

Using Media Clips with the Visual/Virtual Generation: We are Doing it Backwards

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ABSTRACT

A large body of research shows that today's visual/virtual graduate and undergraduate higher education students grasp class concepts best by relating them to visual sources such as TV shows, movies, YouTube and other media and media clips. The traditional college classroom approach, when incorporating media and media clips, positions the instructor as the active participant who finds, selects and presents clips as part of the course experience. The author follows an alternative methodology which has the students taking the active role - selecting the course related topic, finding the appropriate media clip, and presenting same to their classmates. This technique was compared across graduate and undergraduate college classes, and as an individual learning versus a group learning assignment, using business, government and non-profit courses and materials: the result - a clear preference for student selected media clips – led to improved student awareness and understanding of course concepts.

Keywords: TV, film, movies, media, video, clips, college, teaching approach, graduate, undergraduate, higher education, individual learning, group learning, business, government, non-profit, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to compare the use of instructor selected versus student selected media clips in expanding graduate and undergraduate student awareness and understanding of course concepts. Following a background section that discusses visual media and individual versus group learning, the article's purpose, methodology and results are presented. Tools used to employ this student-driven technique such as Media Clip Assignment guidelines, a sample Media Clip handout and a Media Clip rating sheet are included as Samples at the end of this article.

BACKGROUND

As we continue into the 21st century, it is not just our class materials that must evolve, but our methods as well, as we seek to keep pace with our changing students. For most of us in academia, there are few pleasures greater than a peaceful moment reading a good book. However, for most of our students today, reading a good book (or anything else for that matter) is more a chore than a pleasure. They have grown up as watchers, not readers. Today's technology has only enhanced the "watching" approach to life. As far back as 1986, Gioia and Brass called their current students the "TV Generation" and noted how they were the first generation raised on a solid diet of visual images. Twenty plus years later, Proserpio and Gioia (2007) have seen the continued evolution of our students beyond just a visual generation; they have become a "Virtual" generation as well, adding the online world of the internet as a source of their primarily visual information and entertainment.

If we are to engage our students on their turf, we need to look for ways to increase our use of additional media in our classes. We can successfully combine visual media with reading and lectures in the classroom (Hinck, 1995). Specifically, it is possible to increase student learning, interest and motivation by using TV shows, films, or other clips (Addams, Fan, & Morgan, 2013; Badura, 2002; Boyatzis, 2002; Gee & Dyck, 1998; Harrington & Griffin, 1990; Kirsh, 1998; Raingruber, 2003; Roskos-Ewoldsen & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2001; Taylor & Provitera, 2011). Champoux has repeatedly described using pre-selected film clips to show highly visual and dramatic topics involving ethics and moral reasoning (Champoux 1999, 2006) and for topics in management education (Champoux 2001a, 2001b). There is a large body of literature spanning four decades (e.g., Anderson, 1992; Bolt, 1976; Boyatzis, 1994; Burkley & Burkley, 2009; Christopher, Walter, Marek & Koenig, 2004; Conner 1996; Doris & Ducey, 1978; Eaton & Uskul, 2004; Fleming, Piedmont, & Hiam, 1990; Roskos-Ewoldsen & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2001; Smith, 1994; Toman & Rak, 2000) that shows the advantages of using films and television shows in the classroom as well as various techniques for their use.

While some TV and movie characters we select may seem quite dated to our students, they nonetheless do reflect the cultural values, norms and viewpoints from a given time (Johns, 1992; Vande Berg & Trujillo, 1989). For

example, over the past twenty years we had Serey (1992) who used *Dead Poet's Society* to show leadership. Baker (1993) used *The Karate Kid* and Huczynski (1994) used *The Magnificent Seven* to illustrate issues of power and motivation. Ross (1996) found an escalation matrix in *The Age of Innocence*. *Other People's Money* showed corporate restructuring (Graham, Pena, & Kocher, 1999). Harrison & Akinc (2000) used various clips on leadership. Comer (2001) used *The Lion King* to show leadership and role conflict. While Hunt (2001) expanded on the value of TV shows in the class, *Seinfeld* was used to show psychological systems (Dent, 2001). Mallinger & Rossy (2003) looked at culture in *Gung Ho*. *The Insider* was used by van Es (2003) to teach ethics. Bumpus (2005) used various films, and Livingstone and Livingstone (1998) used *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, to show diversity issues.

At the same time, according to Proserpio & Gioia (2007) and Alavi, Yoo, & Vogel (1997), students find it more difficult to think logically and develop critical thinking skills solely from *instructor based* information. It should be noted that all of the work above was based upon the traditional approach of having the instructor/author choose and present the media clips for his/her courses. Furthermore, although our visual/virtual students of today (the internet culture of students described by (Gackenbach, 1998)) can “find” most anything on the Internet, being able to “Google” any topic, at the same time they are not always able to distinguish the validity of what they find, or more often, the lack thereof (Graham & Metaxas, 2003). It would seem that providing more effective learning for the virtual generation requires a more active problem solving focus (Alavi, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1975).

Combining this active search type of learning, the use of media clips, and a problem-solving focus, Tyler, Anderson and Tyler (2009) wrote about the benefits of requiring students to search and find media clips to illustrate management concepts in their business courses. Their primary focus was on the value of having their students actively ‘find’ the media clips themselves rather than having the clips preselected by the instructor. They observed that engaging the students in this way “results in a richer and more active learning experience that is likely to help students better understand and retain the materials.” They listed three benefits from this approach:

1. For the students themselves to research and select appropriate media clips, they must more thoroughly understand the concepts they are presenting.
2. For the instructor, the perennial task of finding media clips that are interesting to the students and effective learning tools is shifted from the instructor to the students.
3. Finally, since the clips are aimed at the students as the target audience, they are in a better position to know what is being seen by their peers and then to find and select clips that are relevant to them than we are as instructors.

Using a constructivist approach to teaching and learning is also advocated by Fosnot and Stewart Perry (2005). Fundamentally, constructivism says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. Thus, the best learning occurs as students are actively involved in the process of constructing their own meaning and knowledge as opposed to passively receiving information. Having students review, reflect upon and select their own media clips, and then present and defend their selections to their peers is highly active and constructionistic.

Proserpio and Gioia (2007) also advocate the value of social interactions and activities to facilitate the learning process. This yielded a fourth benefit to Tyler: By working in groups, the students must brainstorm and experience working collaboratively to identify possible clips, and then review and select the best clips. The benefit to working in groups in general was also highlighted by Richard Light, who assessed the learning of Harvard undergraduates. Light (1992) reported that freshmen who chose at least one small-enrollment course reported a significantly better educational experience than those who did not, but he also found that for larger classes, dividing students into small groups of between four and six students to work on substantive topics had a major positive result. “The payoff,” he says, “comes in a modest way for student achievement, as measured by test scores, it comes in a far bigger way on measures of students’ involvement in courses, their enthusiasm, and their pursuit of topics to a more advanced level” (p. 70).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research was to answer the following questions:

- Could this approach of using media clips in the classroom be considered acceptable and beneficial, using business, government and non-profit courses and materials?
- Was there a difference between using instructor supplied media clips as compared to those found by the students themselves?
- Does this approach work with graduate as well as undergraduate students?
- Is there a difference in perceived effectiveness between students performing the task of finding media clips as a group versus as individuals?

Historically, this author as instructor has regularly used instructor-selected media clips in many of his classes across all management topics, so this was a natural extension of current teaching practices.

METHODOLOGY

Over the course of three years, the author utilized the Tyler et al (2009) technique in a series of courses offered through the College of Business and Public Management at Kean University. These were management courses in which initially no media clips were used; during the last three years only instructor-selected media clips had been presented. In total there were four undergraduate management principles courses, and six information management courses—two undergraduate and four graduate - for a total of ten altogether.

Table 1: Description of Course Section Conditions

# of Sections	Key	Definition
2	GG	Graduate Group
2	GI	Graduate Individual
3	UG	Undergraduate Group
3	UI	Undergraduate Individual

In half of the courses, students were divided into groups of four to six students. In the remaining sections, students were left to work as individuals. In each class the author began the semester by presenting a full overview of the semester's coursework including each week's core topics and readings.

For the first three weeks, classes were conducted without media. In the fourth week, the use of media clips to illustrate a specific topic from each class was introduced by having an Instructor Selected (IS) media clip presented in class. A handout was prepared for each class which provided the source and a paragraph summary of the clip as well as a detailed summary of the specific topic. The handout was presented to the class before showing the clip. Each student was also provided with a rating sheet and asked to rate, on a 7 point scale, how well he or she felt the clip illustrated and supported the topic. In addition, students were to write a detailed paragraph explaining their rating. These sheets were then collected at the end of the class. This process was followed in weeks five thru nine, for a total of six weeks. A copy of the Rating Sheet is shown as Sample 1.

For the next six weeks of the semester (weeks ten thru fifteen), all students in all sections were required to choose a Student Selected (SS) topic scheduled to be covered, either as a group (UG/GG) or as individuals (UI/GI). In all cases students would have to find a media clip of three to seven minutes in length that they felt illustrated their topic, and prepare an accompanying handout to accompany their presentation of their clip in class. A sample Media Clip Handout is shown as Sample 2.

In the interest of sensitivity, all students were to avoid the use of materials containing excessive profanity, graphic sex and/or violence. They were asked to warn the class before showing a clip if they thought there might be any objectionable materials, thus allowing any classmates to sit out any such clips. After each clip was shown, the students/groups were then rated by the class using the ratings sheets.

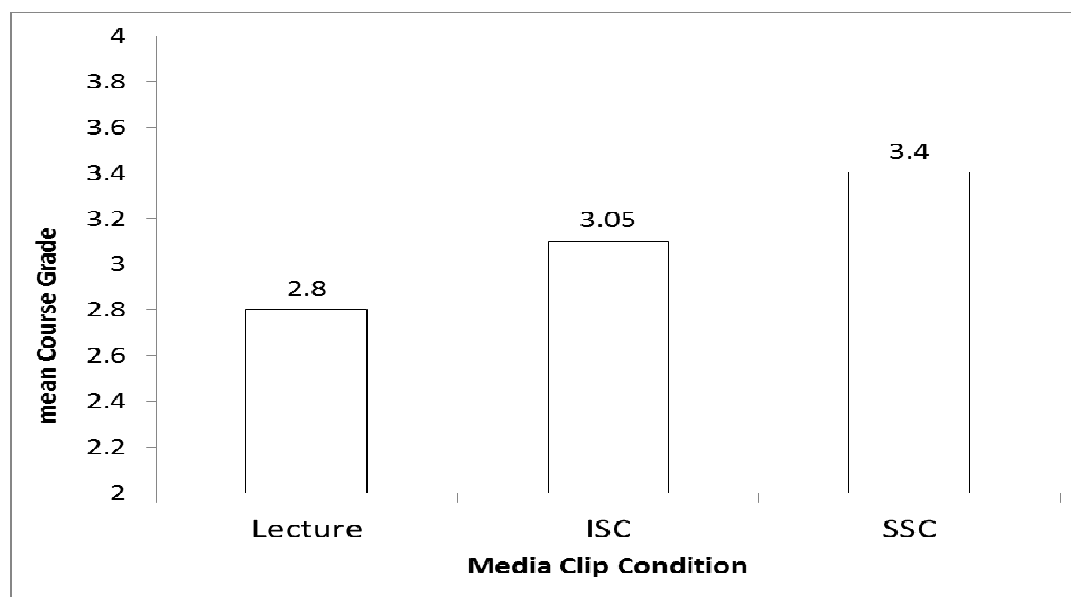
The main overall logistical issue for the instructor was to keep track of each class topic and to ensure that no two students/groups in the same class chose the same topic. Each student/group had to email their topic selection in advance, on a first come first choice basis. Based on the number of students per class (approximately thirty each), two to three individual students presented per week (UI/GI classes). The groups, typically six to eight groups for each class (UG/GG classes), were required to do two clips in the semester. This worked out to two to three clips shown per week as well.

At the end of the semester, students were asked to write a memo on their experience in finding and presenting their own clips, either alone or as a group, in comparison to using instructor selected clips. Further, they included their thoughts on the impact the clips had on their overall class experience and their opinion on using media clips as a way to learn about class topics.

RESULTS

In discussing the results of this work, the first focus is on the student learning outcomes, measured in traditional ways including papers and examinations and summarized in course grades. When comparing the scores and grades of students in earlier sections of these courses that did not use any media clips with those that used only IS clips, there was a small but not statistically significant gain in the latter sections. When comparing the lecture/no media clips to IS clips to SS clips, there was a significant gain in SS clips class grades over no media/IS clips, significant at the .01 level.

Graph 1: Mean Course Grades by Section: Media Clip Condition



We know from the above that the use of media clips in our classes in general increase measured student learning outcomes. But it is the second focus of this work that is most important. Bored students don't learn as well nor do they *enjoy* learning as well as engaged students do. Our task is to continue to find new and better ways to engage today's students to not only learn in our classes but to want to continue learning.

As Tyler et al (2009) had pointed out, we instructors have a limited knowledge of what might serve as a useful classroom clip and likely lean a bit heavily on the 'classics'. To broaden things as much as possible, the student

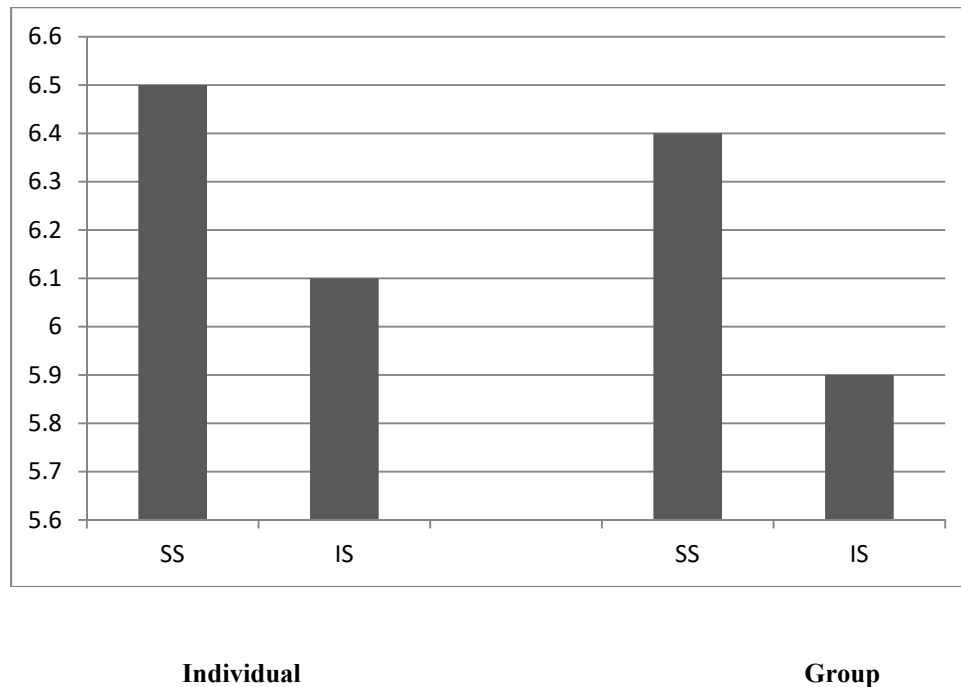
guidelines thus simply refer to “media clips.” Over the course of the semester, while many clips shown did come from movies and TV shows familiar to the author, well over 60% were clips from sources he had never seen or heard of before.

One of the recurring themes reported by the students as part of the end of semester memos was that the assignment brought out what might be called ‘perceptual acuity’--students reported that they would start to see particular class topics “popping up” in the most unlikely places. This was reflected in the clips themselves, which came from not only the usual entertainment sources but also commercials, sports and even organizational training materials. These results were constant across all four combinations (UI/UG/GI/GG). Another point gleaned from the memos was that this perceptual acuity applied not only to their own topic but to the class topics overall, with many students telling of having seen a ‘better’ clip for a given topic than was shown in the class, or of how in their most recent trip to the movies etc. they saw this and that topic “popping out” at them in something they watched. Students who may have expected this to be an ‘easy’ assignment found their peers to be strong critics. Any tendency towards using clips simply for their entertainment or ‘shock’ values was quickly shot down by their peers, who categorized them as ‘time wasters’ etc. The numbers of so-called “questionable” (profanity/sex/violence) clips were few and far between.

While each section of each class at the University undergoes an independent student evaluation using ETS® Student Instructional Report II (SIRII), an additional independent evaluation of each student in my courses was conducted for each media assignment to have them evaluate their opinion of the two media clip conditions, instructor selected and student selected.

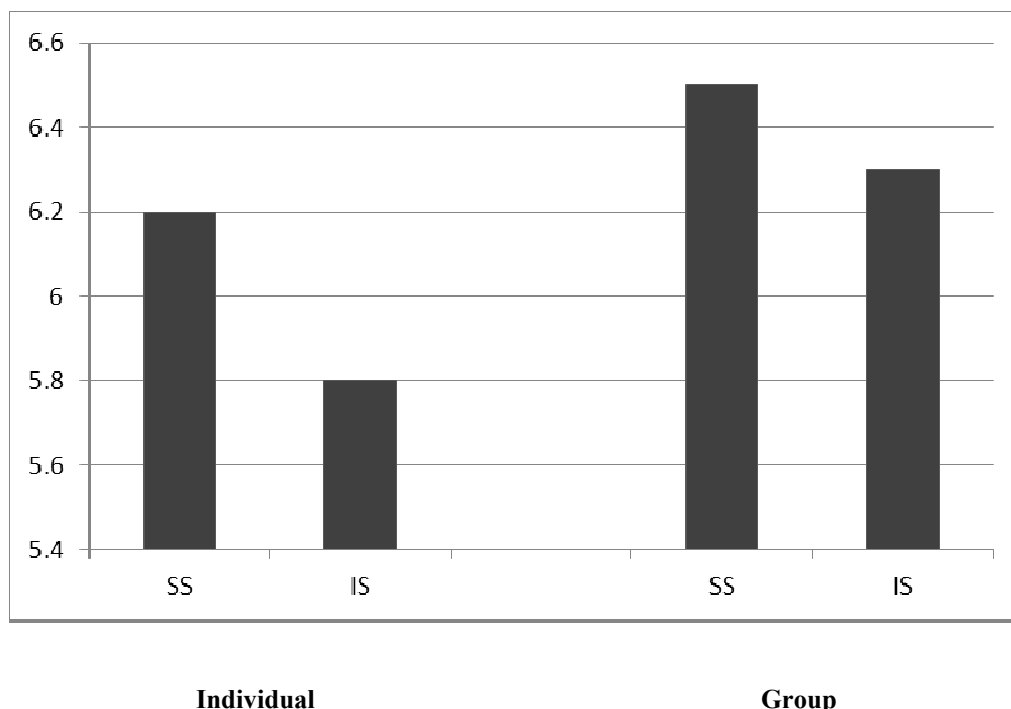
The overall rating for this assignment by the students was quite favorable. On a 7 point scale of how well they thought the clip illustrated the particular topic, the UI classes averaged a 6.1 favorable rating for IS media vs a 6.5 for SS, while the UG classes averaged a 5.9 score for IS media vs 6.4 for SS.

Graph 2: Undergraduate’s Ratings Student Selected SS vs. Instructor Selected IS Clips in Individual and Group Settings



The graduate course results were quite similar: Individual projects Instructor Selected clips 5.8 vs. Student Selected clips of 6.2, and Group projects Instructor Selected clips of 6.3 vs. Student Selected of 6.5.

Graph 3: Graduate’s Ratings Student Selected SS vs. Instructor Selected IS Clips in Individual and Group Settings



Comparing the variable of working as individuals versus working in a group, the undergraduate students preferred working alone while the graduates preferred working in groups; however all combinations rated selecting their own media to being superior to using instructor selected materials. Thus, student selected video materials were rated more favorably than instructor selected clips in all conditions, working alone or in groups, undergraduate or graduate.

In their explanation paragraphs about each clip, as well as their ‘end of semester’ memos about the assignment, all sections at the graduate and undergraduate levels across the board reported that they were very positive about watching videos and media as part of their school work. Perhaps the greatest value of the assignment came from helping students develop the ability to link their everyday visual, virtual world with their school world. For the vast majority of students, school is an island apart from the rest of their existence. Having them define for themselves a learning objective from school, and then finding and defending same from their *other* world, linked not only these two separate parts of their lives but also their visual and writing skills in ways they had not done before. The overall rating of the assignment for all classes was also 5.9 out of 7.0 for media clip appropriateness/class value.

Class discussions about the assignment with the graduate students did bring up its own interesting point. Many of the graduate students were currently functioning as managers in their organizations and they recognized that they often had a hard time reaching out to their younger workers. They saw this technique as a good way to bridge the gap between themselves and their ‘visual/virtual’ juniors, allowing the workers themselves to find a clip and in doing so becoming active learners.

CAVEATS

The graduate students, who were on average more than a decade older than the undergraduates, had little trouble writing about their topics or describing their clips. They did however struggle more with the technological aspects of the assignment—e.g. finding, saving, and showing their clips—and they sometimes agonized over the

'appropriateness' of a clip from more current sources. They also were most likely to use clips from more traditional sources of television and movies as well as news. For both groups, the age range was 18-52 years of age, M UG =21.7yrs and M GR =38.3yrs.

Some words about the technology issues encountered are warranted. The two main ways in which students could 'bring' their clips to class were either on a flash stick or via email. While the flash sticks were commonly utilized by most students, both as a back-up or just for ease of use, many students would email themselves a link to their clip which they would access using the class computer and projector. YouTube was the most common source of clips. Some students would edit their clips from other sources, upload them to YouTube and then email the link to show in class.

For some of the older students, both flash sticks and YouTube were a bit of a challenge. A couple of the younger students in the graduate classes held an impromptu session on finding, saving, and showing media clips for their fellow students. This did not seem to be an issue in the undergraduate sessions, where there were greater struggles in connecting modern laptops and tablets with older classroom projectors and other equipment.

There was the expected occasional conflict over issues of equal team member effort etc., but for those readers wishing to try this assignment themselves, particularly in larger classes, it worked as well with groups as it did with individuals. Note in this case however as with all group work, it may be easier for some students to avoid the challenge of the experience when they do not have to do it entirely on their own.

CONCLUSION

Student comments on sourcing their own media clips were generally quite positive:

- "The clips brought the concepts alive; I don't really get that much from flat words on a page."
- "Having to find my own stuff kept me on top of the topic. I wanted mine to be better than anyone else's."
- "Once we got started [with finding our own clips] whenever I was watching anything I kept seeing stuff and getting excited, thinking, 'Wow that would be great for class!'"

Finally, there were no differences in results between the courses themselves; that is, the Management Principles and the more technical Information Management courses yielded the same positive overall results and same superiority for Student Selected media over Instructor Selected and the same positive results found in the original research. In my University, media clips are a staple in almost all disciplines and courses across the Business College. I believe that having student's research and select the clips used is the more successful strategy for us all.

According to Scherer and Baker (1999), 'Film [TV and other media] provides a familiar attention-capturing visual medium to engage the student and encourage retention' (p. 143). Combined with the new virtual world of today, this visual/virtual world allows every one of us to explore a truly unlimited horizon. Today, using the internet, we as well as our students can go anywhere, see anything, and search anything in the past as well as the present. At the same time, as much as we strive to use relevant 'new' materials with our students, no one of us, student or instructor, can uncover all the best possible media that tie into our courses. By shifting the responsibility onto our students to go out and uncover their own media clips, we not only open ourselves to seeing (and sharing) things we would never have found on our own, but also broaden our students' perspectives to a new way of seeing the world around them. This technique links our visual/virtual students of today with our more traditional analytical approach in the classroom. When we help our students look for and perceive the lessons of the classroom in the bigger world around them, we heighten their perceptual acuity and help to transform them from passive watchers to active learners.

While enrolled in a graduate program in College Teaching and Administration, the author had the opportunity to not only read but attend lectures by K. Patricia Cross, then a Professor of Higher Education, Emerita at the University of California, Berkeley and one of the leading scholars on adult learners in the college/university environment. Dr. Cross often spoke about the need to reform the ways in which we help adults to learn, ways that are different from those of children; hence her use of the term andragogy rather than pedagogy.

Dr. Cross wrote (1998) about the combined benefits of student initiated learning and small group work. "Thus, when students negotiate their own understandings by actively working to understand others' contributions and to fit them

into what they already know, they develop a network that is called, in modern learning theory, a *schema*, which is a kind of cognitive map that permits new learning to become understanding by making connections to what the student already knows. Small interactive peer-group learning is more likely than a lecture or a textbook to make the connections that students need to develop a more complex schema, offering more links to accommodate new learning. It also expands the schema to the larger picture that lies beyond individual perspectives (p. 10).”

The techniques examined here are easy to use, with multiple benefits to both undergraduate and graduate students. The process of bringing in media clips, generated by the students themselves, combines the best andragogical practices with the latest technologies our students know and use. It works well across a broad range of course topics and subject matter and can be used in individual or group work. Since we know that our students, like ourselves, benefit from learning in ways that are felt to be engaging and enjoyable, using student selected media clips greatly enhances the student’s perceived overall value of using media in our classes and provides a superior way to connect with our students than our more traditional non-media clip approaches. Of course, after this, our students may never see things as “innocently” as they did before, as each new self-generated discovery of a classroom concept in the visual/virtual world around them leads to yet another discovery, and another, and another in an endless chain.

If we can inspire our students in class to begin searching for and seeing our class lessons in the media that is all around them, it is a short step for them to begin seeing such lessons on their own. At the point they begin bringing the clips to us and each other in and out of the classroom, we may well have a new, modern illustration of life-long learning.

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Sample 1. Media Clip Assignment Guidelines

They say a picture is worth a thousand words so a TV, movie or other media clip must be worth even more. As we have talked about in class, scenes from various media can be used to illustrate topics we cover in the course. Now, instead of me finding and bringing examples to class, it is your turn. Whether you are working as an individual or a group:

You begin by selecting the topic from class that you want to study. You then email me that topic for me to review; partially to make sure it fits in the class and partially to make sure that no one else is doing the same thing. Then, once you hear back from me you begin to look for a media clip that you think works to illustrate your class topic. This 3 to 7 minute clip can be from a movie, a television show or anything else you think works. Next, get a copy of your clip to show in class and write a one page handout for the class about your topic—what is it, and then describe it; next tell us about your clip, what is it and how does it illustrate your topic. You have between now and Sunday 5pm to send me your proposed topic. I will be showing you a sample clip and providing you a sample handout next week.

Note: Since there is an infinite amount of materials out there from which to choose, please avoid any clips containing excessive profanity; graphic sex and/or violence. If you think your clip has any sensitive or objectionable materials, please warn your classmates before showing your clip so anyone who wishes to can sit out anything that might make them uncomfortable.

To send me your topic you **must** follow this format.

1. Send me an email
2. In the subject line put “Media Clip Topic”
3. In the body of the email:
 - A. your Name
 - B. your Class and Section number
 - C. in one sentence or less tell me what topic you want to study
 - D. in one paragraph or less tell me how this topic fits in to your class/text etc.
4. Wait for me to reply to your email
5. Once you get the OK, go find your clip and write your handout

Sample 2. Sample Media Clip Handout

Your Name, Management 3990-01

Topic: Charismatic Leadership

The **Charismatic Leadership Style** was one of three leadership styles described by Max Weber (1947) along with bureaucratic leadership and traditional leadership styles. The charismatic leadership style is based on a form of heroism or extreme of character where you become leader by inspiring others.

The characteristics of the charismatic style include:

- Leaders are viewed as having super powers and abilities, the leader is viewed as a hero by followers
- Leaders are followed because of personal trust and the charisma the leader exhibits
- Followers are promoted based on personal charisma they exhibit
- There are no formal offices of authority, power is gained through social skills

The Charismatic Leader gathers followers through dint of personality and charm, rather than any form of external power or authority. Charismatic Leaders pay a great deal of attention in scanning and reading their environment, and are good at picking up the moods and concerns of both individuals and larger audiences. They then will hone their actions and words to suit the situation.

Charismatic Leaders who are building a group, whether it is a political party, a cult or a management team, will often focus strongly on making the group very clear and distinct, separating it from other groups. They will then build the image of the group, in particular in the minds of their followers as being superior to all others. The Charismatic Leader will typically attach themselves firmly to the identity of the group, such that to join the group is to become one with the leader. In doing so, they create an unchallengeable position for themselves. In my film there is a scene where the crew does not want to go where Flynn wants so he quits as leader, they then realize they would rather follow him into danger rather than go without him to safety.

Movie Clip-- Errol Flynn as Captain Blood 1935

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BDiNhe_YNQ

My clip is a 5 minute compilation from the film Captain Blood based on the true story of Dr. Henry Pittman who was arrested and sold into slavery in the West Indies in 1685. Even with very little dialog the 5 minute overview shows Flynn's charisma in binding together and becoming the leader of the slaves as they rebel against their colonial overlords and fight not only their former masters but other pirate outlaws who prey on the weak. Much of Flynn's success as a swashbuckler can be seen as the natural charismatic leadership he displayed in motivating people around him to follow him, such as in Robin Hood where he gets the men of Sherwood Forrest to join him in fighting against Prince John on behalf of the people, but it all started here, with his first film, Captain Blood.

Sample 3. Media Clip Rating Sheet

Your Name, Course Management 3990-01

Date

Class Topic: _____

Presenter(s): _____

Media Clip: _____

For this media clip, please rate it based upon *your* perception:

This clip does a good job of how well it illustrates and shows the class topic it is supposed to cover.

Not at All			Somewhat			Very Much
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

For this clip, please tell me what you think is particularly good or bad about the clip in terms of how good a job it does and why in helping you too see and understand the class topic: