

PHD Defence

“Uncovering Alternative Conceptions of ‘Journalism Crisis’ in the Non-West” by Shan Wu

This is a news update from School of Communication, Simon Fraser University
News Editor: Siboc Chen

Our dear colleague, Shan Wu, will defend her PHD Dissertation on Thursday, September 8th, 2016 at Mallinson Conference Room (K8652) in SFU Burnaby (6:30 pm – 9:30 pm). Here is the abstract of her dissertation “Uncovering Alternative Conceptions of ‘Journalism Crisis’ in the Non-West”.

Abstract

The topic of journalism crisis has become increasingly pertinent as criticisms mount against news media systems that have prioritized private over public interests and/or failed to meet the challenges brought on by the Internet. Much research on journalism crisis however, is based within a Western context, set predominantly in the US and couched within a liberal-democratic ideological framework. Little is known about how journalism crisis is articulated and experienced in the non-West, where journalism realities may develop along different trajectories; evaluating them through Western lenses may create erroneous perceptions that alternative systems are lacking or deficient.

This thesis, therefore, plugs an important gap in global journalism studies by uncovering alternative ways in which journalism crisis is conceived in the non-West, where media systems in many states are subjected to some form of authoritarian control or influence. Establishing first that a journalism crisis must be studied at the ideological, material, and discursive levels, this study develops a journalism crisis framework that features as its dimensions the myriad of crisis narratives most commonly discussed in Western-centric literature. While noting how non-Western societies may have been influenced by global processes of neoliberal capitalist expansion and cultural imperialism, this study highlights the selective adoption of liberal ideologies by the non-West, as imperial influences interact with local histories, philosophical traditions, and cultural practices.

Of specific interest are two Asian cities that have come under the international spotlight in recent years, Singapore and Hong Kong. Standing at important historical junctures – with the passing away of prominent statesman Lee Kuan Yew and the rise of the “Umbrella Revolution” – these two cities offer interesting points of comparison as “global cities” and former British colonies that are both subjected to some form of authoritarian control. Through a comprehensive survey with 160 news-workers in Singapore and Hong Kong, and in-depth interviews with senior journalists and news managers,

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this study uncovers stark differences in the journalism crisis perceptions of news-workers in these two cities and argues the existence of a “crisis of governance” narrative not mentioned in Western-centric literature that must be accounted for when studying journalism’s decline in the non-West.