

HOBBS, from page 4

has been growing all over the world, particularly in Eastern Europe where a campaign to destabilize people's generally positive views of Western democracies is used to justify oppressive authoritarian governments. What's unique in the U.S. is that our president has called The New York Times (arguably the best newspaper in the world) a form of fake news, even as he appears to be getting his policy briefings from Fox and Friends.

E.G.: *In New Mexico, lawmakers have introduced a bill to hold a hearing where they would decide how to best teach media literacy in the classroom. Are American public schools currently doing a good job of teaching children how to decipher news from propaganda?*


R.H.: Teachers and school leaders don't get much exposure to media literacy as part of their teacher education programs, so many school districts are still not aware of the importance of integrating media literacy into the K-12 curriculum. Because there are 15,000 school districts, though, there is tremendous diversity and there is a lot of experimentation going on in schools all over the country. Through publications (available online) like the Journal of Media Literacy Education and national membership organizations like the National Association for Media Literacy Education, educators are sharing "what works," and this helps build a knowledge base that helps people who are just beginning to explore this field.

I've been generally surprised by students who find TMZ.com to be a reliable source of celebrity news – and who lack awareness of how publicists are deeply involved in the shaping of celebrity news – are also by those who are unaware that RT is funded by the Russian government. Its pro-Russian bias seems obvious to me, but lots of students don't recognize it.

E.G.: *You've studied media literacy education in Turkey. What can the U.S. learn from Turkey's program and other media literacy programs in other countries?*

R.H.: Turkey is a hot mess right now with more than 40,000 educators, journalists and judges in jail, accused of conspiracy. It seems like as democratic values really started to take hold in that country – including the rise of the internet, a free(r) press, freedom of speech and a wider variety of educational opportunities – the authoritarian forces got nervous of losing power. Many of the educators who pioneered media literacy education in Turkey – like my Media Education Lab colleague Sait Tuzel – are now in jail or have lost their jobs. The






Donald J. Trump 
 @realDonaldTrump

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The so-called angry crowds in home districts of some Republicans are actually, in numerous cases, planned out by liberal activists. Sad!

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lessons from Turkey suggest that politicians and other political leaders are indeed aware of media literacy's revolutionary potential and feared its spread, since genuine critical thinking is a threat to authoritarian regimes.

E.G.: *"The Brainwashing of My Dad" is a documentary in which a woman explores how listening to right-wing talk radio and watching Fox News may have changed her dad's beliefs and personality. He became angry and non-receptive to all other news sources. She met many others who had friends and relatives this had also happened to. Here at Street Roots, we were talking about this movie, as we interviewed its director a while back, and as it turned out, many of us also had an older relative who was engrossed in Fox News or right-wing talk radio and had changed, not positively, because of it.*

Let's say you have an older relative who exclusively watches Fox News. This person is convinced that all other forms of mainstream media news are fake or misleading, and that only Fox News "tells it like it is."

How would you help someone like this to see the error of his or her ways without putting them on the defensive?

R.H.: I have a little problem with the premise because of your use of the term "error of their ways." People are entitled to their interpretations of right-wing radio and television, and right-wingers are entitled to see the dominance of liberal journalists and the New York Times in particular as the "problem" that they aim to correct. Media literacy educators respect different interpretations of media messages. That's a key concept.

The documentary also problematically uses the language of brainwashing, with words like "deprogramming," with

A promotion for Rush Limbaugh's Facebook presence. Below, just one of President Donald Trump notorious and unfounded statements on Twitter.

inaccurate uses of the term, implying that people do not have control over their behavior and attitudes.

The rise of Fox News and right-wing media in general is linked to changes in American demographics: As people get older, they

get more fearful of loss and death. They feel nostalgic for times past and worry that what (little) they have will be taken away. Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck and their ilk exploit these natural fears. Fear is the easiest emotion to exploit. To address this, with my relative, I would watch or listen and stop whenever I notice language that creates anger or fear. By noticing the patterns in how the emotion of anger or fear is activated, we can discuss: Who benefits from people becoming angry? Fearful? How realistic are these fears? What could be some intended consequences of making people feel fearful or angry? Awareness of the constructed nature of media in activating emotion helps build people's resistance to it, because it encourages them to substitute critical thinking for just feeling or reacting. This technique is even good for knee-jerk, crunchy granola Portland liberals. They are also susceptible to emotionally arousing messages that activate anger and fear.

E.G.: *What about a Facebook friend you might have, who is always sharing bogus stories in their thread. What advice would you give this person on how to check the validity of an unfamiliar source – let's say a website – before sharing the stories it publishes?*

R.H.: People should unfriend or reduce the status of friends who share poor-quality content, and it's wise to explain your rationale, explaining, "When you share content that is untrustworthy, it wastes my time, and it reflects badly on you." For people who share content that runs counter to your existing ideology, you should thank them for helping you get out of the filter bubble, but also take the time to comment on what they shared and offer your own critical interpretation. Friends help friends by sharing our interpretations – and as I mentioned in the opening, sharing interpretations is pleasurable (even when we have different responses) and helps us to grow as human beings. Asking questions is a good response to these friends: Why did you like this? What value do you see in it? It's better to engage people in a genuine way than simply trying to persuade them against

Online platforms for learning media literacy

Renee Hobbs was a founding partner or creator of these online tools you can use to learn about or teach media literacy.

Visit MediaEducationLab.com, for access to an array of online media literacy teaching tools for all ages, lesson plans, videos, links to books and more.

For free, online access to an 18-unit curriculum including video and handouts Hobbs developed in partnership with the Discovery Channel for the Maryland State Department of Education, visit MediaEducationLab.com/assignment-media-literacy.

Tween girls can use the award-winning edutainment game at MyPopStudio.com to go behind the scenes of music, television, magazines and online media.

Go to **Propaganda**. MediaEducationLab.com to peruse and rate contemporary media messaging at Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda.

The National Association for Media Literacy Education website, name.net, also offers teaching resources and information about its conference in Chicago this June.

At jmle.org, you can access The Journal of Media Literacy Education, an online collection of peer-reviewed media-literacy-related studies and more.

their beliefs.

E.G.: *I also wanted to ask you about what you have called "dynamic content." Can you tell our readers what this is and how media consumers can avoid having a limited perspective because of it?*

R.H.: Perhaps you mean my writing about learning to recognize sponsored content, which is also called native advertising. These are the posts on your Facebook or other websites, like Salon, Slate, CNN, that sometimes say, "Recommended" or "You Should See This." People may not be aware that this particular content is coming to them dynamically, customized by the platform and based on the content of their emails, the keywords they use in searching, and their posts on social media. Because they are highly customized and likely to appeal to your current interests, people may be less critical of such content – and such content is generally disguised marketing and public relations content, gussied up with a listicle or celebrity photo.

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