In the Classroom 48
How to Use Movies in the Classroom

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Stan Skrabut: Well, thanks for taking time to listen to this podcast. It certainly means a lot. I realize you could be doing other things, maybe you are doing other things and you're hanging out with me. Once again, I really appreciate it. Hey, this week we're going to take a look at teaching with movie. Around my campus, I see it all the time. I walk by various classes and I see a movie going on. What I wanted to talk about are some strategies for getting the most out of it, to make it very much a rewarding and educational experience for your students.

When I was in class, when I was going through my graduate studies even my undergraduate studies, I honestly don't remember ever sitting through a video. I just don't remember it. Now, I'm seeing it all around me and that doesn't mean whether it's a good thing or a bad thing. I think it's really important that it is tied back to your learning objectives. When I was in high school, I do remember watching movies on a regular basis, but I don't recall if there was a lesson behind the movie. I don't recall if there was an activity associated with the movie.

Sometimes the movies were just put in there because the instructor didn't want to teach and we got time off from taking a break from our class, but it's not something that you want to do all the time. I don't remember specifically that we watched a film and then we really sat and discussed it, but that was a long time ago. I just don't remember, but there is one video that I distinctly remember but it wasn't tied to higher education. It was actually a video that was tied to a leadership class for the Civil Air Patrol organization I was part of.

The movie specifically was *Twelve O'clock High.* In this movie, we watched a significant clip of it, but it was tied back to the situational leadership matrix that we were working through and we were able to see how the leader at hand moved through different parts of the matrix and the movie just wonderfully illustrated this. Tied to that specific video clip, there was a comprehensive case study that really pulled it all together. I know movies are extremely powerful for illustrating point and that's why we should use them, but they really have to be tied back to a learning objective.

As I noted, movies are really powerful. The closer you can get to reality and this is where movies help us, the stronger the learning experience. You can certainly read about World War II, you can hear a lecture about World War II, you can even see images about World War II, but when you have a video that's really tying this all together, you have a really powerful experience and movies allow you to do exactly this. They allow you to pull all that together. They allow you to really capitalize on the emotions of the learners.

What are some benefits of using movies? Well, first of all, they bring it to life. If you're teaching history and you can actually watch the video of the first flight, that's a powerful experience. Talking about a rocket launching and heading to the moon is one thing, but actually to see it, that's something entirely different. They can really bring things to life. You can also use video to clarify a teaching point and you can do it very quickly.

Once again, often reading about things, you try to make it as concrete as possible but you can have a page of instructions and only a 30-second video which brings it all together. Sometimes videos can illustrate those points very quickly. You can also spark interest through emotion. What I mean is sometimes students are ambivalent about a specific topic, but suddenly they get it. Once they see it, they get it and they can become very interested in a topic and it can be life-changing. For some individuals, they actually change career paths because of a specific video that they saw, a specific movie that they saw.

One of the other cool things, another benefit of movies is there is a vast collection of resources out there to help you get started. The educators have been pulling together lesson plans that you can adopt and adapt to suit your needs. I have included a lot of these into the show notes so feel free to go in, check out the show notes. This is episode *ITC 48.*

Look at the show notes and you'll find examples of how different instructors are using videos and you can often find the same video and have a different spin on the instruction based on who put together the case study or who put together the questions or what points they're trying to illustrate. That very often movies illustrate multiple points. There are some problems with videos. First of all, if it's not tied to a learning objective then it's probably a poor use of classroom time. There has to be a purpose for the video in your classroom.

Another issue with videos, they can be counterproductive if they're not accurate. Sometimes you're showing a video that is just not historically accurate and this could cause issues unless you capitalize on it. If you know there's inaccuracies, this could be a learning moment where you could have the students try to identify these different inaccuracies. Those are some of the issues with having movies. Let's talk about strategies for employing movies in your classroom. The very first thing is it has to be tied to a learning objective.

There has to be a purpose why you chose this particular movie to show in your classroom. What is that purpose? Next, when you're getting ready to show this to your students, set the expectations for the videos that they are sitting down to watch the video for this specific purpose. What do you want them to focus on? As they're watching this, what are they looking for? Not just to passively watch the video, but make it active, make them think about why they are watching the video, what they are looking out for.

Ideally, if you can have some questions and learning prompts before they even start the video, this is something that you want to put together. Create a learning packet relevant to that movie or clip that you're showing. Turn it into an entire activity. Ideally, you should show the video towards the beginning of your class and use the video to

attach everything else to, that you use the video to set the stage for the rest of the lesson. It will introduce your topic and then you use your lectures and your course activities to build upon what they were seeing in the video.

Another strategy that's recommended if you're focusing on a specific point, rather than show an entire movie, show a series of different clips. These clips can come from different movies if they're related to the same point that you're teaching and make sure that you're also using comments, soliciting comments from everybody that after every clip have a discussion, and you can sequence these clips to really get to the point that you're trying to make by pulling all these different clips from different movies. This means you have to be an active participant.

You can't just sit in the back and grade your papers. You should be there with your remote control and starting and stopping videos and discussing and basically having an interactive lecture using video as a conduit for what you're trying to do. You shouldn't be out there multitasking. You should be an active participant. Like I said, starting and stopping to really capitalize on what the video is showing. At the end of your series of clips or at every stopping point, that students should reflect on what has happened in this experience and then tie it back to their previous knowledge.

Pair and share activities, working in small groups, bringing it to the larger class. These are all strategies for active learning that you want to tie together while using these videos. Have students rate the video. Is this going to be a video that you're going to use for another class? Have students rate it. Have them let you know whether or not this was a good video. This is something I'm thinking of doing in a class that I'm getting ready to teach. I use a lot of different video clips to talk about multimedia learning.

What I'm going to do is weave in a voting system for that particular video and let them rate and decide whether I'm going to keep it or if I want to go hunt out for a better video. This will let me know to do that. Here are some quick ideas on how to use videos or movies in your classroom. If you teach foreign languages, this is a no-brainer. The fact that you can see how native speakers use a language in real situations. Finding movies that are in a foreign language, lots of great examples that you can use.

I talked about this before in this idea called movie talks and that is in a previous episode. I'll put it into the show notes so you can find it. This is a great way to use movies or video clips to help students. If you're teaching a specific topic, videos provide a great background knowledge on a subject. For example, if you're going over some of John Steinbeck's books, *Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*, then watching the documentary about the *Dust Bowl* is a great way to lead into this because that sets up those different books.

As I mentioned, another strategy is sometimes you watch historical videos or historical fiction movies that not all the facts are accurate and so this provides students an opportunity to fact check the videos. They can go out and identify errors and talk about different things that you've may have talked about in the class and how they particularly differ. This also applies to if you are reading a book, what you can also do is show the movie and there's very often differences between a book and a movie.

You get to compare and contrast and see what literary license that the movie producers have taken with a particular book. Identify this with the *Harry Potter* series. While they're good, there's a lot of liberties that have taken as they've moved from the book out to the movie. All kinds of different subjects that are out there. Everything from the sciences to the social sciences to the English. Basically, there's probably a good movie clip out there that you can find. Like I said, in the show notes, I've put together a list of different resources that you can tap into.

Movies are extremely powerful for the classroom as long as they have purpose. There are lots of benefits. There are also some cons to this, but if you apply some of the strategies that I spoke about that you will have a more engaging and educational experience for your students. With that, I am going to do a quick plug for my book.