

Mass Media Studies

Looking Comparatively at US and Latin American Media

1 Introduction

The idea for this seminar grew out of the recent work at MIT to increase people's awareness of the case of Lori Berenson, an ESG alumnus who is still being held in a jail in Peru. Although the seminar described below is built around academic goals, it has a more fundamental aim of motivating students to become more actively involved in the protection of human rights, in Latin America and elsewhere.

This is a six-unit seminar focused on comparing and contrasting aspects of mass media in Latin America and the United States. We will be translating articles in Latin American newspapers on topics of interest to both them and us, then looking at the different view points that are presented therein. From this standpoint, we can explore the larger political context within which the Latin American articles were written and how it differs from our own.

2 Logistics

This seminar will be held in the spring with 3 to 8 politically-minded individuals from both ESG and MIT at large (from MIT Spanish classes, the Media Studies program, possibly even interested Harvard students). At least half of these people should be able to read Spanish.

Each meeting will look at a small group of articles, roughly half of which come from the Latin American press. Students will discuss the topics presented in these articles as well as the media studies and political topics that explain how corresponding articles from different countries differ. We might also explore broadcast media and personal reports to the same end.

By the end of the term, the students will use these discussions to write near-publishable papers on the themes discussed. These papers can then be combined into a booklet as the final product of the seminar. In some sense, this final booklet is the "goal" of the seminar, and considerable time and thought will be dedicated to its development and coherence.

Since ESG does not have any instructors in Media studies, we hope to find convince a professional in the field to come and give a talk either at one of the first meetings or for

the entire ESG community (for Friday lunch). This person may also be willing to continue helping the seminar, advising or directing us.

All we need for this seminar is money to get subscriptions to at least two different Latin American newspapers, preferably more, and a room in which to hold the seminar.

3 Schedule

There will be two 1 hour meetings per week, probably with the first introducing a topic and the second exploring it in more depth after students have had more time to look at the articles involved.

The schedule will be partly affected by the current events which rock both the United States and the Latin American countries we are looking at. Other to-be-determined topics will be chosen which historical hinge on important differences between Latin American and US culture and politics. Topics are likely to include the Lori Berenson case and the revolutionary movements involved in it (Shining Path and the MRTA), and the actions of the new Peruvian government and its political priorities.