The Institute for Public Diplomacy & Global Communication

Sustained growth and progress

Since moving into a dedicated suite within the School of Media and Public Affairs, IPDGC has established a solid foundation at GW for executing events and activities that reach the entire DC community. Working with organizations such as the U.S. Institute of Peace, Department of State, and the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy has enabled further cooperation in fostering dialogue and discussion of public diplomacy and global communication issues among students, faculty, and industry professionals.
Beyond Benghazi: U.S. Public Diplomacy in Troubled Times
with Ambassador Thomas Pickering

Third Annual Walter Roberts Lecture

Each year, the Walter Roberts Endowment supports a public lecture delivered by a prominent figure in foreign policy. This past year, distinguished ambassador Thomas Pickering discussed U.S. public diplomacy challenges in a time of protest and upheaval; digital media; and emerging competitors to America’s pre-eminence on the world stage, particularly in light of the incident in Benghazi, Libya.

Held at the School of Media and Public Affairs, SMPA director Frank Sesno engaged the ambassador in conversation in front of an audience featuring practitioners, academics, and students of public diplomacy. Tara Sonenshine, a distinguished fellow at SMPA, delivered opening remarks.
American insights in Internet governance and media engagement:
Training program with delegations from the People’s Republic of China

Part I
Oct 14 – Oct 18

In the fall, two delegations from the People’s Republic of China participated in weeklong media training programs taught by SMPA faculty and DC-based practitioners of communication and media at GW. The first session brought together officials and representatives from the various media branches of the Chinese government. Through a series of lectures and discussions with professors and media practitioners, the group explored the U.S. system of regulating the Internet, and the various citizen-government interactions that take place in the digital sphere.

In the second session, officials from the Chinese Office of the Spokesperson explored the press-state system in the United States and considered the lessons that might be applied in a trans-Pacific context. In addition to a robust series of lectures, IPDGC’s diplomats in residence took trips to the State Department and Capitol to learn about how communication teams interact with and inform the public. A highlight of the week was the in-studio media training, where the delegation was able to demonstrate its newly acquired skills and understanding in front of the camera.

Part II
Dec 9 – Dec 13
**February 14**

**Soft Powering in Countering Extremism from the Horn of Africa to the Western Sahel**

In partnership with Albany Associates, a strategic communications firm based in London, IPDGC hosted a panel discussion with experts in the role of communication and soft power in countering extremism spreading throughout the northern part of Africa known as the Sahel. Sir Robert Fry, chairman of Albany Associates, and Simon Haselock, a former NATO spokesperson in Sarajevo, discussed and debated the strategic influence of Western powers in changing the narrative toward stability, tolerance, and democratization in a part of the world where radicalization often spreads to diaspora populations residing in the U.S. and United Kingdom.

**Blogs & Bullets III**

**Twitter Evolutions: Understanding the Changing Role of Social Media in War and Protest**

As part of an ongoing partnership with the U.S. Institute of Peace and its PeaceTech initiative, IPDGC held a two-part panel event at USIP to discuss the latest installment of Blogs & Bullets, the third in a series of reports on media and conflict. The latest report, “Syria’s Socially Mediated Civil War,” explored mainstream media coverage, YouTube videos, and more than 40 million tweets over a two-year period to show the changing use and impact of media in the Syrian crisis.

The second panel featured academics from various institutions, including Georgetown University, UNC Chapel Hill, and New York University, to discuss the relationship between social media and the political crises in Egypt, Turkey, and Ukraine.
As part of Women’s History Month, IPDGC partnered with the Institute for Middle East Studies to host a panel discussion examining the complex question of how women have fared since the promising beginning of the Arab Spring three years ago. The discussion also touched on education, human rights, constitutional changes, and inclusiveness in the Middle East and North Africa.

In addition to the panel, two film previews were presented: “Women and Girls Lead,” a campaign that supports women’s empowerment; and a “Awakening,” a series of interviews with women of the Middle East in their continuing quest to realize the goals of the 2011 revolutions.

Moderated by Tara Sonenshine, distinguished fellow at the School of Media and Public Affairs, the panel consisted of Hebah Abdalla, senior interview producer of Al-Jazeera; Sahar Atrache, senior analyst for the International Crisis Group; Isobel Coleman, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations; Thomas Gorguissian, journalist for Al Ahram; and Gini Reticker, award-winning documentary filmmaker and producer of Awakening.
U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy

Over the past year, IPDGC has supported the activities of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy by hosting workshops and public meetings on campus that also involved GW faculty and fellows. Tasked by Congress to research and assess public diplomacy efforts across the government, the Commission was established in 1948 and revived on July 15, 2013 to continue its mission. It hosts quarterly meetings that are open to the public in order to discuss various topics related to public diplomacy, including cultural preservation and digital diplomacy.

Continued Growth in Digital Sphere

Over the past year, IPDGC’s digital presence experienced significant growth both in terms of viewership and followers. Our blog, Take Five, doubled in viewership from 24,000 to 47,000, with readers hailing from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Our Twitter account (@IPDGC) gained 550 new followers, bringing the total number of followers to 1,850. On Facebook, our page – Facebook.com/IPDGC – also increased its viewership to include 200 new “Likes”. As public diplomacy begins to increase the leverage offered by digital media, IPDGC anticipates greater engagement on all our digital properties.

Take Five: June 2012 - May 2014

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Marisa Maldonado: 2014 Recipient of the Walter Roberts Award for Diplomatic Studies

Each year IPDGC and the Walter Roberts Endowment Board recognize a graduating student who has demonstrated excellence in the field of public diplomacy. This year, Global Communications student Marisa Maldonado was awarded the $1,000 prize for her application.

As a Fulbright scholar from Mexico City, Maldonado’s research interests include the use of digital tools for public diplomacy and Mexico-U.S. relations, particularly on immigration. She was recently an intern in the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, where she conducted research on immigrant children and supported the organization’s social media strategy.

During her undergraduate years, Maldonado studied International Relations. After graduating from college she worked in México Calidad Suprema (Mexico Supreme Quality), a civil association largely funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, which works to increase and diversify the foreign trade of Mexican agricultural products. She later worked for three years in a strategic communications agency. Maldonado plans to return to her home country, where she wishes to practice public diplomacy in the government or in international organizations.
The Walter Roberts Endowment

IPDGC operates in large part on the generosity of Dr. Roberts. Roberts is a foreign policy consultant and a former Foreign Service officer who began his public diplomacy career with the Voice of America and retired as associate director of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), then USIA’s top career position. He was appointed by President George H.W. Bush and reappointed by President Bill Clinton to the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. He taught public diplomacy for 10 years at GW’s Elliott School of International Affairs. Roberts is the author of the book, “Tito, Mihailovic and the Allies, 1941-1945,” and numerous articles on foreign policy and public diplomacy. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs and served on the board of The George Washington University’s Public Diplomacy Institute.

Roberts received a Ph.D. from Cambridge University. It was Roberts’ idea to establish a Public Diplomacy Institute at GW, originally directed by Prof. Steven Livingston at GW’s School of Media and Public Affairs. In 2005, Roberts generously created an endowment in his name for the Institute.