and/or video-recorded (pending your consent) and transcribed verbatim. An interview transcript will be sent to you for verification of accuracy.

For confidentiality purposes, the interview transcript and all files pertaining to your participation in this study will be kept on a secure server, which will be password protected. Only the principal researcher (me) of the study will know your actual name, as a pseudonym will be assigned to you in order to keep all the information fully confidential. Data will be destroyed within three years of collection.

If you have questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at   or
                    . You can also contact my Department Chair, Dr. Stuart Carrier, at scarrier@nl.edu or (813) 220-6229 or the NLU IRB Chair Dr. **Shaunti Knauth** at shaunti.knauth@nl.edu or (312) 261-3526.

You will be tendered a copy of your signed consent form. Please acknowledge with your signatures below your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you,
Christen Embry
Doctoral Candidate
National College of Education at National Louis University

I consent to participate in the research project titled *Integrating Media Literacy and Critical Thinking into General Education Core Courses for Undergraduates* conducted by Christen Embry.

Name: Date:

_____   _____

[Signature]

I give my permission to videotape this interview:
Name: Date:

_____   _____

[Signature]

Appendix C: Workshop on Media Literacy Integration

Description

Children, teens, and young adults spend hours every day exposed to media. But they often lack a fundamental understanding of the nature of media and how it impacts them. People who are media literate are often more active, ethically aware citizens. Teachers and professors don't have room in their schedules to add modules teaching media literacy; but what if they could weave media literacy into their lessons? In this workshop, educators will learn about five elements of media literacy, how media impacts their students, and, using their own lesson plans, explore the integration of media literacy into their classrooms.

Please bring a specific lesson, unit, or topic with you. Discussions will focus on the practical application of media literacy into your existing curriculum.

Schedule

5 minutes	Brainstorming/Get to know you What is media literacy? Why is it important?	Questions: What subject do you teach? What lesson/topic are you working with today? What do you already know about media literacy?
25 minutes	5 skills of media literacy Media literacy as part of critical race/gender theory	PowerPoint Have participants consider which skills they already use.
10 minutes	Small groups; Choosing a skill to focus on	Working in small groups, discuss which of the skills you are not using that you want to include.
10 minutes	Individual; Researching options to include chosen skill	
10 minutes	Debrief & Questions	Participants share what skills they will be adding to their lessons

Feedback

Session:	Overall, I thought the quality of this session was:	This presentation featured innovative ideas, models, and/or approaches for teaching.	This presentation offered practical strategies and/or techniques I can apply to my teaching.	This presentation was focused.	This presentation was engaging.	What did you like best about this session?	What could have been improved in this session?

Integrating Media Literacy into Any Subject - Christen Embry	Excellent	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	The open-ness with which participants were invited to share their experiences. Christen really welcomed having a participatory session in which everyone could become a Facilitator.	
Integrating Media Literacy into Any Subject - Christen Embry	Excellent	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Great presentation. PowerPoint slides had pictures of what settings/options we need to look for. Professor also gave real-time demonstrations of some of these setting.	I do not have a suggestion on how to improve this presentation.
Integrating Media Literacy into Any Subject - Christen Embry	Excellent	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Great presentation overall. Informative slides, great dialog between presenter and attendees.	This could have used more time because presenter had an activity prepared for us that, sadly, we did not have time for. Maybe 30 more minutes would have allowed for us to do this activity during the breakout session.