

**Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies 620:
Seminar in Global Media**

PAPER PROPOSAL

3% of grade

Over the course of the semester, students will develop their research and writing skills through a multi-step project. The first step—your research proposal—is explained below.

Before you can write a proposal, though, you need to have an idea what a finished project might look like. Let’s check out this summary of a past undergraduate student paper.

Weapons of Western Civilization	
Does first-hand analysis of these primary media sources (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMAGE SEARCH RESULTS – from two different search engines, one US-based, one China-based, for a small set of revealing key terms. Student looks at how these results depict skewed visions of beauty and professionalism, and how the ways they are skewed match historic inequalities.
Puts their analysis in conversation with secondary scholarly sources (B) on...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The global history of colorism. • Chinese beauty standards. • The centrality of search engines for contemporary knowledge formation. • How algorithms work and are part of Web 2.0 phase of internet culture.
Thesis	By testing the world’s two leading search engines, Baidu and Google, using the same set of search words (i.e. “beautiful woman,” “business man,” and “professional women”) I found that billions are exposed via the search engines’ algorithms to something much more sinister than “best results.” Instead, these search engines consistently reinforce colorism and inequality.

As you can see, an original research project is built using (A) primary and (B) secondary sources. In other words, **in light of what you learn reading (B) secondary scholarly sources, you will do hands-on analysis of (A) your media phenomenon.**

Your proposal is a first stab at finding an interesting, relevant topic, and mapping out how you would analyze it.

Your proposal will have three main components.

1. Three potential research questions, each paired with a primary source. You will asterisk (*) the project you most want to pursue.
2. An elaboration on that asterisked project idea.
3. A bibliography for three relevant scholarly sources that you might use if you pursue the project you elaborated on.

Now, let's look at a sample proposal (in purple text) just below.

Jane Doe
JAMS 620
Proposal
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Three Research Questions + Primary Sources

1. What are the global politics of a hit song? – “Despacito”*
2. What can the popularity of reality TV shows about father’s doing parenting labor tell us about shifting visions of gender in different countries? – Korean Broadcasting System’s *The Return of Superman* vs. (Chinese) Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation’s *Where Are We Going Dad?*
3. What is the significance of new kinds of satirical news programming? – Bassem Youssef documentary *Tickling Giants*

Elaboration of #1

I want to study the “Despacito” phenomenon to think about which kinds of music and which musicians get to reach global popularity, and which do not.

“Despacito” is a reggaetón-style song originally performed by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee. Both are light-skinned Puerto Ricans and their music has proven more

globally popular than that of darker skinned reggaeton artists. In many countries the song reached its greatest success when a remix featuring Canadian singer Justin Bieber was released.

As for my media texts (AKA primary sources), I will be looking at the original “Despacito” music video and the version with Justin Bieber. I will also analyze coverage on the production and reception of “Despacito” in popular sources such as MTV.com, [The Atlantic](http://TheAtlantic.com), and [complex](http://complex.com). I want to use this to, on the one hand, learn about how such songs are produced or selected for transnational distribution, and who profits. On the other hand, I want to consider growing popular discussions about the politics of these songs and their circulation. I may also look at some similar songs showcasing reggaetón that circulated transnationally (ex. “Gasolina”) to compare them with the “Despacito” phenomenon.

References

- El-Burki, I. J., & Reynolds, R. R. (2016). It’s no secret Justin wants to be black: Comedy Central’s Justin Bieber roast and neoliberalism. In A. Novak & I. J. El-Burki (Eds.), *Defining Identity and the Changing Scope of Culture in the Digital Age* (15-28). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Marshall, W. (2008). Dem Bow, Dembow, Dembo: Translation and transnation in Reggaeton. *Lied Und Populäre Kultur/Song and Popular Culture*, 53, 131-151.
- Rivera-Rideau, P. R. (2015). *Remixing Reggaetón: The Cultural Politics of Race in Puerto Rico*. Durham: Duke University Press.
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Two Helpful Guides for 620 Students

Finding a topic, imagining a project, gathering scholarly sources, and properly citing them... All of these can be intimidating tasks for folks who are new to the grind of doing original research! Never fear. You're not alone.

For students new to the process, or just looking to up their game, I've made two guides. Both are housed on our Canvas site under Resources > Research.

Starting Your Global Media Studies Research Project

- Includes 8 snapshots (like table on the first page) of past 620 student projects, and tips for how to get started searching for a topic.

Working with Scholarly Sources

- Covers finding, getting access to, reading, and citing scholarly sources.

They are chock full of resources and tips! I strongly encourage you to check them out and refer to them throughout the semester.

Food for Thought

What counts as global? – The 1/3 rule!

The object of study (the reception of a text, production of a text, a text itself), must be based at least 1/3 outside the U.S. Examples:

- Writing on any foreign media is fine. (A Chilean film. A Ghanaian radio show. Etc.)
- *Full Frontal*, in general, would not be acceptable. But a selection of its clips and episodes about Brexit, or Vladimir Putin, would be.
- Writing on media relating to minority and immigrant groups in the US also frequently works because, implicitly, such media is concerned about or interested in the movement of people across borders, or the consequences of that movement.

Good research will lead you to the unexpected

Good research will often take you places you didn't expect. You don't want the project to run away from you and spin out in too many directions, *but* good research often will lead you somewhere you didn't expect. For example, what if researching Justin Bieber's "Despacito" led you to thinking about the use of reggaeton in the song, and that led you to thinking about the appropriation of reggae attributes in many artists' work, like the vocal cadences of Jason Mraz, Twenty One Pilots, and Drake? As long as you do the preliminary research early enough in the semester, you can totally pivot to a new research topic.

More Details on Proposal Expectations

Name and proper formatting

- 12-point serif font. Double spaced. 1” margins. Pages numbered.

3 potential research questions (1 sentence each). Each should be associated with a media text or a few texts that could be your primary source(s). Mark the question you’d like to pursue with an asterisk.

- The questions should be broad, but meaningful. You don’t have to an answer yet. It’s a jumping off point for exploration.

An elaboration on that asterisked question (3-5 sentences).

- Why does this interest you? What do you think you might find?

As part of your elaboration, describe your tentative primary sources and explain how you plan to use them.

- Clearly state the media text or texts that are your central objects of your hands-on study (ex. “Despacito” music videos), plus any other primary source materials (ex. podcast episodes and popular publication articles discussing Bieber and “Despacito”) that you will use as your data.
- **Be specific.** For example, if you say you want to study Korean reality show *The Return of Superman* and its reception:
 - Explain how many and which episodes of the show you think you’ll look at, and why you’ve selected them. (The fewer the episodes, the more in-depth and higher quality your analysis will typically be.)
 - Explain what materials (ex. popular and industry press, ratings) you’ll use as your sources for studying audience reception.
- **Examples of primary sources:**
 - A music video.
 - A TV show episode.
 - Set of three episodes of a web series.
 - An original Brazilian film and its US adaptation.
 - Popular press coverage on the media phenomenon, its production, or its reception (ex. coverage in *The New York Times*, *Cosmopolitan*, or *The Guardian*.)
 - Industry press—meaning the news sources media industry insiders read—coverage on the media phenomenon, its production, or its reception (ex. *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*)

Proper citations for 3 scholarly sources (i.e. articles, chapters) that you are considering using.

- Citations can be in any citation style you like, but you must consistently and correctly apply the citation style. This makes it easier for me to quickly read the

citation, get a sense if it is scholarly, and look it up if I need to. I'd recommend APA, MLA, or Chicago Style.

- Sources should be **chapters from a scholarly book, or articles from a peer-reviewed scholarly journal**. While it's cool to be interested in an entire book...how realistic is it that you're going to read the whole thing? Select a relevant chapter and cite that.
- There are three examples above in the purple text, all in APA style. The first is a chapter in a scholarly book. The second is an article in a scholarly journal. The third is a scholarly book.
- There are a ton of helpful resources on how to find sources, how to cite them, etc. in the "Working with Scholarly Sources" document posted to our Canvas site.

Grading

- 1 point for: 3 research questions, each paired with a media texts (AKA primary source); one question asterisked and elaborated upon.
- 1 point for: specifying your primary sources and how you intend to use them.
- 1 point for: 3 correct citation for relevant scholarly sources.

You can lose points for improper formatting of the overall document or the citations.