DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 110 075 IR 002 378

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TITLE Instructional Video Tapes for the Humanities.
INSTITUTION Dallas Baptist Coll., Tex.
SPONS AGENCY Association for Graduate Education and Research of North Texas.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Audiovisual Instruction; Costs; Discussion (Teaching Technique); Feedback; *Film Production; Group Instruction; Higher Education; History Instruction; *Humanities Instruction; Independent Study; Instructional Films; Instructional Media; Retarded Readers; Student Ability; *Teacher Developed Materials; *Video Tape Recordings; Western Civilization
IDENTIFIERS Dallas Baptist College

ABSTRACT

Dallas Baptist College (DBC) produced four videotapes for use in its freshman humanities course: The Heritage of Western Man. The videotapes were modeled on television documentaries, and included study guides with a student response and feedback mechanism. Under this system, class time can be devoted to discussion and analysis. Media cannot totally replace reading in the humanities classroom, nor can it develop critical thinking. But the videotapes are effective in conveying factual information and have allowed poor readers to enroll in the humanities course simultaneously with their special reading courses. While many good commercial materials are available, only locally produced media can really be integrated into a specific teaching situation. Because of the cost and production time involved, it is advisable to produce videotapes which are interdisciplinary in subject and useful in several courses. Cooperation between faculty and the video production staff is essential to insure high quality content and an effective presentation. At DBC, the use of electronic media has not precluded interest in or use of books by students. It has been found, rather, that the two forms can be combined in a number of interesting ways to achieve the goals of the humanities. (SL)

Instructional Video Tapes for the Humanities

Electronic media offer several advantages for college instruction. Students with full time jobs and family responsibilities have been able to use their time more flexibly when basic course information has been recorded on audio and video tapes available at their convenience, allowing them to attend class once weekly to ask questions, discuss problems, or relate the taped materials to printed assignments. Students with reading deficiencies can do well in regular college courses with media bases while they work to improve their literary skills in remedial reading and writing classes. Media-based courses can be organized in self-pacing arrangements that give the students control of the learning process, enabling them to proceed as fast as they can or to repeat materials many times without feeling that everyone knows their problems. In addition to these advantages, the use of electronic media for routine pedagogical activities can free more class time for work that develops real intellectual skills, the higher cognitive abilities identified by Benjamin Bloom as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. More specifically, by releasing class time from the relatively simple dissemination of factual information and basic concepts, electronic media make possible more varied and therefore potentially richer educational experiences in all disciplines, including the Humanities. Combining the attractiveness of film and the advantages of being custom-produced for a particular course, video tapes especially offer opportunities to the Humanities. While audio tapes tend to be more successful for the analytical development of clearly defined topics, video tapes lend themselves well to several types of content and teaching purposes.

The video tapes described below were patterned after the documentaries on commercial television, a format that could be adapted for topics in any of the Humanities. The organization, teaching objectives, and uses of these tapes are thus more significant than their particular content, which was designed for a history course that included considerable amounts of materials from other disciplines. Produced at Dallas Baptist College (DBC) between 1972 and 1974 with the aid of a grant from the TIES-US consortium of the TAGER network,[1] three of the video tapes -- "The Renaissance: Art and Science;" "What Is Man?" and "Man and Society" -- were experiments for a course entitled "The Heritage of Western Man."[2] The fourth tape, "Origins of Western Class Structure," was one of the earliest tapes made for Heritage of Western Man, which was introduced in 1969-70 as part of a freshman curriculum built around a random-access retrieval system in an attempt by the college to find alternatives to traditional classroom lectures. Students enrolled in Heritage of Western Man got their basic course information from audio and video tapes and met class once weekly to integrate the taped facts with short readings from original documents and occasionally with period fiction and interpretative selections from monographs and scholarly articles. Students with special interests and those with learning problems were invited to attend extra class meetings to deal with their respective needs. With regard to the tapes themselves, the students expressed pronounced preference for video over audio tapes, but they were more sensitive to technical quality in both than to content in either. Over a period of five years four types of video tapes were produced for use in Heritage of Western Man.

The most basic teaching activity is, of course, the transfer of information, and this was the first use for video tapes in 1969 when Heritage

of Western Man was introduced. The best video tape produced that year was entitled "The Origins of Western Class Structure," the first in a series of tapes on social organization. Intended to convey facts, every visual in the tape supported the information in the script. "The Origins of Western Class Structure" consisted of a simple historical outline and description of the social classes that appeared in Europe after 1000 A.D. The study guide required the student periodically to recall and write facts heard during the previous two or three minutes, and both the narration and visuals provided immediate correction or reinforcement. The tape used a minimum of visuals, and each picture supported or illustrated a fact or concept in the narration. Word cards containing the questions to be answered, then the answers, remained on the screen while the student was supposed to be writing. During the actual narration the student had no distractions from the screen and the supportive visuals. The straightforward nature of this tape made it equally successful for very able and for weaker students. Because the students had the basic facts before they reached class, class time could be spent relating the tape to reading assignments, discussing questions that might have arisen during the viewing of the tape, or elaborating on any points that the professor considered oversimplified or even inaccurate in the tape. It is important to note that while the tape was not expected to be the student's only acquaintance with Western class structure, it did provide a solid beginning for a complex, even controversial topic.

Similar to that used for "The Origins of Western Class Structure," a second format for video instruction in Heritage of Western Man was designed in 1974 to convey more complex concepts. Entitled "The Renaissance: Art and Science," the best example of this type sought to develop a comment

by Herbert Butterfield, that both art and science in the Renaissance grew out of the same basic intellectual characteristics and methods.[3] The tape drew similarities between Renaissance art and science with regard to their mutual use of observation and experimentation, their rejection of authority, and their discovery and/or invention of new skills, techniques, and tools. The visuals were chosen for persons with little or no familiarity with the Renaissance and therefore consisted of some of the most famous Italian art. The accompanying study guide was designed to allow the viewer to watch the screen during all explanatory narration, then to write from memory the answers to periodic questions on the information explained during the previous three to five minutes. Immediate supplying of the answer corrected or reinforced the student's response. The tape ended with a short recapitulation of its main points. Produced for use on television, this particular content would perhaps have been more effective in a slide-tape arrangement. Because recognition of certain of the works of art was included among the tape's stated learning objectives, students often needed more control over the pacing of materials than television allowed, even though many of the art visuals were repeated several times during the tape. In addition to these disadvantages to the students, the beauty of many of the art slides was spoiled either by television's limitation regarding vertical display or by the fact that like most campus systems, DBC's equipment showed tapes in black and white only. Despite these flaws, this particular tape was a successful instructional unit, lending itself to combination with excerpts from original sources like Leonardo's treatise on painting and from Copernicus' On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, both of which illustrate the importance of independent observation. Class discussions related the documents to the tape

or dealt with the materials in the tape itself. Because of the complexity of the concepts involved, this tape was most successful for the more advanced and able students, though others also learned the materials.

In all cases successful instructional tapes -- those requiring that information be learned -- involved the student in the transfer of information by requiring some kind of response. They never allowed the student to remain passive. The study guide might simply require the filling in of blanks as the student listened; it might employ the response-feedback technique described above; or it might ask the student to record personal opinions about the materials in the tape for the class discussion.

Scripts for instructional tapes had a relatively simple organization and a straightforward presentation with no more than four or five concepts to be learned. Adequate explanation of these concepts and inclusion of sufficient details combined with the response-feedback format to produce twelve- to twenty-minute tapes, lengths that proved conducive to adequate absorption of new materials. Such tapes ended with a summary or recapitulation of the major ideas, and the objectives were clearly stated, either at the beginning or the end or both. Professors could, of course, assign as many tapes as desired in a given week.

While some courses could use more electronic media than others, obviously none of the Humanities could ever entirely dispense with the printed page. Literature students, for example, could certainly benefit from films like the Learning Corporation of America's "Changing World of Charles Dickens," but no film could substitute for the actual reading of Dickens' novels. Similarly, although most history content can be programmed for audio and video tapes, the real contribution of history as a discipline is taught by the analysis and interpretation of original materials. Thus, electronic

media should not be expected to do all the tasks of college teaching; some kinds of instruction must be done "live" and in traditional ways. The skills of rational, orderly criticism of potentially emotional ideas and issues, the ability to listen to and respectfully analyze the opinions of others, the application of formal learning to practical situations, the relating of classic works of literature, philosophy, and art to one's own times -- these intellectual skills are gained best, perhaps only, by actual participation in many discussions or, for the more reticent, at least by first-hand observation of such discussions. It would also seem that the abilities to search out, analyze, organize, interpret, evaluate, and communicate large amounts of information are best learned by some kind of traditional research. While electronic media can successfully convey any kind and any level of information that is properly organized and in this way save class time for other activities, the higher intellectual skills -- real thinking -- must be taught in other ways.

The professors of Heritage of Western Man usually tried to teach students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate in the class discussions, and two formats were found to use video tapes to contribute to the learning of these skills. With group viewing, video was found to be successful first, for provoking discussion, and second, for analyzing assigned topics for their relationships to each other. Such video tapes employed a central idea or theme around which to organize information that the students had studied or would study. For example, a video tape entitled "What Is Man?" was inspired by the then-current best seller The Naked Ape, but its concern with the problem of human nature made it relevant even after the book had slipped from public interest. The tape's one main idea was that scientific discoveries since the Renaissance have forced us to change our

concept of ourselves and our place in the universe. The script defined, somewhat broadly, the medieval philosophy of man and examined its breakdown after the work of Copernicus, Darwin, Freud, and Mendel. The narration included several very definite statements intended to be challenged during the following class discussion. The final question of the tape -- "Is man only a 'naked ape'?" -- was tacitly answered in the negative by the final few minutes of the visuals, consisting of some of the world's greatest art. This tape was used both to introduce a topic of study, What does it mean to be human? and to motivate a discussion of how our society defines the term "human being," thus helping to launch a later study of the development since the Renaissance of the modern concept of the individual. "What Is Man?" also led into discussions of how scientific discoveries affect nonscientific areas of thought. Since this tape was produced for group viewing and immediate class response, no study guide accompanied it.

It is true that many interesting materials of this type have been produced by companies like the Learning Corporation of America, and their films, audio tapes, and sound-slide sets are often helpful, both for instruction and for motivation. It is still necessary, however, to "do one's own thing" in order to have electronic materials that can be really integrated into a particular course, that is, materials that belong with the content, development of the course structure, instructional methods, teaching of intellectual skills, and problems or points of view of the students. The commercial materials often say too much, leaving only relatively shallow questions for discussion. While many are excellent for a change of pace, only sometimes do they really "fit."

Like that intended to provoke discussion, Heritage of Western Man's fourth type of video tape was more effective in group viewing, losing impact if time elapsed between viewing and discussion. The best example of this type was a tape called "Man and Society," which was produced in a format that could be useful either as an introduction or as a summary for several topics. "Man and Society" analyzed four of the basic institutions of society -- government, economics, education, and social organization -- in a comparative manner by using visual examples from several cultures. Education was identified as a "key" to participation in any society: by controlling access to education, the tape suggested, societies control participation in their institutions. Intended to analyze several topics of study and to show how they were related, this particular tape was found most effective at the end of the several topics involved. In fact, without previous learning of factual materials, "Man and Society" was almost meaningless to the students. Accustomed to thinking of "society" as a kind of amorphous mass of everybody, the students had never realized that any society consists of some kind of organization and regularization of specific functions, activities, and relationships. Only after studying the background of Western institutions -- historical and contemporary forms of government, the development of capitalism, socialism, and communism, the history of Western class structure, and the demands of workers, women, and minorities for the rights of participation -- were the students able to approach the essentially humanistic question, To what degree are human beings products of a society? Thus, like "What Is Man?", "Man and Society" was used to provoke discussion, as well as to relate several topics of study. "Man and Society" was interdisciplinary in nature, and its content was reviewed by professors in the various disciplines involved before it was presented to the students.

These four video tapes and others like them conveyed basic information and analyzed important problems and concepts in Heritage of Western Man, enabling the professors in the course to do more than teach facts. In addition, because the basic course information was available on audio and video tapes, students with low ACT scores could enroll in Heritage of Western Man while they were working in the college's Reading and Writing Skills Laboratories, to which they were often assigned as an adjunct to freshman English. When Heritage of Western Man was replaced by a traditional history of modern Europe in the fall of 1974, such students either failed or had to be advised to withdraw from the course at midsemester. It cannot be denied that this student generation lacks skills taken for granted in former years. Despite their deficiencies, many of these students are thoughtful, intelligent, often well-informed, and sometimes articulate persons. Through the mass media they have had contact with a wide range of information and ideas, however shallow and cliché-ridden, and it is necessary to "occupy their minds" while they drill in basic skills. These students, in other words, must be taught to read and write <u>while</u> they are studying college-level concepts: they will not wait for ideas and issues to follow basic literary skills. For these students and even for many who do read and write adequately, video tapes can be combined with printed assignments to offer the Humanities additional approaches to traditional materials.

The inclusion of such video tapes as these in a course requires a clear concept of one's teaching goals upon which to base the planning of two or more media. In order to choose those materials to be taped and those to be read, one must plan the teaching purpose to be conveyed by a particular assignment. Video production involves its own kinds of problems, and

it is necessary to decide if the product will be worth the effort and expense. Like everything else, video tapes vary in cost and in time needed for production. It can take many hours to select and photograph visuals, plus a fair amount of imagination to find pictures to fit a script. A relatively simple tape like "The Origins of Western Class Structure" can be produced for less than $100 and in about thirty hours. A much more complex tape like "The Renaissance: Art and Science," which required four times as many visuals as "Origins," costs around $350 and eighty hours. While the twelve-minute "Origins" used few visuals and even included many slides made for previously produced video tapes, almost all the materials were new for "Renaissance," which was twenty-seven minutes long. Neither of these tapes used excerpts from films, which would have required even more time to select, edit, and combine with other materials. Because a good video tape can cost as much as and sometimes more than a commercial film, it is a good idea to produce video tapes that can be used for more than one course, hopefully for several years or even several times during the term. Thus, it is advisable to choose interdisciplinary subjects and content or at least topics that will be useful in courses that enroll significant numbers of students.

The format and techniques used in the production of a video tape can contribute a great deal to the success of the lesson. Theoretically, any content can be put into any format, but particular materials are likely to fit one format better than another. For example, video does not lend itself to an analysis of the British Constitution, a topic difficult if not impossible to present visually. Because of the number of visuals likely to be required, video is not successful for the presentation of more than four or five learning objectives in any single tape. (In fact, any tape, either

audio or video, with more than four or five learning objectives will cause the students problems of retention.) Choice of the techniques or format to be used for any given material rests on a principle basic for all instructional media: the content must be adapted to the medium for which it is chosen. The filmmakers in Hollywood learned years ago that the message must be adapted to the medium, and just as a novel is rewritten into a screenplay before it is filmed, Humanities content must be adapted for video presentation. The dreariest use of video is the "talking face," the traditional classroom lecture simply recorded as delivered by a faculty member. Far more effective and interesting is an adaptation of commercial television's documentary format, which uses slides, charts, graphs, bits of moving film and filmstrips to illustrate and support the information in the narration.

Basic to all instructional production is, of course, the script, which must be written by a faculty member trained in the topic at hand. Writing for video requires development on one's visual imagination, for it is necessary to learn to think of the content in pictures and to jot down ideas for visuals as the script is written. Sometimes pictures can be used with little or no narration to make a point or to define a problem, and such visuals must be written into the script. The obvious use of visuals is to explain, illustrate, or reinforce the narration, but they can also be used on occasion to contradict the narrated ideas for a tape meant to provoke discussion. On the other hand, if the visuals contradict the script of an information tape, the viewers become confused. In all types of video tapes, too few pictures are boring, while too many distract the eye and confuse the message. Quite often, the actual pictures found during production do not

match those in the script writer's imagination, and the visuals must be rethought entirely. If a filmed sequence runs too long or if a particular picture flashes by too quickly, the message intended by the script can be changed or lost. Thus, it is necessary for script writer and production staff to consult frequently and to review each other's efforts.

The production of tapes to be used for instruction can be, in fact, a new kind of cooperative teaching. The members of the production staff at DBC had had previous experience in commercial television, and they frequently made valuable suggestions about the content, organization, or approach of a script. Their comments often resulted in valuable revisions, helping the professor-script writers to rethink the purposes or the orientation of a given lesson. In expressing their personal reactions to a script, DBC's production staff were often better at foreseeing student response to or student problems with a tape than were faculty members.

Because video materials are always inadvertantly in competition with professional television and films, a certain technical level is desirable. Each tape will most likely have to be revised two or three times before a satisfactory copy is achieved. Various problems not foreseen in the writing or during the selection and assembling of visuals tend to appear during the taping. Sometimes the inclusion of too many pictures confuses the eye, or a picture from a wrong period of history gets included. In addition, variation of the kinds of taped materials is helpful in making video instruction more palatable to students who are very likely having to learn a new method of study. For example, still pictures can be alternated with moving film; interviews can be interspaced in the formal narration. Sound effects, actualities, and background music can do far more useful things than merely add a professional touch to a video tape or enhance the

impact of a tape whose subject is controversial. Music is an especially good means of transition between ideas, particularly if the script moves from one period of time to another. Music, in fact, serves an educational purpose in itself as students become accustomed to the music identified wi ific periods of history. Music can also be used to notify the students that a change of topic is about to occur.

One perrenial problem with most documentary production is the vagueness of the copyright situation. This can be met in several ways. For some tapes it is possible to use pictures that may be regarded as public domain. For example, scenes like New York City's skyline and well-known works of art are so frequently photographed as to be virtually incapable of protection by copyright. The same thing is true for background music. For video tapes oriented toward the present, it is desirable to do as much of one's own photography and cinematography as possible, while some of the professional film companies allow use of excerpts from their films upon payment of a fee. For unique pictures, one must simply write for permission and decide if the fee involved is worth it.

A problem with electronic instruction that has persisted at DBC has been student resistance to a new method of study. Even many good students express impatience with the tapes, feeling that they could gain information faster by reading. Their complaints are only partially placated by an explanation that it is considered preferable for them to use their reading time for original documents, selected fiction, monographs, or any source which they find interesting rather than the two to six basic sources used to produce each tape. There seems to be a strong tendency among all students to associate video with entertainment, and irritation is experienced when real concentration is demanded.

In conclusion, electronic media and video tapes in particular, can enrich the offerings of the Humanities. Used to convey the basic content, they can give the Humanities more class time to teach intellectual skills, and perhaps equally significant, they can be used with other electronic media and with traditional readings to give a solid background in the Humanities to students who do not possess adequate literary skills. The Humanities are the repositories of the values and traditions of our civilization, and it is potentially a serious cultural problem that each year fewer college students seem to enroll in them. Perhaps part of the problem lies with the significant amounts of difficult reading, constituting a barrier to too many students. Some educators have expressed the hope that for a generation reared on television, the sensual appeal of color video tapes, films, film strips, and sound-slide sets can help to overcome the reluctance with which students face reading by arousing their curiosity about the contents of books. However that may be, at the very least, electronic media do not preclude interest in and use of books. DBC's institutional self-study of 1973-74 revealed that extensive use of electronic media, especially in freshman and sophomore courses, had not reduced the college library's circulation of books among the students. Students had, in fact, quadrupled their use of books in four years, though this was attributed to the new open stack arrangement rather than to any curiosity inspired by the electronics. There is not necessarily competition between electronic and printed media. They can, in fact, be combined in any number of interesting ways to achieve the goals of the Humanities.

- Elizabeth York Enstam

NOTES

[1]Originally founded to televise graduate courses from college and university campuses to local firms employing technicians and engineers who wanted to work for higher degrees without leaving the plant, the TAGER network was later extended to provide two-way channels between each of four colleges: Austin College in Sherman, Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth, Bishop College and Dallas Baptist College in Dallas. This consortium increased the number of courses available to students at all four colleges, allowing these institutions to supplement their weaker or more overworked departments with brain power employed elsewhere.

[2]For a complete description of this course, see my article, "The Case for Electronic Media in College History Courses," The History Teacher, February, 1973, 191-200.

[3]The Origins of Modern Science, Collier Books Edition, 1962, p. 50.