



visible knowledge project

a collaborative investigation of learning, inquiry, and technology



The Difference that Inquiry Makes:

A Collaborative Case Study of Technology and Learning,
from the Visible Knowledge Project.

Edited By Randy Bass & Bret Eynon



"The Difference that Inquiry Makes: A Collaborative Case Study of Technology and Learning, from the Visible Knowledge Project," *edited by Randy Bass and Bret Eynon*

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Video Killed the Term Paper Star? Two Views

Peter Burkholder, Fairleigh Dickinson University, and Anne Cross, Metropolitan State University

From *The Difference that Inquiry Makes: A Collaborative Case Study on Technology and Learning, from the Visible Knowledge Project*¹, edited by Randy Bass and Bret Eynon

Should we be rethinking the standard term paper exercise for college survey classes? If so, what might we replace it with? In the first half of this article, Peter Burkholder (History) describes why he implemented a technology-based project as an alternative to a term paper. Called the History Music Video Project (HMVP), the investigator found that this approach not only better engages his students, but that it does not sacrifice rigor in the process. In the second half of the article, Anne Cross (Sociology and Criminal Justice) describes some of the intrinsic benefits and problems that have cropped up as a result of adapting the HMVP to her own classes.

Part 1: A Historian's View (Peter Burkholder)

Years ago I taught world history courses at an institution that did not offer a history major and, although I always had a handful of top students who really seemed to get the material, it was apparent that the majority were simply going through the motions. Paper assignments were particularly troubling: not only did they tend to be of low quality overall, but with up to 200 students per semester and no teaching assistant to help with grading, there was inevitably a considerable lag time between students' submissions and my ability to return the papers with meaningful feedback. I realized I had a problem of Bassian proportions.² Was there an alternative that would spark class interest, result in higher quality student work, and allow for faster and more meaningful response on my part?

I About VKP: In all, more than seventy faculty from twenty-two institutions participated in the Visible Knowledge Project over five years. Participating campuses included five research universities (Vanderbilt University, the University of Alabama, Georgetown University, the University of Southern California, Washington State University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), four comprehensive public universities (Pennsylvania's Millersville University, California State University (CSU)--Monterey Bay, CSU Sacramento, Ohio's Youngstown State University, and participants from several four-year colleges in the City University of New York system, including City College, Lehman, and Baruch), and three community colleges (two from CUNY--Borough of Manhattan Community College and LaGuardia Community College, and California's Cerritos College). In addition to campus-based teams, a number of independent scholars participated from a half dozen other institutions, such as Arizona State and Lehigh University. The project began in June 2000 and concluded in October 2005. We engaged in several methods for online collaboration to supplement our annual institutes, including an adaptation of the digital poster-tool created by Knowledge Media Lab (Carnegie Foundation), asynchronous discussion, and web-conferencing. The VKP galleries and archives (<https://digitalcommons.georgetown.edu/blogs/vkp/>) provide a wealth of background information, including lists of participants, regular newsletters, and reports and essays by participants, as well as a number of related resources and meta-analyses. For this article, the author gratefully acknowledges the students whose work is cited here. All students whose work is included have granted the author permission to use the material.

² I use "Bassian" to refer to the important pedagogical work of Randall Bass, especially his astute observation that problems in research are viewed as a "good thing," but problems in teaching are equated with failure and thus often swept under the rug. See his seminal article, "The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Problem?" *Inventio* 1 (1999), <http://www.doiit.gmu.edu/Archives/feb98/randybass.htm>.

For the previous two years, I had been showing my classes a digital story that I had put together in tandem with a unit on warfare in the twentieth century. It consisted of a PowerPoint slide show, set to run automatically, showing emotive images of life and death in the trenches of World War I with brief explanatory text, and accompanied by the 1985 Sting song "Children's Crusade." The viewings always grabbed students' attention in ways that lectures and readings never could. Moreover, I knew from own experience of assembling this History Music Video Project (HMVP) prototype that it was a tremendous amount of work, requiring me to distill complex events down to a level that was digestible within the context of a short multimedia experience. I theorized that students could profit from assembling their own HMVPs, and that such an activity might fulfill learning goals similar to a paper. As an added bonus, such a project perhaps would give greater meaning to seemingly distant historical material, since it would call on students to make use of their own pop culture and tap into an assumed predilection for multimedia. Finally, it made sense to have students work in groups so as to assist one another with the technical requirements of such a project, meaning I could respond with feedback more quickly than I could on individual paper assignments.

The Practice of HMVP

The HMVP is essentially an exercise in translation wherein students tell a story digitally much as they would in a traditional paper. Through the years, I have experimented to determine what works in this medium. As a rule, HMVPs that give a straightforward content overview of a topic have a decent chance of succeeding. Like historical film, digital stories are limited in their ability to convey complex analysis. Also, like film, digital stories are especially effective at provoking an emotional response.³ Having students produce group projects is preferred, since the groups can typically troubleshoot technical issues, and since it allows for quicker instructor feedback. The groups have an increasingly sophisticated array of software options to choose from (e.g., MovieMaker, iMovie, Keynote, Adobe Video Workshop), but most utilize PowerPoint.

Project Evaluation: Student Engagement

One of my initial goals with the HMVP was to engage and excite students (all of them non-history majors) in introductory world history courses, and in that sense, the project was a clear success. Beyond the students' ability to share their work with others on scheduled viewing days, and beyond my ability to provide quick responses to their projects, classes gave unambiguously high marks to the HMVP as a history assignment, especially when compared with the standard course paper. Data collected anonymously after an iteration of the project in spring 2005 indicate that students had a strong preference for the digital storytelling project versus paper (see Chart 1), and that a majority even planned to utilize the method later on in their professional careers (Chart 2). Students' perceptions of whether the HMVP was conducive to learning course content were strong in the affirmative (Charts 3-4), with one student adding, "Through this project, I learned so much more about history than I have [in] all my previous classes put together." This may have been a simple matter of the HMVPs appealing more readily to learning styles (Chart 5), students' level of enjoyment with the project (Chart 6), or the infusion of music into the course (Chart 7). "It was really cool," remarked one student. "I really like music, so it was easier to pay attention." In fact, there is good evidence suggesting that appropriate use of music positively reinforces learning. In a recent review essay,

³ On the relative pros and cons of historical film, see Burkholder, "Popular [Mis]conceptions of Medieval Warfare," *History Compass* 5, no. 2 (2007): 510-511, and the literature cited there.

Isreal Eady and Janell Wilson reported on numerous studies validating the “socio-music curriculum.” Not only do test scores go up, but so does students’ motivation to learn.⁴

Educators need to be clued in to such relationships, and approach their assignments with the same contemplation, purpose and rigor they approach their own research.⁵ Taking students’ already-extant bond with popular music, as well as their penchant for downloading, ripping and mixing audio and video files, and then integrating those with otherwise abstract historical material, can go a long way toward engagement and learning. As David Ausubel prescribed forty years ago, “The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly.”⁶

The Digital Story as a Viable Alternative in History Courses

Clearly, the HMVP “worked” as a way of engaging and exciting students. But is engagement enough? Does the HMVP lead to equal or even better learning than a paper does? This was especially important to me, since an ability to write well and to analyze complex historical issues is an expectation of history students. Moreover, fellow historians at conference presentations of the HMVP were perhaps rightly skeptical about whether substituting a digital story assignment for a paper was a step in the right direction, or whether it was simply a case of pandering to students’ preferences for an ostensibly easier assignment.

I had since moved on to another university that offered smaller course sizes and a history major, effectively eliminating two of the motivating factors for implementing the HMVP in the first place. But because I had continued to use digital storytelling with results similar to those described above, I decided to meet my peers’ challenge by gathering data on different types of projects assigned to students in an introductory world history course in spring 2007. The class, made up mostly of history majors, would perform a wide array of learning activities including in-class exams, a poster project, a survey assignment (this included a write-up of results), a historiography paper, and a digital story. At the end of the semester, I administered an anonymous survey to gauge students’ experiences with what was perhaps a bewildering array of course assignments. Key survey items sought to ascertain 1. how the assignments compared in terms of fostering students’ learning of course materials, and 2. the relative difficulty and workload of the various types of assignments. I would then compare these data with my own assessments of students’ performance.

The results suggest that from the students’ perspective, some assignments that are mainstays of many history courses are not as effective for mastery of course content as we might assume, and that there is pedagogical merit in experimenting with non-traditional assignments like the HMVP. For

4 Isreal Eady and Janell Wilson, “The Influence of Music on Core Learning,” *Education* 125, no. 2 (2004): 244. Thanks to one of my former students, Christina Bridston, for bringing this article to my attention.

5 On this fundamentally important point, see the excellent recent review essay by David Pace, “The Amateur in the Operating Room: History and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,” *American Historical Review* 109 (2004): 1171-91.

6 David Paul Ausubel, *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View* (New York, 1968), cited by Bill Cerbin, “Investigating Student Learning in a Problem-Based Psychology Course,” in *Opening Lines: Approaches to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, ed. Pat Hutchings (Menlo Park, CA, 2000), 17.

instance (see Chart 8), students clearly felt that the typical in-class examination was relatively ineffective for purposes of learning class materials. Papers lagged far behind the poster project (a clear “winner” here from the students’ point of view) and were on par with the digital story. Yet papers lost out to the HMVP if we look at combined first- and second-choice data.

Additional interesting data came from the survey item asking students to rank these same assignments according to the relative difficulty and amount of work required to produce them, and Chart 9 illustrates the results. Once again, in-class exams were the clear “loser” according to students. Poster projects, although reported as the most effective as a means of learning about history, were not perceived as particularly difficult to produce. And significantly, students viewed the production of digital stories as the most difficult and time-consuming—besting even the writing of papers, especially when first and second choices are combined.

The data set here is admittedly small and there are several variables that might have swayed the students’ responses, including a simple penchant for one type of assignment versus another (recall Chart 5). Moreover, my own observations and evaluations of these same students’ work lead me to disagree with some of their conclusions. For instance, although in-class exams trailed the assignment pack, there is still good reason to have them. More broadly, I fully agree with history colleagues that certain skills (e.g., the writing of high-quality history papers) should be emphasized regardless of what students say about them. Nevertheless, the data suggest that experimenting with other types of assignments—even if it means replacing a standard type of project with an unorthodox one—is justifiable. And one clearly need not sacrifice rigor in the process. On the contrary, the students’ own evaluations of these projects sometimes show surprising correlations between assignment preference and relative workloads: “easier” is not necessarily better, as far as students are concerned, and digital stories were evidently not easy to produce.

Reflections on the Visible Knowledge Project Experience

I began this project with a degree of trepidation. As indicated earlier, having graded thousands of history papers, I am fully aware that students need help with their writing, and I firmly believe that papers have a central role to play in history courses. But this does not mean educators should shy away from building new paths to learning, and this is where the Visible Knowledge Project (VKP) and other Scholarship of Teaching & Learning groups have played an invaluable role for me. All of us, whether engaged in cutting-edge technological projects or tried-and-true pedagogy, need to be constantly assessing our students’ experiences. The ability to meet like-minded educators who share a passion for student learning, and to receive assistance with the assessment of my teaching projects, has been invaluable. As but one example, without VKP, I never would have thought to go the next step of trying to place the HMVP into context with other types of history assignments.

Perhaps it is time that historians rethink their predilection for measuring students’ mastery of historical material by their ability to write a paper about it, and at least contemplate the possibilities and benefits of multimedia projects as a more expressive, engaging, sharable, rewarding and even challenging medium for learning. Video certainly did not kill the term paper star in my history courses, but the much-vaunted paper assignment will have to learn to share the spotlight.⁷

⁷ Another recent investigation into the merits of digital storytelling can be found in Michael Coventry, “Engaging Gender: Student Application of Theory Through Digital Storytelling,” *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 7, no. 2 (2008): 205-219.

Charts

The data in Charts 1-7 were collected anonymously from an introductory world history class via the survey feature of Desire to Learn, an online class management system used at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Note that the data shown in those charts pertain only to one iteration of the project, performed in the spring semester of 2005. I have chosen to include only this data set, since the wording and questions on the survey have changed slightly over the years. Previous and subsequent data sets, however, are very consistent with the figures below. Charts 8-9 are based on data collected anonymously from an introductory world history course at Fairleigh Dickinson University during the spring semester of 2007.

Chart 1: "The alternative to doing [the HMVP] would have consisted of each student reading an additional book, and then writing his/her own 5-7 page paper on a specified topic. Please indicate which assignment you would have preferred to do."

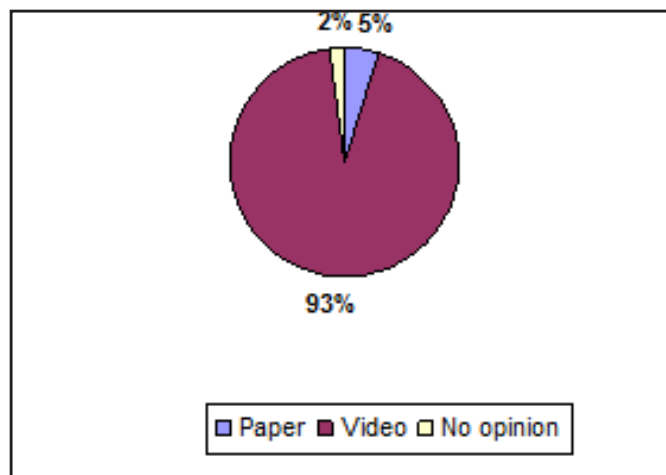


Chart 2: "I will use a music video project like this later on in my own professional career (e.g., for teaching or demonstration purposes)." [Note that no one strongly disagreed.]

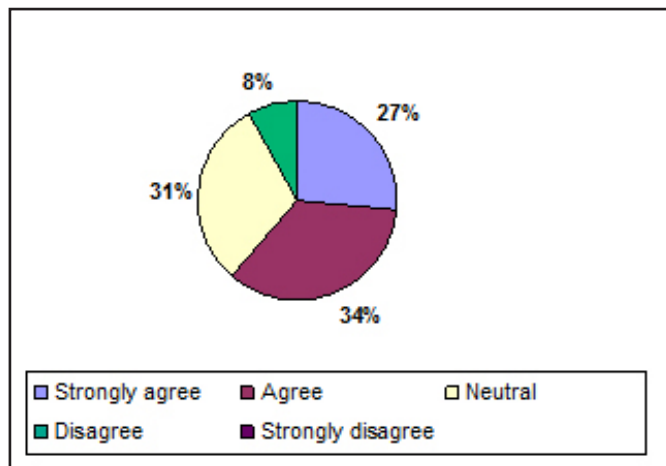


Chart 3: "I learned about history by helping create my group's HMVP"
[Note that no one disagreed.]

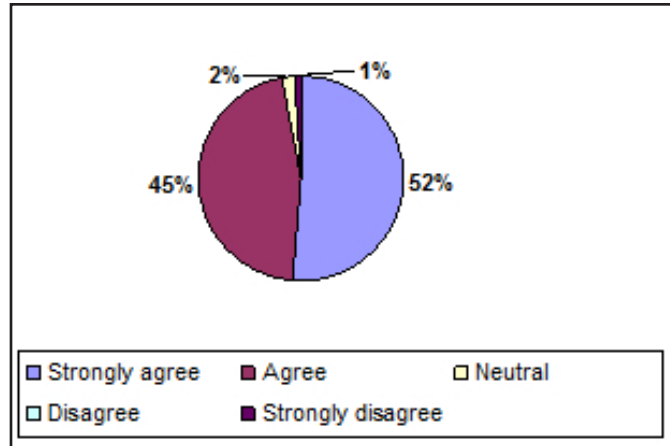


Chart 4: "I learned about history by watching and discussing other groups' HMVPs."
[Note that no one disagreed.]

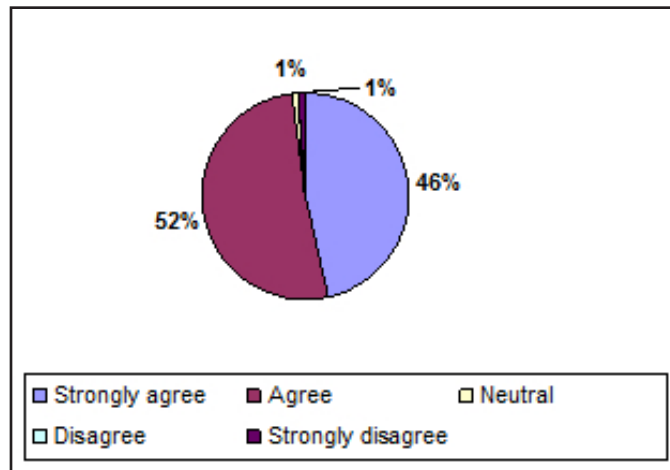


Chart 5: "This type of project appeals to my own personal learning style." [Note that no one disagreed or strongly disagreed.]

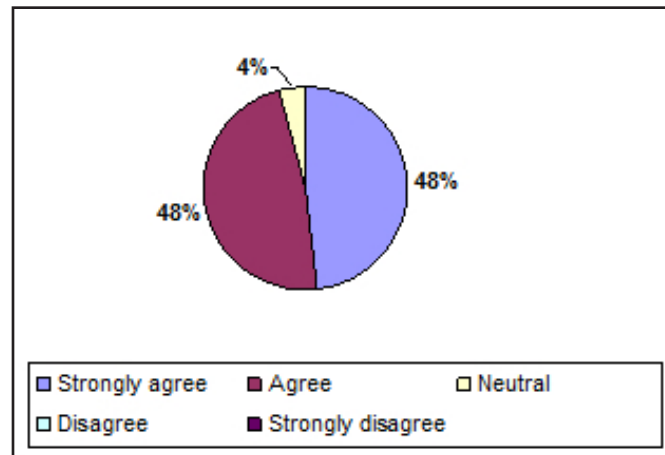


Chart 6: "I enjoyed doing this project." [Note that no one disagreed.]

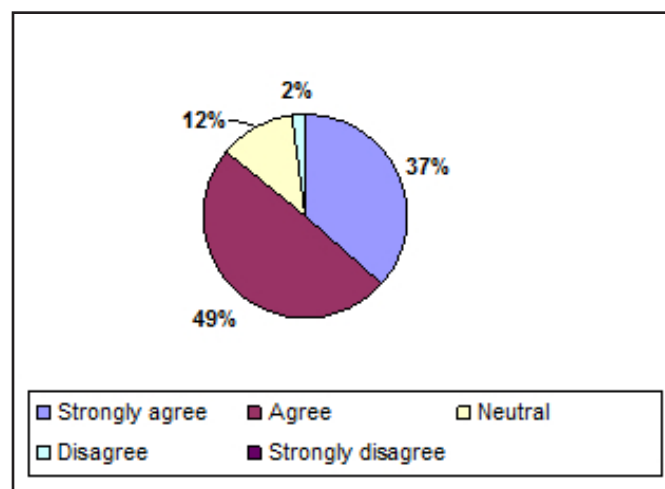


Chart 7: "The addition of music to these videos will help me remember historical information." [Note that no one strongly disagreed.]

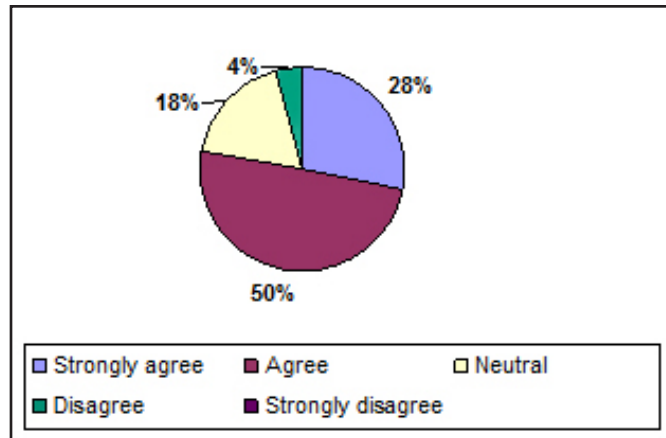


Chart 8: "Please rank how each type of assignment helped you learn class material. Your choices are (a) survey project (b) HMVP (c) poster project (d) paper (e) in-class exam."

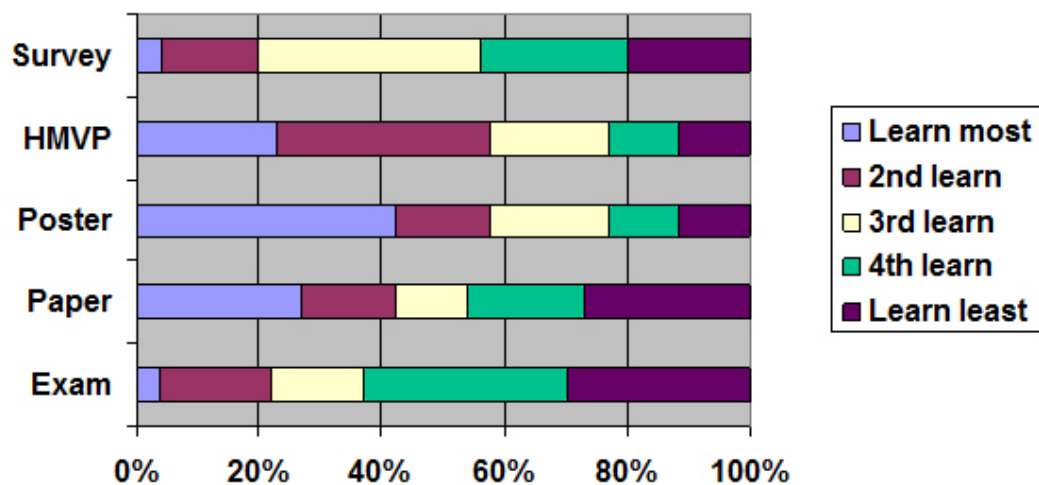
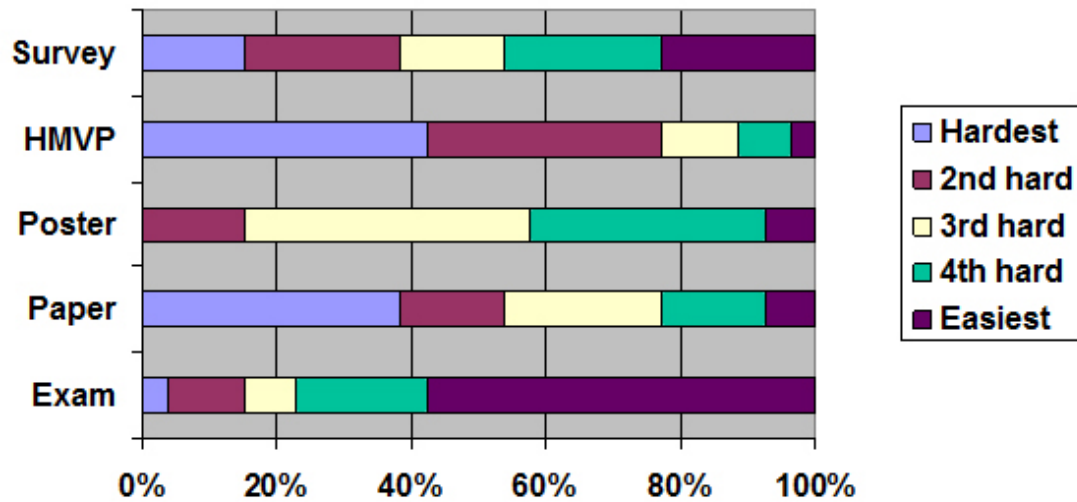


Chart 9: "Please rank the relative difficulty and workload of completing each type of assignment. Your choices are (a) survey project (b) HMVP (c) poster project (d) paper (e) in-class exam."



Part 2: A Sociologist's/Criminologist's View (Anne Cross)

In hopes of adding new energy to introductory courses in sociology and women's studies, I implemented the Music Video Project (MVP). In substituting a more visual project for the standard term paper assignment I had used for years, I hoped that students would become more engaged in the course material. I was not disappointed. Through making a video, it was evident that more students were processing the course concepts in more sophisticated ways than students typically do in courses featuring term papers. Students brought passion and inspiration to the video assignment and the course material. They visibly took pride in their creations and they exhibited a work ethic that was notably absent from work on term papers. The videos sparked lively classroom discussion even with the toughest of crowds and topics. Overall, courses with video assignments saw an increase in student participation and improved learning outcomes.

Assessment and Student Feedback:

Facilitating Student Engagement

In order to assess the effectiveness of MVPs in the classroom, I convened a focus group of six students representing a range of majors and educational experiences.⁸ Focus group feedback demonstrated that students appreciated the video as a change of pace and as a useful learning device, preferring it over a term paper or traditional presentation even when they felt that it required more work on their part. Jenny, a focus group participant, talked positively of the initiative it required of students and the discussion the videos sparked in class:

I really enjoyed the project because it gave us a chance to kind of be the teacher and understand what it takes to come up with questions. I was just blown away. One question can continue on for twenty minutes with people sharing their personal experiences so from that aspect, it is better than writing a term paper.

Michelle, another focus group participant, emphasized that making videos facilitated learning better than a term paper. The process was not as stressful or bewildering an experience as writing a term paper, she said.

It's a nice change of pace. So many of our courses are based on papers and the terms and people get so stressed out in the weeks and months of the semester by stressing on all that stuff. I found it more fun.

Another alternative to the term paper is, of course, the standard classroom presentation. Students in the focus group spontaneously compared the MVPs favorably to classroom presentations, citing the musical format as something that was transformative and that increased audience interest and engagement in the subject matter. For example, Sarah explained that the music videos were received much more enthusiastically than were her standard classroom presentations:

Compared to presentations without the music backbone, I think people pay a lot more attention. In a lot of my classes we do presentations. I know that people are not paying attention. I could have the most awesome PowerPoint but they just don't care. With these, the music really excited people.

Each of the students in the focus group noted that the addition of music heightened interest in both the course and the particular topic being addressed by each video. "It is the music that makes the video," said Jessie. Citing a particularly effective MVP, Jessie added, "I had tears in my eyes and I was like, 'Oh my gosh.' It was the song that hit home and made you read the facts and get into it."

⁸ On the suggestion of Prof. Randall Bass of the Visible Knowledge Project, a focus group was convened in order to assess the effectiveness of the MVP. Participants in the focus group were selected randomly from a course section of thirty students. Eight students were invited to participate and six agreed. The resulting focus group met for one hour with two facilitators in December 2004. Five of the students were traditional college students. One was a non-traditional, returning student. A range of majors were represented: art, business, psychology, human relations and education. The focus-group discussion was semi-structured using open ended questions. Discussion between and among students was encouraged. The focus group session was videotaped and transcribed. Students in the focus group expressed overwhelmingly positive responses to the Music Video Project. They described it as both a useful learning experience and an enjoyable undertaking.

Breaking the Ice in the Classroom

The Music Video Project can help improve students' comfort level in the classroom. Liz, another student participant in our focus group, said that the video format helped her overcome stage fright. Liz was relieved that the attention of the class was placed on the material she was presenting rather than on her delivery. A key benefit of the MVP is that it encourages and rewards mastery of course materials, rather than pre-existing public speaking and performance skills. Liz said,

It takes the focus off the person [presenting]. For me, I don't really like being in front of big groups. So if they are watching the video going on you don't have to be all nervous about stuttering over the words.

Relatedly, several students said that the project drew on creative skills that usually sit dormant in general education classes. Michelle said,

I'm really passionate about music. I'm a firm believer that music plays well on the emotions—and that's really critical in this project. I'm definitely more of a creative person and I think for those who are really into the art and music aspect, it's a time to shine.

Encouragement of a Learning Community

Since the videos are screened in class, students have an opportunity to view and consider their classmates' intellectual life, as well as show their own. Students in the focus group cited this as a positive aspect of the project. Liz remarked,

The class doesn't know what you wrote in your term paper but [with the music videos] the class is learning from what you researched and what you know. And they see a little bit more about who you are because of the song you chose and how you present the facts

The videos also served as an ice-breaker in the classroom. Several participants in the focus group mentioned that the videos helped students in the class get to know each other better and feel more comfortable participating in discussions. As the instructor, I noticed a fairly dramatic increase in student participation. Participation was more evenly distributed in the classroom—and was more balanced—when compared to classes in previous semesters where a few students usually dominated classroom discussions and the rest of the class was passive.

I noticed an especially dramatic improvement in classroom discussion of difficult or controversial topics. Before I introduced the MVP, the topic of race and ethnicity, for example, sparked very little discussion. A few students confided in me outside of class that they were worried that they would say something inappropriate or unwittingly offensive. Discussion of race and ethnicity thrived after I adopted the MVP. Using the facts and images presented in the video as a common focus seemed to make the discussion more manageable and more approachable. For example, one music video made two somewhat advanced arguments. First, it argued that African American culture has been commercialized in a way that injures group identity in the black community. Next, the video argued that white America has colonized important artifacts of African American culture, including fashion and hip-hop music. The video effectively interspersed some of the formal social theories presented in the course with powerful images of Caucasians (both convincingly and ridiculously) taking on aspects of culture that originates in the African American community.

The video provided a point of departure to talk about race in both a focused and general way. Students who had previously been quiet on the topic opened up after the video and a lively debate took place that covered questions including whether or not rap music should be equated with African American culture, what successful African American music and fashion entrepreneurs owe (if anything) to their communities, and how qualified white scholars and students are to understand and respectfully appreciate African American culture. We then discussed these issues in a broader context, and students offered insights drawn from scholarship and readings. The videos served as a collective, safe reference point to anchor emotionally charged issues.

The MVP facilitated discussions among students around the difficult topic of domestic violence. With topics like this—as with the topic of race—it can be difficult to juggle scientific sociology with the need for students to address the topic in a personal way. Before the MVP was introduced, students were either tensely silent about relationship violence, or occasionally one student would talk anecdotally or inspirationally (often for too long) about a friend or relative who was abused and got help. Before the video project, students never seemed particularly interested in connecting the emotional stories with course concepts. The videos, however, did this very well. Set to gloomy songs like Sarah McLachlan's "Angel" or Johnny Cash's "Hurt," the videos did what a textbook or a lecture could not. Tears flowed openly in the classroom and experiences were shared as the class discussed the problem as a social issue. The videos provided a neutral emotional release that made the difficult topics easier to discuss in terms of facts and theories.

One of the best examples of a domestic violence video presented a set of topics through the eyes of victims. This had the effect of personalizing statistics about domestic violence –statistics that, in my experience, can become unwieldy and remote in the classroom. The sample slides in Figures 2-4 exemplify the merging of strong visuals with facts and figures about violence.

Empowerment

In creating and showing videos, students are given power to help shape the learning experience in the classroom. Participants in our focus group expressed positive experiences with the give-and-take that the videos sparked in the classroom. Said Sarah,

I think the discussion after the videos is crucial. That really kind of reflects the learning of the class. I think that that's really important that we are taking that time to, like, actively work out a bunch of questions and just have it all thrown out there.

The student testimony summed up what I had already seen happening with my students. They paid close attention to the videos being screened. Participation in the discussion was more widespread than had typically been the case in my classes. Outside the scope of the videos project, student engagement increased as well. Attendance improved. Traffic to office hours improved. My student evaluations improved. My average student grade rose dramatically. Students seemed more content in class. Most importantly, students displayed a firmer grasp of course concepts on final exams.

Perils

While outcomes registered mostly positive for the Music Video Project (see also the assessments cited in Burkholder's section of this article), one significant drawback concerns evaluation and the trade-off between self-styled creativity and adherence to standards.

While the MVP allows for open creativity and expression, it does not teach conformity to standards in the way that term papers do. Comparing it to the more competitive model of the term paper, the videos are more difficult to assess, simply because most students manage to do well on the project. In the focus group, several students mentioned the lack of clear standards and direction in this assignment as positive aspects of the project that allowed them greater creative control. A lack of clear standards nonetheless creates difficulties in evaluation. While some videos were better than others, almost all of the videos produced were remarkable in some way or another.

Because most students succeed, the project does not conform well to traditional grading hierarchies. Similarly, it disrupts the typical hierarchy of expertise, wherein the instructor ostensibly knows everything to be mastered and the students' job is to receive that knowledge. The video project plays to young people's strengths in that they tend to be savvier than the average instructor in terms of popular music, popular culture and working with images. In that way, it allows students to serve as the experts. The video project also allows students flexibility to develop expertise on their video topic and to follow their own interests and instincts. Jenny agreed with most students in the focus groups that the lack of clear standards was empowering to students. She said,

[The project] didn't have a standard grading system. We interpreted it as we wanted to. There wasn't a lot of pressure to do anything specific. We could do whatever we wanted. I didn't feel a lot of pressure. For a paper, it's a lot heavier on your shoulders.

Lindsay also reflected favorably on those aspects of the project. She said,

It was pretty broad in what was expected of us and the different angles we could take on it. Doing things on your own, I think you retain more knowledge better than if you're just told things. You gave us tools and we did the rest.

While the issue of evaluation criteria remains a dilemma, one of the strengths of the assignment is that it is more flexible and multidimensional than a term paper.

Conclusion

Creating music videos provides an opportunity for students to analyze and synthesize course material in a multifaceted manner. In creating and screening videos, students review, summarize, encapsulate, argue, discuss—and ultimately teach themselves and others about the concepts in question.

Since the initial implementation and evaluation, I have used the video project successfully in many more courses and with different types of students. I now teach in a school of law enforcement and criminal justice. In my first semester with law enforcement students, I was reluctant to assign the project, fearing that it might be perceived as unnecessary fluff in what is often viewed as a pragmatic, life-or-death profession. I was pleasantly surprised when future cops embraced the video projects, skillfully using humor and art to honestly examine some of the most difficult issues in law enforce-

ment. As it was at my previous institution, projects tended to be edgier than presentations I would give—and effectively so. Videos about transgender and transvestite populations stand out as particularly noteworthy. Working with these groups has been a longstanding challenge for law enforcement. Officers and prospective officers still tend to lack tolerance for and comfort with these populations. In the early weeks of courses that address diversity issues it is not uncommon to hear law enforcement students openly express bias towards gays and lesbians, and transgender and transsexual individuals.

No arguments on my part seemed to make any headway on the topic, but surprisingly sensitive videos made by students opened floodgates of discussion. One example, set to the tune, “I Feel Pretty,” broke the ice with humor, and set up a subtle discussion of the plight of men who identify with women and feel trapped in their male bodies. Another video, set to “Wild Thing,” provided concrete advice about how to handle uncertainties involved around transgendered and transsexual issues in arresting and booking, including “which box to check,” how to address them (“sir” or “ma’am”), and when transgendered and transsexual individuals should be placed in male or female jail cells. While these videos were not always politically correct, they represented huge leaps forward in terms of tolerance, discussion and intellectual growth. They were thought-provoking and honest.

What began as an experiment has opened my eyes to the value of taking chances in the classroom and selectively turning the reins over to students. I have also learned a great deal about my field from student videos. Most enjoyably, I have learned an enormous amount about my students through the self-expression contained in videos. It is safe to say that this aspect of content is largely absent in traditional term papers. This awareness has made me more effective in preparing appropriate course material and it has also made teaching more rewarding.

Figure 1: Slide from an MVP illustrating how whites have sometimes sought to hijack African American identity through rap music.



Figure 2: Images of those who have lost a sister, mother, friend or daughter to domestic violence bring a different perspective to the problem and the statistics that document it.

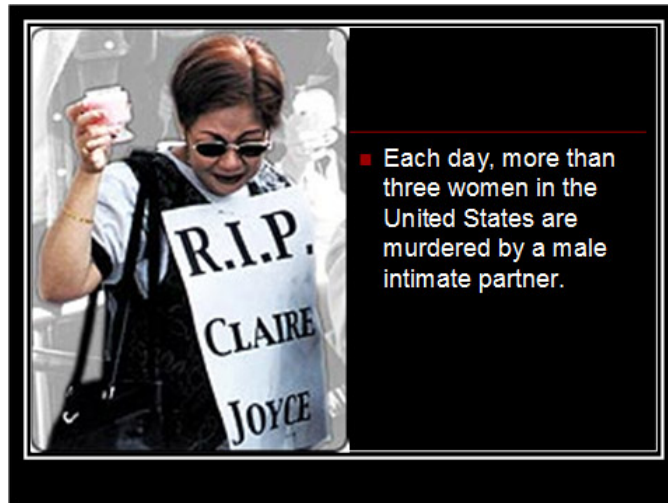


Figure 3: Stylized graphics help the audience appreciate the problem from a victim's perspective, and add emotion to an otherwise dry statistic.



Figure 4: The final slide displays the word's hope and leaves it to the audience to determine what is hopeful about the situation.

