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Your Eastern Progress: An Approach to Teaching Critical Reading, Media Literacy, and Campus Engagement

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Your Eastern Progress: An Approach to Teaching Critical Reading, Media Literacy, and Campus Engagement

Introduction

This Quality Enhancement Plan-sponsored project aided in the development of a learning community arc assignment for Fall 2020.



Professor Tricia Kelley introduces first-year students to the concept of media literacy and the *Eastern Progress* student newspaper.

It taught critical reading strategies, awareness about campus resources, and community engagement through a partnership with the *Eastern Progress* (EP). The project promoted information and media literacy amongst first-year students.

Learning Objectives



Student media specialist Chelsea Creech was hired using a Quality Enhancement Grant to produce instructional media.

The series of assignments had the following Learning Outcomes: differentiate between genres (video, written) and types (objective, opinion) of journalistic

media; contextualize campus issues within historical and sociopolitical frameworks; demonstrate audience awareness through rhetorical analyses of journalistic sources; engage with the campus community through an original piece of media.

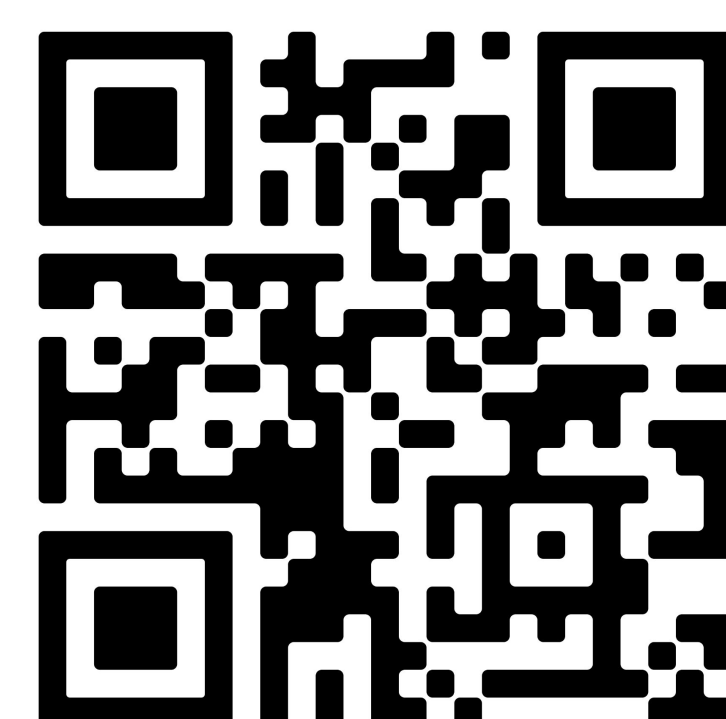
Review of Literature

Hobbs and Jensen (2009), discussing the importance of information / media literacy, argue that “exploring the ways in which violence and sexuality are depicted in media messages continue to matter as important life skills” (p. 9). Critical reading can be of personal and professional importance, but it doesn’t always come

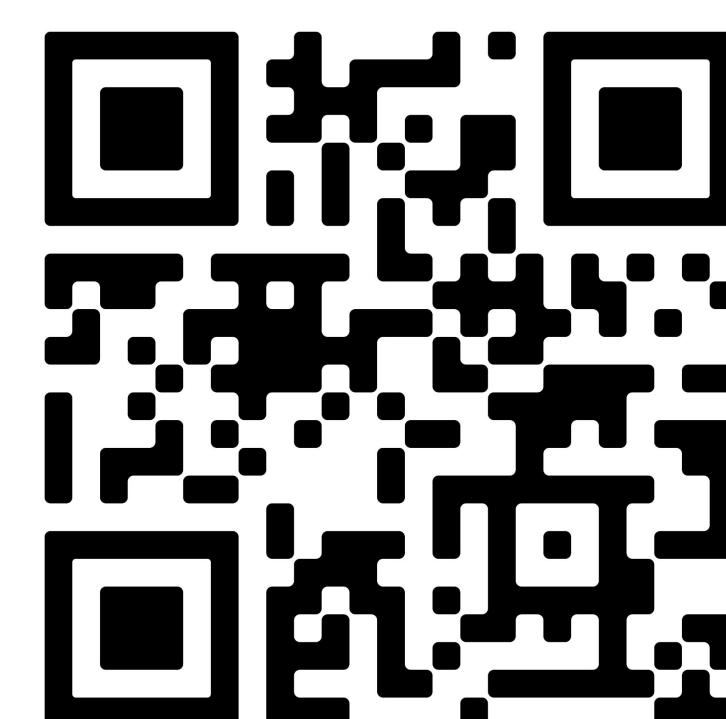
naturally. Bosley (2008) explains, “freshmen ... need to be taught explicit strategies” (p. 298). In student development theory, Schlossberg proposed four factors influencing freshmen transitions: situation, self, support, and strategies (Patton et al., 2015, p. 36). Critical reading within the context of this arc assignment results in metacognitive approaches that address each of these factors. Participants emerge as informed stakeholders, aware of campus resources, equipped with literacy skills that allow them to engage with the community.

Development

Partners included First-Year Courses, the *Eastern Progress* Media Network, the Department of English, EKU Libraries, and the Department of Communication. The assignments (linked above) covered “Media Literacy,” “Issues of Personal / Public Concern,” “Assessing Sources,” and “Information Literacy,” a module created by EKU Libraries that specifically uses *EP* archives. Students combined the work completed in their first-year seminars with skills learned in their English courses such as rhetorical analysis, synthesis, and multimodal communication. The use of scaffolded assignments was meant to inspire confidence and a growth mindset en route to the creation of an original piece of media suitable for publication in the *EP*.



Use this QR code to view and download all assignments included in the “Your Eastern Progress” arc assignment.



Use this QR code to view the “Your Eastern Progress” video playlist on YouTube.

Results

Fall 2020 was an unusual semester for both faculty and students. Freshmen, in particular, began their college experience having missed out on the formative final year of high school - no proms, or graduations, or other rights of passage. Faculty, on the other hand, were scrambling to adapt to online, hybrid, and staggered teaching modalities. Success proved possible only in the middle ground between authenticity and humility.

The goal of the arc project was to provide students with critical reading and media literacy skills, communication skills, and an opportunity to take an active role in shaping the campus community.



Chelsea created this video at the request of the Associate Provost and Dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences to help students with their academic success while in quarantine.

One student, Alyssa, chose to complete an audio interview with a friend who had felt stereotyped by fellow students. Her interview highlighted a single moment in time. A campus demonstrator, intent sowing discord, railed against the Black Lives Matter Movement. However, the interviewee was less offended by the demonstrator than by her former friend who called and asked her to come respond as the “angry Black woman” stereotype.

Implicit bias was one of many themes explored by the students. Another student, Asha, wrote about difficulties maintaining college success when quarantined due to COVID-19. Nicholas, who interviewed a friend about the campus response to COVID-19, related

common refrains heard by faculty and staff across campus: their courses were too quickly paced; they received too little training the Blackboard Learning Management System; fears about inadvertently spreading the virus due to being asymptomatic. Other themes included sports, college finances, poverty in Appalachia, and of course, parking.



Diversity emerged as a predominant theme, both in class discussions and topics chosen for the arc assignment. This video highlights Latino/Latina experiences on campus.

All told, the arc assignment was implemented in four GSD/ENG learning communities of 15-20 students each. Roughly one-quarter of the students who

began the assignment both completed it and allowed for its submission to the *Eastern Progress*.

Conclusions

Successes included quality, adaptable video series; the use of TILT framework for consistency; easy-to-import/export via the LMS; ENG assignments flexible enough to accommodate varying curricula; the invitation to continue their work with student media. Areas for growth in post-COVID world include dialing back the workload; including with the main content modules; identifying places to insert the arc assignment into the existing curricula.

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