

The University of Iowa

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING: INDIA

Study Abroad: India Winterim December 27, 2011 – January 16, 2012

165:197:007 International Development, Section 007
019: 169:002 Topics in Mass Communication, Section 002

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COURSE OUTLINE

Course description and objectives

The Indian economy has grown rapidly in the last 20 years. In keeping with this change, Indian media have grown dramatically both in number and reach. Not so long ago, a handful of newspapers and a solitary government-run TV channel and radio service constituted the sum of modern Indian journalistic media. Today, we find an exponential growth in print media, broadcast channels, online media sources, and media industries operating on multiple media platforms. Contributing to this dense media environment are prominent multinational media conglomerates, also vying for audience share in the Indian mediascape.

However, the high economic growth of the last two decades has not been equitable. Expanding urban areas have created larger pockets of poverty, and the urban-rural gap has heightened. For example, India boasts 69 billionaires (third only to the US and China), but other statistics for critical areas such as public health show a dismal contrast – for example, 47% of the children under age five are malnourished, and 60% of Indian women suffer from anaemia (figures provided by Visthar, India).

This is the context within which this course is situated. We will go to India and observe these extraordinary combinations of progress and disparities characteristic of developing countries. We will learn about the development of modern Indian media, forms of communication unique to the region, and the environments within which Indian media work.

Our objectives in the course will be to (a) familiarize ourselves with Indian media today through readings and field visits, and (b) read about, see, and learn firsthand development efforts from a community perspective, and record them (research, write, edit, shoot, upload, present) in various formats.

Partner organization

Visthar, our host, is a non-governmental organization working and advocating for children's rights, especially female children of marginalized populations. It runs educational programs to train them to join a productive workforce. Visthar is also an academy of Peace and Justice Studies. The organization is located in a green and eco-friendly campus at the outskirts of Bangalore, a southern Indian metropolis, and serves as host and partner organization to several universities in the US participating in exchange programs. Visthar collaborates for program planning and will arrange various activities and field visits both in Bangalore and surrounding areas and region. Students will have opportunities to meet people of different caste, class, and religious backgrounds. Education on the campus includes experiential learning. To quote a Visthar coordinator, "While we take theory seriously, our education begins with the experiences of the people at the grassroots."



Source: Laura Northup, UI Student who went to Visthar in 2009-10

Eligibility

Undergraduate and graduate students, and non-UI students. This course will fulfill the conceptual course requirement for UI Journalism majors, and is accepted for a Media Studies minor. Students from other departments in UI and from other institutions should consult with their academic advisors to determine whether this course will meet their program requirements.

Study Abroad location

The three-week course will take place in Bangalore, in the state of Karnataka in South India. Dubbed the Silicon Valley of India, it is also a regional media hub, and a city known for educational institutions for engineering, law, and medicine.

Benefits of the experience

At a minimum, stepping outside one's comfort zone to consciously expand horizons is one of the best ways to appreciate one's own culture and life situation. Contrasts and comparisons help us learn in ways a traditional classroom experience cannot. More, encounters abroad may well have powerful influences on career choices. Media work in development contexts have the potential to open up extraordinary professional opportunities in the future for creatively using media to foster social change. Field visits and activities are designed to expose students to different types of media organizations, and gain some familiarity with dilemmas of developing regions such as the struggle for sustainable livelihoods, consequences of water privatization, development-induced displacements, and more.

Course requirements

Prior to departure

- Attend orientation meetings (non-UI students should check with the instructor for arrangements)
- Read and view

Gunaratne, S. (2000). *Handbook of the Media in Asia*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapter on Indian media (will be placed on reserve at Main Library)

View "Divided by Language: Newspapers in India," (2008), a documentary by Vandana Pednekar-Magal (will be placed on reserve at Main Library)

During our stay in India

- Attend all planned activities and excursions
- Attend regular group meetings with the instructor to process experiences
- Prepare for readings and discussion sessions (readings below in bibliography)
- Actively engage with our hosts and partner organizations
- Prepare and upload three blog posts (individual assignment) – instructions and guidelines will be provided
- Develop a group project related to a specific topic and related field visits – instructions and guidelines will be provided. Some choice is available for choosing topics for the project – alternatives will be provided.
- Discuss individually with the instructor the angle you will take to write a feature-length article in multimedia format about your experiences in India – due upon return
- Prepare a summary and present to our local hosts on the last day of the course – likely a public event will that will attract people who have been marginalized, activists, and members of the general public who may be unaware of the scale and details of development-related triumphs and dilemmas. Guidelines will be provided.
- The first four requirements apply to graduate students. They will then work with the instructor to develop a final paper on a topic of their choice. Guidelines will be provided.

Follow-up

- Prepare a feature-length article (750 words text) in multimedia format on your experiences in India, taking the angle you will have discussed with the instructor (graduate students will have different requirements and will have to consult the instructor)

- Participate and present a group summary with the instructor (under 45 minutes) at a Winterim symposium that will be organized before the end of February at UI. No presentation is required of non-UI students, but they will have to write a brief essay of 5 pages maximum, double-spaced, on a development issue they have witnessed and experienced.

Course grades

- 20% attendance at all meetings
- 20% active participation following panel discussions, visits, and other activities, with the instructor, hosts, and other sponsoring organizations
- 15% for blog posts @ 5
- 20% for the group project
- 15 % feature-length article or brief essay (non-UI students)
- 10% for presentations @ 5
- For graduate students, attendance and participation grades are the same, assignments will differ.

Readings to be completed for discussion at Visthar:

Joseph, A. (2005). *Making News: Women in Journalism*. New Delhi: Penguin. (selections)

Sachs, W. (2010). *The Development Dictionary: a Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London: Zed Books. (selections)

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf. (selections). This book is available in electronic format through UI Libraries.

Shiva, V. (2005). *Water Wars*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. (selections)

Sinha, S. K. (2004). *Sociology of Media: Impact of Doordarshan on Tribals*. Delhi: Raj Publications

Supreme Court of India Judgment on Nandini Sundar and others vs State of Chattisgarh (2011)
http://www.thehindu.com/multimedia/archive/00679/Supreme_Court_judgm_679794a.pdf