Using Pop Culture to Engage Students in Media Literacy

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What is Media Literacy?

The ability access, analyze, evaluate and produce communication in a variety of forms ~ Peters, 1998

- Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
  http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/
- National Communication Association
  http://www.natcom.org/
Why is Media Literacy important to instruction?

- The information literacy standards developed by ACRL are NOT all encompassing.
- The ACRL standards can be a little impractical to incorporate into the arts.
- Other standards of literacy are more appropriate (i.e. visual and/or media).
What is Popular Culture?

Contemporary lifestyle and items that are well known and generally accepted, cultural patterns that are widespread within a population - *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

*Popular Culture and American Culture Association*
*http://pcaaca.org/*
Why is Popular Culture important to instruction?

- Students are already familiar or have a general knowledge
- Easily transferred into other genres or areas of study
- Creates an instant connection between the instructor and the students
- Allows for the easy inclusion of social technologies
What is instruction at RWWL?

- **Typical 1 shot instruction is generally:**
  - 50 minutes/ 1 hour & 15 minutes or less
  - Assignment Driven

- **Consist of:**
  - Housekeeping
  - 2 or 3 basic databases (less if complex database is shown)
  - Hands on activity
  - Active learning
  - Article take away
  - Brief Assessment
Class Makeup

- **Audience:** Mass Media Arts majors (juniors/seniors)

- **Course:** Mass Media Research

- **Learning Outcomes (given by professor):**
  - Learn about media literacy
  - Begin researching for upcoming assignment:
    - Create a 30 second commercial with indirect marketing or media influence on public relations
Classroom Experience

- Classroom Opening Discussion
  - Do you know when you are being persuaded to purchase a product or service?
  - What do you know about media literacy
  - What do you know about Curtis Jackson (a.k.a. 50 cent)
- Video Showing: Candy Shop by 50 cents
- Further Discussion
  - How many times were you marketed to during that time?
- Demonstration of 3 databases
  - Biography Resource Center
  - Business Source Complete
  - Hovers Online
- Video showing again and count number of times you were marketed to
- Students begin individual research
  - Brainstorm topics related to their class project
  - Choose a topic
  - Find relevant articles
- Brief Assessment
Advantages

- 90% of the class was already familiar with Curtis Jackson and his business dealings

- The topic was something that the students could easily relate to

- More and more celebrities are partnering with businesses, creating business, or promoting companies
Disadvantages

- Topic was so popular students needed directing back to the assignment several times
- Helping students put their own “popular culture” topics in perspective for assignment may require that the librarian and the student brainstorm outside of class
- Time constraints
What didn’t this study do (future implications)?

Compare an instruction session that uses popular culture references and one that does not to measure student engagement.
Selected Relevant Reading

- Manuel, K. (2002). How first-year college students read Popular Science: An experiment in teaching media literacy skills. *SIMILE Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education*
THANK YOU!!!

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