

# New Directions in Global Media Literacy

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## INTRODUCTION

This article highlights the birth, development, and growth of a dynamic educational program promoting global media literacy. *The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change*, a program born in summer 2007, annually gathers 50 students and a dozen faculty for three weeks to create educational and multimedia products around media literacy, global citizenship, and freedom of expression. With more than 200 student and 30 faculty alumni from 25 countries, the Salzburg Academy has created a curriculum that has been downloaded in more than 100 countries worldwide, and has enabled new forms of dialog across borders, across cultures, and across divides. Now in its fifth year, the program stands to benefit the future information societies by offering resources to help maintain active and participatory journalists and citizens of the digital age.

## GLOBAL MEDIA LITERACY: NO LONGER AN OPTION

Any conversation about globalization today must take into account the changing ways in which information is produced, transmitted, and received. New media technologies have allowed for wide and unfettered flow of information across borders, across cultures, and across platforms; influencing how individuals, societies, and nations use information to inform, interact, and persuade (see Shirky, 2010; Carr, 2010; Weinberger, 2008; Benkler, 2007; Jenkins, 2006). In response to this new global media environment, educators have increasingly adopted media literacy to help students understand the complex and multi-faceted roles and responsibilities of media in civil society.

While many media literacy initiatives have made significant strides over the last few decades to respond to the almost daily changes in the global media landscape and to address the roles media have come play in the globalized world, these initiatives do not always have the resources or infrastructure to incorporate global media literacy learning outcomes into their purview.

*The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change*, with a network of over 200 students and 30 faculty from over 25 countries worldwide, has transformed global media education by creating a program that brings together faculty and students from all over the world, and charges them to build products that characterize media and citizenship as inherently global, and representative of the cross-cultural media environments now occupied by a majority of individuals worldwide. Through an interdisciplinary and cross-border media literacy approach, the Academy has developed a new framework to teach students not only to think critically about media and media messages, but also to defend and appreciate the necessity of free and diverse media systems for free and diverse global communities.

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global media and civil society, and on post-secondary learning outcomes in media programs. Mihailidis is also the Director of the Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change, and sits on the board of the National Association for Media Literacy Education.

## THE SALZBURG ACADEMY ON MEDIA & GLOBAL CHANGE

In 2007, fifty-two students from fourteen countries over five continents gathered at the Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg, Austria, for three weeks to create educational content around media, freedom of expression, democracy, and citizenship. The premise of this gathering—the inaugural Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change—was that a truly global collaborative effort is a prerequisite to creating a truly global media literacy educational experience.

In the four years since its birth, the primary outcome of the Salzburg Academy, in addition to the individual growth and transformation documented by those who participated, was a student-created curriculum on global media literacy. This curriculum reinforced critical inquiry and analytic skills with modules that emphasized the vital importance of free and independent media in building and supporting civil society (Mihailidis, 2009). Since its birth, the Academy has grown into a robust and dynamic laboratory for creating dynamic, diverse, and collaborative products to be shared with a global audience (see *Table 1*).

In its first year, the Academy participants created an analysis framework for the global media literacy curriculum built around five concepts. Known as the “5 A’s” of global media literacy (see *Table 2*), this model seeks to produce individuals who are aware of the world and their own role as a world citizen, respect and value diversity, understand how the world works [socially, culturally, politically, economically, technologically, environmentally], participate in and contribute to the community at both a local and global level, are willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place, and who take responsibility for their actions. The 5A’s are also designed to not think of media education in terms of content or media silos (TV, radio, print, internet) but to reflect a more holistic and integrated approach to media realities that are converging and increasingly borderless.

Building on the work of the first year of the program, the Academy in years two and three created a series of case study-driven lesson plans, available online as web pages and downloadable PDF documents. The lesson plans all include an introductory case study, a set of classroom and homework exercises, and discussion questions modeled along the 5 A’s. The plans also list additional resources and credits.

**TABLE 1**  
*Salzburg Academy Institutional Partners (2007–2010)*

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTION	COUNTRY
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT	LEBANON
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN SHARJAH	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY	UNITED KINGDOM
HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY	USA
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY	UGANDA
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA	NAMIBIA
PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA	ARGENTINA
PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA	CHILE
QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERISTY	PAKISTAN
STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY	SOUTH AFRICA
TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY	CHINA
UNIVERSIDAD IBEROAMERICANA	MEXICO
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK	USA
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI	USA
UNIVERSITY OF ST. CYRIL & METHODIUS IN TRNAVA	SLOVAKIA
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN	USA
ZAYED UNIVERSITY	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

**TABLE 2**  
*The 5 As of Media Literacy*

<b>ACCESS</b> TO MEDIA AS A HUMAN RIGHT
<b>AWARENESS</b> OF MEDIA’S POWER
<b>ASSESSMENT</b> OF HOW MEDIA COVER INTERNATIONAL AND SUPRANATIONAL EVENTS AND ISSUES
<b>APPRECIATION</b> FOR MEDIA’S ROLE IN CREATING CIVIL SOCIETIES
<b>ACTION</b> TO ENCOURAGE BETER COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DIVIDES

The consistent lesson plan format provides a familiar structure for teachers and students, and the separation of the lesson plan into parts gives educators an easy way to select those elements of the lesson plans are of greatest value to them in their classroom. The students worked in diverse groups to collectively build, edit, and finalize each lesson plan, making sure the scope of each product was global in scope, collaborative in its development, and adaptable for diverse audiences.



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OR... if you have other hi-res or vector visuals, please send them to me to be included with your article :)

In 2010, the Academy set out to diversify its media education platform. With the curriculum now in use in over 100 countries, the lesson plan approach was expanded to include six over-arching themes: two theoretical *agenda setting* and *framing*; two related to new media technologies: *social media*, and *civic participation* and two focused on topic of international concern: *covering conflict* and *freedom of expression*. Each of these thematic modules provides an overview to the content area, and offers a downloadable lesson plans, videos, exercises, online social maps, and resources. These six modules together represent topics that are global in scope but local in context and application. They can be taught across cultures and borders, and they each provide room for critical inquiry, theoretical exploration, and practical application: founding principals of the Academy model.

## CONCLUSION: NEW DIRECTIONS IN GLOBAL MEDIA LITERACY

The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change is a visionary effort to transform media education. If understanding media is a prerequisite for civic engagement in an information world, then media education programs must do more to help prepare citizens for lives of active participation through mediated platforms. This not only includes how to critically analyze and compose media messages, but also how to empower civic voice, how to be tolerant of media cultures in other parts of the world, how to use media for better cross-cultural dialog and less stereotyping, and so on.

The Academy has been a success because it has built upon earlier notions of teaching and learning about media to create new dynamic platforms for civic growth in global contexts. Through a collaborative, ground-up approach to teaching and learning about global media, the Academy has created not only dynamic education products, but also a core group of future media practitioners that have gained invaluable insight into how media systems define cultures and identities in foreign nations. This involves thinking beyond borders, and beyond specific media, to understand the unique ways media defines civil society across the globe.

For more information on the Salzburg Academy, it's curriculum, and how to apply, please visit [www.salzburg.umd.edu](http://www.salzburg.umd.edu). ☞

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