

AU communications students participate in 'satellite seminar'

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Scandalous Hollywood movies and TV are receiving mixed reviews abroad, a prestigious group of media panelists told Alfred University students, via satellite, on Nov. 18 in the Olin Building. The panelists included Joan Ganz Cooney, creator of Sesame Street; Everette Dennis, professor of media and entertainment industries at Fordham University; and Charles Stuart, filmmaker and president of Stuart Television Productions. Some people are perceiving America's media as corruption of their societies, and some see it as a celebration of what could be, says Cooney. "One man's corruption may be another man's freedom," said Cooney. The satellite discussion, titled "Entertaining the World: The Impact of American Culture Overseas," was viewed at AU and approximately 200 other colleges and universities nationwide via the Museum of Television and Radio's "University Satellite Seminar Series." Alfred's communication studies program took advantage of this series, which is in its eighth year, by making it available to its students for the first time. Past seminar sessions have included media legends such as Walter Cronkite and Barbara Walters. Many foreign countries are using American television programming because it is inexpensive and aesthetically stimulating, and not because they agree with content, said Stuart. America's dramatic and glamorous pop culture leads citizens of other countries to believe that everyone in America acts as such. Many people are simply offended by the promiscuity factor in American media, commented Stuart. "People hate America, but they love the lifestyle," Stuart said. According to Dennis, people all over the world are subjected to American commercialization and view it as arrogance. Between the forcing of American culture on others and the negativity toward U.S. foreign policy, hatred is easily formed. Hollywood's intentions have never been to corrupt other societies, but the damage has already been done, according to Stuart and Cooney. The way to curb negative foreign attention away from controversial Hollywood images is to reformat them according to countries' acceptable boundaries, according to Cooney. A perfect example is the work that she has done with The Sesame Workshop. Politics get in the way of creating joint shows with multiple countries. Children's programming has found a way to use the same concepts and shows while adopting acceptable ideals with respect to their culture. Programming remains relatively inexpensive and the culture shocks are removed. Just the same, Stuart said he is seeing more steps being taken in the desired direction. Even the hit show Friends has been reproduced overseas, now with focus placed around the workplace, and not sex lives.