



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

Google and censorship in different cultures

Google-China was launched in 2006 and has been the object of censorship and fiery rhetoric from Chinese officials. China blocked access to YouTube during 2009 as a result of footage that showed Chinese security beating Tibetans. China continues to block access to certain search terms on Google, which protested but continues to operate as the no. 2 search engine in China. Baidu, the market leader, is in full compliance with China's censorship laws.

Discussion questions:

Flashlight: Do you think most of China's Internet users know that a large amount of information is being blocked? How might they know? Are there long-term consequences for China stemming from Internet censorship? What might those be?

Spotlight: According to the author, 40 governments currently censor the Internet. Find out the names of these countries. Do they have anything in common (geography, religion, language, political systems)? Do these similarities help explain their attitudes toward the Internet? Is China on the list?

Searchlight: Different cultures value different things. In 1956, *[Four Theories of the Press](#)* developed four media types. It's still used a half-century later. But its critics say it described the systems according to Western (mostly American) standards. Discussion: What does the American culture value? How does our media system and the media and press freedoms we have support or hinder those values? Consider Asian cultures known for valuing collectivism. Can their media system support those societal values? How?

Extra credit: Chinese blogger Michael Anti (aka Jing Zhao) says hundreds of millions of micro bloggers and readers are at work. On platforms like Sina Weibo they discuss public issues banned from the official press. View [this TED talk](#) and assign a short paper on this question: Are these social networks effective as a back channel for news and information or are they a tool to try to keep the masses complacent?