Free GIFTs for You!

As journalism and mass communication educators, we teach, do research, serve on committees and fulfill other responsibilities to our colleges. Teaching, however, is a priority, as indicated by tenure and promotion reviews, student evaluations and peer performance assessments. Yet we refer to that part of our job as a teaching "load" as if it were a burden.

But teaching is a gift!

The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) has outstanding researchers. And it also has gifted educators—and here is an opportunity for them to share their GIFTs with you.

The Great Ideas For Teachers (GIFT) program was established in 2000 by the Community College Journalism Association (CCJA) and the Small Programs Interest Group (SPIG), divisions of AEJMC, to recognize excellent standards in teaching journalism and mass communication courses and to provide colleagues with fresh ideas for creating or updating their lessons.

Included in this year's souvenir journal are 32 practical, innovative and creative teaching tips—just in time for the new academic year—the ultimate gift for all AEJMC members!

Enjoy!

Edna R. Bautista, Rutgers
GIFT Program Coordinator

2001 GIFT Committee
Annette Aw, Nanyang Technological
Dennis R. Bautista, Chaminade
Carroll Ferguson Nardone, Sam Houston State
John Neal, Brookhaven
Zeny Sarabia Panol, Southwest Texas State
Jim Sernoe, Midwestern State

Great Ideas For Teachers

2001 GIFT Grand Prize Winner

Patricia Radin
California State-Hayward
The Crash of CommAir Flight 4083
How to join a journalism and public relations course by using a simulation

Read her winning GIFT on page 53. Congratulations from AEJMC, CCJA and SPIG!

GIFT Website

The Great Ideas For Teachers website will be an online source of innovative journalism and mass communication lessons. Until construction of the website is completed, GIFT articles will be published periodically in *The Community College Journalist* and on *www.ccjaonline.org*.

For more information about the annual GIFT Program, please send an e-mail to *aejmcgift@yahoo.com*.

The Scholarly Tourist

How to utilize the virtual tour to stimulate student learning and enhance computer skill development in introductory mass communications courses

Beverly S. Bailey, Ph.D.
Tulsa Community College

Introduction

Incorporating "virtual tour" presentation assignments into introductory mass communications courses is an innovative, unique teaching tool that fosters student learning and creativity.

In creating a virtual tour presentation, students work in teams to develop small websites that provide a visual "journey" through information on course topics and issues. Students find creating tour presentations interesting and fun. The virtual tour is an ideal, novel way to explore topics taught in mass communications survey courses. The assignment also aids in the development of research, writing, graphic presentation and computer skills.

Rationale

The virtual tour presentation assignment encourages students to research and present information in a fresh, engaging format that fosters learning and retention. The assignment helps build students' research, writing, computer and presentation skills, and enhances creativity. It also encourages teamwork, self-motivation and discipline.

Virtual tours, focusing on introductory mass communications course topics, present information in a novel way that effectively reinforces other teaching methods. In addition, students can include their virtual tour websites as part of multimedia portfolios.

Implementation

- **Conduct an initial assessment of students' computer skills.** While the skill level needed for this assignment is not advanced, the assignment is most successful if at least a portion of the class possesses basic computer usage and Internet search skills and is comfortable using the computer. It is important to assess students' computer skill levels before beginning the assignment. If students possess a level of skill and "computer comfort" that allows them to use most basic features in a word-processing program (save, print, cut and paste, click and drag), and can conduct a basic Internet search, they have the skill level needed for the virtual tour assignment. To promote success, show examples of virtual tours (refer to Table 1), provide an explanatory handout and allow instructional lab time to guide students in developing their tours. Once students see a virtual tour and realize they can create a fun, informative tour, they become very enthusiastic about the project.

- **Assign teams based upon student skill assessments.** The assignment is most effective when each student team is comprised of members possessing various computer skill levels. A student with more advanced computer skills generally is quite willing to take the lead in getting the information onto the site and helping other team members practice new computer skills with the instructor's supervision. Because the skill level needed for the project is not overly advanced, students less experienced in using the computer often are surprised at what they can learn and accomplish during the virtual tour assignment.

- **Utilize software that is easily accessible and appropriate to skill level**. Free, basic web design software, such as Netscape Composer, a feature of Netscape Browser, or web-building features provided in many of today's applications (including many word processing programs), are easy to learn and accessible, and they provide the features and tools needed to build an interesting, effective virtual tour. Students possessing intermediate-level word processing software skills can quickly learn to create basic web sites appropriate for classroom use. More experienced students with access to software created specifically for web site development can be encouraged to use more advanced web design programs, but it is not necessary for this assignment.

- **Set standards for presentation.** Provide a written explanation of assignment expectations and grading criteria. Require students to provide proper citation of sources, etc. Encourage students to include links to other websites (even other virtual tour sites), but require that student tour sites include information they have researched and presented on their own as well. Encourage students to include sound, links to video clips, etc., to make sites fun and interesting, but make sure they understand the major focus is on content, accuracy, quality and effectiveness of presentation. Assignment requirements include a class presentation, submission of tour site on disk, written project overview and work log.

- **Feature special "take a tour" days in which students debut their sites.** Sites can be saved to disk or can be uploaded into a course's e-learning site for class presentation. Students react very enthusiastically to touring the sites their peers have developed. Allow students time and access to go through each site on their own for enhanced learning.

Impact

Students find this assignment quite interesting and effective. They become very creative and involved in developing their sites and enjoy the tour days. The virtual tours present information in a way that captures attention and increases students' understanding of concepts and issues presented in introductory mass communications courses. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

Sample Course Topics	Related Virtual Tour Examples
The First Amendment	Freedom Voyage: A Tour Through the First Amendment (provides history, explanation of amendment, interesting FAQs, overview of pertinent cases, etc.)
History of Newspapers	From Penny Press to newyorktimes.com: An Historical Tour of Newspapers in the United States
Women in the Media	Hearing Our Voices, Seeing Our Dreams: Notable Women in Broadcasting
Professional Profiles	Headlines, Deadlines and Deciding the News: Journey Through a Day in the Life of a Newspaper Editor
Global Communication/Technology	A Virtual Tour of E-newspapers from Around the World
Media and Culture	Tracing Communication Methods from Preliterate to Modern Culture

Table 1. Examples of Virtual Tours

The Feature Teacher as Preacher and Practitioner

How to integrate a teacher's own writing experience into the classroom

Gene Burd, Ph.D.
University of Texas—Austin

Introduction

Feature writing classes without the benefit of a lab publication and a staff usually rely on freelance outlets, and those who teach those classes can use their own past and on-going writing experiences to "write along" with students and share with them their own successes and frustrations on specific stories as well as serve students as a type of "broker" and literary agent to help them market their assignments for possible clips for job resumes.

Rationale

Youth, especially students in training for writing skills, expect teachers to "practice what they preach" and to disprove the popular school adage that "Those who can, do; and those who can't, teach; and those who can't teach...they just criticize what students do". Students dislike hypocrisy. If teachers say "Do as I say", then teachers should be ready to also do the same. By telling and showing feature writing students how teachers themselves are writing freelance features alongside students as part of their journalistic and scholarly careers, teachers can gain student respect and get them to heed their advice and counsel.

Implementation

- Take students from story idea to publication in a step-by-step process. Trace your own story writing cases with an outline of the "biography" of each story in the standard features of personal experience essay; the profile; the historical article; and the analytical/explanatory feature, with the "how-to" side bar. Share with them the teacher's own personal experiences that shaped, focused and refined the story idea; the interaction, persuasion, negotiation, and compromise involved; the visuals suggested and used; and the eventual tension and tedium of re-write, titles, payments, legal rights, and even the failures to publish ranging from missed deadlines, censorship, kill fees and publication bankruptcy.

- Use personal experience, especially in the campus community, to mine and explore stories for local publications, as both teacher and students see the campus and local community as a shared "beat", even if for only a few semester weeks. This community can provide feedback for the class if and when feature articles are published. It can gener-

ate more story ideas, further stringer and correspondent assignments; and even generate writing internships and future full-time jobs for students.

• Teachers themselves can make a special effort to write about similar student-chosen topics and use the assigned feature forms to strengthen the "togetherness" of the teacher and students in a common task—not the usual top-down separateness of the professionals and academics giving orders and not necessarily following them themselves. Good teachers of feature writing are out in the foreground, not in the background, especially in this more subjective type of journalism.

• Regular formal classes, if small, can be in round-table format, with personal one-on-one sessions used to break up weekly lectures to all. Students do not "move in" with the teachers, but socials for brainstorm-ing story ideas and mutual critique and field trips to possible story sites and sources can add to this atmosphere of learning together.

Impact

Practice what you preach! It works! A teacher who shares his or her experience in the classroom can inspire students to accept criticism and advice more readily, especially when they've "been there, done that" in writing efforts and success. Teachers can discourage the student tendency to imitate teacher's style of writing in order to perhaps gain a higher grade and can encourage individuality by students and their adapting writing content and style to the market.

The pay-off for both is in the published articles during the class and above all, the ability of students to handle failure and difficult criticism in a caring atmosphere by a professor who can show them how he or she also tried and sometimes failed but eventually succeeded.

Media Literacy Project

How we can learn from the media

Lisa Burns, M.A.
University of Maryland—College Park
Prince George's Community College

Introduction and Rationale

In the Information Age, media literacy is an important issue, especially for students planning careers in communication-related fields.

Because of its pervasiveness, many of us take media for granted, but there is much that can be learned from TV shows, movies, songs, newspapers, magazines, advertisements and other media products.

The Media Literacy Project asks students to become critical consumers of media products in an effort to identify the educational potential of mass media. Specifically, this project not only encourages students to turn a critical eye toward the media but also shows them how the theories they are learning in their classes are illustrated in media products or put into practice by media practitioners.

Implementation

- The purpose of the Media Literacy Project is for students to identify examples of concepts discussed in class and in their text that appear in media sources, including television programs, movies, music videos, songs, magazine or newspaper articles, advertisements, etc. Because of the general nature of the assignment, it can be adapted to fit almost any communication course.

- The project includes both a written and oral portion. Once students have identified their examples, they write a short (2-3 pages) review explaining how their example illustrates the course concept they are identifying. They also do a short oral presentation (5-7 minutes, depending on time available) in which they identify the concept, introduce the example and finally explain how the concept was illustrated in the example.

- Because the project allows for flexibility, students usually choose a variety of concepts and identify interesting and unique examples. In turn, students learn from each other during the oral presentations. I go as far as asking exam questions based on the Media Literacy Projects.

- The project encourages students to attend to media in a way that is different from what they are used to, and this "critical turn" results in higher levels of media literacy. Students also begin to realize how much can be learned from media as well as how media influences our lives.

- The visual/auditory nature of the project also adapts to different learning styles. Many students note that these examples help them to understand and remember the concepts

being taught in class. The examples also illustrate theory in practice, which many students find helpful.

• There are technical issues that need to be considered, mainly access to video and audio equipment. However, if technical support is not available at your institution, you could limit the project to written sources (newspapers/magazines).

Impact

This GIFT has been used in several classes, including an introductory mass communication class, a media history course, a communication class about gender and a basic hybrid course. Because I have had a variety of majors in my classes, students have also found this assignment adaptable to their own interests, including advertising, public relations, video production and reporting as well as areas outside of communication. I believe this assignment could be adapted to fit almost any course.

This has been, by far, the most popular assignment in my classes. Students enjoy finding a unique example and then sharing it with their classmates. They learn a great deal from each other during these projects. I also learn a lot from the students, many of whom choose examples that I am not familiar with or have not considered.

Following the assignment, many of the students "complain" that they cannot watch television or listen to their favorite radio station the same way because they begin looking for concepts or realize what they have learned when they see an example. However, they also recognize the importance of being a critical media consumer. The tangible results of this project are very rewarding for both my students and me.

Building Cyber-Communities for the Classroom

How to use on-line resources to involve students in and out of the classroom

John Chapin, Ph.D.
Pennsylvania State University

Introduction

Several activities are used to encourage students to use the course website and to take ownership in it through critique, additions and active participation in a course chat room.

Rationale

The techniques/assignments were initially developed for a large mass lecture course (mass media and society) to actively involve students in and out of the lecture hall. In smaller settings, including a first-year seminar course for communications majors, the activities have helped create a community of majors to be used as a resource throughout the remainder of their college careers.

Implementation

- **Assignment 1: Media (or course) related surfing**

Students spend one hour surfing media-related websites (this is easily adapted to course content for other courses). They are instructed to follow the provided links and make sense of the patterns in content found at the various sites. For each site, the students supply the URL, a brief summary of content, critique of the content and the relevance of the site to the course.

Students must recommend the best site for inclusion on our course page.

Student additions are made to the course website, along with their names and rationales for adding the link.

This is assigned during the first two weeks of the semester.

- **Assignment 2: Course website critique**

Each student is randomly assigned a state.

For each state, they must review 10 websites for communications departments offering a course similar to our course.

Each student locates several published criteria for evaluating websites. They provide a rationale for choosing "the best" criteria, and are permitted to add their own.

After applying the criteria to the 10 sites and our own course site, the students present a review of their findings and make recommendations on the "ideal" department and course pages. These presentations can be done in class, but I have had my students present in poster format at regional and state communication association conventions. In the mass lecture format, presentations were limited.

Based on all recommendations, the course website was revised again.

- **Activity 3: Comm. Chat**

   Prior to the first exam, students were encouraged to form cyber-study groups using a chat room linked from the course page (Multiple free services exist. I used *Delphi.com* to create the chat room. The person who creates the room can get transcripts/summaries of all the activity in the room and on the message boards.)

   The first students using the site were pleasantly surprised with a printable coupon for an extra point on the first exam. Word of mouth builds interest quickly.

   Students were encouraged to take ownership of the area, posting times for study sessions, asking for missed notes etc.

Impact

   Data collected after the first semester indicated that students who used the on-line resources had better grades than those who did not. Students indicated in the survey that they enjoyed and appreciated the resources. Many said they picked up more web skills through incidental learning. This was especially true for the first-year seminar students.

   From the instructor perspective, the course website improves every semester and remains student-oriented. Personally the most satisfying element was seeing the first year students bond. Many have stayed in contact after the course and continue to serve as a support system for each other academically and socially.

Examples

Homepage

http://www.br.psu.edu/faculty/jrc11/100.html

Chat

http://www.delphi.com/n/main.asp?webtag=comm100&nav=start

Crossing the Lines

How to bring together far-flung disciplines into a single project

E.J. Conzola, M.A.
Cecilia Friend, M.A.
Utica College of Syracuse University

Introduction

Bringing together a variety of disciplines in a single assignment gives students an appreciation for the need to have a diverse knowledge base and builds cooperation among faculty colleagues.

Rationale

Working journalists are required to have knowledge of (or know how to acquire knowledge of) a vast variety of topics. Unfortunately, students often pigeonhole themselves, focusing on their journalism courses to the exclusion of other areas of knowledge. Creating an interdisciplinary assignment forces the students to expand their knowledge base and demonstrates the importance of broad-based learning. It also involves colleagues in many fields, helping break down the barriers that sometimes arise between areas of study.

Implementation

• "Real life" situations re-enforce classroom lessons and help maintain student interest. Presenting students with an actual press conference situation (as opposed to a classroom exercise) gives them a taste of what they can expect when they enter the workforce, including the unexpected problems that often arise.

• Involvement in cross-disciplinary projects demonstrates the need for knowledge in many disciplines. Students tend to acquire tunnel vision as they move through the journalism curriculum, taking courses outside the field only when required to do so. Placing the students in a situation in which they must write about an area of knowledge outside the journalism/communication area brings home the need for a broad base of knowledge when they enter the field.

• The competition engendered by requiring students to submit their report to the college newspaper for publication, students have an incentive to prepare and submit only their best work. Students whose work are published earn a measure of pride; those whose work are not chosen are given a greater incentive to improve their skills for the next assignment. The competition also mirrors the real-life battle for space/airtime that all working journalists face.

Impact

This GIFT idea was implemented in an "All-College Period" in which a topical issue is examined from a variety of perspectives by the entire campus community. Preparation, staging and reporting on the period brought together students from a wide

variety of academic disciplines and gave student journalists a chance to experience some of the practical difficulties working journalists face when confronted with writing about an issue outside their particular area of expertise.

Examples

Students from the government/politics class prepare the topic (in this case, the legalization of drugs) through background research and contact with prospective guest speakers.

Students in a sociology class are responsible for the actual staging of the event, which includes presentations by speakers from both the campus and the wider community.

Students in a survey and statistics class prepare a questionnaire to measure changes in attitudes based on the presentations made and do a statistical analysis of the survey results, then present their findings in a press conference covered by students in an introductory reporting class.

The reporting students each write a news story based on the press conference that is submitted to the student newspaper, where the editors choose one story for publication.

Creative Aerobics

How to generate advertising creativity on demand, minimize students' anxiety and encourage their creativity and productivity

Linda Conway Correll, M.A.
University of Florida

Introduction

Turning your classroom into an agency creative department where students use Creative Aerobics, a four-step idea-generating process to brainstorm ideas for print and electronic advertising on a daily basis, is a breakthrough teaching approach that jumpstarts students' creativity by allowing them to move effortlessly from left- to right-brained thinking.

Rationale

In creative advertising, the professional copywriter or art director is constantly being challenged to be preemptive: to create a unique identity for a product or to break through media clutter in a way that will involve the reader or viewer and to accomplish it within a tight time frame.

Creative Aerobics provides new tools that you can use in the classroom to assist your students in accomplishing these goals, while at the same time shortening, simplifying and reducing the anxiety of the creative process for them.

Creative Aerobics' greatest strength, however, may be the way it exponentially multiplies the number of creative solutions your students are capable of producing for any given assignment.

Moreover, Creative Aerobics transforms the classroom into a creative department, where students put what they learn into practice on a daily basis, strengthening their idea generation skills.

It provides a relaxed, anxiety-free environment in which creativity is shared and enhanced. It gives students a systemized methodology for tapping into their creativity. It allows students to produce professional-level advertising as a class on demand, within a defined time frame (the class or lab period). It encourages a sense of creative accomplishment and generates student enthusiasm for the assignments, resulting in more involvement and better performance.

Students transfer Creative Aerobics to creative assignments in other courses. Colleagues remark on the number and freshness of their ideas.

Upon completion of the course, students identify that they are much more confident in their creative abilities.

Implementation

- The first Creative Aerobic exercise is a familiar left-brained process: making a list of facts about the product or service to be advertised. The list should engage all five senses, as well as students' perceptions of and experiences with the product.

- Creative Aerobics II asks students to create a list of new names for the product or service, drawing on the facts list. For example, if the product is an orange, the fact "round" might generate a list that includes "clock", "vitamin pill", "ball", etc.

- In Creative Aerobics III, students create a list of similarities between dissimilars—the product and one of its new CA II names. The list for the orange and clock might include: they both require hands (hands on a clock tell time, farm hands for the orange to cultivate it).

- Creative Aerobics IV searches for new definitions for existing phrases, often employing homophones. For example, someone finishing off a box of Rice Krispies might be called a cereal killer.

- Each Creative Aerobic adds another layer of information about the product. Doing the math, if students come up with 20 "facts" about the produce in CA I, and then 10 new names for each fact in CA II, they've forged 200 different connections between the two layers of generated information and the product.

Impact

This GIFT idea has been implemented in an advertising copywriting and visualization course where students were asked to create an advertising portfolio and turn it in at the end of the semester.

Outstanding ads from their portfolios were compiled in a class portfolio that was shared with students as they picked up their individual portfolios. They were enthusiastic about the quality of the work and thrilled to see their ads included.

Students were encouraged to enter their work in competition. This year, 22 entries were submitted to the American Advertising Federation District Four ADDY competition. Students captured one Gold ADDY and five Silver ADDYs. All entries were assembled for a department exhibition, and faculty and students were invited to view the work.

Last year, student radio and television commercials submitted to the Missouri Broadcast Educators Competition captured first and second places in both categories, as they have in previous years. Radio and television commercials also captured first place in this competition.

Students have used their Creative Aerobics-driven portfolios successfully in applying for cooperative positions, internships and entry-level jobs in advertising.

Currently, several are working in creative positions at top-tier advertising agencies.

Technology as a Teaching Assistant

How to use readability tests in writing classes

Dixie Shipp Evatt, Ph.D.
Syracuse University

Introduction

Microsoft Word software gives students the option to run standard readability tests on their work. The program also counts instances of passive voice and sentence length. The tool is a useful diagnostic that serves two educational purposes in a writing class: (a) reinforces instruction in the importance of active voice and short sentences and (b) introduces readability theory and methods, including instruction on use and interpretation of these tests.

Rationale

Although students are urged to use their "Spell Check," often they are not familiar with other forms of support that a strong word processing system gives writers.

Implementation

• By the fourth or fifth week of the semester students have usually prepared several longer writing assignments (500 to 1,000 words). In my public relations writing classes, this often includes a backgrounder and/or position paper.

• Students are asked to bring copies of three completed writing assignments to the lab on disk.

• I show them how to activate the readability settings in Microsoft Word.

   (*PATH: Tools-Preferences-Spelling & Grammar-Show Readability Statistics)*

• I talk to them about readability theories and the logic of readability. They agree that while readability alone does not equal good writing, it is a useful tool. We also talk about practical applications in public relations.

Some useful references regarding readbility include:

1) Rudolph Flesh, *How to Write Plain English: A Book for Lawyers & Consumers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 25-26.
2) Doug Newsom and Bob Carrell, *Public Relations Writing: Form & Style* (Wadsworth, 2001), pp. 469-474.
3) Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, Jr. *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media*, 3ed. (New York: Longman, 1992), pp. 109-128.

• Students then use the computer to run readability tests on at least three writing samples. The only requirement is that the piece be 500 words or longer. Usually they test their backgrounder, position paper and a writing assignment for some other course, such as history or English.

- They turn in a report of their findings along with an interpretation of what they have learned about their individual writing strengths and weaknesses.

Impact

Primary Impact: I've done this for several years now and the pattern repeats itself year after year. Students listen when I tell them that passive voice is not as powerful as active voice and that short, crisp sentences are easier to understand and read. The chicken, however, doesn't come home to roost until the computer tells them the same thing. Because this is a generation that has grown up with computers, people trust and respect the machine. I find that this exercise is a powerful form of reinforcement of key principles of clear writing.

Secondary Impacts: In addition, this exercise demonstrates a practical application of theory and, for many students, is the first time they have explored all but the most routine tools available in the Microsoft Word software.

Examples

The best demonstration for the effect of this exercise is in the reaction of students when they interpret the results of the readability scores. Here are some of the comments from students after they've worked through this assignment:

"I need to concentrate on writing for my audience and addressing the issues on a simple level. I think improvement will come with time, especially after working with this program. I can now identify what I need to work on."

"I have a definite problem with passive voice."

"The results show me that I must shorten my sentences and lessen the use of passive voice to make my writing more readable."

"I should definitely go back and switch the sentences to active voice. It will make my points much clearer and easier to understand."

"I have written in long complicated sentences that are difficult to understand."

"I tend to write in an academic style that is not appropriate for public relations writing. I have a high percentage of passive sentences. Less than half of my audience would understand me."

"My goal for the future is to get the reading level and passive sentences down and get the reading ease higher."

"I notice a lot of weaknesses here... The passive sentences were definitely my biggest weakness."

"If I decrease the number of words per sentence and proofread for passive voice, I will most likely increase my readability."

"I need to work on simplifying my writing."

"I failed to address my reader in concise sentences."

"I think I need to concentrate more on getting the point out to my readers rather than trying to dress it up with bigger words and useless transitions."

"I need to write with a better sense of who or what is doing the action in my sentences. This will help me write in the active voice and will make my writing more understandable."

"I need to stop writing longer sentences that use conjunctions (i.e., and, or, therefore). I need to start breaking them into two separate sentences. This may make my writing more easily understood by a target audience."

"I need to shorten and simplify."

"I was shocked by the percentage of passive sentences in this piece. I really need to

work on that and get that much lower. The grade level, again, was too high and the reading ease was too low."

DOING Instead of Just PLANNING in Public Relations

How to make a public relations capstone class more meaningful through implementation projects

Lisa Ferree, A.P.R., M.B.A.
Eastern Kentucky University

Introduction

Public relations students are exposed to the RACE (Research, Action, Planning, Communication and Evaluation) or ROPE (Research, Objectives, Program and Evaluation) process.

While many students are exposed to case studies or simulation and may actually be required to develop plans themselves, few students, even those taking senior capstone classes, are required to actually carry out the third and fourth steps of the process.

The public relations campaigns course is offered by many PR programs as the capstone course for seniors. In these courses, seniors often work with real clients to develop strategic campaigns to solve client problems. This usually involves conducting extensive research and writing a plans book of recommendations.

I require my public relations campaigns students to take the extra step and actually implement a short-term campaign for their clients as teams. They are then also required to evaluate their efforts based on predetermined objectives.

Sometimes they also apply what they have learned to long-term recommendation for their clients. This fulfills all campaign activities as laid out in Cutlip and Center's Strategic Planning Pyramid (a more in-depth version of the campaign model than the RACE or ROPE formula).

Rationale

Senior level students studying public relations need to have an opportunity to apply what they learn, not just theorize. While some students may gain this experience through individual internship work, they also need to be able to make this application in an agency simulation setting (i.e., working in teams).

While most public relations campaigns courses concentrate on conducting research and developing recommendations for clients, the students rarely actually carry out these plans for their clients.

Students gain increased confidence in their abilities, more adequate career-ready skills and more thorough exposure to the client relationship by actually implementing and evaluating their plans.

Students may also offer stronger recommendations to clients at the end of the semester by taking what they have learned from short-term implementation projects and applying their findings to longer-term recommendations.

Implementation

• Add an extra step in your curriculum. When you assign students to study and make recommendations for clients, require the students to identify and solve a short-term problem for these clients. This project should be feasible within one semester, and the client should be willing to cover any costs.

• Require the students to consider research findings in selecting their objectives and choosing strategic solutions.

• Require the students to set quantitative, measureable objectives within a set time frame in advance and then show that they did meet their objectives. Ask them to submit the written proposal including a time line and budget.

• Have the students present results in class, including the demonstration of tactics used, media coverage and evaluation data collected.

• Ask the students to analyze their results and then apply those results to long-term recommendations and plans books commonly required at the end of the semester.

Impact

Students commonly choose to create a tactic, conduct a publicity campaign or hold a special event. Results have included increased attendance at athletic events at our university.

Students have materials for their portfolios that are actual examples used by real organizations.

Students are exposed to media representatives, vendors and opinion leaders as actual representatives of a client.

Students are exposed to deadlines, personnel conflicts and other pressures in a group context and, thus, may be more capable of handling these stressful situations on the job.

Students actually conduct evaluation activities based on their own activities, rather than recommending evaluation techniques for hypothetical recommendations.

Clients are commonly impressed with results and are more likely to lend credibility to the recommendations students offer them at the end of the semester. The ability to incorporate client feedback strengthens the student-client relationship.

Hands-on Experience for Public Relations Students

How to address departmental needs

Salma I. Ghanem, Ph.D.
University of Texas-Pan American

Introduction

The departmental newsletter is written and produced by students in the introductory public relations course.

By incorporating the departmental newsletter into the required assignments, students get practical experience in writing, management, photography and layout with a final product they can include in their portfolios.

In the meantime, the department benefits by having a newsletter that it distributes to faculty, students and alumni.

Rationale

A department needs to connect with its students, faculty and alumni and yet many departments do not have the funds to hire personnel to conduct the many administrative duties needed.

Faculty in a small program are swamped by a heavy teaching load, many service requirements as well as on-going research.

Having a public relations classroom produce a newsletter alleviates some of the burden on the faculty while providing practical experience for the students.

Implementation

- **Naming the Newsletter:** For the first issue of the newsletter, have students come up with names for the newsletter. Conduct a vote on the top three names and then distribute the names to the faculty for one more vote.

- **Story Ideas:** Brainstorm with the student on story ideas.

- **Repeated Features:** Several types of stories can appear in every issue: graduating students and achievements (faculty, alumni and students).

- **Student Assignments:** Every student must sign up for one of the following: management team, photography team and layout team.

- **Management Team:** Usually 2-3 students will serve on this team. Their job is to keep track of story and photography assignments.

- **Photography Team:** Students on this team are responsible for taking pictures needed for the newsletter.

- **Layout Team:** Students on this team are responsible for scanning photographs and newsletter layout.

- **Assign Stories:** Every student in the class has to be assigned at least one story. Students may volunteer for an assignment. The rest of the stories are distributed randomly to the remaining students.

- **Deadline:** Assign a deadline for first draft of the story. Story needs to be accompanied by photographs.

- **Editing:** Every story is displayed on a document camera and edited in class.

- **Electronic Transmission:** All stories need to be resubmitted to the faculty member via e-mail and should incorporate all the corrections made in class.

- **Layout Begins:** Dates and time should be set for the layout team. Layout is conducted under the supervision of the faculty member.

- **Final Edit:** Once the layout is completed, copies of the newsletter are distributed in the class for a final edit.

- **Printing and Mailing:** Using departmental funds, the newsletter is printed and mailed to alumni of the department.

- **Grading:** Newsletter participation is the equivalent of two class assignments. One grade is given for the story written and the other grade is a participation grade in one of the three teams: management, photography or layout.

Impact

This GIFT idea has been implemented for the last four years and students are currently producing the eighth issue of the newsletter. Many times, this is the first opportunity for students to see their name in print. It also provides a forum for students to examine the editing and writing process. The newsletter also provides a good morale boost to faculty, alumni and students.

Graduating students are always eager to see their name and/or pictures in the newsletter and faculty receive some recognition for their accomplishments.

The newsletter is also a good vehicle to maintain a relationship with alumni which could possibly lead to fund-raising opportunities.

In addition, a by-product of the newsletter was helping administrators become aware of the dynamics of the department. Many administrators are not fully aware of the activities that take place within a department, and the newsletter is bridging the gap.

The newsletter also serves an important role in informing faculty and students of activities that took place or are taking place. The newsletter reduces the isolation especially if a department is composed of several divisions or programs.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

How to revive student enthusiasm

Donna K. Hale, M.A.
Bowling Green State University

Introduction

Although my students are mainly sophomores and juniors, I have found that a little playfulness goes a long way toward reviving student enthusiasm.

Rationale

I teach basic newswriting, but a few of the chapters in our textbook are on concepts like mass communication law and ethics. These chapters are covered toward the end of the semester, when students are starting to get a little restless. So I tried something different. I made up multiple choice questions based on mass media law and in class we played "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?"

Implementation

- I put the questions on a computer disc and projected them onto our screen to play the game.

- I used Hershey's Kisses as prizes for each correct answer and Reese's bars for the people who achieved millionaire status.

- I appointed an outgoing student to take on the role of Regis Philbin. And class members were our contestants.

- To add to the ambiance, I brought in extra crowd noise that I taped off the real show. The game included lifelines such as "Ask the audience," "50/50" in which two of the wrong answers are removed, and "Call on a friend."

Impact

The class responded enthusiastically to the game. Although I would not recommend doing this during the first portion of the course, it worked well during the last week of the semester and was a fun learning activity at a time when students (and teachers) are starting to get a little worn down.

Using Student Group Projects in the Classroom

How to diminish the dread for students and faculty

Julie K. Henderson, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh

Introduction

This GIFT addresses the use of a synergistic teaching method (assigning student groups or teams to complete a project) and the wariness and dread with which both faculty and students often approach it.

Rationale

While much educational research has demonstrated that collaborative learning produces positive results, some faculty are still reluctant to use student teams because of student reluctance to work with someone. Confounding matters, projects are especially appropriate in professional-training curricula, such as public relations, but concerns over fairness in grading often arise.

Implementation

• **Get real.** Use real-life situations and clients for the projects. Students find them more interesting and relevant. Use the client in the evaluation process, such as having all student teams present their project to the client and having the client have input on the "winner".

• **Go interdisciplinary.** Students enjoy working with groups from other academic disciplines; they learn from each other and teach each other. Look for projects that can involve art students, political science, psychology, marketing, etc.

• **Provide meeting time.** Students often complain that it is difficult for their group to meet, especially at so-called commuter colleges. An obvious solution is to schedule class time for project work. This is time usually well-spent; often, as all the groups are meeting, questions that arise can be answered for everyone at once.

• **Be Specific.** The more specific the assignment and the clearer the students are in regard to what is expected of them, the better the chances of success.

• **Keep Involved.** Students work better when faculty make timely comments or critiques, especially when a complex issue is being addressed.

• **Evaluate often.** Build in summative and formative evaluation; a midway evaluation can keep a team from going astray.

• **Involve Students in the Evaluation.** Allow team members to evaluate each other, and make that a part of the final grade. This creates a sense of control and ownership for the students, and also gives the professor a signal as to who has not been contributing.

A variation of this is creating bonus points at the end to be distributed among team members by team members.

- **Appoint Roles to Play.** Student complaints include confusion over who is responsible for what. To combat this, assign roles, for example, one student is responsible for media contacts, one for publications, etc. This does not mean one student does all the work, but simply that he or she is responsible for making sure the work gets done. A variation of this is to have students sign up for the position they want. Early on, the professor must then provide position descriptions. A benefit of this is that all team members understand what each position is supposed to entail.

- **Flashbacks to Choosing Sides.** Allow students to pick their groups, or assign them. It can be difficult in a large class where students do not know each other to have them find partners. One solution is to provide a selection of projects for the students to choose from; for example, the topics might include health care, sports, or non-profit public relations. Students gravitate to the topic in which they are interested.

- **Allow Divorces.** To address the problem of slackers, allow students to divorce their partners. Students who are divorced must then try to find another group to let them in or get all the work done alone.

The following are suggestions for grading methods:

- In addition to a group grade, each student is also given a short final project quiz taken individually.

- At the beginning of the project, all students in a group meet with the professor. Each student relays what contribution he/she will make. Individual grades on these aspects are given as well as an overall group grade.

- Provide students with a rubric of minimum requirements. To get a passing grade, these standards must be met.

- Grade some aspects separately; some as the group.

- Give the students grades at various steps as the project develops.

- Use an outside evaluator

Impact

In a survey, students who found team projects positive cited three reasons most frequently.

First was the opportunity to work with a team and to learn teamwork. Second, was the opportunity to learn from each other. Third, they enjoyed the group work simply because they enjoyed the other people in the group. This illustrates an often-overlooked social benefit of group projects.

Thus it appears students can find group projects beneficial; initial hurdles are worth overcoming.

From Focus Group to Completed Ad

How to teach advertising students to recognize and use consumer insight in creating ads

Thomas Kim Hixson, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin—Whitewater

Introduction and Rationale

In a small advertising program, it is not possible to provide students all of the content-specific courses larger, more established programs can provide. However, by integrating certain activities into existing courses, instructors can expose students to, and provide them knowledge of, aspects of advertising they otherwise might not learn. For example, our program does not offer a course in advertising research, so I try to integrate research knowledge, concepts and activities into an existing course. In my Advanced Advertising Procedures course, students are provided instruction and practice in conducting focus groups and using the results to guide the creative process. This assignment is completed during several class meetings and consists of students conducting a focus group, reporting the results, using the results to compose a creative brief/advertising strategy, and then using the creative brief/advertising strategy as guide in creating a one-page magazine advertisement. Therefore, elements of research, consumer behavior and advertising creative are integrated in this assignment.

Implementation

• First, a lecture on the basics of research is presented. Included is an explanation of the difference between quantitative and qualitative research. An emphasis is placed on the fact that focus groups are qualitative research and, therefore, the results cannot be generalized. Students are instructed that focus groups in advertising research are used, among other purposes, to gain deep insight into consumers' beliefs, needs, perceptions, motivations, and attitudes toward products. These insights are used by advertisers to plan strategy and develop advertising concepts.

• Students are provided step-by-step instructions on the process of conducting a focus group. They are provided a sample discussion guide that a moderator would use to facilitate discussion among focus group members. Students are told a prepared moderator is essential to conducting an effective focus group.

• Next, the students are participants in a focus group that is moderated by me. I conduct the focus group as a moderator would conduct it, by following a discussion guide and facilitating discussion between the participants. However, I also provide instruction by explaining the types of questions asked and discussion points raised, but only after participants' comments are made. As in any focus group, participants are encour-

aged to talk expressively about their deeply held feelings about the product.

• For a product, I select a snack item such as dried fruit. I select snack products for students to sample because they usually have strong feelings about snacking and its role in their lives. Also, I am easily able to elicit sensual feelings from the participants relating to the sight, feel, smell and taste of the product. I point out these and other statements made by the participants that are indicative of insights that would be useful in the creation of a strategy and an advertisement. I particularly emphasize the use of colorful descriptions, interesting images, unique adjectives, metaphors and similes.

• After completion of this demonstration focus group, students are assigned to groups to conduct their own focus groups. The groups serve as each other's participants. These groups of six to eight students select their own products for their focus group. They produce a discussion guide and select a group member to serve as moderator. The other group members serve as observers who record the responses of the participants.

• Following these focus groups, each group produces a report of its findings. These findings should include insights that will help the group develop an effective strategy for advertising the product. This strategy is included in the creative brief that serves as a guide to producing an advertisement.

• Each student then produces a one-page magazine advertisement to comprehensive stage based on the insights gained. This assignment is graded on how thoroughly each student used the insights to formulate and produce creative, effective advertisements.

Impact

This assignment is beneficial to small programs as it provides students important knowledge and practice they otherwise might not have. They work in groups, are provided an introduction to an important advertising research technique, and are given practice in using the research in a practical application. The assignment provides them a glimpse of consumer insight and how that insight can be used in creating ads; therefore, it provides a useful, real-world application of learning.

Karloff's 'Tis a Nice Day to Get Out' Information Search and Search Strategy Exercise

How to get beginning reporting students up, out and investigating the world around them

Kim E. Karloff, M.S.
California State University—Northridge

Introduction

"Karloff's 'Tis a Nice Day to Get Out' Information Search and Strategy Exercise" is an active-learning, student-participation exercise that is modeled after the scavenger hunt.

Rationale

Developed initially to encourage introductory-level journalism students to talk face-to-face with university experts, to investigate the university's library facilities, to utilize the world wide web and to "get to know" their campus surroundings, the exercise consists of 15-20 questions and/or hypothetical situations. The exercise can be modified for almost any course. It works particularly well in the first half of the semester.

Implementation

• Key to the exercise's success: Pre-classroom lecture on library-based searches, government publications, community/political/legal resources and the importance of real people and observation/critical thinking skills as sources of information.

The exercise:

• Set a time limit/deadline for student-participants.

• Distribute series of 15-20 questions and/or hypothetical situations.

• Advise students that they can work alone or in pairs.

• Set an adventuresome tone by comparing this information-gathering and hands-on learning experience to the proverbial scavenger hunt.

• Have everyone meet at the deadline to compare findings and search strategies.

• Bonus option: Reward students with most correct answers or most clever search strategies.

Impact

This GIFT idea has been implemented in our journalism department's and university's core newswriting and reporting course. Generally employed in the third week of class, the exercise encourages students to go beyond the classroom, to go beyond the relatively safe confines of the journalism building and actually do some investigative legwork. When used with teams, the exercise consistently takes on a more competitive and adventuresome tone allowing for students to envision how real journalism professionals work with their colleagues in the field.

Examples

Sample exercise questions taken from an introductory newswriting and reporting course:

"Karloff's 'Tis a Nice Day to Get Out' Information Search and Search Strategy Exercise"

1. There has been a robbery at 9401 Reseda Blvd. in Northridge. (Remember: This is a hypothetical situation…Do NOT call or suggest such a crime has actually taken place at this location.)
Part I: What business is located at this address?
Part II: What is that business' telephone number?
Part III: If you were to interview those who neighbor this address, what/who would you find?
Part IV: How did you go about gathering this information?

Tales from the past: One student skateboarded to the location (about 10 blocks from the university's campus) while his teammate searched the city directory for information. Another team bicycled to the address to confirm their assumptions about what business was located at that address. And another team cell-phoned a friend on the university's track team who then ran to the address during her workout to double-check that team's findings.

2. Who is the president of the university?
Where is his or her office located?
What is the president's campus phone number? E-mail?
What are the president's office hours?
Without calling anyone, what is the best way to obtain this information?

3. There has been a murder at the Gene Autry Western Museum.
Part I: Where is the museum located?
Part II: How does one get there from the CSUN campus?
Part III: Where does one obtain such specific navigational/address information?

4. The president of the United States is on campus to give a speech. The speech was to be given this morning on the university's main library steps—that is until the president tripped on the library's steps during his early morning workout.
Question I: How many steps lead up to the main library's front entrance?
Question II: Who maintains these steps?
Question III: Where does one go to obtain and confirm this information?

Tales from the past: The answers to this question have actually led to much debate in the past and have even led to an all-classroom trek back to the university's main library steps. Why? Accuracy in reporting. Those students who guessed or gleaned the information from the university's website (on campus building and construction) were surprised to discover that this is precisely why journalists need to check (and double-check) their facts.

5. Who was the president of the United States from 1901 to 1909?
Who was the president of the United States from 1974 to 1977?
In what year did World War I begin?
Where does one find the answers to such historical information?

News in Brief

How to teach media law creatively

Patricia Kennedy, J.D.
Syracuse University

Introduction and Rationale

Letting your students put media law news in brief reports is a creative and important lesson which fulfills the following:

- **Monitoring Change**. Media law is in an almost constant state of re-examination right now. Many old legal principles are being reviewed by courts and legislatures. Some are then retained while others are being overturned to reflect the upheaval caused by rapid technological change and the global nature of wired communication.

- **Team Building**. Working as part of a team is a critical skill required for most modern journalistic endeavors.

- **Information Retention**. This method of information exchange moves us down the learning retention pyramid…most of us learn best by talking about and teaching others what we've learned.

- **Practicing Information Delivery**. Synthesizing masses of information into manageable pieces while attempting to give context to the information is a valuable skill for modern journalists.
- **Fun**. Many students said on the first day of class that long monotonous lectures are boring, so this is one alternative that offers a challenging and amusing way for them to learn some legal principles and get some of those creative juices flowing.

Implementation

The following is taken from the assignment handout:

- **Topics**: Your topic must relate to material we will cover during the week you are scheduled to present or the week before or after. So, as an example, for those scheduled to present on Week III on the syllabus, the topics should focus on news about the First Amendment or newsgathering: access to media and information.

Your team can decide to provide an in depth report on a single case or piece of legislation, compare two cases on the same topic that reach different results or individual team members could each present a report on several different cases. But remember, this is news, not history, so your information should be timely**,** *based on an event that occurred not more than six weeks before your report*. Context, of course, is also important. If, for example, a court decides to overturn a famous legal precedent, you should explain the significance of the new event within the context of the old—that's good journalism.

- **Format**: Last semester one team did a take-off on the *Jerry Springer* show, another offered a courtroom scene, several imitated *Crossfire* or *Burden of Proof*. It's up to you, but the presentation must be in a *strictly time limited* broadcast-like format. Think, radio or TV. Think, anchor and reporters. Or, TV host with commentators or guests. Or, Cokie Roberts reporting on the courts and including sound bites from other team members playing the lawyers, judges or parties. You can play a role or do the straight news. You can use the Internet through our Netscape hookup in the classroom or show us a videotape you made or recorded. You can use real audio from NPR for example or an original game show format. Each presentation team gets the equivalent of 2.5 minutes/team member of class "air time." So, if there are four on your team, you get ten minutes, MAX! You can spread the total time in whatever way you choose, but you lose points for being under or over the allotted time.

- **Where will we find material?** We'll brainstorm in class, but I have found the online versions of some of these helpful: *Editor and Publisher (www.mediainfo.com), The Freedom Forum (www.freedomforum.org), The New York Times (www.nytimes.com), Wired News (www.wired.com/news), CNN Interactive(www.cnn.com), Findlaw (legalnews.findlaw.com), NPR (www.npr.org) or Lexis/Nexis-Legal News* in our library databases. You can sign up to be on an email updating service for findlaw.com, for example, and the news will come to you. If you have trouble finding material, ask me for some help. Don't wait.

- **Handouts for your classmates**. Your team is responsible to create a short handout to share with the rest of the class. Think press release, single article, news in brief or script here. This handout should include only the most important facts and legal points or principles of your group's presentation. It should be ready to hand out to the class *before* your presentation so that your classmates can ask intelligent questions and participate in a post-presentation discussion. Please arrange with our TA to make 50 copies. Your handout must indicate the sources you used for the information.

- **Grading**. This assignment will be worth 15% of your grade. The criteria for grading are shown on the back of this sheet.

Impact

    The last two times I have used this GIFT, it was in a class of 45-50 students, taking a required class in media law.

    To establish groups for the presentations that are part of this project, I made slips for students to choose from a basket. For each day on which a presentation was to occur, I made four or five slips with the date written on each, depending on the number in the class and the number of presentations days. The idea was to have four or five students randomly "selected" into each presentation group so students would get a chance to work with people they don't usually work with—to diversify the experience.

    Feedback has been terrific. Each group of students tries to outdo the others in creativity, and the class discussions after each segment have been lively and provocative.

Dirty Words and Dangerous Ideas

How to teach the realities of book banning

Kim Landon, M.A.
Utica College of Syracuse University

Introduction

This great idea grew out of a Journalism course called "Censorship of the Press, Art, Literature and Film." The course is taught in the fall, which coincides with the annual late-September nationwide recognition of continuing efforts to ban books in public schools and libraries. Many communities and libraries hold "read-ins" of banned or challenged books during this week.

To cover the Literature portion of this course, we began our own read-in, which has become the largest in Central New York. Students read, research and report on a banned or challenged book. Although many others participate in the read-in, class members not only read a selection, but also provide a report on how and why their book was challenged or banned.

Rationale

I think the innovation in this idea speaks for itself. Rather than simply do a book report for the instructor, the students organize, publicize, host and participate in a major community event that raises awareness of attacks on the First Amendment that are occurring in our own schools and libraries.

Implementation

- The instructor provides a list of banned/challenged books. (Lists are available online from the American Library Association and many other First Amendment-related organizations.)

- Students have until the next class to choose a book to read for the project. No duplicates are allowed in the class, and the book must be one the student has not read before. Children's books are allowed, as these make up most of the list.

- Students have two weeks to write a five-page paper that summarizes the book, provides a chronology of attempts to ban or challenge the book, discusses any court cases regarding this book, cites the challenged words or passages from the book, and concludes with the student's assessment of why the book was challenged.

During this time, the students work in teams outside of class to organize and publicize the Banned Book Read-in, which is held on campus. Local celebrities, such as newscasters, reporters, politicians, and college officials, are invited to read as well. Readers sign up for three-minute time slots during which they read a passage from a banned or challenged book.

Other classes with related themes, such as Public Speaking or Introduction to

American Literature, are invited to participate and usually do.

The campus bookstore and the college library both provide displays of banned and challenged books.

The Central New York ACLU sends a staff member who provides posters, literature and expertise on the subject of book banning.

The class members sit at a table where people can sign up to read, obtain lists of banned books, or borrow a copy of any one of dozens of books on display.

The Read-in is held all day in the Student Lounge. Class members must be in attendance as much of the day as possible. They also sign up for timeslots in which to read their reports.

Class members talk to whatever local media show up to cover the event.

Impact

The impact on students is huge. Class members as well as student passersby are astonished to learn that their favorite childhood books have been banned in some public schools. The students become impassioned on the subject. For years after they take the class, and even after they graduate, they continue to send me clippings or websites they find about banned books. Some have come back for several years in a row to read in the Read-in, contributing to its growth from about 20 readers the first year, to 64 last fall.

The impact on campus has also been great, as other faculty have incorporated the Read-in into their classes. Faculty have also supported the Read-in by bringing guest speakers or films to campus during the "Dirty Words and Dangerous Ideas" awareness week.

Perhaps even more important is the impact students see that they can have in their communities by raising awareness of issues they care about.

The Importance of Saying "Thank You"

How to turn a simple courtesy into a valued teaching tool

Phyllis Vance Larsen, M.A.
University of Nebraska—Lincoln

Introduction

Bringing experts in the field of study into the classroom as guest speakers adds a new dimension to the academic conversation. This simple technique helps students think through how a speaker's information relates to their course curriculum.

Rationale

By encouraging students to consider what they learned from the guest, they discover how to make the connection from speaker's real world experiences to the course material. They find their own answers to the "so what?" question. Students also make valuable networking contacts as well as create positive public relations for our college with leaders in the industry.

Implementation

Following a guest speaker's presentation in my public relations classes, students are given the option to write thank you letters to our guests in exchange for participation points used in course grading. I provide contact information as well as suggestions on how to write a good thank you letter.

In order to get participation credit, the student's letter must include descriptions of what they learned from the speaker and how they can apply that information.

- Speaker contact information is made available to students following a guest presentation.

- Students who choose to send a letter must follow specified guidelines (see example handout below) including providing a copy to the professor in order to earn participation points.

- Participation points are considered in the student's final grade for the course.

Impact

Students are pleased to have a legitimate reason to make contact with a professional with whom they may want to network in the future. They also benefit from learning good habits—sound analysis of information as well as the common courtesy of expressing appreciation. After receiving letters from students, many speakers contact me to say what a rewarding experience it was to join our classroom. Some professional colleagues are surprised to be the target of good old-fashioned courtesy and many say that due to such a strong positive experience, they want to be included the following semester. When they do an outstanding job of connecting with students, speakers often get a flood of letters, which they tell me is reward-

ing (rather than bothersome). They enjoy making contact with students and have occasionally stayed in touch with individuals, either as a student's personal mentor or a provider of an internship. Creating these strong relationships with industry professionals helps us to develop internships, donor programs, and curriculum refinements to better meet with needs of employers of our graduates.

Examples
Handout: The Importance of Saying 'Thank You'

WHY?
Guests will feel their time was well spent.
Gives you a networking opportunity.
Helps you synthesize what you have learned.
Serves as good PR for the college.

HOW?
Be prompt. Mail within one week.
Tell something about yourself. They'll remember you.
Be appreciative. It's their only payment.
Explain what you learned & why it matters.
Paper is preferred to email.
Give a copy to Professor Larsen for participation points.

Journalistic Read-Aloud

How to analyze and improve a story/article

Tina Lesher, Ph.D.
Wayne Patterson University

Introduction

In a seminar/conference setting, students *listen* to and *read carefully* a story written by a classmate who begins the follow-up discussion with his own appraisal of the work.

Rationale

Too often, students are asked to read stories but don't truly focus closely on the copy. The objective here is to ensure that every student focus on the work being analyzed. So, students *hear* the story while reading a copy of it, and get a chance to help "coach" the writer after he assesses his work.

Critical thinking, analysis and assessment are utilized in an attempt to strengthen the piece, and writing proficiencies are reinforced.

Implementation

- Professor selects a story written by a student, and passes out copies of the piece to everyone in the class.

- Students, sitting at a conference table or similar setting, listen as the professor reads aloud the story and follow along with their respective copies of it.

- At the conclusion of the reading, the student author candidly assesses his story—and discusses its weaknesses, strengths, etc.

- Then class members comment on the story and discuss with the author how he might improve the work.

- The professor acts as a writing coach for the session, and elaborates, if necessary, on questions/issues raised during the discussion.

Impact

Initially, a few students are hesitant to offer their writing as the discussion piece for a session. However, once they have experienced the Read-Aloud, they readily volunteer their stories for assessment.

What they like is the involvement of the class—every student has a copy of the story and *listens* to it. They provide constructive criticism as well as praise for their classmates' work.

As a bonus, they have a chance to get to know each other in a "teamwork" atmosphere. The sessions often are set up as "Brown Bag" seminars.

Test Partners

How to take the stress out of exams and promote student interaction

J. Barlow LeVold, M.S.
University of Illinois

Introduction

Allowing students to take an exam in pre-determined pairs increases studying and long-term retention, reduces test anxiety, and increases student interaction throughout the course of their entire program of study by encouraging "real-world" social behavior where short-term alliances are the norm.

Rationale

This approach to testing is deceptively simple. By pairing students up randomly two weeks prior to an exam, you put them in a situation where they can benefit from working together. The "cost" for them is working with someone they are not likely to know well, if at all. The benefit is the sharing of information *during* the test by passing notes written on a piece of paper to their partner. This time consuming process of writing to someone works especially well for timed exams. Since writing takes much more time than talking, conversing reduces the overall time available to work on other parts of an exam.

Up until the time they sit down to take the exam they have the right to "pull out" and take the exam on their own. This creates a "threat" that motivates "slacker" tendencies to not study properly or at all. If a partner feels they have nothing to gain from the alliance they can refuse to help the other person. Since everyone is responsible for their own mastery of the material, "dumped" students have no grounds for complaint. At the end of the exam, each person turns in their own paper and receives their own separate grade.

Implementation

- Create a pool of students who want to work in test pairs.

- Randomly assign students to test pairs with two weeks notice before the exam.

- Pair students who show up to class that day with others that are in class; pair absent students with other absent students (this reduces complaints about getting "stuck" with "slackers").

- Tell them they are ultimately responsible for all the material.

- Tell them they can change their minds and take the exam individually at any time up to the day they arrive to take the exam (this reduces the "slacker" factor).

- During the exam they can pass notepaper within a test pair but they cannot talk (this prevents eavesdropping and reduces the

amount of information shared during the exam).

• After the exam, collect exams and notes.

Additional pedagogical issues:

• This testing technique can be adapted to many different disciplines and levels of education. It could be used throughout a program but it works better for more advanced courses.

• This technique "tricks" students into studying more by creating a social alliance where they feel obligated to do their share of studying. The common goal forces students to overcome any trepidation about meeting new people and to work past their prejudices in order to gain the advantage of the pairing.

• Students report taking more time to study, which aids in long term retention rates. This is particularly relevant for courses that teach foundational knowledge and skills that will be built upon in subsequent courses.

• Testing in pairs greatly reduces test anxiety allowing students to focus on the material instead of the test.

• Students report a strong confidence in the correlation between their knowledge and test performance, attributing less interference to the testing instrument. This builds confidence in the course and the instructor's ability to evaluate their individual performance fairly.

• The technique increases the number of people any one student is likely to know well thereby facilitating future interaction and

support. This enhances a student's social interaction abilities that are essential to their future professional development.

• Initially, it was believed that students might cheat the system by studying exclusive halves of the material being tested then answering only the questions relevant to their chosen material. The inclusion of complex questions that require concept integration and the time-intensive needs of written language effectively curtail this potential problem. Hence, this technique might not work as well for exams that test simple recall. The more difficult the material, the better the technique works.

• It is also possible that one student could copy the responses of their partner. They could trade-off studying from one exam to the next. The random assignment of pairs helps to reduce this potential problem since each exam is taken with a different partner, thereby preventing a reciprocal relationship.

Impact

This GIFT idea has been implemented in a large (90+) advertising media planning class attended by a diverse population of students from advertising, marketing and other programs. Only closed-ended response exams (multiple-choice) have been implemented in this format but it could be easily adapted to open-ended essay style testing instruments where it is likely that it would prove to be equally effective.

Students love the format. Even those who choose not to work in pairs think it is a wonderful idea. Many have claimed they have fun when studying and taking the exam. Course evaluations clearly indicate the positive impact of this technique.

History Helpers

How to engage students in American journalism history when they might rather be watching Oprah

Karen K. List, Ph.D.
University of Massachusetts

Introduction

My American journalism history syllabus begins with a quote from James Joyce: "History is a subject from which I am trying to wake up." I tell my students on the first day that I will try not to fulfill Joyce's expectation as far as each of them is concerned. But that's not an easy promise to keep when many of them agree with Joyce and the course is at 9:30 in the morning.

Several years ago, some students were telling me that they enjoyed watching television talk show, and I began to think about how I might tap into their interest in that sort of format and use it to enliven the history class. I hit upon turning what had been a traditional research paper assignment into an "interview" with a journalist from the 18th, 19th or early 20th century. After conducting the "interview," my student-journalists then would appear on panels during class to field questions about the subjects of their "stories."

Rationale

This seems to me to be an innovative teaching idea, first because it works. Students who might otherwise write off such a research project are more likely to be engaged by it. Some are fascinated. The very notion of "interviewing" someone who is dead gets their attention. Then, from a jour-nalistic as well as an historical perspective, they want to get it right, so they are much more likely to engage fully in the research process. Writing too is not so daunting, since many "stories" are presented in a question/answer format. Finally, it can be great fun to become an expert on a significant figure in journalism history and relate interesting information about that individual to classmates.

This assignment also adds an important dimension to the history class, which I teach largely from a freedom of expression perspective. The class tends to focus on ideas and issues, but this assignment helps illustrate those ideas through the individuals whose collective stories make journalism history what it is.

Implementation

• Students are given a list of journalists who might make good interview topics, organized by the type of journalism they did. One category, for example, is abolitionists. Another is muckrakers. The list is as diverse as I can make it in terms of gender, race and other considerations. Every student should be able to find someone of interest.

• Once students make their selections, they

are given a list of questions that include such things as their subject's greatest accomplishment in journalism; the person's philosophy and style, as illustrated by work product; any efforts to curb the journalist's freedom of expression and how the person reacted; the individual's greatest failure; and why we remember this person in journalism history today. All of these questions are answered from the perspective of the journalist being "interviewed."

• We discuss the fact that, just as if they were interviewing sources for the student newspaper, students must work hard to gather background and context on their subjects and to understand where and how they fit into journalism history. Students must read until they have a real understanding of the individual they are studying and are comfortable speaking for them in the proper "voice." Multiple primary and secondary sources are required in order to make this work—everything from good journalism histories to biographies to collections of the individual's work.

• Students' understanding of the people they research is put to the test by the last questions on the list that ask them to figure out how the individual they studied would respond to the state of journalism today and what job that person would most like to have. (Since students already are required to interview people long dead, bringing them alive in 2001 is not that difficult. The possibilities, actually, are endless).

• Although citations and bibliography are required just as they would be for a standard research paper, the writing is not so daunting for many since the paper is organized in a question/answer format. Students seem to enjoy speaking not only in their own voices but in the "voice" of the person being interviewed.

• Finally, much valuable information can be conveyed to the class by students themselves as they appear in panels focused on certain topics like party press or women's rights journalists. Lectures already have conveyed some context, which then can be fleshed out and illustrated through the stories of real people, told by those who "interviewed" them.

Impact

Students really seem to enjoy this assignment and, I think, gain much more from it than they would a traditional research paper. As a teacher of journalism ethics, I try to instill in my students the importance of empathy—and here is one more chance to do that through the vehicle of the history class. These journalists from the past were living, breathing people, and I hope to encourage my students to see them that way—to see them whole and in all their complexity. Many students seem to care more about the quality of their research, as they develop some sense of responsibility for an accurate portrayal of the historical figure they are representing.

I have worked very hard in the past few years to bring history and law as well from what were once exclusively lecture classes to something more akin to learning communities that are much more interactive, with students learning not only from me but—through more opportunities for reflection—from themselves and—through assignments like this one—from each other. To orchestrate this interview assignment is challenging, but also rewarding. And it's endlessly interesting.

Can't YOU imagine the spirited party press editor William Cobbett today with his own talk show, ala G. Gordon Liddy? Or Amelia Bloomer publishing the Valley Woman's Voice in Western Massachusetts? You could if you listened to my students.

Beat Reading

How to get students talking about the news (and thinking about the reporter's craft)

Miles Maguire, M.B.A.
University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh

Introduction

Beginning journalism students could learn a lot just by keeping their noses in a good newspaper, but many students feel that they don't have the time to engage in regular, careful reading. The Beat Reading approach gives students an incentive to keep up with current events and a basis for evaluating the quality and accuracy of news articles.

Rationale

In Beat Reading, each student covers a beat by reading news articles on a regular basis and thus becomes the classroom expert on the topic, responsible for keeping the rest of the class informed of developments on that beat. By studying how professional reporters cover their beats and handle specific news developments, students learn how to evaluate media coverage and to identify the elements of successful news writing.

Implementation

- **Motivate students to engage with current events**. Each class starts with students speaking about the latest development on their beats. Because students know that they will be called on at the beginning of each session, they will come prepared to talk and

to share their knowledge with their classmates.

- **Expose students to the best the profession has to offer**. Students are required to focus their reading on newspapers with national reputations for quality coverage. As students read examples of good writing, they learn to improve their own writing skills.

- **Help students critically evaluate what they are reading**. Students are given a checklist to use when doing their beat reading. This checklist directs the students' attention to those qualities of good news reporting and writing that are emphasized elsewhere in the course, such as leads, fairness and accuracy, writing skill and AP style.

- **Encourage students to form their own judgments about journalistic excellence**. Students are required to write a short term paper analyzing the elements of good news reporting and writing. Because they have read extensively on a particular topic, studied how competing newspapers cover the same news and rated how well individual articles have accomplished their goals, they can compare and contrast the characteristics of specific stories and provide detailed criticism.

- **Broaden student understanding of the news and the journalism profession**. Beat Reading exposes students to the way news stories develop over the course of short- and long-term news cycles.

- **Give students a sense of control**. Introductory news writing can be challenging to students because they are learning both general composition skills and specific journalistic methods and standards. The Beat Reading approach allows students to gain a sense of control over how the course is going because they earn points toward their final grade based on how many articles they read each week. Most students will read at least an article a day because they see it as a way of gaining maximum credit.

- **Gain greater flexibility in grading**. The Beat Reading component of final grades will most often be an A. This allows the instructor to enact higher standards than might be possible otherwise in other phases of the course without skewing the final grade distribution toward the low end of the scale.

- **Simplify record keeping and grading.** In addition to their class-time reports on their beats, students provide a weekly written report to the instructor listing the headline, byline, date and publication for each of the articles that they have read. The instructor can quickly review this material to ensure that it meets the requirements of the assignment and enter the number of articles read into a spreadsheet, for easy tracking of student effort and quick calculation of grades.

Impact

This GIFT has proved highly successful in ensuring that students come prepared for class and ready to participate in discussion and other exercises. Because they are following topics more closely than they would otherwise, they often get caught up in the excitement of breaking news.

By the end of the semester, most students are able to provide a detailed critique of news coverage, citing specific factors that contribute to or detract from successful journalism. They are also able to incorporate what they have learned into the articles that they write.

Making the Best of Disaster

How to teach effective and sensitive coverage of large-scale tragedy

Scott Maier, Ph.D.
University of Oregon

Introduction

Sooner or later, every reporter will be thrust into disaster coverage–an earthquake, a school shooting, a clinic bombing or other catastrophic news event for which few are journalistically or emotionally prepared. This series of in-class simulated disaster exercises, all based on real-life scenarios, help prospective journalists get a vivid sense of the issues they'll face when confronted with the biggest story of their careers.

Credit is due to UW OnCue, a University of Washington student-based drama group that introduced me to the idea of in-class disaster simulation, and helped refine and execute early versions of these exercises.

Rationale

Unlike reporting on a city council meeting, disaster coverage isn't the kind of assignment that most prospective journalists ever have the opportunity (or misfortune) to experience. But through a series of simulated disaster events, all adaptable to conform to an instructor's own experiences and class objectives, journalism students confront the challenge of disaster coverage from a variety of perspectives—from on-the-street reporting to newsroom orchestration of assignments.

Using collaborative learning techniques, the exercises give every student a role in the disaster coverage and reinforce the value of professional teamwork.

Implementation

- In the first-day exercise, students are confronted with three scenarios involving a major industrial explosion: a grumpy police spokesman who only grudgingly reveals details of the disaster, a dazed industrial worker who hints of labor strife and management's impossible speed-up demands; a distraught family member desperately seeking information about a missing loved one.

- I have successfully reenacted these events by either using myself in the appointed roles (I have no acting experience, but it works!) or by recruiting budding actors from the university's drama department (even better).

- Through use of stop action, *every* student gets the opportunity to play the role of reporter, asking tough questions as the scenarios unroll. When an impasse in reporting occurs, the class works collaboratively to come up with strategies for dealing with, for example, an intransigent cop or a hysterical victim.

- Following the reenactment, a debriefing

is held to consider issues such as reporter safety, reporter responsibility to aid the injured, victim trauma, and reporter trauma.

• Depending on time constraints, students write either in class or at home a hard-news story of what they have "witnessed." They must figure how to deal with incomplete and conflicting information, how to report the facts concisely without sacrificing drama, and how to contend with other real-life challenges of disaster coverage.

• In the following class, students divide into four groups and collaboratively reconsider the disaster coverage from a variety of newsroom and field perspectives: The assignment desk, onsite team coordination, the re-write desk, and the night desk. Each group reports its conclusions to the entire class.

Impact

These exercises clearly engage students in ways that mere description of reporting techniques would not. Students rate the exercises highly in class evaluations. The exercises have received favorable media coverage

Examples
Day One

Three disaster scenarios, each based on real-life situations, that can be simulated in the journalism *classroom:*

Scene I: A reporter and photographer, en route to conduct a feature story about a local youth who just broke the world record for successive pogo-stick hopping, are called on their car radio to go to a local chemical factory, where police reported an explosion has occurred. Arriving at the scene, the reporter and photograph find the area cordoned off by police as ambulances and fire trucks rush by. The reporter and photographer are directed to Police Sgt. Joe Schultz, director of communications.

Schultz brusquely tells the reporter and photographer they can go no further. He says

a massive explosion has occurred. He grudgingly offers further information, but only when asked. Over time, it is revealed that the AAA Chemical Company produces highly unstable jet-propulsion fuel additives. The explosion was reported at 3:44 p.m. Cause of the blast is unknown. Extent of damage is also unknown, but windows three blocks away were shattered. Injuries unknown but may be dozens. Deaths are likely. Fourteen fire engines, 12 ambulances have responded. Hospitals are on disaster alert. There are unconfirmed reports of a subsequent blast. No foul play is suspected. But Schultz reveals that arson investigators had the building under surveillance last month because of a tip that sabotage might occur. AAA Chemical six weeks ago laid off a third of the work force when the company opened up a subsidiary in Mexico.

Break in action. *Ask class: Should reporter sneak behind police lines? What questions remain unasked? Where to go next?*

Scene II: The reporter catches a ride behind police lines with a CBS television news crew. The scene is bedlam. Emergency officials are carting away the injured. The police order everyone out of the area. A man walking in a daze asks the reporter and photographer for help.

The dazed man, Chris Harrell, volunteers that he was in the factory's control room when the blast occurred. He vividly describes the blast, as if it were being replayed in slow motion in his mind. At first, the walls rippled and the floor shuttered as if a minor earthquake had just occurred….then the blast pulverized the walls and tore off the ceiling in a flash….Left exposed were the scarred remains of Samuel Jackson, Jared Hanson, and others he could not recognize. Worst was the agonized cries for help of those injured and buried in the rubble. Harrell says only the reinforced walls of the control room saved him from injury. He volunteers he was supervising the delicate mixing of Ziton and Hydron. He repeatedly mumbles, "The meter was at nine, not at nineteen." He complains of labor strife

and a company speed-up. His story changes, saying he was in the restroom when the blast occurred. No, he was in control…. He asks, "who are you?"

Break: *Should the reporter/photographer help? Identify themselves? Take photos? Identify the man in the story? Use all the information he said? etc.*

Scene III: Outside the Red Cross Center, the reporter and photographer encounter a woman who fears her husband was caught in the blast. Norma Bell explains that her husband, Jason, had gone to the bank to withdraw money before they went to visit their grandchildren. The bank was next door to the factory. The Red Cross doesn't know whether her husband survived the blast. She asks that the reporter publish a description of her husband in case he's wandering around somewhere in a daze. Other relatives of the missing and killed refuse to talk to the journalists, insisting the press is interested only in selling newspapers.

Break: *How do you handle victim's families? Include husband's description in story? etc.*

Debriefing: *Discuss what has occurred. If time permits, ask the students to write a lead to the explosion story. Assign them to write a full story by next class.*

Day Two

In a follow-up to the simulated disaster, the class reconvenes to consider disaster coverage from a variety of newsroom and field perspectives. In this cooperative learning exercise, students divide into four groups and consider instructions posted in their designated corner of the classroom.

Group 1—The assignment editor: The city editor hears over the police monitor that a major explosion has occurred near a major business district. Details are spotty, but it sounds like many are injured and there is a chemical cloud hovering over the area. The group's task: Develop a newsroom mobilization plan.

Group 2–The field team: A group of reporters and photographers have just arrived at "ground zero." Police are trying to secure the disaster scene, which can only be described as bedlam. The injured are shrieking for help, emergency personnel are rushing by, the air is filled with chemical fumes. The group's task is to develop an initial coverage plan.

Group 3–The rewrite desk: A group of anchor reporters are given the raw facts of the disaster phoned in by journalists at the scene. Provided are the basic facts, a few quotes, and a bit of background. Essential information is missing. The group's task is to quickly craft a news flash for the newspaper's early edition.

Group 4–The night desk: Exhausted editors at the night desk, having just completed editing the day's copy, now have to consider what angles should be pursued next. Possible angles include cause of the explosion, the company's history of industrial accidents, the impact of restricting access to the central business district, and the mayor's absence (again). The group's task is to craft a plan of action to greet the next day's reporting and editing staff.

Each group is given 20 minutes to prepare a report to be given to the entire class. Optional take-home assignment: Write a two-page memo developing a response to the task assigned to your designated group.

News Team Peer Critique

How to teach your students to give each other helpful feedback and still be friends when it's all over

Jane Marcellus, M.S.J., M.A.
University of Oregon

Introduction

By showing students a few simple steps to use when reviewing each other's news stories in groups, you can help them communicate in a way that is helpful, effective and positive. The result is not only better papers, but teamwork skills that they can take into the workplace. (You can also use these steps yourself when making comments on your students' stories.)

Rationale

Many students arrive in their first reporting class without having gotten feedback on their writing from anyone but teachers. When they begin to study journalism, they may not be used to the idea that their writing will be shared publicly. Having beginners share their writing in groups can help them grow accustomed to writing for a larger audience of peers. It fosters teamwork, confidence and the ability to work collaboratively.

The process described here provides a way to organize a helpful discussion of stories-in-progress. These steps can also be used by the instructor when giving oral or written feedback. Adapted from the freshman composition field, these steps are perfect for journalism because they elicit comments about clarity (#2) and holes in the story (#3).

Implementation

• Divide your class into teams of four or five people. Have each student bring in copies of the story in progress. They may also be shared electronically. The process I will describe can be used either in person or in writing.

• Students are to respond to their peers' stories using the following four-step process, which is designed to elicit specific feedback from a number of readers without vague value judgments.

1. "I like…. " This simple step establishes rapport. We can almost always find something to like about a piece of writing. It could be the lead, the way sources are used, a single phrase or just the idea itself. It doesn't matter, just so long as students establish a supportive tone.

2. "When I read your lead, I expect your story will be about…. " Here, student readers mirror back what they have read. The focus is on clarity. This step is especially helpful with feature leads, which should, as writer John McPhee said, "shine a light down into the story." I used this strategy myself recently after a local journalist spoke to my Reporting I class. I asked my students to write a story about his talk. The journalist mentioned problems with carpal tunnel

syndrome earlier in his career, and one student led with that—then changed directions. "When I read your lead, I expect that this story is going to focus on carpal tunnel syndrome in journalists," I told my student. Since that was not what she intended, she could see that she needed to write a more relevant lead. Because I focused on my confusion as a *reader,* this was more constructive than writing "Lead is irrelevant" in the margin. Students can learn to be helpful readers, too.

3. "To fully understand this story, I need (or want) to know…." This step asks respondents to identify the holes in the story. Reporters may not be aware that they haven't put in all the facts or covered all the angles. Readers should identify large holes ("We need to know what the defense attorney says as well as the prosecutor") and small holes ("How old was the murder victim?")

4. "If this were my story, I'd…." Finally, make suggestions for revision. Since each student will have suggestions from three or four other students, it may not be feasible to do them all. But each suggestion can potentially give the writer an idea for revision or a problem to bring up with a more experienced writer, like the instructor.

Impact

I've used this process for a number of years. By focusing on reader reactions, rather than evaluation, they encourage the exchange of helpful information. Because students respond to each other's work as readers, not critics, they gain confidence in their ability to give feedback to their peers—a process that makes many uncomfortable because they don't think they have the knowledge or authority to make value judgments. Conversely, writers get feedback from several readers—not just one.

"You Decide What's Right" Exercise

How to integrate ethical issues into the classroom

Nancy Mitchell, Ph.D.
Michael J. Consbruck, B.S.
University of Nebraska—Lincoln

Introduction

This exercise helps instructors integrate ethical decision-making into the classroom. It is designed to stretch students' thinking and challenges their tendency to make ethical judgments based on situational ethics. This hour-long exercise is designed to work in small or large class settings and can be used with students who have or have not studied ethical theory.

Rationale

Media professionals are often criticized for their unethical behaviors. This exercise provides an opportunity to explore issues about solving ethical dilemmas for those students who may enter the field of journalism and mass communications or for those students simply interested in being better educated about the media. It may be easy for students to identify core values such as truth and fairness as their behavioral guides. However, in practice, sometimes issues that call for ethical decision-making involve values that clash. This exercise lets students look at situations from multiple perspectives to help identify underlying issues.

Implementation

• Discuss what core ethical values are. [For instructors wishing to cover this topic in more depth, precede this exercise with a lecture/readings concerning moral principles (i.e., Kant's categorical imperatives and Mill's utilitarian ethics) and codes of ethics.]

• Ask students to write down their core ethical values.

• Assign students to five groups and distribute a sheet with situations. (You give the same set of five situations to all groups or give the five broadcasting situations to one group, the advertising situations to another group and so on. These situations are for purposes of illustration. You can add or delete situations, depending upon the type of class you teach.) Refer to Table 1 for examples.

• Ask students to read each situation and decide individually the extent to which the following groups would find the behavior: A=totally acceptable, B=somewhat acceptable, C=somewhat unacceptable or D=totally unacceptable.

• Ask students to repeat this decision-making process as a group, projecting how the following categories of people would judge those same situations: 1 (your group's consensus), 2 (most media professionals) and

3 (most members of the general public).

- Have a student from each group report to the entire class, summarizing the group's situations, responses and observations.

- Link the observations to the earlier discussion on core values, situational ethics, and integrity of behavior. Ask students why ethical behavior sometimes breaks down. Discuss how this exercise relates to what students experience at school and what young media professionals may find in the workplace

Impact

Variations of this exercise have been implemented in mass media and society and introductory mass communications courses. Students were actively engaged in this exercise and challenged each other about their decisions. It is a non-threatening environment for students to apply their ethics in the context of real life situations. Students often did not want to stop discussing these issues when the class ended.

The exercise can be updated by the instructor, who can use other situations that appear in the media as idea starters. The exercise can be tailored to a particular discipline by collecting and using a variety of ethical dilemmas for that discipline.

Summary of Situations	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 4	Situation 5
Broadcasting	The local news broadcast reports on a fatal accident minutes after it happened revealing the identity of the victim before family members are notified.	The local news broadcast shows shots of a victim, still in his vehicle, of a fatal accident on the news.	The local news broadcast reports on a fatal accident and shows footage of the victims' license plates before notification of the family.	The local news broadcast reports on a fatal accident and in haste to outdo other news stations, identifies the wrong person as the victim.	The local news broadcast reports on a fatal accident giving only general information on the victim due to the fact family members have not been notified yet.
Advertising	PDQ Ad Agency representing buys space for a cigarette ad in a magazine targeting teens.	PDQ Ad Agency recommends a product placement of cigarettes in a new movie.	PDQ Ad Agency designs a tobacco ad for a magazine targeting adults.	PDQ Ad Agency designs an ad for a tobacco company targeting African American people specifically.	PDQ Ad Agency refuses to do work for a major tobacco company.
News Editorial	The local newspaper runs a story reporting on the issue of using Native American nicknames and symbols as mascots for sports teams.	The local newspaper reports on a story about using Native American nicknames and symbols as mascots for sports teams and offers the opinion of the newspaper in an editorial.	The local newspaper runs a story about the controversy of using Native American tribes as mascots, plugging its own bias toward being politically correct and renaming teams.	The local newspaper runs a story about the controversy of using Native American tribes as mascots, slanting the story toward keeping team names as they currently are.	The local newspaper ignores the issue of using Native American nicknames and symbols for sports teams.
Public Relations	The PR firm for a major automobile company claims faulty tires, not their client's vehicle, caused rollover accidents to occur.	The PR firm for a major tire company claims poor vehicle design, not their clients tires, caused rollover accidents to occur.	The PR firm for a major automobile company denies any problems with tires or vehicle design in related fatal accidents.	The PR firm for a major tire company advises against a recall for faulty tires, stating it would hurt the company's image to go public with the problem.	The PR firm for a major automobile company releases information about a tire recall months after problems start to occur.
Student	Joe is a journalism student working on a group project and claims ownership for ideas his whole group thinks up together.	Joe borrows ideas from fellow students in his advertising class to use on his project because he knows he presents first in the class.	Joe does not speak up when he knows another student is stealing ideas from other classmates for her own projects.	Joe is having his father (who works for an ad agency) do his copywriting for a class project.	Joe is putting group work produced by his team in his portfolio for job interviews.

Table 1. Examples of Ethical Situations

Reading Response Assignment

**How to help students improve reading comprehension
and prepare for discussion sections**

Mark Plenke, M.A.
Anoka-Ramsey Community College

Introduction

This is a one-page assignment that asks students to summarize main points in an article assigned for a discussion section and then write a response to those main points.

I've used it in Introduction to Mass Communication and Introduction to e-Journalism classes, but it would work in any class with outside readings that are discussed in large or small groups.

Rationale

Student discussion is key to exploring issues in class, but it's often difficult to get students to read the material, volunteer to discuss it and have something helpful to say during the discussion.

This assignment yields evidence of close reading. The "script" gives students confidence to join a discussion. And the summary-thinking-responding process prepares them to offer discussion that's been considered and formulated before class.

I also allow students to use their papers as "notes" on final essay exam questions, so there's a third incentive (besides the nominal number of points awarded and the discussion script) for completing the assignment and doing a good job.

Implementation

- Assign a group of readings to prepare students for discussion of a particular issue. I assign the 6-8 articles in one of the five units of *Annual Editions: Mass Media* each week for five weeks, for example.

- Prepare a short list of provocative questions from each of the readings as a place to start the discussion on each reading.

- Hand out the instructions for the Reading Response paper the week before the discussion is scheduled and go over the directions. I find it helpful to sketch the assignment form on the board or overhead.

- On the discussion day or days, have the class move desks into a circle or large square. Explain that a speaker gets the floor by raising a hand and being acknowledged by the previous speaker and that he or she holds the floor as long as they wish.

- Remind students that they've prepared a script for discussing one of the articles you'll be discussing.

- Start the discussion with one of the questions you've prepared. Ask for responses and acknowledge a student with a raised hand. Offer your own thoughts when you want to make a point, steer the discussion another direction or revive a stalled topic. Ask students for the right to speak. Don't be afraid to go to the board to write key terms or definitions.

- When discussion dies down, ask if there are any more comments, then move to the next article and your next prepared question.

Impact

On end-of-semester feedback forms, students almost unanimously mention the discussions as their favorite part of the class. They appreciate the opportunity to test their ideas on the whole group without my interference. The discussions always include disagreement, reasoned debate, demands for evidence to back up assertions and occasionally involve raised voices and tempers. I think it makes students more critical readers and better advocates for their own points of view. Students who don't raise their hands to participate in other class discussions get involved in these issues debates. And I have evidence that students are reading, thinking about and writing about some of the material I've assigned.

Murder They Wrote

How to teach journalism history, research, writing and citation

Anna R. Paddon, Ph.D.
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Introduction

Using newspaper accounts of sensational crime stories as the basis for research papers avoids tired topic choices, gives students a glimpse of changes in reporting practices, and adds the intrigue of a murder mystery to term paper writing.

Rationale

Often Introduction to Communication or Journalism History courses are designated for Writing Across the Curriculum, which requires a specific number of writing assignments. [See Elizabeth Foote, "Writing Across the Curriculum in Community Colleges," *Community College Journal of Research and Practice,* Vol. 23 (1999), pp. 211-216]. Making these assignments interesting and varied for students (and for whoever is grading the papers) is a challenge. This assignment meets that challenge.

Implementation

• A list of topics, newsworthy murder cases and the year, is provided by the instructor. Each student chooses a different case to research, or the topics may be put on 3"x5" cards and dealt out randomly to students.

• This kind of assignment has been used in a freshman English classes by W. Keith Kraus, and he has compiled an annotated list of 90 murders reported in *The New York Times* from 1859-1970. [W. Keith Kraus, *Murder, Mischief, and Mayhem: A Process for Creative Research Papers* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978), pp. 143-146]. Library microfilm collections and bound indexes go back to the mid-nineteenth century. The assignment can be localized for other large cities from the "murder" entry in the newspaper's index.

• Students become familiar with their assigned case by consulting the bound *New York Times Indexes* and the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* for the right time period.

• Students submit a working bibliography in the specified citation style.

• Opportunity is given to go beyond the newspaper accounts, to seek later material or to seek information from those close to the case.

• Writing an introduction, planning the narrative, critically evaluating material and synthesizing material for a conclusion are covered in lecture and discussion. Examples

from the students' work, which they are eager to share, make for lively discussion.

• Professional standards of accuracy, grammar, documentation and other mechanics of writing are emphasized.

Impact

• Because these are older crime news stories, students are forced to use traditional, printed library finding aids instead of depending exclusively on Internet searches.

• Because the topics are defined for each student, time is not wasted fishing for ideas or choosing a topic that is too broad or too narrow.

• Because the topics are assigned, students have less opportunity to "recycle" papers from other courses or to plagiarize.

• The assignment is manageable for those who have had no earlier experience in writing term papers and is a different challenge for those who can build on good high school or freshman English research paper instruction.

• Students, as in other primary research, become real authorities on their particular crime, long forgotten by the general public.

• Students see how news coverage has changed.

• Students gain experience in developing a narrative from fragmentary accounts and in judging the importance of various characters and clues as an investigation develops.

• The bound newspaper indexes and microfilm readers, which themselves have almost become obsolete, are still important for historical research to examine older material.

• Students note variations in name spellings and other inaccuracies in the stories and learn the importance of verification.

• Citation style and the use of a research stylebook (Chicago, Turabian, MLA or APA) are emphasized.

• Racism, sexism, sensationalism, euphemisms for sex crimes, the inclusion of evidence not presented at trial-all require context, evaluation and interpretation.

• Teaching the writing of an introduction, how to use quotations, organization and conclusions is similar for the whole class, because all students are working on the same kinds of topics and source materials.

The Crash of CommAir Flight 4083

How to join a journalism and public relations course by using a simulation

Patricia Radin, Ph.D.
California State University—Hayward

Introduction

The news conference is a source of curiosity, excitement, and motivation for beginning media students. When they see snippets of these events on TV, it all seems so glamorous–yet so competitive and mercilessly public if someone makes a slip. The reality, of course, is that it takes a lot of hard work and planning on both sides.

A live news conference exercise can be quite realistic. It is nicely bounded by a short time frame, a single theme, and the necessity for all the "reporters" and "PR people" to be in the same place at once. So, if the PR and journalism teachers can find an overlapping class period, they can engineer a simulation with plenty of surprises and challenges.

Rationale

A simulated news conference, bringing together trained PR and journalism students, rewards good preparation and well-honed skills–and helps students to see why weak skills are a serious disadvantage. Long-term benefits include greater motivation and an experiential appreciation of just how their education will be applied when they are on the job.

A plane crash scenario was chosen because among possible crisis PR scenarios, it is familiar–journalism students immedi-

ately know many good angles to pursue–and it is non-technical. In addition, a plane crash always involves several different agencies, providing for multiple PR roles.

Implementation

Week 1

Journalism and PR teacher (both veterans of hundreds of news conferences) consult about specific goals for the exercise. Both classes should experience the tension, yet complementary objectives that would be evidenced in real life. Reporters should have to "dig" for buried details, accurately report facts and identify the lead and high-news-value details. PR people should anticipate reporters' needs, convey specific crisis messages, maintain a helpful attitude, be knowledgeable, and plan the event for maximum control.

Week 2

• Project is kept secret from the journalism class.

• PR students are told they'll be giving a news conference that will get live coverage. PR instructor provides skeleton "facts" about the crash to the students–time, place, conditions, list of four "dead" (including "Davis, Gray"–the governor–and the female

pilot). Students contribute some great ideas.

- Students volunteer for PR roles: CommAir PR Director, Assistant FAA Information Officer, Assistant Oakland International Airport PR Manager, Assistant NTSB Information Officer, Assistant

- In response to student enthusiasm, several minor PR roles were invented: Eyewitness, Videographer, Messenger, Greeter. Non-participants are assigned to critique the exercise.

- PR class uses conference planning to review the basics of crisis PR and to fashion each organization's distinctive PR message.

Week 3

- Shortly after the journalism class meets, a "messenger" brings in a FedEx box. It contains news releases on CommAir letterhead. The journalism teacher distributes the releases and leads a discussion with surprised students on how to handle this. They will write their stories in the lab immediately afterwards.

- Meanwhile, PR students run through their news conference – practicing with visual aids, clarifying who answers which questions, reviewing notes, checking body language, giving each other last-minute help. There is tremendous solidarity.

- In 20 minutes, excited journalism students pour through the door, grab seats, pull out pens. CommAir gives a brief, somber opening statement without revealing many details. Oakland Airport distributes maps of the airport and indicates the crash site on an overhead slide. The FAA and NTSB briefly describe their roles. The video camera rolls. The hour-long news conference is underway.

Week 4

- Journalism students receive feedback on their news stories from their teacher. Governor's "death" in the lead? Names spelled accurately? Facts reported correctly? They discuss tricks to working on deadline, taking notes, being well informed and alert, etc.

- PR students pass around copies of all the "coverage" (author names deleted). Who got mentioned? Were specific PR messages reported? What seemed effective? Coverage accurate? Parts of the hour-long videotape are replayed for a lively critique session.

Impact

- Students on both sides tested their skills and discovered reasons to improve.

PR students:

"I wished I'd really known that background information cold."

"They got my title wrong!"

Journalism students:

"I knew they had a strategy – but what was it?"

"I missed the Gov. Davis thing because I was writing up some notes."

- Students discovered the importance of well-honed skills.

- Students were rewarded with tangible, realistic results.

- Student enthusiasm for their courses peaked.

- A mass communication faculty observer highly praised the exercise.

- Teachers were delighted and resolved to do it again!

Just Do It

How to teach strategic thinking skills in an advertising course

Jan Slater, Ph.D.
Ohio University

Introduction

Creating an environment and exercises that allow students to search for answers found in the marketplace not in a textbook is essential in learning the "how to" of advertising.

Rationale

One of the most difficult tasks for advertising professors is providing the skills and prompting students to think strategically in making advertising decisions. Students are used to relying on textbooks for the answers. However, in advertising, the answers come from research, the marketplace, experience and judgment. The exercises outlined here encourage students to use information in various ways to aid in using skill and judgment to determine what action to take in terms of advertising. Furthermore, the exercises measure the student's level of learning, while providing each student a substantial sample of his/her work to showcase for an internship or job interview.

Implementation

• Establish a benchmark for learning the foundations of advertising. The first day of class, distribute a questionnaire that establishes the student's current level of knowledge. In addition, the questionnaire provides a teaching tool for presenting the key issues surrounding advertising in an indirect way. The questionnaire can be used again at the end of the course to measure the knowledge gained over the course of the semester.

• Establish the foundation of understanding the marketplace. Have each student choose a product category from a list provided. Require the student to do a store check of the product category. The student will count the facings of the product within the category as well as counting the facings for each brand in the category. This allows the student the opportunity to see brands in the marketplace and see the competitive environment as well. In analyzing the information obtained from this assignment, the student can begin to think strategically about the brand's position in the marketplace.

• Establish the need for research. Using the same category for the previous exercise, have each student compare the store check to syndicated data available from MediaMark Research or Simmons Market Research Bureau. The store check should be similar to the market share indicated in the syndicated research. From here, the student can use this information to begin thinking strategically about the category situa-

tion, as well as the situation of the various brands within the category.

• Establish the need for understanding the consumer. Allow the student to choose any brand from the product category in exercise #2. Ask him/her to develop a profile of the typical consumer based on the syndicated research and whatever other research he/she can conduct using secondary sources.

• Establish the need for developing a strategy. Again, using the information from the previous exercises, have the students write an advertising strategy for the brand chosen using the 10 Step Strategy used by the advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson. This gives the student the chance to see the factors required in order to make strategic decisions based on information.

Impact

This idea has been implemented in Advertising Principles, Advertising Strategy, Copywriting and Advertising Research courses. Furthermore it has been used in classes that range from 15 students to more than 100 students. It has been effective in measuring the student's learning of the information, while providing the professor a constant foundation of information to build upon and reference in class and in examples.

Students have been overtly enthusiastic about the exercises. They enjoy sharing the information within the class and are excited about the fact they are practicing the profession in a way, albeit in a classroom setting. Furthermore, many students have used the exercises in interviews for internships or full-time employment. The exercises allow the students to apply what has been taught in the classroom to real world scenarios. In addition, the exercises allow the professor the opportunity to use real world cases in teaching, yet the students are providing the solutions to the advertising problem while learning the skills of strategic thinking.

Examples

The examples include the advertising questionnaire, the 10 Step Strategy format and a list of possible product categories.

Advertising Questionnaire
1. How many people live in the United States?
2. How many families live in the United States?
3. Can you think of an advertising campaign that is directed to everybody in the country?
4. How would you define advertising?
5. Is advertising a strong force, sometimes strong/sometimes weak, or a weak force? Explain.
6. Name all the brands you can remember having seen or heard being advertised yesterday.
7. Name specific brands of products that you use regularly.
8. Describe the World Wide Web and its importance to advertising
9. (a) How much money is spent on advertising in the United States?
(b) How much money does this work out per capita?
10. Look at the various advertisements presented in class. Describe what those ads are trying to do.

10 Steps to an Effective Strategy
A strategy should be written with knowledge of a brand's competitive position. The brand's situation within its market will substantially govern its Target Group and Proposition, and the Role of the advertising.

A. Target Group (whom are you talking to)
1. Determine the target group in terms of the planned source of business.
2. Using MRI, define the target group demographically.
3. Through analysis of various sources, define the target group psychographically.

B. Proposition (what will you say to the target group)

4. Study the functional characteristics of the brand and its competitors. Understand the brand's functionality from the consumer's perspective. What functional features should be demonstrated in the advertising? This will be a motivator.

5. Determine the extent to which functional features differentiate your brand from its competitors. Do not give up easily. This should be a functional discriminator.

6. Determine the non-functional qualities- the personality- of the brand. Again, this is from the consumer's perspective, not your own. Think about the brand as a person - what's its personality?

7. The brand's personality will be (by definition) unique. Determine the source of this uniqueness. This is what should be communicated in your advertising and it normally represents your most important discriminator.

8. Determine the balance of motivators and discriminators in your advertising. Remember, a motivator is a brand argument that relates to the category; a discriminator is brand specific. As a general rule, larger older brands rely more on motivators than smaller newer brands. But all advertising should be a mix of both motivators and discriminators, and this strongly influences the tone of voice of the advertising. This should be unique to the brand and should be defined as far as possible in the strategy. There is also a balance of the rational vs. emotional argument in the advertising.

C. Ways in Which the Campaign Should Work

9. What is the role of the advertising? How directly should it work? Plot the role on the King Continuum.

10. Include additional points about the communications gestalt in particular, how media and promotions should work in conjunction with the creative content of the campaign.

Store Check Product Categories
(Only 2 per student)

- ☐ Bar soap
- ☐ Liquid laundry detergents
- ☐ Shampoo (only, not conditioner)
- ☐ Diet carbonated soft drinks
- ☐ Regular carbonated soft drinks
- ☐ Ice cream
- ☐ Mayonnaise
- ☐ Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals
- ☐ Peanut butter
- ☐ Toilet tissue
- ☐ Ground coffee
- ☐ Ketchup
- ☐ Margarine (tub)
- ☐ Canned soup
- ☐ Domestic beer
- ☐ Toothpaste
- ☐ Pain relievers
- ☐ Dog food (canned)
- ☐ Ready-to-eat cookies
- ☐ Dry cake mixes

- ☐ Yogurt
- ☐ Frozen entrees
- ☐ Dishwashing liquid
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ Trash bags
- ☐ Cooking oil
- ☐ Salad dressing (bottled)
- ☐ Popcorn
- ☐ Mustard
- ☐ Spaghetti sauce
- ☐ Snack crackers
- ☐ Juice (non-refrigerated)
- ☐ Bottled water
- ☐ Salted snacks (potato chips, etc.)
- ☐ Disposable diapers
- ☐ Preserves (jams & jellies)
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Shaving cream
- ☐ Pickles
- ☐ Packaged cold cuts

Using Vigorous Verbs and Colorful Phrases in Newswriting

How to write a stronger lead and news story that grabs an audience's attention

Patricia S. Tillotson, M.A.M.C.
Southern University and A & M College
Nicholls State University

Introduction

Journalists and reporters often have a difficult time finding the right verb to express the appropriate action in their lead sentence. The right action verb and/or colorful phrase used in the lead sentence helps to propel the lead forward and makes the audience want to listen or want to read further.

Rationale

Compiling and using a list of verbs for print and broadcast journalism students can serve as a handy reference when writing. We all get writer's block sometimes when writing. But if the journalist had a list of verbs and colorful phrases, he/she can use the verbs or modify the phrases when writing. The list of verbs can be used as a handy reference whenever journalists approach writing.

Implementation

• Teacher and student can compile an ongoing list of transitive verbs and active verbs for usage in broadcast writing and print writing.

• Teacher and student can compile an ongoing list of colorful phrases by perusing newspaper and magazine articles and listening to the verbs that newscasters/news anchors/reporters use.

• Student and teacher should acknowledge that *verbs for print* are used in the *past tense* and *verbs for broadcast* are to be used in the *present tense* or *present perfect tense*. The list of verbs are to be compiled with these rules in mind:

Print Majors: The verb in the lead must be transitive and in the active voice. Print uses the past tense. The verb in the lead should be colorful and vigorous enough to accelerate the reader to the object or make the reader pause and think. Do not use adjectives or adverbs. The lead should never start with a participial phrase.

Broadcast Majors: The verb should be transitive, colorful, vigorous, and have ear appeal to a listening audience. When writing for broadcast use the present tense/present perfect tense whenever appropriate. Although they can be used, try avoiding ad-

jectives and adverbs. Use active not passive voice. Avoid starting a story with a participial phrase or a dependent clause.

List of Verbs
For example: Print vs. Broadcast

Advocated/Is Advocating
Has Advocated/Will Advocate
Advocated/Advocate
Blasted/Blast
Cinched/Cinch
Confiscated/Confiscate
Dashed/Dash
Deluged/Deluge
Eeked-out/Eek-out
Flinched/Flinch
Gripped/Grip
Hammered/Hammer
Inked/Ink
Jabbed/Jab
Kicked/Kick
Launched/Launch/Launching
Navigated/Navigate
Punctuated/Punctuate
Quashed/Quash
Recoiled/Recoil
Riddled/Riddle
Shellacked/Shellack/Shellacking
Singed/Singe
Toppled/Topple
Trussed/Truss
Veered/Veer
Whisked/Whisk

List of Phrases
Example used in sentence:

The accident *reduced cars to twisted steel*.

- blitzed by the spectacular blaze/fire

- reduced cars to twisted steel

- residents braved flames

- succumbed to the siren call of a high-speed chase

- the knife-wielding attacker

- Titan of Trouble

Impact

   Students can rely on this list of familiar verbs and colorful phrases as a ready reference to aid them in writing. My daughter is a broadcast journalist that is currently working in Radio Broadcasting. The List of Verbs and Colorful Phrases serves as a resource that helps her to write and report the news and traffic without having to search for the right active verb(s) or colorful phrase (s). I feel rewarded for my efforts in implementing this writing resource, because my daughter uses it faithfully in her work and my former students have a list of verbs they can add to or refer to when writing a news story. This idea has also motivated students to listen to the news and read the newspaper more. It is often difficult to get beginning journalists to read and listen to the news. This is a mission all journalism teachers should explore!

Deconstructing the Newspaper Feature Article

How to teach students about the component parts
of a newspaper feature article

Diana Tonnesson, M.S.
University of Florida

Introduction

To drive home the point that feature articles are distinctly different from hard news stories, and to teach students about the component parts of a feature article, students are given a short (10 paragraph) "deconstructed" feature article and asked to reconstruct it during the first class session. To deconstruct a feature article for them, simply photocopy a short newspaper feature article, use scissors to cut up various pieces of the article (lead, nut graph, sections of the middle and ending), shuffle the component parts and paste or tape them onto a blank sheet of paper from which you can make copies. Then ask the students to number the paragraphs in the order in which they appeared in the original article. Following the exercise, hand out a copy of the original article for comparison.

Rationale

In order to complete the exercise, students must identify the beginning and end of the story, and must use the article's transitions, anecdotes, AP style and other literary devices to piece together the middle of the story. The tight writing characteristic of feature articles is precisely what allows the students to successfully complete the exercise. This exercise makes a good icebreaker for the first day of class as well as a springboard into a discussion about what makes a feature article tick.

Implementation

• Good feature articles are tightly written. The exercise demonstrates that feature articles rely on a narrative writing style characterized by a clear beginning, middle and ending, longer paragraphs, the use of transitions to help move the reader through the story, and anecdotes to illustrate issues and events in the story. The students must use these devices to piece the story back together again.

• Feature articles rely on sensory details to bring the story to life. Another distinguishing characteristic of feature articles is the reporter's reliance on his or her observations. Often, however, beginning feature writing students confuse "observations" with "opinions" and begin infusing their own opinions into their feature articles. The reconstructed feature article usually contains one or two examples of sensory details and reporter's observations to help clarify this point, and to demonstrate to students that, when reporting a feature story, there's no substitute for being there.

• Feature articles may have a slant or angle but are always based on verifiable facts. Another misconception students sometimes have about feature articles is that the stories are slanted (not objective) and therefore may rely on the author's conjecture, or that by "borrowing" storytelling techniques from fiction writing, the reporter is at liberty to fictionalize parts of the feature story. By reviewing the facts of the reconstructed story and asking the students where they think the reporter got his or her information, students come to understand that even seemingly "slanted" features with an obvious point of view are always based on verifiable facts.

Impact

This GIFT idea has been implemented in a university magazine and feature writing course, where students were asked to reconstruct either a 21-paragraph feature article or a 10-paragraph feature article. Most students were able to identify the beginnings and endings of each story. About two-thirds of the 23 students in one class were able to correctly reconstruct the 10-paragraph article. Only one student was able to correctly reconstruct the 21-paragraph article. The middle sections of both feature articles proved to be the most difficult to reconstruct. Reconstructing a shorter article works better than rebuilding a long feature. To make muddling through the middle easier, it may be necessary to section off larger portions of copy. This exercise was not graded. It was designed solely to be a puzzler or teaser to engage students and help them to see the various components of a newspaper feature article.

Job Search Package

How to prepare your students to be successful in job interviews

Lauren Vicker, Ph.D.
St. John Fisher College

Introduction

This assignment is really a series of assignments that can be incorporated into many mass communication classes, but we have used it primarily in the Interviewing class and the Senior Seminar. It gives the student an opportunity to be fully prepared before entering a professional job interview situation by having an employer-ready resume, the experience of an informational interview, interviewing practice with a classmate, and feedback from a real professional conducting a mock interview experience.

Rationale

This is an innovative idea because it was one that began as discrete assignments and evolved through trial and error along with suggestions from the students. It is also an assignment that maintains that faculty are responsible for preparing students for chosen careers in the media and for making sure that they are the appropriate choices for their students.

Implementation

This is a series of individual assignments that build over the semester to produce complete Job Search Package.

- **Resume Writing Workshop**: The Director of Career Services is invited to come to the class early in the semester to conduct a resume-writing workshop targeted at this group of majors. Students are expected to produce a resume and consult on an individual basis with the Career Services office personnel to produce a resume that is considered to be "employer-ready."

- **Informational Interview**: Students are assigned an informational interview to be conducted with a professional in a career they would like to pursue. Students are given material to read on conducting informational interviews. They are given guidance on how to choose an interviewee, but they are responsible for contacting the professional, setting up the interview, planning an agenda for the interview, conducting the interview, writing a paper on the experience, and reporting the highlights of their experience to the class.

- **Job Search on the Internet**: Students are required to search for entry-level jobs or internships in their field using the Internet. They can receive assistance from library resource personnel or Career Services if needed. Our Career Services staff now offers a Job Search Strategy workshop, and this will be incorporated into the class in the next academic year.

- **Selection Interview Practice:** Following the classroom lecture/discussion portion of employment interviews, the students are divided into two-person teams according to their career interests. They plan and conduct 15-20 minute interviews with each other and tape record these interviews. Then they listen back to the interviews together and analyze their strengths and weaknesses in the interview process.

- **Mock Employment Interview**: Students arrange a mock interview with a professional in a position to give them employment after graduation. These interviewers are often college alumni, contacts made through internships, or contacts made through professors in the students' field of interest. The student sends a resume and cover letter ahead of time, prepares for the interview as if it were a real interview, and

leaves the interviewer an evaluation form to be returned to the instructor upon completion of the interview. Students write a paper with a description of their interview and a final copy of their resume. Students receive the evaluation form back with the evaluation of the paper.

Impact

Students describe themselves as feeling more confident and prepared to seek internships and professional employment as a result of being guided through this process. The practice beforehand and the mock interviews are often cited as the most critical components of this area, although the informational interview is always their favorite assignment. Additionally, some students discover that what they thought was a chosen career is not exactly what they are seeking.

Please Don't Eat the Data: M&M's and Polls

How to teach basic math skills to journalism majors using problem-based learning

Kathleen Woodruff Wickham, Ed.D.
University of Mississippi

Introduction

Problem-based learning enables students to relate basic math skills to the real world of journalism. PBL also develops critical thinking skills, analytical skills and teamwork.

Rationale

Problem-based learning begins with asking the students a good question. The question drives the assignment and the research and/or project that in turn leads to answering the question. It is sufficient, and sometimes necessary, to start with a basic lecture before moving to the project. But the learning process is concluded with discussion to reinforce the learning, fill-in gaps generated by the students and to point out strengths and weaknesses in the process.

In PBL, the pedagogical focus is on engagement (reaction and interaction) to increase cognitive learning, active learning, reflection and general application beyond the classroom. The focus is on having the student encounter a problem, develop a mode of inquiry, and take responsibility for learning. Learning is driven by constructivism and is not a receptive process. The focus is on understanding, not memorization.

In this example, problem-based learning was used to teach a freshmen level media writing class the basics of polling. The problem was centered on polls released regarding the most recent presidential election. Students were challenged to determine the reliability and validity of the polls using basic statistical techniques.

Implementation

• The problem: For example, a reporter not familiar with statistical analysis might report:

Candidate Tim Korp is ahead in the polls following a debate with Candidate Amanda Bartlett based on a poll done by Voters Choice that found 53 percent of those polled favored Korp compared to 47 percent favoring Bartlett.

• The lecture: An important fact, the margin of error, is often overlooked in reporting poll results.

The margin of error is, for this example, plus or minus 4 percent. That means there is no difference in the two candidates' ranking in this example (47 + 4 = 51 vs 53 - 4 = 49). The two percentages could possibly overlap depending on error, creating the potential for no difference in results.

• The question: What do we mean by margin of error?

The margin of error refers to a statistical tool used to balance against "error" in sampling (Example—too many men, too many middle age folks), questions (bias, lack of clarity) etc.—things that are unseen that might affect the actual outcome. This is the simple explanation. There are multiple types of error. The bottom line is that no survey or poll is perfect. Statisticians developed margin of error to compensate for this.

The margin of error is based on the sample size—the more people polled the smaller the possible error. Statisticians have generated charts showing the margin of error based on sample sizes. It is not an arbitrary figure.

• The mode of inquiry: To demonstrate margin of error, try this exercise:

Using bags of M&Ms (or other colored candy) assign each person a different color to count. Assign each candidate a color(s). Advise group members not to eat the data and to include the cracked M&Ms in the count. (Eating the data is unethical.)

(Or, as an alternative give one group two bags, another group three bags and a third group four bags so that the size of the sample varies and thus, the margin of error will vary.)

Consult a statistician's manual/textbook to determine the margin of error for your sample (total number of M&Ms counted by everybody). If using the alternative exercise, compare the margin of error for the different groups/polls. Compare the differences.

Find out what percentage of the whole each color is (in my class exercise we arbitrarily assigned red and brown to Korp, blue and yellow to Bartlett and green to the third party candidate—Dennis Fletcher).

Assume all the M&Ms in three bags were counted and the total came to 2,642. The margin of error chart indicates that with a sample of 2,642 the margin of error is plus or minus .44 percent at the 99 percent confidence level and 1.4 percent at the 95 per-

cent confidence level.

• The outcome: We can write that:

In the Voters Choice poll conducted after the debate, 52 percent of those polled supported candidate Tim Korp and 37 percent supported candidate Karen Bartlett. The poll had a plus or minus margin of error of 1.4 percent and was evaluated at the 95 percent confidence level indicating a significance difference between the candidates in the polls.

Impact

In order to make learning meaningful to students, teachers have to make instruction explicit and tied into the student's own experience. Problem-based learning provides students with opportunities for hands-on learning, meets the needs of diverse students and enables students with different learning styles to make connections between theory and practice. In addition PBL enables students to extract abstract knowledge from their experience and develop the cognitive skills needed to apply that knowledge to similar situations in the future.

Students enrolled in Introduction to Media Writing are freshmen and sophomores with an expressed desired to work in journalism. Many, however, have weak math skills as evident by a diagnostic test given at the beginning of the semester. Weekly math skill assignments are part of the course requirements. Exercises developed using PBL techniques are viewed as enriching and positive by the students based on a semester-end survey. Many noted that they began to see the connection through assignments like the M & M assignment.

Active learning is also viewed as "more fun" by students raised on the entertainment qualities of television. By assisting students to think and learn on their own they are also more likely to connect all parts of a course with a larger worldview of the field and to become lifelong learners.

When using PBL, instructors should also concentrate on authenticate learning, have

a viable assessment method developed, develop clear learning objectives and link assessment to learning objectives.

Examples

Following are more details from the M&M exercise conducted in Fall 2000.

Assume all the M&Ms in three bags were counted and the total came to 2,642 M&Ms.

Korp had 1, 360 "votes" or 51.4 percent of the votes
Bartlett had 930 "votes" or 35.2 percent of the votes
Fletcher had 352 "votes" or 13.3 percent of the votes

• The margin of error chart indicates that with a sample of 2,642 the margin of error is plus or minus .44 percent at the 99 percent confidence level and 1.4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. (I'll explain confidence level in a moment).

• For this example, choose the 95 percent confidence level figure.

• To determine the true difference in the percentages subtract the margin of error from the largest number and compare it with the highest possible of the lower two numbers.
51.4 - 1.4 = 50
Add the margin of error to the lower figure(s)
35.2 + 1.4 = 36.6
13.3 + 1.4 = 14.7
At the 95 percent confidence level it is obvious Korp is ahead.

Confidence level: what's that?

• Another issue in reporting polls is the confidence level, which is a bit more complicated to understand, but goes to the heart of accurate reporting.

• When conducting polls researchers, in advance, assign a number called a confi-dence level—this is the level (percent) at which they have confidence in the results. By definition confidence level is viewed as the probability of obtaining a given result by chance. Researchers select the confidence level in advance based on pre-testing and previous research. The purpose is to prevent the researcher from being tempted to tweak the results for a more favorable result.

• The confidence level is usually reported at the 95 percent or 90 percent level, but can go higher or lower (think of it this way—if you were taking a new drug would you want one tested at the 98 percent confidence level or the 75 percent confidence level?).

• The confidence level figure is part of the same chart as the margin of error chart. The confidence level should always be reported as part of the story because it gives the reader a chance to assess the results.

Final notes: Just because someone does a survey does not mean it has validity. Always consider, and report:

• Who sponsored the survey: organizations seeking to promote their point of view may report slanted results based on their views. The credibility of the polling organization goes to the heart of interpreting the accuracy of the results. Does the sponsoring organization have a vested interest in the outcome? Is the organization experienced in polling? What were the questions? Are the results pulled from the larger sample with no change in the margin of error?

• The size of the sample: the larger the sample and the more random the polling the more accurate the results. The sample should represent the population being queried. Consider the impact of varying demographics, limiting questions to only those people with listed phone numbers and making contact during limited hours of the day. These factors could impact the outcome. If a telephone survey is conducted and only those folks

with listed numbers are called the poll is not random.

• The method used to collect the data: random or self-selected. Random samples are random in that every person in a group has an equal chance of selection. The results of random samples can be applied to a larger group because every person in the study group had an equal opportunity to be selected. Self-selecting polls only report the results of people who cared one way or another to either call a particular number, reply by email or are willing to be interviewed in person in a public place (think of mall surveys). The results cannot be generalized beyond those who choose to answer.

• The actual questions: wording can impact the results. Are the questions clear with only one topic included in each question? Were the questions balanced with both sides represented? Were the questions easy to understand? Can you detect any bias in the questions that could impact the results? Were questions open-ended or multiple-choice?

• Open-ended questions open the door to bias in interpretation. Multiple coders are needed to decrease the opportunities for bias—and should be reported in the report's methodology section. Sometimes organizations will combine the answers from questions to be able to report a more favorable result.

• Your own review of the numbers: get the raw data, if you can. If not, look over any charts or supplementary information provided by the poll's sponsor. Do the math yourself. Determine how the poll's sponsors came up with the figures.

• Their numbers might not be accurate. Did those reporting the results pull one group out from the whole? That changes the margin of error and the random sample parameters.

Grammarama

How to build competence in and enthusiasm for grammar

Carol Zuegner, Ph.D.
Creighton University

Introduction

Grammarama helps students identify and correct grammar errors as well as explains the rules and offers guidelines to help them discover errors. It's based on the simple concepts of teamwork and competition in a game show-like format. Students split into teams that compete against each other for points based on correct answers and reasons why they are correct.

Rationale

I looked for a way to teach grammar that would involve more than students listening to me and then correcting grammar mistakes in a series of written exercises.

Grammarama comes at the end of a grammar section in an editing class. Finding a way to make grammar fun (well, relatively speaking) helps the students develop some enthusiasm for the topic and demonstrates the value in the ability to identify a grammatical error and explain why it is an error.

Implementation

Grammarama comes as a part of a grammar section in an editing class. We focus on the most common mistakes: agreement, possessives/plurals, who/whom, that/which, commas, semicolons, colons, and hyphens. I find a wide range of grammar backgrounds among the students, which is why we do a quick review of each topic.

• We begin with a support group-type session where each of us (including me) say where we learned most of our grammar and what we find the most troubling. (I had a fourth-grade nun named Sister Mary Nathaniel and I still look up lie/lay every time I use it.) The session is designed to make each student feel he or she is not alone or the only one who doesn't get it. I also get a sense of what frustrates them the most.

• After the support group session, we quickly review the basic rules for each of the grammar areas I focus on. I offer suggestions on how to spot errors and how to correct them. The students also use an editing book that covers the same material.

• The last part of the grammar section is Grammarama. Students break into four or five teams of three or four people each. Each team chooses a name. Each team receives a sheet with some 30 to 40 sentences with grammatical errors. The teams get about a half-hour or so to go over the sentences as a team and come up with the right answer and the reason why it's correct.

• I'm sure there's a more technologically

advanced way to do this, but I put the sentence numbers in a hat to add randomness to the actual game.

• I pull a sentence number out of the hat. Each team takes a turn to answer. The team must come up with the right answer to earn one point and provide the rationale for another point.

• If a team misses a question, the other teams vie for the chance to answer it by raising their hands. (This is where I usually call in a colleague or another student to be my lovely assistant. The competition can get quite heated, and I need another pair of eyes to determine who is the first to raise his or her hand. I also can use someone to keep score.)

• The team with the most points at the end of the round wins.

Impact

The impact on the students is remarkable and comes in two forms.

First, the students work together in teams and talk about grammar, about what's right and why. My favorite part of the exercise is walking around the room and listening to spirited debate on who/whom or whether a hyphen is appropriate. I feel that the students gain some level of comfort in talking about grammar and explaining the reasons behind it.

Second, the enthusiasm that comes from the competition also helps them feel more comfortable with grammar. I think it helps them see that grammar is not just some arbitrary torture, but something that can make their writing lives easier. It is one of the most active-learning sessions I've found in my classes. Students who normally would have little or nothing to say, particularly about grammar, are throwing their arms in the air and begging to be called on to win points for their team. I myself am refreshed and rejuvenated from the experience.

GIFT Sponsors

Community College Journalism Association

    The need for a national organization to meet problems of junior college journalism in the United States prompted the formation of the Junior College Journalism Association in 1968. The organization changed its name to the Community College Journalism Association (CCJA) in August 1974. Recognition was partially gained for community college journalism when the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) started accepting community college journalism professors as regular members and, shortly afterward, recognized CCJA as an affiliate. CCJA was the second non-division of AEJMC to hold membership and a vote on the Advisory Board, known today as the Council of Divisions. In 1996, CCJA was granted full division status by AEJMC, which was formalized for the first time in the Council of Divisions By-Laws. CCJA publishes *The Community College Journalist* and its website is *www.ccjaonline.org*.

Small Programs Interest Group

    The Small Programs Interest Group (SPIG) was established in 1994. Its mission within AEJMC is to be a forum for those faculty in small programs whose primary emphasis is teaching, advising and mentoring undergraduate students. Faculty who work in smaller programs face a full range of challenges. They teach an average of four or more courses a semester, advise students and often college media and, at the same time, cope with limited resources. The practicalities of running their programs require that they be teachers first, and SPIG helps its members accomplish this task by frequently offering programs at the AEJMC convention that focus on teaching. For more information about SPIG, visit *www.angelo.edu/ org/spig/.*