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Three Semester Review- Reflection Essay

CMPS225

Reflecting on what the title of “Media, Self, and Society” truly means with regards to this program has taken me quite some time to fully process. Before this course, I knew that media played a role in my own life, but I never realized how big a role it played. The end of my 3rd semester in this program is coming to an end and I have most definitely developed a more thorough understanding of the role media plays with my life and society as well. Without media, our lives would be uninformed and completely different than it is now. One of the takeaways from this course is that the media runs our society, which is linked with the title of the course. We become informed, communicate, collaborate, and are able to create platforms that ignite social and political movements with the use of media. My understanding of media has drastically improved over the course of the past year and a half where I can now critically analyze various types of platforms of media.

One example of how I employed critical analysis of a type of media production was an assignment we recently did on breaking racial and gender stereotypes in Hollywood films. As a female, this assignment was interesting and insightful and it enabled me to analyze a film that has redressed traditional stereotypes on gender roles. I selected the movie “A League of Their Own”, which tells a story about an All-American Girls Professional Baseball League that was created during World War II and the league eventually becomes a success after people begin to appreciate the women’s skills. The textbook we used throughout the semester taught me about how entertainment media has previously misrepresented women by disproportionately confining them within the home, while associating them with cooking, giving birth, and depending on men. Learning about this in class allowed me to critically analyze this film and redress these traditional stereotypes portrayed in media.

My Scholars experience has definitely helped me understand how society can be helped and harmed by media. As a college student, there have been multiple times where I have witnessed media content and production being harmful towards a certain group that has created division among society. Media has been seen to be used as a negative force in amplifying cultural differences in social groups and I have recently noticed that over the past 3 semesters regarding the way sports media commentators talk about Black athletes during athletic games. In sports, there have been various occasions where commentators talk about African American athletes' "athleticism" rather than the skill or field IQ they actually possess. A more specific example comes from a statement made by Crystal Dunn, who is one of few African Americans on the United States Women's National Soccer Team. When the Black Lives Matter Movement was occurring, she used social media to state there is this constant narrative used by announcers and commentators that commends Black athletes on their speed, aggressiveness, and strength rather than their "smartness" or field IQ. She mentions that she has tried to break away from the stereotypes placed on Black athletic community, but it becomes difficult when these stereotypes

are consistently mentioned on media broadcasts. These stereotypes being connected to the African American athletic community is harmful to society because of the divisional lines it creates. However, I have also seen the media being helpful towards society. With regards to the Black Lives Matter Movement, social media was extremely helpful because it acted as a platform for people to spread the word on marches and other ways to take action to help propel the movement. Social media was specifically helpful for me because I was able to become informed about what was going on and how I could help. By teaching me how to analyze media's role in society, my media experience has enabled me to interpret different platforms of media and whether they help or hurt society.

Being a critical consumer and producer of media refers to someone who is actively engaged in the content being released by various sources of media and also producing content that is informative and meaningful to society. The word critical is important when it's linked to production and consumerism because it does not refer to someone who casually scrolls through social media or just watches the news- it is someone who critically analyzes the content they are viewing or producing. I would consider myself to be a critical consumer, but not a critical producer. I make sure that the information I am learning from media sources is accurate and informative, but I do not produce content that is critical to society.

Scholars has introduced me to an environment where it was okay to have different beliefs and opinions than other people. I felt comfortable challenging someone's idea in a respectful manner and I was always open to hearing opposing views from my own. There have been multiple times in class, especially when we were able to have in person class, where discussions occurred that made me reflect on my own beliefs. There have been conversations we have had regarding race and gender in the media and hearing other people's opinions have made me reflect upon my own perspective on various topics.

Living in Cumberland Hall and being surrounded by other Media Scholars has definitely improved my learning. Having constant interaction with my classmates in and out of the classroom, not only helped my learning, but it helped me create and develop lasting friendships. Having my neighbors in the dorm that were in the same Scholars program made me feel comfortable because I could relate to them and also collaborate with them for group projects and assignments. There were a few times last year where I needed clarification about certain homeworks so I would just knock on the door across the hall to get that immediate help, which made me realize how beneficial the living-learning community was for my ability to learn.

One of the principles of Scholars is for students to actively participate and contribute to the program and I feel as though I have had multiple opportunities to do so in an academic setting and also towards the larger Scholars community. Having engaging colloquiums that discussed relevant topics going on in society allowed me to give insight on my own thoughts in the classroom. Another principle that is important to the Scholars program is actively participating in service, which contributes to the larger Scholars community. The day after moving in freshman year, I had the opportunity to spend my service day at Food and Friends. Those who are diagnosed with serious illnesses like cancer or HIV/AIDS have certain dietary

restrictions that make it hard for them to get food independently, so Food and Friends uses their many resources to ship out breakfast, lunch, dinners, and groceries that are specifically made for each person suffering from a specific illness. This service trip enabled me to actively contribute to the larger Scholars community from the start of this program in addition to helping those in the community around me, whose hunger issues are somewhat hidden from the media.

The Media, Self, and Society Scholars program has truly impacted my perspective not only on media, but how I am going to continue to develop my academic future. When COVID-19 shut down campus and we were sent home, I was upset because having face-to-face interactions is something that I valued especially with this class. However, Program Director, Alison Burns, and Program Coordinator, Kelly Brower, still made the class engaging each and every week. The reason I mention this is because I was able to learn how media can “do good” in a crisis while bringing people together. Having the smooth transition from in person classes to weekly Zoom chats that were engaging taught me that we will constantly face adversity, but it is how you react to these challenges that truly matter. Guest speakers that were brought onto Zooms taught me various lessons about myself and how to actively apply myself to fields I am interested in. After this class, I have realized that media will always be in my life whether it is using fact-checking techniques, critically analyzing films, or even creating my own podcast with friends regarding our future plans. My Scholars experiences has taught lessons that I truly appreciate and will continue to carry with me for the rest of my life wherever my future takes me.