

Teaching Portfolio Extract

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Teaching Video

Filming one's own lectures is challenging and at times profoundly humiliating.

A lecture is not simply a recitation, or a reading of notes. It is a performance. If you have 200 students in Boole II, and you hope to hold their attention beyond the first 10 minutes of the lecture, then you need to convey content in an engaging way. I cannot imagine going into a lecture and merely reading notes in a dry monotone – I move, I gesture, I project my voice, I make eye contact around the room, I try to vary intonation and speed. I make a point of pausing to create a space for questions, and I often explicitly ask for questions. More and more, I try to engineer some interaction into the large lectures.

And then you film this, and look at the video, and all you see is some fat guy with a beard talking for 50 minutes.

It isn't quite that bad of course – once you find a better camera angle and look more closely at the video you can see that the performance elements of the lecture are there; but they just aren't as clear as one would like. Partly this is because, however much we might think our performance in Boole II is right up there with Ken Branagh, the reality is that we aren't that good.



Illustration 1: The Joy of Video - every time the student in the foreground moved his head, the motion triggered the 'autofocus' on the camera making this video unusable

The other reality is that they shot *Henry V* with with a good cinematographer, and a lighting

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cameraman and lenses by Panaflex and some Industrial Light & Magic to help. Working with your own camera, no help and not much experience of digital video is a learning experience. My teaching video was shot on a Konica-Minolta Z3, which is technically a digital still camera but which will record video at 15 fps at 320 by 240 pixels which is slightly better than a camera phone. It has a built in microphone which is also technically quite low spec. When I bought it, I got the biggest memory card I could get, a 1Gb card, which will hold just over an hour of video. The only other accessories I got were a cheap tripod from Argos, and a couple of sets of NiMH batteries.

In spite of its technical limitations, it does a reasonable job of recording lectures, as you will see.

The Great Men in History Lecture:

I have included the Great Men in History Lecture from HI2002 because it is a topic which is accessible to a non-history audience – while the lecture addresses the issue in a way that relates to the development of mass democratic society in the mid to late nineteenth century, and refers to other elements of the Second Year survey core, it does not require prior knowledge to follow the lecture. It took place during Student Union Election Week, and therefore was shortened by the usual round of political announcements at the start (which I have edited out)



Illustration 2: Still from the 'Great Men in History Lecture'

The lecture begins by juxtaposing the classic Carlyle and Marx views on Great Men and on deterministic great forces in history, and expands on both. The Marxian view is shown to be a logical development from the positivist views of the Enlightenment. There is a discussion of the role of chance, and of individual whim and choice in history to counter this. There is a fairly explicit pause for comment about halfway through which also serves to flag the movement to newer material based on

new narrative historians and writers like MacGregor Burns on leadership which offers a perspective that suggests a 'human action' approach which balances the marxian ideas. Towards the end, I introduce ideas of chaos and complexity theory as a way to view the role of great men in history, finishing with a slide of a Lorenz attractor as a visual image to encapsulate this synthesis of great

men v great forces.

The lecture included on CD in Apple Quicktime format (.mov) which requires a quicktime compatible media player, which is usually present on most systems. The presentation slides are included as an appendix