

## HISTORY THROUGH FILM

Over the past year we have published in this department of the magazine a series of syllabi of "History Through Film" courses currently being offered in American Universities. They have been enthusiastically received by readers, many of whom are planning their own courses. We will continue to make available this kind of information to the profession and hope that you will help by sharing your experiences with us. Send along your syllabus with an introductory statement describing your approach, the goals your course hopes to fulfill, and whatever insights you might already have into teaching "history through film." We realize that not everyone interested in using film in the classroom wishes to use it this extensively, but we can all learn from each other's experience. In that spirit the experiences of film archivists and producers are welcome here as well.

The article below is not strictly speaking a course syllabus, but it offers systematic guidance for the use of visual materials in the classroom that we think worthy of your special attention.

### MAKING MULTI-MEDIA LECTURES FOR CLASSROOM USE: A CASE HISTORY

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I suppose I should begin by recounting how I got into the business of even thinking in terms of creating media presentations for my courses. Teaching Contemporary and Intellectual history, I had always made extensive use of media, since these fields are ideally suited to them. Thus I have always used films in my contemporary European and American History courses, and slides and music in my intellectual history classes. I have developed extensive collections of slides in the fields of nineteenth and twentieth century art and architecture and have made master tapes (with explanatory texts) of between one and two hours in length and con-

taining selections from the music of each period of intellectual history that I cover. Finally, in order to better service our "civilization" survey course, which at the time was run as an 1100 student lecture course, we began developing a slide set consisting of pictures, maps, graphs, and "word lists" - outlines and vocabulary lists which constitute a working outline that the students copy as they periodically are projected during the lectures. Photographed and processed by individual faculty members and by Northeastern's Office of Educational Resources, the collection now contains over 10,000 slides and is used in many courses. Parenthetically, we are now considering creating a fully integrated educational system of audio and visual tapes for this course, it was from these activities that the notion of the multi-media lectures was born.

The specific content of the lectures arose from the nature of the courses for which they were designed. In intellectual history, I devote some three weeks to the study of Romanticism as an integrated movement. The first week was devoted to its background and to an investigation of its guiding principles as well as to an analysis of the literature that argues for and against its existence as a valid term. The second week is spent in an explanation of "Romantic" philosophy, "Romantic" political, social, and economic theory, and "Romantic" science. In the third week, the various arts are investigated and conclusions, including a "Romantic" Zeitgeist or synthesis, are postulated. When I began teaching this course, I dealt with the arts as separate entities - art, architecture, music, poetry, literature - narrating the history of each movement, giving some examples from each medium - through the use of records and slides and the reading excerpts - and drawing them together at the end. I did not find this approach very satisfactory as the student became enmeshed in the details of each discipline and often found it difficult to grasp the broader synthesis. So I gradually began combining the various examples and media around the thematic principles laid down in the first week and a coherent theory of Romanticism began to emerge. But the cumbersomeness of trying to handle records, slides, narration and readings is all too apparent. I turned to educational technology to streamline the format of this presentation. In making this multi-media set, I sought to accomplish three things. First, I wanted to integrate the arts into a single audio-visual presentation that would show students the thematic similarities between them. Furthermore, I wanted the presentation itself to act as a synthesis, drawing together as much of the material from the previous two weeks of discussion, lecture, and readings (mostly in primary sources) as possible. Finally, since

the rest of the course is devoted to students giving oral and written reports as teams on the remaining cultural epochs ("Positivism", "Fin de Siècle", "Alienation/Reintegration", "Unity/Conformity") and reaching their own "synthesis", I wanted the presentation to act as a model for their work. Many of the students have in fact created their own, more limited multi-media presentations from materials (tapes and slides) that I provided.

The second subject arose from my course in European History: 1870-1921. Here, the students spend a great deal of time reading and talking about the myriad of changes that were overtaking Europe and the world in the period before and during the First World War. Living, however, in the twentieth century in the world already changed, it is difficult for the students to realize the shock that many of these changes produced or the effect on the stability and confidence of Europe that the First World War engendered. All of their textbooks dwelt in great, almost loving, detail on the military and diplomatic aspects of the period surrounding World War I, but these subtler, and to my way of thinking more important and long range social, cultural, and psychological effects were not getting through. Since I see the strife-torn and revolutionary period of the First World War and the Peace of Paris as the watershed of the twentieth century, confirming for the average European the destruction of the old order seen by many pre-war intellectuals, it is important that students not only recognize the full impact of the war, but also empathize with those human beings and the situation in which they found themselves. This I sought to accomplish by the use of film, slides, and snatches of contemporary writings from the war period. Here too a unified media format was an ideal solution, but my purposes in this instance would be not only to illustrate and to analyse that climatic episode from this angle, but also, and more importantly, to elicit an emotional response.

The actual research for the lectures began about six months before production was to begin. I searched through as many "picture books" and art texts as I could lay my hands on, making lists of paintings (and, in the instance of World War I, posters and photographs) done during the respective periods and having slides made of those that seemed pertinent. At the same time I tried to read as much of the contemporary writing (mostly poetry as that is a more compact medium, but some prose as well) and had those poems and prose selections I wanted to use copied out. Poetry anthologies, including annuals of magazine verse (for the years 1914-1918) were particularly helpful in this regard. Finally,

reading histories of music, I made lists of the music composed in the respective periods (utilizing books like Sigmund Spaeth's A History of Popular Music in America enabled me to compile lists of popular music written during the period of the First World War). Using both Schwann catalogues and various libraries, I assembled records of those pieces and songs that were available (some pieces, such as Henry Cowell's "Advertisment", Charles Griffis' "Kairn of Kodwarin", or Felician David's "Deserts", were not available or records - for the next edition Roland Nadeau of Northeastern's music department has offered to play these pieces) and recorded three to five minute segments of them on audio-tape in the order which they would have in the final versions. All this while I was trying out the material on various classes to test their reactions.

By this time too, I had decided on the general organization of the lectures. The one on Romanticism would be organized as follows:

- I. Background: The Classical Cosmology and its downfall  
(Poetry by Pope, Boileau-Despreaux, Boswell, Blake; paintings by Houdin, Wright of Derby, David Ingres, Blake; music by Haydn, Mozart)
- II. The Romantic Condition: Violence and War  
(Poetry by Hugo, Pushkin, Coleridge; paintings by Gros, David; music by Beethoven, von Suppe)
- III. The Attendant Philosophy of Flux: The Dynamic Quality
- IV. The Romantic Escape: Negative Romanticism
  - A. Spatially: To the exotic
  - B. Temporally: To the Medieval
  - C. To Books: The Romantic Literary Quality
  - D. To Nature: The Anti-Urban, Anti-Rational Bias
- V. The Flight toward Affirmation: The Romantic Wanderlust
- VI. The Hope in Nature: Positive Romanticism
- VII. Promethean Man: The Affirming Self
  - A. The Romantic Locus: The Striving hero
  - B. The Quest for Self-Expression: The Drive for individual freedom

- C. The Organic Individual: Man in Angst and Triumph  
(Music by Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz; paintings  
by Gericault; poetry by Shelly, Savage-Landor,  
Blake, Goethe and Schiller)

The World War I set has eight sections:

- I. The End of the Old Order
  - II. The Patriotic War: 1914
  - III. The Holy War: 1914-1916
  - IV. The Morass of War: 1916-1917
  - V. The Destruction of Traditional Values: 1915-1917
  - VI. The Yanks are Coming: 1917
  - VII. Before the Dawn: 1917-1918
  - VIII. At last, At last: 1918-1921
- The last pieces are: Music, Ives, "Adieu to Land";  
painting, Citroen, "Metropolis"; poetry, T.S. Eliot,  
"The Hollow Men"

The next step was to determine the best format for the presentation. I turned to the design and production services of Northeastern's Office of Educational Resources and together we explored the possibilities. After some investigation, video-tape was rejected because all of the visuals to be employed were to be slides and the lecture was not to appear at all "on camera", the extra cost of "moving pictures" was not required or justified. Instead we decided to make cued audio-tapes - that is, audio-tapes on one track of which would be the narrative and music, while on the other would be put electronic signals which would automatically change the slides projected by a standard carousel projector. Thus I was "booked" into the audio studios and assigned a recording engineer.

The constraints of time were determined by the length of classes and the number of classes each week. The Romanticism presentation was to be three hours long, leaving one full hour to discuss the synthesis. The World War I tapes were to be two and a half hours in length, leaving a half hour on the third day for general reactions and recovery, and a fourth hour for a film or films to cover the diplomatic and military aspects of the war in as simple a fashion as possible (e.g. "The Great War", or the old high school level Crane Brinton supervised Encyclopedia Britanica films). In this time, I chose to incorporate 138 (155 for the World War I section)

slides, 70 (49) musical selections, and between 92 (56) snatches of poetry and prose. Thus the materials had to be cut and pasted onto sheets of paper that would enable both myself and the engineer to visualize each sequence and combination. No formal script was written (though that would have made things considerably easier), but these flow sheets were so detailed that there was really little left to "ad-lib".

At this point, the audio recording took place, in which my voice doing the narrative, and readings, and the music from the tape was integrated on a working master. (I was the only speaking voice on the tapes and this is one area that I would correct if I ever do it again - I would try to get some people from Drama and Speech to read some of the poetry for variety and added impact). This was done in three five hour working sessions for each set. Then the engineer and I spent about a week editing my mistakes, stutters, "ah's" and "wells" out of the masters, after which the electronic "cues" for the slides were added onto the second track with a "programmer" - a simple process, the programmer feeds a high pitched bleep onto the tape every time you push its button. Then the final masters were duplicated onto fresh tapes. (to avoid the problems of editorial splices separating with wear) and the recording job was done. The last step, being taken at the time of this writing, is to once again transfer the material from cued audio-tapes and slides - still a relatively cumbersome medium if only in terms of the number of pieces of machinery - onto self-cueing tape cassettes and film strips which can be played back through a single projector and can be stored compactly. With this completed, the first half of the project will have reached its climax.

In trying out some of the materials in the early stages of the projects students who were asked to evaluate their impact and effectiveness stated that while they found the presentations fascinating, they also found them hard to follow. For there were no chapter headings on the tapes, nor were all of the slides, music or poetry selections adequately identified. Furthermore, the students felt bombarded and a little "shell shocked" from the discontinuous bits of poetry, music, and prose being thrown at them for the first time. In order, therefore, to give the students "lead-time" in which to acquaint themselves with the materials, in order to avoid at least some of the inevitable problems of selectivity and bias that come from taking bits and pieces out of their contexts, and in order to give the presentations the maximum possible impact,

it was determined to publish texts to accompany the tapes.

The organization of the texts would be analagous to the flow charts I described earlier. Thus a sample page of text would include, on the extreme right hand side, the name of the musical composition, of its composer, an explanatory statement about the music, and the lyrics, if any, to the music in English. The center column would name the illustrations being seen at that moment, the artist, and often the date of creation. And the left hand column would have transcribed the full text of the poetry/prose selection and occasionally a similar piece from another country (e.g. for the immediate post war period Louis Untermeyer's "Rhetoric" is used; along with it is reprinted a translation of Berchtold Brecht's "Legende vom toten Soldaten".) It took about six months to get the copyrights to the poetry (two publishing houses had to consult over who owned the rights to Carl Sandburg's early poetry, an English and American publisher both disclaimed rights to someone else's poetry, and some publishing houses are no longer in existence) and the 6 page introduction, 101 pages of text, 2 page epilogue, and 10 page bibliography were published by Northeastern University to be sold to students at cost - printing costs and fees for copyright permission - approximately \$3.25. The Romanticism texts, which are currently in production, will be less expensive as most of the poetry is in public domain and only translation permissions need to be paid for.

That is where the projects stand at this point. To date I have used each presentation three times and have been pleased and excited by the student response. Both orally, and through examinations, they have exhibited a more thorough understanding of and empathy for both the subjects and the people than ever before. Finally, it has been repeatedly suggested that I prepare these lectures for commercial distribution. To do this would require re-negotiation of the copyright permission contracts (publishers charge more to profit-making organizations), gaining permissions for the music performances and the pictures (both expensive operations) and probably re-taping the whole business with professional narrators so that a highly polished presentation would emerge - to say nothing of the fact that I am constantly finding new visuals and at least one newly recorded musical selection (Erik Satie's "La Belle Eccentrique") that I would love to include in my new edition. It is, therefore, both cost-factors and a want of energy that have made me more than content with the presentations as they exist today.

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