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OIA 694 – Mascha Gemein
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Self-Reflection of Teaching

Today, I was able to give a brief introduction to film studies lecture to the group of approximately 200 students in AIS 160 “Many Nations of Native America”—although it was clear that there were many students absent from today’s Monday lecture. My goals for today were to (1) give a brief overview of the three eras of American Indians in film, (2) provide a film clip sample from each era, (3) connect the assigned daily reading to a film clip viewed in class, and (4) give a very brief one question pop-quiz to students in attendance for part of their AIS 160 grade.

Prior to the beginning of class, I arrived early and greeted my observers from OIA 694 as well as additional individuals that were just interested in my talk and had come (mostly AIS grad students, and my husband was included). I then went and introduced myself to the camera recording professional that had been sent to tape my presentation. After being wired up with a mic, I went and uploaded my Powerpoint early. I adjusted the volume on the video clips using the main screen and sound (I’ll discuss further issues below) and adjusted some of the lighting for students as they entered.

I began teaching promptly at 10am, which has been something other members of the teaching team have not done. However, I had timed my lecture to last exactly 44-45 minutes, giving us only five minutes of wiggle room (or, in this case, a quiz), and it was therefore imperative that I start exactly on time. I also believe, as my sections can attest to, that beginning on time is part of an instructor’s contract—if we do not start on time, then why would we require students to be in their seats on time? I began with asking students to put their cell phones away. I then told students that if they were going to keep their laptops out, they needed to be taking notes and doing nothing else on them, as we were going to be watching several film clips and did not need distractions. I was pleased that many students began putting their materials away that they did not need—something that rarely happens in the course on Monday and Wednesday lectures.

Overall, I believe my presentation was a success. I was able to spend 45-minutes covering the different eras of cinema. Many students laughed at and seemed to appreciate a few of my jokes along the way, all of which were meant to engage them. At a few areas I stopped and would ask the audience to answer a question or make a prediction. While a few students were eager to do so, a lot of students seemed like they did not wish to make any suggestions and just wanted the answers to be given to them. This is something I struggle with, because there was not enough time to pause and just wait for answers. In some cases, I received answers, but in others I would have to move on before really getting students to interact. But I do not think I could have avoided this without cutting out material, as I only have one 50-minute session to present this material to the entire class.

Commented [MNG1]: Be careful with using sarcasm p not all students my have recognized it as such.

Commented [MNG2]: After ne clip you asked the students to analyze what they saw; could that happen more throughout the lecture?

There were moments where the audio was off. This was due to embedding the videos in the Powerpoint, which apparently were done at different audio levels. Normally, I can alter the sound by using the main desk panel to adjust sound for each clips. However, today the panel was not working on the main desk and so some of the audio seemed off from where I was standing. Members of the teaching team reported that you could hear everything fine in the back row, but that sometimes the music seemed too loud or “slightly off” in relation to the voice audio. This is something I discussed with the media solutions representative (filming me) after class. He had several suggestions on how to adjust audio volumes prior to embedding the video links, but also mentioned that if I ever have a film, they can edit it down for me into the scenes that I need—which works better than pulling them from YouTube at different audio levels. I am so excited to look into this option in the future.

I also had issues adjusting the lighting in the room. I began by leaving the lights dim, but then turning them off each time a clip was played. This led to me running back and forth; although I did not actually run and would like to think I looked like I was in control of the situation, this made me feel uncomfortable. Thus, after one clip I just told the audience that they were going to remain in the dark for the rest of the presentation. I made this decision based on two factors. First, as the instructor, I was uncomfortable and believed that I would look frazzled if I kept going back and forth to turn the lights on and off. Secondly, I noticed that none of the students in the audience were taking notes. This is normal, as most students have admitted to me that they come to class sections on Friday ready to take notes then, but do not do so during Monday or Wednesday lectures. Since I saw no students taking notes, I no longer worried about lighting issues. I kept the back row of lights on for safety reasons, but turned the rest off and left them off. In the future, I’m not sure if I would do this presentation the same way—I may need more practice playing with lights. Or, it would be great if they had a controller you could keep in your hand that adjusts the lights, instead of having to go back and forth.

After the presentation, we had five minutes left for a small quiz. The students were asked one question based on the materials they had just seen. Based on the grades I gave students that participated, they all received the material and were able to receive perfect scores on the pop-quiz. I also had several student write ins saying things like “great lecture today!” and “by far the best lecture of the year please keep teaching on Mon and Wed” which made me feel like students really engaged with and enjoyed the presentation. I’m always really proud of my lectures if students give me positive feedback, because I base this lecture on them—they are all familiar with media (here, movies) and so I want them to take away a new understanding of what they are seeing on the screen when they watch a movie.

Clearly, there are a few things that I need to work on—the sound and lighting in particular. But overall, I was very proud of myself today. I think that I felt confident, and as Dr. Colombi phrased it on the way to our team meeting, “You looked relaxed, but were still giving them information, and I think they felt relaxed and receptive because of how you presented yourself.” I think alongside some of the student comments I received, this was a successful

Commented [MNG3]: Is this something you could or should have addressed? Do student know how to take notes when it comes to analyzing primary resources (in contrast to predigested bullet points of a synthesizing lecture)?

Commented [MNG4]: The quiz question was not just recall, but critical thinking. You might note that on the lesson plan and in this reflection because it shows that you try to make the students think on higher levels.

presentation. I'm looking forward to watching the film back and seeing it from the vantage point of a student in the near future.