

Running Head: INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SEMINAR PARIS FRANCE

The International Media Seminar, American University of Paris, France: An Autoethnography

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International Media Seminar

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International Welcome

The first night our International Media Seminar began with a river cruise on the Seine. This gave us an overview of some of the city's most memorable landmarks. After the cruise, we journeyed to opening reception at the home of Joanna Gordon, co-founder and co-president at DG Global Advisors, a strategic marketing consultant agency. The intimate setting allowed us a glimpse into Parisian life while we heard stories from students at the American University in Paris. Three international scholarship students from developing countries shared stories of media, government and life in their home countries.

As I heard their stories unfold, I was stunned at the young age of these women, and my eyes were opened to the struggles they have faced and overcome. Freedom in media, press, thought, art, opinion, expression is taken so lightly in the United States. People just like you and I are being jailed, tortured and killed in other parts of the world, just for sharing opinions and thoughts. The tone was set that night for my entire experience. Suddenly, the seams of my world were split wide open. The neat, tidy lines of understanding now frayed and tattered. And open.

International Media

Our second day of the seminar included presentations by international journalists and marketing and media experts. Barry Lando, an investigative reporter, formerly the European producer of CBS's 60 Minutes, was among the presenters. As a documentary addict, I was fascinated to hear Lando share the intricacies of producing an investigative documentary.

Hearing Anne Swardson, editor at large at Bloomberg News, share about her career as a business journalist, I more clearly understood that journalism reaches far beyond reporting on local sports and quick updates on distant wars. Swardson shared how journalists spend months researching public records, reviewing statistics, facts and data. In the story Mapping China's Red

Nobility, Bloomberg mapped the families of Communist China's "Eight Immortals." My respect for journalism went to a whole new level at the moment I saw the intricacy that went into developing the interactive family lineage graphic. Now THAT is how you bring stats and data to life!

Later in the day, we visited the International Herald Tribune and met Anne Bagamery, Senior Editor. Bagamery has a rich career that started at Dartmouth College, where she was the first female Editor in Chief of the college's daily newspaper. The IHT is the global edition of the New York Times and will soon change its name to the Global New York Times. This name change was a topic of many discussions during the seminar.

Our second day closed with a breathtaking sunset view of the Arc de Triomphe, atop the roof of the Publicis Groupe, one of the world's largest advertising and marketing companies. Publicis' companies manage ad campaigns for world-renowned companies such as H&M, Marlboro and Doritos. This was my most memorable tourist moment, overlooking the centre of the Place Charles de Gaulle at the Champs-Élysées.

Past:Future

Day three held a visit to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD's mission is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. They evaluate member countries and provide insight and recommendations.

The OECD media team shared their communication and public relations strategy and led us in a social media exercise. Our group created a social media campaign for OECD's video contest, to attract a new audience: 18-25 year olds. OECD hopes to connect with tomorrow's leaders as they solicit entries to address the "worst financial, economic and social crisis of our

lifetime led to widespread condemnation of ‘business as usual’ and calls to revisit, rethink and test new approaches to economic and societal challenges.” The “Think differently: How would you shape tomorrow’s global economy?” video contest closed yesterday and winners are announced later this month. Our team is anxious to see if OECD incorporated some of the ideas we shared.

After our OECD visit, we traveled in small groups to the home of our seminar hosts, Lee and Berna Huebner. This provided quite the adventure, as each day’s travel did. We went the wrong direction. Three times. We honed our problem-solving and coping skills while tenaciously reading (and rereading) street maps, metro maps, iPhone maps, and courageously speaking to two strangers in a country where none of us spoke the language. When we safely arrived at the Huebner home, on time!, our self-confidence had definitely grown.

At the Huebner’s, I was privileged to introduce Jim Bittermann, Senior European Correspondent for CNN International. Bittermann has covered the changing of five popes, the death of Princess Diana, and NATO air strikes on Kosovo, among many other stories. It was exciting to meet a correspondent of such caliber. Bittermann, comes from the pre-social media era. He stated that he declines the use of social media outlets such as Twitter, partly for protection from professional vulnerability. I found this stark contrast from our morning exercise interesting. And I am left thinking that Bittermann just needs a good PR manager.

Life

Books overflowed from their shelves. Art filled frames on their walls. Sentimental items sat quietly, holding stories of journey, family, life and love. How does one collect a rich treasure of items? Time, experience, life, joy, sorrow, birth, death. Life lived. It takes time.

Over and over, I heard the presenters at the seminar share that they started from the bottom and worked their way up. They were willing to be vulnerable. They were willing to be humble, take a lower position, take a pay reduction, for a better opportunity. They were willing to do the hard work, for little credit. They were diligent in planning and research. They were tenacious when they failed. They did not stop. They tried again. And again. They tried something new. They reinvented themselves. They reinvented themselves again.

Life is a collection of experiences. Nothing should be wasted—experience, failure, joy, heartache, pain.

Me and Us

Berna and Lee Huebner were our hosts for the seminar. We saw Berna daily and were welcomed into their home in Paris one evening. Lee is currently a professor at the School of Media and Public Affairs at The George Washington University, in Washington D.C., travels between D.C. and Paris and we caught him on a travel week. He Skyped with our group when we were visiting their home. Along with many successful years in academia, Lee Huebner served as publisher of the International Herald Tribune and as a speechwriter for President Richard Nixon. He shared with our group his observations on the ideas of individualization and globalization. There is beauty in both. Negatives in both.

roots. nostalgia. history. identity. pride in self. peace. harmony. sharing. inclusion.

no identity. expressing identity at the expense of others. war.

Huebner urged us, “Be exceptional.” And at the same time, reminded us, “It’s not about you.”

Jack of All Trades

Researching Lee Huebner, I came across an article by Ryan Morton, who interviewed Mr. Huebner. He writes, “As a student at Northwestern, Huebner never locked himself into one path, considering careers in education, journalism and politics. But the history major wanted to be a generalist above all else. ‘The problem is, I haven’t mastered any one thing in particular,’ admits Huebner, half joking. ‘I’ve dabbled in everything and waited for opportunities to arise.’”

As I study communications, journalism and public relations; multidimensional is a recurring theme that I hear. Each of the speakers at the seminar echoed this theme.

Barry Lando, an investigative reporter, formerly the European producer of CBS’s 60 Minutes, recalled journalists who have reported on the famine in Africa. News agencies did not want to run the reports, “until [journalists] got great footage. Then everyone wanted the story ...”

Don Morrison, former co-editor of Time Magazine Europe, executive editor, Time Magazine Asia and assistant managing editor, Time Magazine New York, emphasized “presentation, packaging. Lively writing is better than boring writing.” While print news magazines are in decline, “photos sell.” He envisions a full service network with web innovation, videos, proactive industry professionals who are imaginative and energetic.

Don’s wife Ann Morrison, co-editor of Time Magazine Europe, editor of Asiaweek Magazine in Hong Kong and executive editor, Fortune Magazine, New York, encouraged us to, “know how to do everything.” The attention span of readers is shorter. She recalled as an editor, marking articles, “TLDR—too long, don’t read.” Ouch.

Madeleine Czigler, fashion and culture journalist and professor at the American University of Paris, said that today’s fashion journalists get their start by developing a fashion

niche and writing about it. “There is an intimacy and mystery,” in peering into the subjective blogs of fashion journalists.

Eileen Bastianelli, founder of Milestone Media, former advertising executive, shared with us the social media campaign that she headed to encourage Americans living abroad to vote. The absentee voting strategy included video production, website development, and Facebook and Twitter sub campaigns.

Derek Thomson, senior producer at France 24 is the co-editor of The Observers. “The Observers is a collaborative site and TV programme on France 24 that covers international current affairs by using eyewitness accounts from “Observers” – that’s to say people who are at the heart of event. Videos, texts, photos – the content isn’t produced by professional journalists – but everything’s selected, verified, translated and explained by our team.”

Multidimensionality in communication takes on the form of dabbling in a little bit of everything. Social media, blogging, videography, photography, imaginative writing and creativity are skills that I hope to further develop as I complete my degree at MSSU. Last week I received a message from one of my professors—she is incorporating Final Cut into the curriculum for one of our editorial courses this fall. There is hope. Light a candle. Say a prayer.

Don’t Forget to Have a Baby

Another side to multidimensionality is learning more than the technical side of communications. “Journalism is a trade. I always advise people not to go to journalism school. Learn history, international affairs, business, language...” Janine di Giovanni, one of the world’s most experienced journalists in covering war and conflict from Palestine and Israel to Bosnia and Chechnya, and much of Africa, as well as Egypt, Iraq, East Timor and North Africa. Her books

and articles have won major awards. When asked about how she handles embedding herself in a culture and covering conflict, she said, “Resilience was key.”

She spoke to us about the importance of knowing more than the technical elements to journalism. “There’s not shortage of wars and conflicts.” To effectively write about conflicts in cultures other than your own, you need to understand the history, the language, the culture.

Another speaker at the seminar, Jean-Marc Illouz, senior international correspondent for France 2 TV shared how he has spent years learning the culture, habits and perspective of people outside of his home country. “When you eat, sleep, drink with people, you know and understand them...”

Waddick Doyle, professor and director of the division of global communications and film, American University of Paris, said, “Media should express the diversity of culture...” as he shared the history of French government, politics and media.

I watched Giovanni’s TED talk before our trip and was fascinated to hear that this woman, author, international war journalist was a also a young mother. At the seminar, she spoke with us about being a mother and a professional. “There is no way to do both jobs perfectly. You have to be forgiving of yourself. It’s hard. It’s very hard. I won’t lie.” On parenthood, she said, “If you have a child, it’s your responsibility to bring them up. You have to teach them ethics, morals, it’s not up to the school to teach them.”

And on life, and on being a woman and a professional, she said, “Don’t forget to have a baby.” Balance your professional life with a personal life. Don’t put personal goals off too long.

Unforgettable

Sitting in the home of John Morris, hearing the tears catch in his throat as he shared how his dear friend, photojournalist, Robert Capa died while covering war; that afternoon was unforgettable.

“The Japanese celebrated my 20th birthday by bombing Pearl Harbor,” Morris said. “I’ll never forget that Sunday ...” At 96, John Morris has seen a vast amount of history unfold. He is considered by many to be the leading photo news editor of the twentieth century. He is the former head of Magnum Agency, former senior photo editor for Life Magazine, The New York Times, The Washington Post and other publications, and author of “Get the Picture: A Personal History of Photojournalism.” He turned on his slide projector and shared with us six decades of front-line photojournalism.

I remember last semester, my news writing professor told our class about the seminar. She shared the story of Morris working as the Life photo editor during World War II. He was in the London office, waiting for the photographs of D-Day. His friend, photojournalist Robert Capa was covering the invasion. While under constant fire, Capa took 106 pictures. As the film was sent by boat, rolls were lost at sea. When one roll finally arrived in London, all but eleven were destroyed in a photo lab accident back in London. These photos are known as The Magnificent Eleven.

I was on the edge of my seat hearing my instructor share this story. It was that moment that I knew I had to attend the seminar. This man, John Morris, was the first person to lay eyes on these iconic images of world history.

Morris summarized, “Photography is so important.” He urged us as communication students and future journalists to learn photojournalism history. “You’re studying communication for God’s sake!” Visual communication is crucial to communication as a whole.

Forget the Eiffel Tower. Keep the Arc de Triomphe. Meeting John Morris was the unforgettable moment.

Petits

Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet, founder of the Publicis Groupe, was said to have discovered Edith Piaf and helped launch her career. Prior to our trip, I watched *La Vie En Rose*, *The Extraordinary Life of Edith Piaf*, and blogged about the taste of Parisian culture I experienced when hearing her captivating story.

The Publicis building, on the Champs-Élysées, was destroyed by fire in 1971. The IT Director, Maurice Lévy, had a backup and restoration strategy, and the company was back on its feet one week later. Marcel was so impressed, he appointed Lévy as the new CEO. In public relations, and in life, it pays to be prepared. Our community of Joplin, Missouri, knows about crisis communication, disaster, resolve and recovery. We experienced an EF-5 tornado that destroyed one-third of the city on May 22, 2011.

Quotes by Peter Barnet, Associate Professor at the American University of Paris, Former Executive VP for International Advertising at Young and Rubicam:

- “It was tough. But everything is tough.”
- “Social media raises the bar for marketing. So get over it.”
- “At the end of the day, all marketing is global.”
- “It only takes three seconds to get a brilliant idea. The problem is how long it takes to get to those three seconds.”

Saisissez le jour, Savourez l'expérience

The seminar closed with a PR event by Radio Nova at Cafe A. It was a modern, eclectic scene. Great food, modern music, French waitresses, art abounding everywhere; it was the perfect close to the week.

I would highly recommend this experience to students. Traditional and non-traditional alike. There were three traditional students, two non-traditional and two faculty members. As a non-traditional student and a mother of a five year old, I did not think that a study abroad program was feasible for me. This one-week trip was the perfect amount of time. The seminar is structured in a way that allowed me to truly engage in French culture and experience everyday life in Paris. Portions of the seminar were held in homes of Americans living in Paris. What an amazing experience! And, of course, the \$750.00 grant from the International Studies department was a huge help. This covered approximately one third of the cost of my travel and lodging for the trip, \$2,296.50.

I would suggest that ladies who attend the trip leave their heels at home. All of us were regretting our shoe choices on the first day. We seriously walked five miles or more every day.

The staircase of the Hotel Malar is as wide as a telephone booth. It winds up five flights and from the top floor, the stairway looks like a paperclip. There is no elevator. If I had to do it again, I would not pack such a heavy suitcase. My room was on the top floor! Room 336 deceptively told me that I would only have three flights to climb. No. There were five.

My final recommendation: savor it! Savor every moment.

Can I go back?

After my experience at the seminar, I appreciate the friendliness of American culture, the eye contact and smiles on the street. I also appreciate the multitasking ability of Americans that can

grab a cup of coffee on the go. I have to give kudos to the French for their parallel parking ability, their amazing desserts and unbeatable coffee. I also valued the public transportation and government funding for many programs. However, I would not like the taxes if I lived there. I appreciated some of the speakers sharing French history and politics. My view of global journalism is forever changed and my eyes are forever opened. Why is the United States so inclusive in this? My career path has changed as a result of this experience. How?: broader, wider, more visual and less limits!