**MEDIA PROJECT**

December 2nd, 2010

Jessica Williams

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**MEDIA PROJECT ANALYSIS**

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Religion 100A

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The view of religion in the media is typically quick and to the point. That is the history of religious traditions and religious practice is typically ignored. To better understand the media’s perception of religion, I collected religion themed articles from two Canadian newspapers over a three month period. The two newspapers that articles were selected from were The Globe and Mail and The National Post. The newspapers were compared based on their owners and target audience along with their perception of the religious traditions Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Globe and Mail founder George Brown was a supporter liberal politics. By creating The Globe, The Globe and Mail’s predecessor, in 1844, Brown was able to target liberal supporters. By doing this, Brown increased the popularity of the liberal party and of his newspaper benefitting him both financially and politically. The Globe’s merger with The Mail and Empire in 1936 created a newspaper that targeted both liberals and conservatives due to the conservative point of view of the The Mail and Empire’s founder, Sir John A. Macdonald. George Brown’s original newspaper, The Globe, was considered to be the voice of the upper class elite and supported what would come to be known as the conservative party. Merger with Sir John A. Macdonald’s newspaper, The Mail and Empire, changed the voice of The Globe and Mail from a strictly conservative newspaper to one supporting both conservative and liberal point of views. In 1980 The Globe and Mail was sold to The Thompson Corporation. Currently, The Globe and Mail is owned by CTVglobemedia. The Globe and Mail continues to alternate their support between the two political parties. As a direct result of their stance on politics, The Globe and Mail puts a strong emphasis on business. In recent years, satirical remarks have been made that the Globe and Mail has targeted an older male audience. Despite this, the Globe and Mail continues to introduce new and younger additions to their paper.

In comparison, The National Post was founded in 1998 by Conrad Black. Conrad Black’s goal was to eliminate the liberal bias found in Canadian newspapers. By doing so, Black became a new voice of the conservative party. Unable to keep up with the cost of the newspaper, Black sold the newspaper to Canwest Global Communications Corporation. Despite the change of ownership The National Post continued to suffer financially because of the troubles it faced competing with The Globe and Mail for popularity. Politically, today, The National Post has attempted to support the conservative party. However, The National Post has shown support for the liberal party in the past. As a result of their changing voice, the popularity of the paper has continued to remain below that of The Globe and Mail. The National Post has recently changed the appearance of their newspaper in hopes of raising interest and popularity. In other words, The National Post is still trying to find its target audience.

In general, The Globe and Mail has a very literal approach to religious articles. The emphasis of the newspaper is not to draw support to a certain religion, but to report current issues. In addition, The Globe and Mail is a business oriented newspaper that focuses on numbers and facts. The Globe and Mail sticks to current issues on religion such as Women wearing full face veils, the burning of the Qur’an on September 11th, the building of the mosque at Ground Zero, the Catholic Church’s abuse scandal and the issue of Israel peace settlements. This becomes clear when examining the newspapers expression of the three traditions studied in class, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Of the traditions studied in class, Judaism was rarely a focus of the articles. I believe this is due to Judaism’s shift over the years from a religious practice to an ethnicity. Being Jewish has changed for a lot of people from the study of scriptures and obeying the law set forth in the bible to adopting jewish holidays and eating jewish food. For Christianity, there were more articles due to recent events like the Roman Catholic Church sex scandal and the canonization of Canadian Brother Andre. However, the emphasis of each article is very simple and they lack a strong bias. Of the three traditions, Islam generated the greatest number of articles from the Globe and Mail which I assume to be a result of its relevance worldwide. The Islamic tradition remains central to some of the major struggles occurring around the world. As a result, The Globe and Mail has a greater number of articles because of its reoccurrence in society. I feel like the articles about the peace settlements in Israel lack information about the history of Judaism and Islam. Because The Globe and Mail does not pick a side the articles seem to lack any sort of direction. I believe the main goal is to bring up the issue and let their readers decide how they feel. As a national newspaper in a multicultural nation I think this is smart of The Globe and Mail because it remains neutral, therefore it cannot offend anyone.

The major difference that I noticed between The Globe and Mail and The National Post, when finding religious articles, is that The National Post has an exponentially greater number of articles then The Globe and Mail. Not only did The National Post have a greater number of articles, but The National Post had a blog focused entirely on religious articles. Because The National Post has not found a loyal target audience the articles they produce vary. That is, The National Post is much more open to religious opinions and, as a result, they will write about touchier issues than The Globe and Mail. For example, the article “Anti-Semitism on curriculum at Islamic schools in U.K,” is a bold article that describes the perception of Jews in Islamic schools in Britain. Therefore, The National Post is not afraid to publish articles that may offend someone. I think that this is one of the reasons why The National Post created “The Holy Post” blog because it allows its readers to respond to the issues they bring up daily. Because of the large number of articles produced by the newspaper it is hard to determine a strong religious bias. I noticed, however, with Judaism that The National Post appeared to support the religion. In the last month they produced three anti-Semitism articles, which makes me believe that the news company is in support of the Jewish population. Because Christianity has so many denominations I feel like The National Post is not afraid to put any of them in the public eye. The National Post wants to make people aware of what is going on around the world, and it appears as though they do not hesitate in sharing information about any Christian, or religious, tradition.

Religion was never central to my life and, as a result, I lacked any knowledge or understanding of it. My father always told me the central role that religion plays in the problems around the world but I never understood why. After taking this course, however, my understanding of Judaism, Christianity and Islam has increased greatly, thus my understanding of current events has also increased. By selecting the media project as my semester project I was able to apply the information I was learning in class to issues occurring worldwide. In doing so, I gained a greater understanding of the course material, a greater interest in religious articles and a greater desire to find a religious ideology that fits my lifestyle. When I first started this project I could not believe how relevant the course material was to the articles I was collecting. As a result, I developed a better understanding of the course material, thereby increasing my success in the course. In addition, by understanding the articles I was collecting I was able to apply my own opinion and reason to the problem, which increased my interest in current events and the variety of religious ideologies around the world. Moreover, discovering the number of different religious beliefs has given myself the desire to find one that fits my lifestyle. I am, however, overwhelmed by the number. But, seeing the passion that people have for their religion inspires me to find one. Even in my class on the history of religion you see people getting defensive because they feel so strongly about their beliefs. I am not sure if the three traditions we learnt this semester are right for me, so I will continue my search in hopes of finding one that I can come to terms with.

To summarize, the purpose of the media project was to increase my understanding of the relevance of religion in current events occurring around the world. Collecting articles from The Globe and Mail and The National Post made me understand how different media outlets perceive religion as a whole. The Globe and Mail appeared to have a very simple unbiased expression of religion. It did not choose sides nor did put a large emphasis on religion. As a result, I can see how some readers would be disappointed because the religious articles do not seem to answer any questions. In comparison, The National Post is not scared to publish religious articles and to publish different opinions, which is evident in their blog “The Holy Post.”

References

1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Post>, accessed December 1st, 2010.
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Globe_and_Mail>, accessed December 1st, 2010.