

## Media And Culture Concentration Meeting 09/23/09

Meeting Minutes

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October 12, 2009

There were 11 students in attendance as well as Professors Nina Khrushcheva and Sean Jacobs.

Professor Nina Khrushcheva, the current Chair of the Media and Culture Concentration, started off the meeting by asking the students why they are studying media, and what exactly is they want to study.

She talked about the Yes Men, and their recent New York Post spoof. (From [theyesmen.org](http://theyesmen.org): The Yes Men “impersonate big-time criminals in order to publicly humiliate them. Targets are leaders and big corporations who put profits ahead of everything else.”) On 9/21/09 the Yes Men made a fake New York Post with real stories about Climate Change, and distributed 1 million copies around New York City. A main point Nina made was that although the Yes Men were spoofing the media, they still used the newspaper format to do so.

We watched the following video about the New York Post spoof:

<http://www.vimeo.com/6676567>

Nina invited Professor Sean Jacobs into the conversation by mentioning an off the cuff remark he once made about it still being “All about the New York Times anyways.”

Sean brought up a video mash up in which a German pop band did a cover of Soulja Boy’s hit *Turn My Swagger On* and made a video with interviews and war footage to make a commentary about child soldiers in Africa.

This video can be seen at:

<http://vodpod.com/watch/2220963-soulja-boy-dedicates-song-to-child-soldiers>

Sean brought up this video because he think its interesting to consider how the song (and even the artist who wrote the song) had nothing to do with the images, but the way in which they were combined made for a compelling and touching look at Child Soldiers. Perhaps a video like this could bring more awareness than the traditional PSAs or social ads, through a different way of looking at things. Sean was also interested in how these mash ups are made, the politics behind them, who the makers are, as well as the copyright issues that come into play when you use someone else’s footage.

Nina brought up that similarly to the Yes Men who used the newspaper format, the Soulja Boy video also used the traditional medium of a music video.

Josephine Q. Vu, who is graduating in December talked briefly about newspapers, and how they might be shrinking here, but are still valuable in places that are newly democratic like Nepal, which she recently returned from.

Jake Perry, the previous editor of Contexts who is also graduating soon spoke about his thesis, which is a work of fiction and deals with information communication technologies around the world.

Sean brought up that one aspect he really enjoys about the Media and Culture Concentration and GPIA in general is the concept of mixing theory with practice in our studies, with an emphasis on practice. He brought up a course that is being offered next semester called Reading and Making of a Documentary, in which a documentary film maker will come in and teach students to make short documentaries on their own, as one person crews. We took a look at a draft of classes that will be offered in the spring semester, which you can see on [gpia.info](http://www.gpia.info) at:

<http://www.gpia.info/media-concentration/courses>

A first semester GPIA student, Maria Ximena Plaza, mentioned that she would be interested in a class about technologies of communications. It was brought up that the Media Studies Department currently offers two courses Media Management and Leadership (NMDM 5303) and Political Media and Communication (NMDS 5253) that could be of interest to our students.

Another first semester student, Carrie James, brought up that she is interested in Women's Rights, and is unsure whether she should be in the Media and Culture concentration, or in the Governance and Rights concentration. Nina recommended she take a class with Peter Lucas, who will be teaching Media and Human Rights next semester, and told her that it is possible to combine both of the concentrations.

Christine Newkirk spoke about her job at an online journal called Youth Media Reporter, whose purpose is to bring awareness to youth media in the United States and around the world. Christine is interested in the emergence of young people as a new political demographic and how young people are being engaged politically in different countries.

Sean brought up the site [scoop44.com](http://scoop44.com), which is an online newspaper run by college students. (From [scoop44.com](http://scoop44.com): Scoop44 is an online national outlet covering the Obama Administration, national politics, and a new generation of Americans produced, edited, and written by young people across the nation and abroad.) Sean called the website a "Huffington Post run by 20 year olds." He brought this up to Christine, since young people run it. Also, Sean suggested maybe at GPIA students could make a similar site, and Nina suggested maybe turning Contexts into a similar type of site. [Contexts](#) is currently online, but is only updated when a new issue comes out.

Lorena Ruiz, a first semester student spoke about her interests in new media, mash ups, and comedy to bring awareness to important issues. She brought up the Gregory Brothers, who make YouTube videos called Auto Tune the News, in which they take news clips and use auto tune to make the speakers sing. We watched the following video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0OzxvClwoU>

Sean asked about if students have access to video cameras. Several students said that it was difficult to get access to video equipment, and that we don't have the right to the video equipment the Media Studies Students have. Nina brought up that to get access students often need faculty assistance to get equipment. Sean and Nina decided to look into this, to see what students are currently able to access, and to see if the Concentration should look into having equipment of its own. Sean brought up a student in one of his classes who wants to make a short documentary using his iPhone and his laptop.

Everyone discussed how today it is common for people to say they don't watch TV, because it is possible to get one's news and entertainment through the internet and Facebook, Twitter, iTunes, etc.... Whereas 10 years ago it would be strange if someone said they didn't watch TV. Sean brought up that even though we get our information from different sources, there are still some things we all watch, like Michael Jackson, Barack Obama, etc... However, because of Tivo and the Internet, people can watch it on their own time, so there doesn't seem to be a collective audience.

Josephine brought up a reason why she chose GPIA, which was the question about how we perceive ourselves now that the whole world is starting to get their news from similar sources, and there seems to be a global history forming. Sean brought up the question of how should we define a pivotal media event.

Nina posed the question why people want to be a journalist in this day. Leslie Pariseau, a first semester GPIA student said she wants to be a journalist because of her love of writing, and she is finding ways to evolve with the new technologies. We discussed the Yes Men New York Post project again, and how it was particularly effective in cities, and in New York City because of public transportation.

Nina closed out the meeting by saying that she is much more optimistic about the media than in previous years, because even though we don't know what's coming next as things are being redefined, media will continue. When the moving press was invented, people mourned the end of art, but that didn't happen, things went on and progressed. Both professors recommended looking up the upcoming courses on [gpia.info](http://www.gpia.info)

<http://www.gpia.info/media-concentration/courses>