

LAC Workshop, Spring 2007

Outline to accompany Power Point Presentation: “I Think We Should Start Seeing Other Texts”: Using Non-print Resources in a LAC Recitation Section Jonathan Risner, UNC-CH LAC Instructor

Slide 1: Besides the poor attempt at humor, the title emphasizes the visual: “seeing other texts.” I am not suggesting a complete abdication of print texts, but rather merely raising the prospect of using non-print in a LAC recitation section. UNC has wealth of resources with films and photographs, and LAC instructors could easily choose to use those items in their course. Despite the emphasis on the visual, this should not rule out other resources that appeal to another ‘sense’; for instance, music.

In this presentation, I will describe the use of some visual media and suggest some ways as to how a LAC instructor can use the media. I have taught two LAC recitation sections in Spanish for INTS 210, Global Issues. Two different professors taught each course with two distinct syllabi, though there were a number of commonalities in their choice of texts. From the syllabi, I have selected three topics – mega cities, structural adjustments policies (SAPs), and Jihad vs. McWorld – and paired them with three different media whose contents relate to mega cities, structural adjustments, and Jihad vs. McWorld.

By using non-print media, I urge you to try to provoke critical thinking and provoke conversation among students. Non-print should not be an occasion for students to go on autopilot or enter into a sort of ‘living room mode’ as if they were watching a Hollywood blockbuster in the comfort of their homes. Generating a discussion is often a question of getting students to read images and film in a critical manner.

Using certain media is highly contingent on knowing what materials exist. In the event a professor broaches an idea in lecture, a LAC TA may resort to a film, photos, or website. Hence, being a LAC TA requires a bit of improvisation with selecting materials.

Slide 2: By the term “other texts”, I am referring to photography, documentaries, web sites. Again, I am not ruling out music, but rather emphasizing what is often most accessible through UNC’s various libraries or the Internet.

Slide 3: Using non-print texts offers a number of benefits. Now more than ever, U.S. culture is a visual culture. Students (and everyone else) constantly encounter images and engaging with an image or film critically may help a student to read images critically in their everyday lives if they do not do so already.

Students can also learn about filmmakers and photographers that rarely receive attention in the U.S. And finally, by looking in particular at some websites, students will learn that technology is not merely a prerogative of the first world. At times, I sense students, as well as authors of some scholarly articles, think ‘underdeveloped’ countries are primitive and their citizens could hardly produce a website.

Slide 4: Photos: Mega Cities and Sebastião Salgado. This slide introduces the first topic, mega cities, paired with some photographs of Salgado, a Brazilian photographer.

Slide 5:

Megacities. In one Global Studies course, the professor touched on mega cities in lectures. Some aspects of mega cities from the lectures included: (1) mega cities are cities with 10 million people or more (e.g., New York, Mexico City, Mumbai, Sao Paulo); (2) immigration and how mega cities are often the desired destination of immigrants; (3) mega cities as a microcosm of globalization demonstrating wealth disparities, stress on the environment (water and waste management), migration to the cities, and the mix of cultures; (4) the “urban experience”: given the massive amounts of people, one may be surrounded by people, but still alienated.

Slide 6: One may perceive a number of the aforementioned ideas about mega cities in Salgado’s pictures. Here are just a few pictures from two series – *Exodus* and *Migrations* – that Salgado did during the 1990s.

First photo: aerial view of Mexico City in 1998. A new barrio was formerly a stone quarry.

Slide 7: Second photo: shantytown of Damunagar, one of Asia’s two largest slums, near Mumbai in 1995.

Slide 8: Third photo: garbage dump outside Sao Paulo, 1996

Slide 9: Fourth photo: small boat with Moroccans caught by the Spanish customs patrol off the coast of Gibraltar.

A caveat: Salgado’s images are typically of third world countries. Being that the course deals with globalization, I would recommend including an image of New York, Los Angeles, or some European city to demonstrate that industrialized countries contend with problems similar to those of less developed countries such as waste management.

Slide 10: In class: a LAC instructor could use such images in various ways. For the purposes of discussion, I suggest not entering into a theoretical conversation regarding the *punctum* and the *studium*, a la Roland Barthes. However valuable such discussions could be, time in a LAC recitation is limited. Instead, I would suggest using the photos as they speak to issues in the course lectures or readings.

Even prior to the actual recitation, one must decide on several other factors. First, an instructor should determine whether to make the images available to students before class or to display the images in class and discuss the images at that time. In addition, one will have to decide whether images are to accompany a reading or if they should be the sole text for the week.

One could also take up other issues germane to the photos. For instance, in the case of Salgado, the discussion could revolve around portrayals of mega cities, as well as forms of activism. Salgado was economist until 1973 and worked for the International Coffee Organization. He traveled to Africa on numerous missions for the World Bank, and abandoned a career as an economist and foresaw photography as a better way to attract attention to the plight of the impoverished throughout the world.

Finally, again specific to Salgado's photos, one could consider scheduling a museum visit at the Ackland Art Museum for one's recitation section. In 2004, in conjunction with the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, the Ackland organized an exhibition of 300 photographs from Salgado's work. Following the conclusion of the exhibition, the Ackland purchased 9 of the photos for its collection. One may contact Carolyn Allmendinger (carolyn@email.unc.edu), University Educator at the Ackland.

Slide 10: Films: Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) and *The Take* (2004; Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein)

The Take concerns the economic crisis in Argentina that occurred at the cusp of the 21st century. The primary focus is a group of workers who occupy the factory where they worked before being laid off during the economic crisis. After months of unemployment, the workers enter the factory and begin to operate the machinery and the business themselves.

Call it the Michael Moore effect: at present, there are a deluge of documentaries. On UNC's campus and in Chapel Hill, a number of places have outstanding collections of documentaries. ILAS, the Media Resource Center (MRC) in the Undergraduate Library, and even Visart, a local DVD rental store, offers a number of options.

Slide 11: SAPs came up in both Global Issues courses in both lectures and in the readings. I will refrain from providing any specific information on SAPs here, but instead explain the importance of choosing a documentary that deals with SAPs in Argentina. First, my recitation section was conducted in Spanish and the majority of the documentary is in Spanish. In the larger Global Issues courses, students were exposed to SAPs primarily in African countries. By showing the application of SAPs in Argentina, I attempted to particularize SAPs and to show students that while there are commonalities in SAPs in some African countries, there are differences that should not be ignored.

Slide 12: In class: again, a LAC instructor has a number of options in the classroom. One could organize a screening outside of class, though this is contingent on if students can and are willing to attend. Also, one would consider how to ensure students pay attention and do not go on auto-pilot. I would recommend having students submit a few discussion questions that you can use in the recitation section. Finally, as with Salgado's photographs, documentaries can often speak to other issues in a course. In the case of *The Take*, the film shows workers taking over factories and running them under a new managerial system in which the workers are their own bosses. Such a situation could bear relevance to a discussion on, say, alternative economic models.

Slide 13: Websites: Jihad vs. McWorld and Zapatistas.

It is no secret that websites are constantly proliferating and activist groups make use of them for obvious reasons. Jihad vs. McWorld comes from a book of the same name by Benjamin Barber. An article that was expanded and eventually became the basis for the book appears in an anthology, *The Globalization Reader*. Professors teaching Global Issues often use *The Globalization Reader* as a text book in their courses.

Slide 14: Notion of Jihad vs. McWorld.

Barber's Jihad-McWorld binary was characterized in lecture by attributing certain characteristics to each entity, some of which were common to both. Jihad may be described as:

- Not exclusive to Muslim cultures
- Slaughter of “other”
- Undermining democratic institutions
- Uses information technology

McWorld may be described as:

- U.S. popular culture
- Expansionist commerce
- Undermining democratic institutions
- Uses information technology

For my recitation section, the fourth facet, using information technology is key in order to include the Zapatistas in the conversation and relate the group to Barber’s text. Zapatistas, in many ways, defy Barber idea of Jihad-McWorld. For instance, the Zapatistas do not desire the slaughter of the “other.” Nevertheless, the Zapatistas use of the Internet illustrates how a group that is not necessarily of McWorld wields information technology, specifically the Internet, from McWorld in order to articulate their ideas. The Zapatistas’ website, one of many, is intended to show a use of McWorld.

Slide 15: The slide shows a home page of a Zapatista website. There are plenty of other uses of technology by the Zapatistas, such as the Chiapas Media Project.

Slide 16: In class. As with previously discussed media, one must decide on a number of issues. First, one must determine whether a website should stand alone or accompany a text. In my recitation section, I used the website along with an article about the Chiapas Media Project. Second, one must decide whether to ask students to view the website prior to class or to show the website in class. Regardless, if one elects to show the website in class, I would suggest reserving a classroom with a projector. I also recommend specifying what you would like students to view on a website, or websites. Students may fixate on a part of the website that strays from the lesson the larger course is trying to convey. Finally, one could always consider selecting a student, or students, to lead a discussion about a website to ensure students viewed the material.

Slide 17: Textual harmony

As a sort of recap and an occasion to make some additional points, I offer the following:

- One may make use of print and non-print together
- Flexibility is paramount for a LAC instructor. As topics come up in readings and lectures, knowing what materials are available can allow one to utilize non-print resources if one chooses. Moreover, one should look at the sources, print and non-print, used in past LAC recitation sections.

Using a variety of print and non-print texts makes for a compelling recitation section that can engage students through different media.