Harvard Kennedy School

IGA 380-M: HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY USING VIDEO, SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

January Session 2016
Instructor: Sam Gregory, Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy, and Director of Program, WITNESS (www.witness.org)
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CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Civil society actors press for the effective enforcement of human rights laws and mechanisms at a national and international level - documenting, report-writing, organizing, lobbying and conducting legal advocacy. Many new forms of advocacy are incorporating video, mobile communications and social media. These enable enhanced engagement, mobilization and participation by concerned citizens -- both acting with formal NGOs and within formal structures, and increasingly in decentralized and ad-hoc networks.

Aided by the spread in low-cost, high-quality technologies, video and moving image media are becoming increasingly ubiquitous and multi-form (even though a considerable digital divide exists in terms of access, literacy and skills both within and between societies across the globe); video will soon be part of every communications and advocacy strategy. Increasing moving image creation, usage and literacy defines much of the experience of a connected younger generation, particularly in the Global North and within certain sectors of Global South society.

Use of video, including particularly mobile video, has publicized and documented many emerging human rights struggles from Rangoon, to Oakland, to Tehran, and most recently the 'Arab Spring', 'Occupy' and 'Black Lives Matter' movements, and characterizes many vibrant citizen media spaces that fill niches long ignored or abandoned by the mainstream media.

However, strategic, directed, impact-driven use of video remains under-utilized as an intervention by either NGOs or citizen networks in human rights spaces including treaty monitoring systems, legislative debates, lobbying of decision-makers, and community organizing. Many human rights actors do not yet have the skills, connections or experience to organize, aggregate or coordinate others'
audiovisual media including citizen media content in spaces like YouTube, create their own targeted advocacy media for specific audiences, collaborate to develop compelling material with professional or citizen storytellers, or to link their strategic use of video to new participatory technologies that enhance creation, distribution, and debate, such as mobile, social media, data visualization, mapping and Web 2.0 tools. Policy advocates encounter new challenges as they consider how citizen media and technology usage for activism is enabled or curtailed by government policy and adhoc decisions and the actions of private sector actors such as mobile and online service providers.

This course, taught by a leading practitioner of using video, social media and participatory technologies for human rights advocacy, will combine a focus on practical advocacy skills for using video, as well as social media (particularly as it relates to video) and other networked/participatory media with analytical discussion, expert guest speakers, exercises and review of topline emerging trends and overarching policy questions.

Although not focused on technical skills in video production it will include an optional session on filming the basic building blocks of video testimony that are utilized in many settings.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In order to increase the capacity of human rights policy practitioners, activists, advocates and campaigners to understand, analyze, evaluate and/or integrate the use of video and related social and participatory media in advocacy campaigns:

Participants will discuss and deepen their knowledge of:

- A range of approaches to incorporating visual media, particularly video and related multimedia into their campaigns, highlighted through case studies (including a range of international and US examples) as well as review/discussion of best practices.
- New and social media-based approaches to advocacy incorporating the power of participation and networks

Participants will learn how to:

- Plan the strategic use of video and related media as a tool for change in a human rights campaign, and apply this learning to their own work
- Make appropriate decisions on safety, security and consent in a digital era
- Craft effective advocacy narratives utilizing moving image media – ‘storytelling for action’
Participants will be introduced to:
• Social-media based approaches to advocacy more broadly
• Mobile-based approaches to video and documentation
• Emergent live and immersive approaches to human rights documentation and advocacy
• Key debates and questions in the field of human rights, social media, technology and advocacy

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for participation in IGA-380M. However, students without previous professional or academic background in either human rights or advocacy strategy should read the following in advance of the class: Andrew Clapham. Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press, 2007. This course is also a good complement to other IGA courses covering Human Rights – particularly, IGA-384, Tools and Tactics for Human Rights Practice. No background in visual or social media is required.

COURSE METHODOLOGY

The course methodology is based on adult learning principles. This assumes that learning will draw on, ground and anchor the topics in participants’ experience, add new information and theory, and where possible provide the opportunities for participants to apply the new information in a controlled, facilitated environment, and then take the material away to utilize it in their professional development.

The course will additionally try to ensure:
Relevance - All content is relevant to participants’ needs
Immediacy - Where possible, all learning is immediately useful to participants

The curriculum model includes:
• Presentations, dialogues, group discussions, forums and debates on key aspects of video and related multimedia advocacy drawing on facilitators’, guest speakers’ and participants’ experience
• Small group discussion and a ‘seminar’-style approach to classroom debate
• Case studies, incorporating video screenings and discussions, from WITNESS, participant experiences and peer practitioners
• Demonstrations of skills, simulations and hands-on projects to practice skills
• Group and individual exercises
• Teaching and learning teams working on specific thematic issues or regional clusters

The course begins on Tuesday January 5th and concludes on Thursday January 14th, 2016. There is no class on Monday 11th.
COURSE FORMAT

The course starts Tuesday January 5th and includes seven sessions. It will meet 1:30-5:30pm each day of class. Please note there is no session on Monday January 11th.

Based on class interest, there will be an optional technical session confirmed for one of the mornings of the class schedule.

A. In-Class Meetings
The class will meet in a room Littauer 382 at the Harvard Kennedy School from 1:30-5:30pm beginning on Tuesday, January 5th and concluding on Thursday January 14th. There will be no class on Monday January 11th. There will be a mid-afternoon break in the course each day. Guest speakers will participate in a number of classes – primarily via Skype Video Chat and Google Hangout.

Class participation counts for 40% of the final grade. Students are expected to attend every class (with notification to instructors beforehand for an excused absence) and to actively engage in discussions and group work.

On one morning during the class (date TBC) there will be an optional hands-on skills session focused on developing a basic level of skill in shooting interviews/testimonies and documenting visual evidence. Participants will be taught how to recognize and apply the key techniques of filming including composition and framing, shot-sizes and camera movements, stability, sound recording, interview techniques, and continuity. Participants will practice filming an interview, including learning how to secure informed consent. Participation in this session has no bearing on credit/grades.

B. Preparation for Class
The course will involve daily viewings and readings requiring up to two hours. Students are required to come to class prepared to discuss the day’s readings. These readings and viewings are included in the syllabus but are subject to change as they will often involve current web video and blog posts. Optional readings and viewings are provided for those who want to engage further with particular topics.

These readings will be available online at the HKS Course Page for IGA-380M.

All participants will also be expected to follow and contribute to a class Twitter hashtag #iga380, highlighting resources and discussion points.
C. Assignments

Assignment 1 (due January 10th, 6pm): All participants will be expected to draft an analysis of a usage of video and related social media in advocacy based on principles, readings and approaches discussed in the first week of class. Analyses should be written in a blog-style (no footnotes required), and should be between 500-1000 words.

Assignment 2 (due January 24th, 6pm): All participants will be asked to draft an effective S.M.A.R.T. visual and participatory media strategy for a human rights advocacy setting. Participants may either choose a context with which they themselves are familiar, or the Instructor will provide some template scenarios for participants to use as a basis for the assignment. A set of guiding questions will be provided to all students.

D. Grading

The HKS Academic Council has issued recommendations on grading policy that includes the following curve: A (10%-15%), A- (20%-25%), B+ (30%-40%), B (20-25%), B- and lower (5%-10%). Participation and assignments will be weighted as follows:

- Participation in class, including contribution to class and small groups discussions, participation in comments on discussion board, short responses to readings, and contribution to Twitter feed (40%)
- Assignment 1: 25%
- Assignment 2: 35%

Late assignments without prior approval will be penalized by one grade.

A Note on Academic Honesty

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are actively encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics, to discuss ideas and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate.

However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it in its synthesis reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices (unless noted otherwise by instructor for particular assignments) and properly cite any books, articles, videos, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you receive any help with your writing (e.g., feedback on drafts), you must also acknowledge this assistance.
CLASS SCHEDULE, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Session 1 Tuesday January 5th. Visual and Social Media Advocacy: Questions of Scope and Impact

On the first day we will focus on key theoretical issues that will recur in the course including the linkage between visual media and advocacy impact, questions of who is the participant/producer/audience and the challenges and opportunities of an information-dense environment. We will discuss our understanding of the evidentiary or ‘truth’ value of visual media, and reflect on the dilemmas of using testimony, visual evidence and graphic imagery.

As a grounding point and to develop an initial framing for the course, we will discuss participants’ own experiences of effective moving image/visual image advocacy, and will look back at events of 2011-5, in particular the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ and subsequent events, as well as other lower profile human rights situations.

Presentation, case study analyses, discussion, small group exercises, and debrief.

Required Readings/Viewings

Optional Readings
**Session 2 Wednesday January 6th. Models of Advocacy... Models of Video Advocacy**

On the second day we will reflect on different approaches to using video in advocacy and recognize and identify the strengths and limitations of using visual media as a tool for human rights advocacy. We will look at the role of human rights activists as curators, documentors, co-creators, creators and distributors of visual imagery created by them, with others or ‘found’ in the world.

As one of a range of approaches we will begin by focusing on produced, targeted video as advocacy media, particularly within the context of formal non-governmental organizations. Participants will watch, discuss and reflect on case studies as a step towards understanding practical methodologies for how video and related multimedia are used in work in a range of advocacy settings including community organizing, online mobilization, decision-maker advocacy, human rights monitoring institutions and legislative settings.

Presentation, case study analyses, discussion, small group exercises, and debrief.

**Required Readings/Viewings**

**Session 3: Thursday, January 7th, 1:30-5:30, Targeted Video Advocacy and Storytelling for Action**

This Session will continue the discussion of targeted video advocacy begun in Session 2. Case study films will be used to review a diverse set of approaches to using human rights video footage in campaigning worldwide, both offline and online. We will also explore key ideas on strategic timing and distribution of video, giving participants a opportunity to identify a range of advocacy distribution options including peer-to-peer, evidentiary video, community organizing, within activist networks, direct-to-decision-maker, and online.
At the heart of effective advocacy is effective storytelling – the process of converting ethical documentation and advocacy into effective persuasion. Participants will continue to advance their understanding of the deployment of visual persuasion for advocacy in this section on ‘Storytelling for Action’. Alongside discussion of a number of case studies participants will review their own experiences (within the course, and externally) around effective storytelling, and learn about key concepts of storytelling for action – including utilizing genre, character, hooks, and creating a ‘space for action’. We will also review a number of non-traditional and non-linear approaches to storytelling.

As part of the session we’ll also take a look at the ‘Kony 2012’ video and the accompanying debate on the practice and problematics of human rights storytelling as well as the models of community and youth organizing focused around video that are utilized by Invisible Children.

Presentation, case study analyses, discussion, and debrief.

Guest Speaker TBC: Fabiana Paranhos ANIS, Brazil
Guest Speaker TBC: Lisa Dougan, Invisible Children and Kony 2012

**Required Readings/Viewings**

- Watch ‘Kony 2012’ if you have not seen it: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc)

**Optional Readings**
Session 4 Friday January 8th, 1:30-5:30. NGO Media and Mass Media
Models for Human Rights Advocacy

Traditional models of human rights advocacy have often relied on securing mass and mass media coverage of abuses as a tool for exerting pressure on policy-makers. This section will explore this practice, and consider innovations that are occurring in terms of distribution of video and related multimedia to mass and alternative media outlets. We will look at the multimedia work of Human Rights Watch and other major human rights groups.

We will also start our discussion on how we are evaluating impact across a range of approaches to utilizing media.

Presentation, case study analyses, discussion, and debrief.

Guest Speaker TBC: Emma Daly, Communications Director, Human Rights Watch
Guest Speaker TBC: Katerina Cizek, Highrise project, National Film Board of Canada

Required Readings/Viewings
- Selected films/multimedia from Human Rights Watch to be noted by instructor
- Additional reading on impact to be provided by instructor

Optional Readings
there-to-report-on-the-world/


Optional Viewings

Assignment 1 is due, January 10th, 6pm, to be posted on the Class Discussion page.

Session 5 Tuesday, January 12th 1:30-5:30. Web 2.0, Online Advocacy and Network-Centric Video Advocacy

Use of online video, including particularly mobile video, has publicized and documented many emerging human rights struggles from Rangoon, to Oakland, to Tehran, and most recently the ‘Arab Spring’, Occupy and Black Lives Matter movements, and characterizes many vibrant citizen media spaces that fill niches long ignored or abandoned by the mainstream media. Video is also a key element of emerging models of advocacy that emphasize citizen participation, crowd-sourcing of activism and a decentralized, networked approach to organization.

In this session we will discuss examples of online and participatory video advocacy within frameworks of traditional and new models of advocacy, looking at:

- Viral/spreadable video in the NGO human rights sector
- The role of video-sharing and social networking sites including YouTube and Facebook, as well as niche online human rights spaces
- Social media organizing and movements and the use of participatory media

Presentation, case study analyses, discussion, and debrief.

Guest Speaker TBC: Steve Grove, Google News Lab
Guest Speaker TBC: Molly Beutz Land, University of Connecticut

Required Readings/Viewings
Finding in the 21st Century (Philip Alston & Sarah Knuckey eds. 2015) (to be provided by instructor)

Optional Readings
- Kjerstin Thorson, Kevin Driscoll, Brian Ekdale, Stephanie Edgerley, Liana Gamber Thompson, Andrew Schrock, Lana Swartz, Emily K. Vraga, Chris Wells. YOUTUBE, TWITTER AND THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT: Connecting content and circulation practices in Information, Communication and Society 16:3, 2013, pp 421-451 (focus on findings not the methodology)
- Huma Yusuf. The Convergence of Old and New Media During the Pakistan Emergency in Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism (Zone Books, 2012), edited by Meg McLagan and Yates McKee

Optional Viewings
- Additional viewing options will be listed on the course page and circulated via the Twitter feed

Session 6 Wednesday January 13th. ‘Cameras Everywhere’, 1:30-5:30 – Emerging Ethical and Practical Challenges with Ubiquitous Visual Media; Verification, Aggregation and Curation

In today’s session we will continue our discussion of the ecosystems of ubiquitous media and online/offline activism and then put a particular focus on a review key areas of challenges that are emerging for human rights at its intersection point with social media, new technologies and ubiquitous video. These challenge points include issues of privacy and safety, the role of
technology providers as human rights facilitators, and questions of
authentication, information overload and further ethical dilemmas raised by the
broadening possibilities of media creation and sharing.

As one practical response to many of the challenge points we will look at the
roles of curation, aggregation and verification in the visual media ecosystem.

Presentation, case study analyses, discussion, and debrief.

Guest Speaker: Steve Grove, former Head, YouTube News & Politics, current
Director, Google News Lab
Guest Speaker TBC: Madeleine Bair, Program Manager, WITNESS Media Lab

Required Readings/Viewings
- Madeleine Bair, Video Exposes Police Abuse in Venezuela (Or is it Mexico?
  Or Colombia?) on WITNESS blog, February 25, 2014, at
  http://blog.witness.org/2014/02/video-exposes-police-abuse-venezuela-
mexico-colombia/
- Madeleine Bair, What WITNESS Learned in 3 Years Curating Human Rights
  Videos on YouTube, on WITNESS Media Lab blog, June 2015, available at
  https://lab.witness.org/what-witness-learned-in-our-3-years-curating-human-
  rights-videos-on-youtube/
- Sam Gregory, Cameras Everywhere: Ubiquitous Video Documentation of
  Human Rights, New Forms of Video Advocacy and Concerns about Safety,
  191-207
- Sameer Padania, Sam Gregory, Yvette Alberdingk-Thijm, Bryan Nunez,
  Cameras Everywhere: Current Challenges and Opportunities at the
  Intersection of Human Rights, Video and Technology, WITNESS (2011),
  available at
  https://www.mediafire.com/folder/clu36oiklb0i/Cameras_Everywhere_Report
- William Lafi Youmans and Jillian C. York. Social Media and the Activist
  Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information
  Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements in Journal of Communication 62
  (2), 315-329 April 2012

Optional Readings
- Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, Deen Freelon. Blogs and Bullets III:
  Syria’s Socially-Mediated Civil War, Peaceworks No. 91, Washington, DC:
  United States Institute of Peace, 2014, pdf at
  http://www.usip.org/publications/syria-s-socially-mediated-civil-war
- William Quinn, The Other End of the Abu Gharda Camera, in New York Times,
- Susan Sontag, Regarding the Torture of Others, in New York Times May 23,
of-others.html

**Session 7 Thursday, January 14th, 1:30-5:30. Focus on Live-streaming and Immersive Experience; Wrap discussion on Video and Participatory Media Advocacy.**

In this session we will first consider how live video and technology-mediated immersive experience are changing approaches to human rights advocacy.

In the second half of the session we’ll spend time reviewing ideas for the final project as well as conduct a wrap discussion on digital activism and video advocacy, considering lessons learned, and how we can consolidate course learnings into our future practice.

Presentation, case study analyses, discussion, and debrief.

Guest Speaker TBC: Esra’a Al-Shafei, MidEast Youth
Guest Speaker TBC: Taylor Owen, University of British Columbia

**Required Readings/Viewings**

**Assignment 2 is due, January 24th, 6pm via email to Sam.**

**OPTIONAL SESSION TBC:** Hands-on skills half-day focused on developing a basic level of skill in shooting interviews/testimonies and documenting visual evidence