

**A ROLE FOR FILM IN WRITING PEDAGOGY**

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**“You can observe a lot just by watching.”  
Yogi Berra**

**“The soul never thinks without a picture.”  
Aristotle**

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

John A. Wieland

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This thesis discusses the use of film in the composition classroom. It is divided into four chapters: The Argument, The Audience, Film as a Pedagogical Tool, and The Future. Chapter One (the Argument) discusses the different ideas about using media in the classroom, and how it is good practice to do so. New ideas on teaching from education expert Ken Bain (*What the Best College Teachers Do*) are presented. Bain suggests that as long as the instructor is confident in his or her subject, any innovative thing they do in class is all right. Malcolm Gladwell's ideas from *The Tipping Point* are applied to the classroom: the Law of the Few, Connectors, Mavens, Salesmen, the Stickiness Factor, and the Power of Context. Presentations couched within a Gladwell frame can prove to be extraordinarily effective. Chapter Two (the Audience) analyzes the Millennial students, and discusses their views on learning and media. These students see learning as a commodity and view modern media with a bit of contempt. Therefore, to use media in the classroom the instructor must be innovative. Chapter Three (Film as a Pedagogical Tool) examines various different applications of film use in the classroom. It also looks in depth at using David Mamet's films in the classroom, especially *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *The Edge*, and *The Verdict*, which use classical structure to persuade and argue. Chapter Four (The Future) looks at the work of Howard Gardner and his theory five minds: the Disciplined Mind, the Synthesizing Mind, the Creative Mind, the Respectful Mind, and the Ethical Mind and how we must prepare to teach to them all. In the conclusion I posit that the students of today and the students of tomorrow will require new and innovative techniques to be taught effectively, and that film is versatile and flexible enough to do it.

Stephen L. Fox, Ph.D., Chair

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## Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis will discuss using film as a resource for teaching college English composition and technical writing. It draws from critical film theory, writing pedagogy research, current demographic data, course surveys, and personal interviews. It will look at film's unique qualities as a communications medium, and how it is uniquely suited as a pedagogical tool for teaching this generation of learners-the Millennials, born after 1980. It will describe how film can enhance learning in ways other media cannot. The thesis will describe ways of using film and video in composition and technical writing classes, with examples drawn from several different films.

Since the early 1980s, films have been widely available. Whether through inexpensive rentals, DVDs, online sources, cable television, or satellite outlets, they have become almost commonplace in the education process. Wired classrooms with instant Internet availability and video feeds are now the norm rather than the exception. Before the 1980s, films were available only through educational film sources, audiovisual centers, film distributors, or private organizations. The process of obtaining films for use in the classroom could be slow and expensive, the quality could be hit- or- miss, and there was always a chance the wrong video would be shipped (Smith, 1973).

Since the 1970s, teachers who were familiar with using film as a pedagogical tool have urged its use by others. For example, Fordham's John Culkin who was one of the first to use film as an object of study and combine it with more traditional humanities subjects found it to be a very useful tool. Hart Wegner was a pioneer in the use of film in the classroom. He used film in teaching a broad range of topics and disciplines, and he reported successful pedagogical use of film in many different settings. His booklet *Teaching with Film* (1977) was one of the first intelligent discussions of film and its propensity for different applications.



In 1973 the film theorist Siegfried Kracauer wrote that a unique quality of film was its ability to “make one see and grasp things which only the cinema is privileged to communicate.” Later, researchers like Funderburk (1978), Dubeck (1990), and Michaud (1997) would demonstrate that topics ranging from political science to American studies to anthropology to French can be taught using film.

Among other things it does, film records physical reality, but presents it differently from ordinary human experience. Human reality is filtered through the senses. Film offers one more filter, because it filters reality through the lens of the camera; and also, perhaps, through the lens of the filmmaker (Arnheim, 1957). The unique characteristics of filmmaking add to its communicative power. For example, cinematic techniques like focusing, editing, framing of shots, mise en scene, camera angles, sound, and the rest enable film to make powerful statements.

The film audience does not consist of passive observers. Images on the screen can evoke many responses, and viewer responses become an intimate part of the film-viewing experience (Albritton and Gerrig, 1991).

In 2009, the classroom that does not employ some type of media is the exception. PowerPoint presentations replace blackboards and chalk, and Microsoft Word replaces paper. Traditional forms of instruction (lectures and printed media) are now supplemented by overhead projections, slide images, and computer projection.

So, it is really not much of a stretch to assume students can make the leap from interpretation of film for its own sake to interpretation where the interpretation is linked to other pedagogical uses. Such interpretations can happen at any point of the learning process.

The new generation of students is the Millennials (those born after 1980). Both academic and popular literature concerning these young people has proliferated with their coming of age and entering higher education and the world of work. Much has been written about the character of this generation and their values, potential, likes, dislikes, and motivations. Much has also been written about how they compare with the previous generations: the Baby Boomers (their parents) and the Generation X-ers (those born after 1960).

This thesis will examine the Millennials, and how they learn. It will look at Mannheim's generational theory (1952) and writings by Howe and Strauss (2003). It will also look at the innovative teaching techniques of Peter Elbow and Paolo Freire, insomuch as those revolutionary pedagogical methods are effective in teaching this generation. The thesis will also look at the precepts set down by Conrad Bain in his book *What the Best College Teachers Do*.

Ideas from thought leaders in film, literature, education, and sociology are presented. Wegner, Kracauer, and McHale tell us it is all right to use film in the classroom, and they give us a model for how to use it. Prensky and Hoechsmann tell us our methods are not keeping up with our audience. Howe and Strauss tell us about our audience. Hocks and Kendrick teach us about the connection between the image and the word. Bain and Gladwell let us know that new ideas and approaches are workable. David Mamet shows us how to use the classics to teach the modern. Howard Gardner gives us a direction to follow.

## **Chapter Two: the Argument**

Film can be used to teach composition. Just as literature instruction can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of film, so can composition instruction. Many of the notions about using film in the literature classroom can also be applied to teaching writing. Composition students in the late 1990s belonged to the first wave of what population experts call the Millennial cohort; those born after 1980. Perhaps because millennial students live in a media-oriented world, they consider sight, sound, and music as being user-friendly. That is, more friendly than the printed text. As a result, some of the ideas about teaching literature by using video also work out well in teaching composition. It is perhaps indicative of the versatility of film that it can be used in this way.

Millennials require new pedagogies. Because they grew up with the Internet, they are not as impressed with it as are Baby Boomers. Marc Prensky suggests they even hold it in disdain. Prensky says that because the Millennials have always been exposed to computers, the Internet, cell phones, I-pods, and other gadgets they tend to be unimpressed by them. It is because of this overexposure to modern technology that they are much less impressed with it than Baby Boomers (Prensky, 2006).

Back in 1917 Columbia's James Hosis assailed the traditional college curriculum as being too narrow and writing instructors for ignoring the students' own experiences as being suitable subjects for writing. He thought students should be encouraged to write about that which interests them. They ought to write about sports, hobbies, work, and current events. He wrote:

The development of the expressional power of the individual pupil should be the aim of the teacher rather than the teaching of specific forms and rules. Each year of a pupil's life brings a broader outlook through added experience and more mature thought. Each year, consequently, there is the need for an increased mastery of technique and of more mature forms of expression. Only from a

realization on the part of the teacher of this growth of personality can an adequate course in composition be organized. (Hosic, p.54)

Hosic went on to say that in teaching composition, interesting content should be the primary concern of the instructor, followed by organization and then mechanics.

On the intellectual side, Michael Hoechsmann said in 1996 that academics keep behaving as if the world in which they teach is still one where print is the dominant medium of discourse. He wrote “while literacy still plays a hegemonic role in the allocation of sites, in the social hierarchy, it is being supplanted in other spheres by visual code.” So, as teachers of the Millennials, we need to make note of it and “confront a decline in the cultural decline of print literacy” (Hoechsmann, 1996, p.167).

In the 1960s the prescient John McHale wrote:

The problem now is that those areas of our formal education which deal with the symbolic and value content of our culture do so almost entirely in terms of the past ...The new educational technologies are largely being used as twentieth century channels to convey a conceptual context which is still nineteenth century or earlier...the arts and the humanities remain relatively unaware of any need to revise the conceptual framework of studies little removed from the polite education of eighteenth century gentry (McHale, 1966).

McHale, Prensky, and Hoechsmann were right. The methods have not kept up with the students. Older teaching methods are still being used to teach modern millennial students. Even though our students regard print and video equally, their teachers do not. Though students view older pedagogy with a tired eye, they are still being taught by it. Today the conceptual frame is vastly different, but the message in writing classes is about the same: write papers, bring them to class, peer-edit them, get them back with comments on them. The teaching of composition needs a shot in the arm—some new pedagogies for the new millennia.

Even before video became a staple in the classroom, the “Introduction to Film” course had become a staple of most college course offerings (Lovell, 1987). What has become apparent over the years is that film can be used as a supplement to almost any discipline, especially the language arts. For example, film can be used to provide a social context for ESL students and provide visual texts for the hearing impaired. The visual images provide a thousand words, thus stimulating the imaginations of deaf students (Lovell, 1987). Once students are thus engaged, the teaching is facilitated.

Teachers have long used the media—particularly film and video—to reach many different instructional objectives. For example, Professor William Schneider of the IUPUI Department of History uses Hollywood and foreign films to enliven, enrich and give background in his classes. Even though, he admits, the historical facts are sometimes wrong, Schneider says, “There is no such thing as bad history.” Dr. Schneider uses films such as: *Reds*, *Inherit the Wind*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *All the President’s Men*, and *Gettysburg* when discussing historical context.

Schneider asserts he can always straighten out the actual historical facts once the students are engaged. His point is to engage them, and film can do that. Film brings an immediacy and interest to historical events that students might otherwise consider dull because they occurred so long ago. It can do so like no other medium (Schneider, 2007).

In teaching literature, film is often used to illustrate the themes and motifs of the dramas or narratives. It brings visualization to the study of literature. Such visualization is a powerful tool, considering more than 40 percent of all learners are visual/spatial (Silverman, 2006).

Linda Post argues that videos of literary classics can become influential and effective in the classroom if used in the right way. They must be used efficiently, not just as a way to fill up the hour with “good” material. She says that

by using film in a course, a teacher could teach works which might otherwise be omitted due to length (Post, 1987). For example, a Russian classic like *The Brothers Karamazov* might be more easily taught by video. Whereas the 1,100 page novel might prove to be daunting to students, the two hour movie should be less intimidating. The main ideas and themes can be more easily discerned through the genre of film.

Joseph Harris argues that rather than teach students to produce a certain type of prose instructors should “make students more aware of how they can work not only within but against the constraints of a given discourse – of how they can take its methods and use them for their own aims, inflect its usual concerns with their own.” (Harris, p.34) Using film, in the classroom can achieve that effect easily. He goes on to say that the “key to finding your own voice... to get *outside* the conventions of academic writing...a question of working against such constraints.” (Harris, p.38) so, thinking and teaching outside the box has a place in writing instruction.

Harris’s goal in a film writing course he taught was to “get students to reflect critically on the ways of talking about movies that they already have, and in doing so maybe learn something about themselves as readers of their culture.” (Harris, p.69) He sought to teach the students to take critical looks at themselves, and thereby grow as writers. By writing and thinking about their responses to films, his students were “confronted with an extraordinary range of discourses.” (Harris, p.71)

Film can link disciplinary perspectives in interdisciplinary studies. Michael Krukones designed interdisciplinary college courses integrating political science, literature, and film to examine politics on the local, state, national, and international levels. He based his lesson plans on the premise that students often sort information into categories dictated by the different courses they take. So, he designed the class to move from theoretical politics to a clearer, practical understanding with broad applications. He was using Problem Based Learning

before PBL was cool. Krukones used four novels to correspond to different political spheres:

1. *The Last Hurrah* deals with local politics.
2. *All the King's Men* looks at politics on the state level, particularly in Louisiana.
3. *Advise and Consent* addresses national politics.
4. *Fail-Safe* looks at the international politics, albeit the world of the early 1960s.

Krukones would give students an overview of the scene or passages to be discussed and then relate them to real-world situations. His use of film was much like Dr. Schneider's. His classes met for 2½ hours every week, so there was ample time to show the video and then employ all the disciplines. He states that his multiple genre approach worked very well with his students (Krukones, 1986).

Film can serve specific courses and issues. In the 1980s Dr. Kathy White taught a course called "Women and Violence in Literature and the Media," where she used an interesting blend of film and readings to explore a then, rather new topic. The class viewed the film *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, and read Norman Mailer's *The Time of Her Life*, among other things (White, 1985). A couple of years later, Joyce Dyer developed a course called "Rural America in Film and Literature." Dyer's course looked at all the forms of mass media. The course began by having the students read some rural-themed short stories by Willa Cather and John Steinbeck, then newspaper articles addressing rural issues, students then viewed some contemporary films about life on the farm: *Country* and *The River*. Dyer ended the course by having her students listen to segments from *Lake Wobegon Days*. As a result, the students were able to make literary and cultural connections they would not necessarily have made (Dyer, 1987).

If film can be used to teach history, literature, or women's studies, it can be used to teach writing. However, there is a scarcity of good films available on the topic. Generally, these videos are talking heads participating in erudite discussion about arcane topics. Quite frankly, many are boring. In the classroom often they are met with yawns, or, worse, the students simply leave.

Some videos are available for use in the composition classroom. One of the best series is *The Standard Deviants*. These short videos (1/2 hour each) “cut through the confusion with a clear and concise format, high-tech computer graphics, and a fun approach to serious education. They have been described as a cross between *Sesame Street* and *Saturday Night Live*...” One of the most important points to consider when teaching through the use of film is the idea that the film being shown has to be *interesting*. Students quickly lose interest if it is not (The Standard Deviants, 2009).

Though *The Standard Deviants* is pretty good fare, it can be a bit superficial for the college class room. Other videos about college writing are less than ideal. One of the better ones is *Advanced English Composition*. It was a series produced at the University of Florida for viewing on *PBS You*. With the demise of *PBS You*, the series is all but over. Alas, the majority of writing-themed videos are not very good. For every wonderful *Standard Deviants* themed learning video there is a “Teaching Writing as a Process” video full of talking heads and boring graphics. It is no wonder students balk at videos which purport to teach writing (McKeachie, 2006).

Since Millennials like to be taught in new and innovative ways, they tend to reject the notion that the Internet is cool. They take it for granted and are mostly bored with it. Baby Boomers and WWII-age older folks are the ones most impressed with it. The Millennials seem to view the Internet with disdain. Millennials want to be taught with innovation. They are not as awed with technology as one would think. Mike Rose in his book *Lives on the Boundary* argues “that unremitting focus on the more routine and dull aspects of intellectual work can instead act to dim their ambitions and limit their chances of success.” (Rose, p.30)

Whereas, Baby Boomers think the Internet and all the electronics are terrific, the Millennials remain unimpressed. They have grown up in an age of electronics and split-second communications. They may text message over 100



times per day, so why should they be impressed by e-mail? They “have been pampered, nurtured and programmed with a slew of activities since they were toddlers, meaning they are both high-performance and high-maintenance” (Tulgan, 2009,p.78). So, the use of technology must be interesting, and it must be interesting rather quickly, or it will lose significance.

However, simply using the Internet as an innovative teaching tool is not enough. Millennials are unmoved by URL trips to pictures of author’s faces; they want to know about the author. They want to find out cool things about the author. They want to be *impressed* by the information. Film can make that impression, because film impresses people. It can be bigger than life and quite striking. Ideas expressed on film seem to have more impact than ideas on paper—at least to the Millennials.

Harvard’s Howard Gardner thinks it is a good thing to teach the young in unorthodox ways, as they “possess the ability to cut across the customary categories; to appreciate usually undiscerned links among realms, to respond effectively in a parallel manner to events which are usually categorized differently, and to capture these” (Gardner, 2009).

The educator Joseph Harris says:

The task of the student is thus imagined as one of crossing the border from one community of discourse, of taking on a new sort language...students are simply unused to the peculiar demands of academic discourse...Such a view reminds us that one’s role as a teacher is not merely to inform but to persuade, that we ask our students to acquire not only certain skills and data, but to try on new forms of thinking and talking about the world as well... If to enter the academic community a student must ‘learn to speak our language,’ become accustomed and reconciled to our ways of doing things with words.(Harris,p.102)

So, teaching with film and using it in unusual ways dovetails with Gardner’s idea of unorthodoxy and Harris’s notion of crossing the borders of discourse.

In *Eloquent Images* Hocks and Kendrick tell us that “the relationships among word and image, verbal texts and visual texts, ‘visual culture’ and ‘print culture’ are interpenetrating dialogic relationships.” (Hocks and Kendrick, 2006, 1) Their book does not deny that words and images are distinctive, but looks to soften the boundaries between the two, offering a “less binary” perspective. This is the perspective the Millennials already have. In the same book, Jay Bolter argues that word and image interpenetrate through praxis (a coupling of theory and practice), remediation (where new forms can borrow from old forms), and performance (where writing occurs) (Hocks and Kendrick, 2006).

So, the model is in place. The New Media people have let us know that using film in a new way is exciting to students. It is not unnatural for the students to learn in this way. Film can be used to illustrate ideas other than the most obvious ones on the screen. A Western or an adventure film can be employed to teach things other than history or survival. Lesson plans can be written to teach anything provided the instructor is creative and persuasive enough to make it work. For example, David Mamet’s *The Edge* or Clint Eastwood’s *Unforgiven* can be used to illustrate and discuss clichés.

Eastwood used his 1992 masterpiece to transform the Western genre. In this film, nothing is as it is supposed to be. The bad guy is not completely evil; the sheriff is not completely good. The catalyst for the film’s action is a brutal assault in a brothel, and the protagonist is motivated by a skewed vision of the American Dream. Eastwood has fun with the genre, by demonstrating how flexible and deep it can be. He shows the audience how the Western can transcend stereotypes and clichés.

The traditional Hollywood Western was inhabited by noble men and strong women. If the film had any prostitutes, they would probably be presented as dancehall girls chatting amiably with the cowboys at the bar. They would be well made-up and dressed, and never would be seen to go upstairs with a john. Eastwood’s hookers are just that—hookers. They ply their trade in a billiard hall,

and a trick is euphemistically called a “game of billiards.” The pimp who owns the bar/billiard hall/brothel explains that the billiard table “was burned in ’71 for firewood” (Eastwood, 1992).

The film takes many of the standard western film clichés and explodes them:

1. The hero is not heroic, rather he is insane.
2. The sheriff is more evil than the supposed antagonist.
3. The cowboys are not really very noble; they are motivated by greed.
4. Vengeance is a theme. Rather than being punished for it, the perpetrator gets away and lives happily ever after “prospering in dry goods,” as the Epilogue tells the viewer.

Stylistically, the film deviates from the norm as well. Eastwood has a slow, almost melancholic, style, as opposed to the spare, tough style of a director like Budd Boetticher. There is no quick-cutting fancy camera-work contributing to the action. The use of available light (Eastwood prefers autumn filming for unique light it affords) also takes some getting used to, as it lends an understatement to the images and the film. There is nothing “in your face” about this lovely film.

*Unforgiven* makes a wonderful composition lesson. Because it can be read as a commentary on clichés, it can be used in the same way Dr. Schneider uses film in his history classes. Because it is unique and departs from the usual, it can be used as a lesson on what is wrong with clichés and stereotypes. It can demonstrate their use and abuse in practical and accessible ways. Precisely because *Unforgiven* does those things, the Millennials respond to it in a composition lesson.

David Mamet, on the other hand, uses his film *The Edge* (1997) as a commentary on film, filmmaking, storytelling, and society. Mamet uses a stock Hollywood vehicle, the survival/adventure drama, and strips it of its clichés to impart his messages about stereotyping and categorizing. Such films generally employ stock clichés normally associated with the wealthy, the poor, how the poor interact with the rich, and who *deserves* what.

Mamet's Pulitzer Prize winning play *Glengarry Glen Ross* illustrates Aristotle's persuasive appeals. In that play/film Mamet uses all three formal methods of Aristotle's persuasion as well as the two informal ones. Traditionally, *Glengarry Glen Ross* might be taught along with Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* by comparing and contrasting the two. The folksy old days of American commerce can be contrasted with the cutthroat business of the 1980s. However, the Mamet film can be taken a step farther and can be used to illustrate Aristotle's persuasion in a composition class setting. The persuasive techniques first described 2500 years ago are still valid today. Students respond to the immediacy of the film. They see a real world connection between the persuasive techniques and doing business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The "Image Analysis Essay" From IUPUI's freshman composition course is the perfect genre for using *Glengarry Glen Ross* as a pedagogical tool.

### **Ken Bain**

Ken Bain is a history professor at New York University and director of the NYU Center for Teaching Excellence. In addition to his writing on United States history, he has also written extensively on college pedagogy. His book *What the Best College Teachers Do* won the 2004 Virginia and Warren Stone Prize awarded by the Harvard University Press for Outstanding Book on Education and Society.

In the book Bain defined excellence in college pedagogy this way:

All the professors we chose to put under our pedagogical microscope had achieved remarkable success in helping their students learn in ways that made a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how those students think, act, and feel. The actual classroom performance of the teachers did not matter to us; so long as the teachers did not do their students (or anyone else) harm in the process, we cared little about how they achieved their results. Dazzling lecture styles, lively classroom discussions, problem-based exercises, and popular field research or projects might or might not contribute to the *telos* (goal, purpose, end) of good teaching (Bain, p.5).

His selections of the best teachers were made based upon the following criteria:

First, we insisted on evidence that most of their students were highly satisfied with the teaching and inspired by it to continue to learn...we wanted indications from the students that the teacher had “reached them” intellectually and educationally and had left them wanting more” (Bain, p.7).

“Our second acid test concerned what students learned...We sought evidence that colleagues in the field or in closely related fields would regard the learning objectives as worthy and substantial” (Bain, p.8).

“Indeed, most of the highly successful teachers in the study broke traditional definitions of courses, convincing us that success in helping students learn even some core material benefits from the teacher’s willingness to recognize that human learning is a complex process (Bain, p.8).

Bain arrived at six major conclusions of his study based on these broad questions he asked about the examined teachers:

1. What Do the Best Teachers Know and Understand?
  2. How Do They Prepare to Teach?
  3. What Do They Expect of Their Students?
  4. What Do They Do When They Teach?
  5. How Do They Treat Students?
  6. How Do They Check Their Progress and Evaluate Their Efforts?
- (Bain, p.15-20)

This fascinating book has much to say regarding how we teach or do not teach our students. Bain notes one disturbing fact that was uncovered by the research team of Halloun and Hestenes; two physicists from Arizona State University. They found that students “held firm to mistaken beliefs even when confronted with phenomena that contradicted those beliefs” (p.23). They also found that “even some ‘good’ students may not progress as much intellectually as we once thought” (p.24). So, it appears new and innovative pedagogy is needed now more than ever, since our young students may be more conservative and less pliant than they (the millennials) suppose.

Bain has learned that the best teachers “know their disciplines well and are active and accomplished scholars, artists, or scientists – even if they do not have long publication records” (p.24). There are also two other types of knowledge the good teachers have: “an unusually keen sense of the histories of their disciplines including the controversies that have swirled within them...then use that ability to think about their own thinking – what we call *metacognition* – and their understanding of the discipline to grasp how other people might learn.”(p.25) For purposes of this thesis, the best composition teachers are those who understand their discipline well enough to see the same concepts employed elsewhere, and then are creative enough to put those to use in their courses. So using film to teach composition is not such a far-fetched idea to someone like Bain.

Bain writes that the best teachers view memory as constructed, not received. They say we “construct our sense of reality out of all the sensory input we receive and that process begins in the crib. We see, hear, feel, smell, and taste and we begin connecting all these sensations in our brains to build patterns of the way we think the world works. So our brains are both storage and processing units. At some point we begin using those existing patterns to understand new sensory input. By the time we reach college, we have thousands of mental models, or schemas, that we use to try to understand the lectures we hear, the texts we read, and so forth.” It would seem our students are already programmed. Therefore, it is foolish to ignore that programming (mostly visual) in the composition classroom. If the connections are there to be made, why not make them by using film in the classroom? Bain writes that “the teachers we encountered believe everybody constructs knowledge and that we all use existing constructions to understand any new sensory input...they often want students to do something that human beings don’t do very well: build new models of reality” (p.27).

Bain writes that teachers he studied “believe that students must learn from the facts *while* learning to use them to make decisions about what they

understand or what they should do... learning makes little sense unless it has some sustained influence on the way the learner subsequently thinks, acts, or feels. So they teach the 'facts' in a rich context of problems, issues, and questions" (p.29). Therefore, including film in a lesson plan along with fact sheets, a short lecture, and means of applying the ideas is ideal for optimum learning.

Bain goes on to write about a professor who is not so much interested in having students absorb information as she is in having them understand structures. That is, she wants them to see how the individual parts relate to the whole and how (most importantly) the students are then able to make decisions with the comprehension they have developed. She is helping students to build their understanding and learn to use the information to solve problems. She talks about how things work, but she is also interested that her students know why they work and what could go wrong (p.30). By parsing problems in class, like analyzing a scene from a film, and seeing them from all sides, much can be learned.

Bain is also a believer in using questions, as "they play an essential role in the process of learning and modifying mental models... if memory does not ask the question, it will not know where to index the answer. The more questions we ask, the more ways we can index a thought in memory." (p.45) During a film clip one of the most important comments an instructor can use is *why*: Why is the character saying that? Why is the camera doing that? Why the lighting is used that way? When the students are exposed to enough questions from the instructor, then they know it is all right to come up with questions of their own. Deep learning results.

Bain believes the most successful teachers expect the most from their students. Their students are expected to "rise above the category of received knowers... procedural knowers...and those students whose ways of thinking and drawing conclusions are permanently transformed" (p.45). His best teachers are pursuing answers to important questions using "methodologies, assumptions,

and concepts from a variety of fields to solve complex problems. They often incorporate literature from other fields into their teaching and emphasize what it means to get an education. They speak of the value of an integrated education, rather than one fragmented between individual courses” (p.46).

What better way is there to incorporate ideas from outside of composition, than by using film in an interesting and useful way? This natural critical learning environment with imbedded skills and information is fascinating to students. Their curiosity is aroused and they are challenged to “rethink their assumptions and examine their mental modes of reality. They understand and remember their lessons because they have mastered the “reasoning abilities necessary to integrate it (the lesson) with larger concepts” (p.47).

Teaching is not just delivering information. It is not only delivering lectures. Academics often talk about “transmitting” information. If that were the case, then students could read newspapers and magazines and learn all they need to know. Teaching is more than that. It is more than telling, it is creating an environment in the classroom where “students will realize their potential to learn” (P.173).

Part of being a good instructor is the realization you always have more to learn. Not so much learning about techniques or the subject, but about the students and their world. The teacher must always be concerned with the context of the student and the lesson. Teachers must always be willing learners, not afraid to stumble in their learning. It is only in the attempt that anything really good can be discovered. All students will not be reached equally, but the attempt to reach them all must always be made equally. As Bain says:

“The best teaching is often both an intellectual creation and a performing art. It is both Rembrandt’s brush strokes and the genius of insight, perspective, originality, comprehension, and empathy that makes a Dutch Master. In short,



we must struggle with the meaning of learning within our disciplines and how best to cultivate and recognize it.” (p.174)

## **Malcolm Gladwell**

Because this is a study of pedagogy being used uniquely, it is necessary to examine more than just the ideas pertaining to pedagogy. It is necessary to look outside the box and outside of the literature of teaching for clues about what can work in a classroom, and how to teach with innovation. Malcolm Gladwell is a good source to examine.

In his book *The Tipping Point* social critic Gladwell discusses trends and how they take hold in society. *Tipping point* is a sociological term meaning “the levels at which the momentum for change becomes unstoppable” (Gladwell, p.12). Gladwell claims there are a variety of forces, patterns, and influences behind every trend. The term has also been applied to epidemics and communicable diseases. New ideas are introduced from a wide variety of sources. Gladwell discusses change, and presents new ideas about why things change quickly and unexpectedly. “Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do” (Gladwell, p.7). Yet some take hold, and most do not. Some really take off, and others flop. Why?

Gladwell researched many different fields when looking for answers to this question. He looked at industry, academics, and government. He started to look at examples of “contagious behavior,” the kind of behavior that occurs when things take off, whether they are epidemics or pet rocks. Finally, he was able to narrow things down to three key factors that help determine whether a trend will tip and become popular. They are: the Law of the Few, the Stickiness Factor, and the Power of Context.

*The Law of the Few* says that before there is popularity, several different types of people must support the idea. They are: Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen.

*Connectors* are “the kinds of people who know everyone” (Gladwell, p.38). They are people with an extraordinary knack of making friends and acquaintances” (p.41). “They have a natural gift for making social connections...often they like people in a genuine and powerful way...they find patterns...in which people arrange themselves to be endlessly fascinating” (p.43). Connectors are “people whom all of us can reach in only a few steps because, for one reason or another, they manage to occupy many different worlds and subcultures and niches” (p.48). The connectors in the composition classroom are the popular students. Often they are the ones who lead the small groups vital for brainstorming, reader’s response, and tossing around ideas.

Applying Peter Elbow’s ideas of classroom management, especially placing students in groups, works well with the notion of the connector. If the group has a leader, often the leader also acts as a disseminator of information. Therefore, the instructor assisted by the group leaders can connect with the group in unique ways. The instructor knows the students usually in a rather structured, formal way. The group leaders know the students in the group a little better than the instructor does. When new ideas are introduced in a lesson by the instructor and then re-presented in the small group by the leader, connections are made (Elbow, 1986).

*Mavens* are those who accumulate knowledge and broker it. They are the “information specialists” we have come to rely upon, and they connect us with the information we need. They intrinsically know how to share information with others. Not only do they know how to do it, they like doing it. Their knowledge is disparate and not necessarily connected. They can know a lot about many different things, and they are almost pathologically helpful (Gladwell, p.66). The mavens in a college classroom are the students who work hard, do all the reading,

and retain what they have learned. They are vital to the group because they have their academic bases covered. They understand the assignment (many students often do not), and they can keep the group on task.

*Salesmen* are charismatic. They are society's persuaders with the skills necessary to persuade us when we do not believe what we are hearing. In order to do this, they must possess a trait that goes beyond the words they are using. The trait makes people want to agree with them. These are the students who do the presenting, if there is any to be done. Often in small groups results must be shared, and these are the students who handle it.

The instructor must first discuss the lesson and what is to be covered, then explain it, and then show the film to illustrate the points being made. Later, in groups the film will be discussed with germane worksheets or note sheets employed.

*The Stickiness Factor* refers to "the hard part of communication...how to make sure a message doesn't go in one ear and out the other. Stickiness means that a message makes an impact, and is memorable. You can't get it out of your head. It sticks in your memory." (Gladwell, p.25) An instructor wants his/her message to be contagious; he or she wants it to stick. Unless the lesson is remembered, how can it ever be applied? Gladwell says there are several ways to make a contagious message memorable: simple changes in the presentation and a restructuring of the information have a tremendous impact on the message. Often stickiness is achieved through unexpected, unconventional, or highly original ways. The nature of the messenger is critical here. "Messengers are what make things spread...the content of the message matters too...Is it memorable?" (p.92). In advertising they say an advertisement "has to be seen at least six times before anyone will remember it" (p.92).

Sometimes in a classroom setting a point can be made over and over by the instructor with a pronounced lack of clarity and is not understood by the

students. It often takes a maven in the position of group leader to distill the information and present it in a different way. Voila! They then get it. Film can be the innovation students need to help the lesson stick. Points being made in film seem to stick better with the students, perhaps because of the visual stimulus of the medium. Seeing it on screen has more impact than simply hearing about it in class. The instructor becomes the maven by pulling together the odd concepts and making them cohesive.

*The Power of Context* is about the moment and the historical context in which a trend is introduced. If the moment or place is not right, then the tipping point will not happen. Gladwell discusses how New York City went about dealing with the high crime rate of the 1980s. The city started to focus on small goals. By accomplishing several small goals the city achieved small successes, and the crime rate began to ebb. A lesson plan for teaching a new essay is useless if the topic is not placed into a context. On the other hand, a paper dealing with image analysis is easy to teach in an election year when candidates are in a constant photo op mode. It is uncomplicated to analyze the rhetorical structure of images placed in that context.

There is a tipping point in the college classroom as well. Learning can be a classroom epidemic. Why should only a few students understand the lesson when they all can? Gladwell writes that “epidemics tip because of the extraordinary efforts of a few select carriers. But they also sometimes tip when something happens to transform the epidemic agent itself” (Gladwell, p.22). The small things in class can yield huge results. What Gladwell calls the tipping point, Peter Elbow calls the *click* or *aha* moment. He points out that there is a physical response to the *aha moment*, and that it is not an uncommon response. He calls it “the principle of one understanding the exceeding of one’s reach” (Elbow, 1986. p.16). It is the moment where learning occurs; it is when the students *get it*.

Another concept Gladwell presents is the idea of *withitness*. He claims teachers must have it to be effective. They certainly must have it to recognize and capitalize on a tipping point. He describes it this way:

Educational researcher, Jacob Kounin, once did an analysis of “desist” events, in which a teacher has to stop some kind of misbehavior. ... and what really was significant was not how a teacher stopped the deviancy at the end of the chain but whether she was able to stop the chain before it started. Kounin called that ability “withitness,” which he defined as “a teacher’s communicating to the children by her actual behavior (rather than by verbally announcing: ‘I know what’s going on’) that she knows what the children are doing, or has the proverbial ‘eyes in the back of her head.’ ” It stands to reason that to be a great teacher you have to have *withitness* (Gladwell, 2008).

The underlying theme of Gladwell’s book is the notion that change is possible and that people can transform their lives with the right kind of push. The smallest of nudges can affect a tremendous number of people. There can be a tipping point in the classroom, granted the teacher has the withitness and wherewithal to implement it. If the teacher has the presence of mind, the classroom sense, and the skill to judge the time and place for the implementation, pedagogical mountains can be ascended. A nudge or two in the right direction can make all the difference.

### **Chapter Three: the Audience**

Just as a writer must engage and consider his or her audience, a competent educator must do the same. The demographics of the college classroom have changed greatly over the past dozen years. Current college students were born between 1984 and 1991, and they have been studied ad nauseam. Demographers ranging from Howe and Strauss to the Oblingers to the Department of Education have spent thousands of hours trying to figure them out.

Actually, there is a limited consensus about who really belongs to this group. There are many different starting birthdates and age parameters. This generation even has several different names: Millennials, Generation Y, Generation 2000, Generation Y2K, and Baby Busters to name a few (Strauss and Howe, 2003; D'Antonio, 2005).

The typical IUPUI freshman is 18 years old, white, and a graduate of an Indiana high school. They represent about 1/3 of all new students at IUPUI in a given Fall Semester. The majority of these new students are from Marion and the surrounding eight counties. IUPUI freshmen have a lower academic profile (GPA's and SAT's), yet have significantly larger work commitments than other Big Ten freshmen (19.5 hours/week). Most of them belong to a learning community, yet they do not avail themselves of supplemental instruction in their weak areas. IUPUI admits many freshmen who rank in the lower half of their high school graduating classes, and score below average on the SAT's (conditional admits). They tend to be less prepared than other IU freshmen. Perhaps because they work more, they spend less time studying. They are commuters to the school, as only 2 percent of IUPUI freshmen live on campus (Indiana University Enrollment Report and Analysis, 2009).

This essay also looks at another group of students—the Apprentices from the Indianapolis Electrical Training Institute of the Electrician’s Union (IEJATC). The union has a contract with the Community College of Indiana (Ivy Tech) to train their apprentices. When the five year apprenticeship is finished, the new Journeymen are not only vested in the union, they receive an A.S. in Construction Technology from Ivy Tech (James Patterson, 2007).

Their demographic is a bit different from the IUPUI freshmen. Their ages range from 19 – 27, which would place their birthdates between 1980 and 1988. That would make them, for all intents and purposes Millennials with a bit of an overlap with Generation X. They earn a good income for college students, making between \$35,000 and \$45,000 per year. Their salary is based on the Journeyman’s scale, of which they receive 55 percent. Twenty percent of the apprentices are legacies; that is, they are either the sons or nephews of Journeymen electricians. All must be high school graduates, and 25 percent have at least one year of college before they join the program.

The Electrician’s trade is different from other construction trade unions in that electricians must use more individual creativity and problem—solving skills than other building trades. In other words, a sheet metal worker or pipe-fitter arrives at the job site and the materials are labeled and ready to be assembled. These workers then stick them together. The electrician has no such guidance or pre-work completed, so they must design their own work. As a result, the electrician’s trade is both physically and mentally demanding (FitzGerald, 2007).

The apprentices, though they fall within the same cohort as most of the other freshmen, have more direction. They have already decided on a career, and are pursuing it. At least half are married, and half of those already have children. They are less sheltered than collegiate Millennials, as they are already out in the real world earning a living and supporting families.

Howe and Strauss tell us there are 78 million Baby Boomers, 66 million Gen-X-ers, but 83 million Millennials. The numbers are staggering. With so many young people coming along, the educational system had better be ready for them.

### **The Millennials**

The most recent American generations break down this way:

<p>The Boom Generation</p>	<p>Born 1943 - 1960</p>	<p>Indulged youth growing up in a spirit of community progress. Postwar optimism, Dr. Spock, and <i>Father Knows Best</i> were big influences. They rejected the values of their parents. Focused on the inner rather than the outer. The self rather than the team. Summer of Love, war protests, Earth Day, and Kent State. They became the arbiters of the culture venturing into journalism, the arts, marketing, teaching, and religion. Oprah, Ken Davis, Steve Fox, Rush Limbaugh, Steven Spielberg, Laura Schlesinger, Camille Paglia, Fred DiCamilla, John Edwards, Diane Wieland.</p>
<p>Generation X</p>	<p>Born 1961 – 1981</p>	<p>Survived a childhood of divorce, latch-keys, and open classrooms. Rise in youth crime and a fall in test scores. Denounced as wild and stupid and putting the nation at risk. AIDS forced them to date and marry cautiously. They embrace risk and free agency. They are not corporate types. Their culture has a hard edge to it from grunge to hip-hop. They would rather volunteer than vote. Criticized as slackers, they still helped to turn the economy around. Barack Obama, Susanmarie Harrington, Michael Jordan, Winona Ryder, Quentin Tarantino, Laura Ingraham, Tom Cruise, Rosey O'Donnell, Wanda Colwell.</p>
<p>The Millennial Generation</p>	<p>Born 1981 - Present</p>	<p>Born under a <i>Baby on Board</i> sign. Lower divorce and abortion rates made these kids special. People and politicians were thinking about <i>the kids</i> again. Cable TV and the Internet led to Child Safety Zones. Education standards, school uniforms, and cooperative learning became the norm. Teens began turning against risk. Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen, Haley Joel Osment, Tara Lipinski, Mike and Lukas Wieland.</p>

(Howe and Strauss, 2003 p.19)



## The Seven Core Traits of the Millennials

Special	They sense that “they are collectively, vital to the nation and to their parents’ sense of purpose.”
Sheltered	From child-safety rules to school lockdowns “they are the focus of the most sweeping youth-protection movement in history.”
Confident	High levels of trust and optimism. A connection to parents and the future. They “equate good news for themselves with good news for the country.”
Team-Oriented	Soccer, school uniforms, and group learning have helped to “develop strong team instincts and tight peer bonds.”
Conventional	They are well-behaved and comfortable with their parents’ values. They “provide a modern twist to the traditional belief that social rules and standards can make life easier.”
Pressured	They study hard and avoid risks. They take advantage of opportunities. They are “the <i>trophy kid</i> pressured to excel.”
Achieving	Accountability and higher school standards have pushed them to become “the smartest, best educated generation in U.S. history.”

(Howe and Strauss, 2003 p.51)

## Millennial Rebellion

The French social critic Alexis de Tocqueville observed that “in America, each generation is a new people” (de Tocqueville, p.257). Indeed, it seems that the new generations react to the old ones. Romanticism reacted to the Neo-Classicalists, and the Realists reacted to the Romantics. Howe and Strauss write that there is a pattern that can help us to determine how a new generation will be different. Young people are given the freedom to define what it is to be young, and they are able to direct society according to their inclinations. In other words, they rebel.

Strauss and Howe say that three rules apply to any generation in nontraditional societies like America:

1. The rising generation breaks with the young adult generation preceding them. The style of the preceding generation does not function in the new era. Though the hippie generation was said to be one which rebelled against rules, it was actually very rigid in many ways. The Generation-X'ers came along and rejected their rules.
2. The rising generation corrects the perceived excesses of the mid-life generation. That is, those in charge. This is often accomplished through protest, or with the support of those in charge as a kind of complement to their deficiencies. The offspring of the Greatest Generation spurned war and materialism- things the WWII folks embraced and glorified. Hard work and ambition were replaced by drugs, peace, and love. Ironically, the very instruments of the love generation, drugs, became valuable commodities later: and the hippies went into business selling them. Free enterprise replaced free love.
3. The rising generation fills the void being left by the departing generation.

(Howe and Strauss, 2003)

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey tells his audience to “seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Keeping that in mind it is a good idea to see what Neil Howe and William Strauss have to say about our new college learners:

As a group, Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse. More important, they are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct.  
(Howe and Strauss, p.4)

These students do not want to be linked with the Genx'ers who they find to be negative and cynical. They see themselves quite differently. They have grown up in an era of increased academic standards and parental control. America is now a more child-centered society, with much more

focus on children and what is good for them. As a result, Millennials have grown up with a better sense of self than previous generations. They also tend to be more positive and optimistic. They take more AP and other intensive classes. This can result in their being more demanding of their instructors. Not only do they understand technology, they expect it. The tuned in instructor must avail his or herself of any available technology. (Lyons, p.42)

Millennials are the largest (100 million) and most ethnically diverse of any American generation. African-Americans (up until now the largest minority group) have been surpassed by Hispanics. Professors may notice a change in the complexion of the classroom, but the students will not. Because they have grown up in racially mixed neighborhoods and ethnically diverse schools, they will not notice anything unusual or different. (Lyons, p.43)

Millennials need to work in teams or groups. Teamwork makes them feel comfortable. Millennials need to know the rules, not so they can break them (like Baby Boomers), but so they can follow them. They also have the drive to succeed, so they will complete their assignments. They also want high marks for the completion (Lyons, p.43).

## A Brief Analysis of the Student Generations

	<b>Baby Boomers</b>	<b>Generation X'ers</b>	<b>Millennials</b>
<b>Historical events that shaped this generation.</b>	Sputnik, the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis, VietNam. Assassinations: Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and John Lennon. Woodstock, Anti-war, Civil Rights, and Women's movements. Space program. Man on the moon.	Watergate, Nixon resignation. Three Mile Island, Chernobyl. Challenger explosion. Fall of the Berlin Wall. AIDS. Desert Storm. Belushi and Cobain deaths.	Economic Success followed by recession. Oklahoma City bombing. Columbine. Clinton impeachment. OJ trial. Rodney King riots. Title IX. WTC and Pentagon attacks. War on Terror. Enron, WorldCom, Goldman Sachs. Bernie Madoff.
<b>Social dynamics that shaped this generation.</b>	2-3 kids per family. Move from small towns to big cities. Suburbia. Moms supplement family income. Illicit drug use. School consolidation. Role of religion in family life.	1-2 children per family. 50% divorce rate. Child custody issues. Mom's income essential. Latchkey kids. Single moms. Rise of EU and Pacific Rim. Corporate downsizing.	1 planned child per family. Soccer moms. Over-parenting. Integrated schools. Falling rates of divorce, abortion, child abuse, and crime. Increased security everywhere.

	<b>Baby Boomers</b>	<b>Generation X'ers</b>	<b>Millennials</b>
<b>New technologies affecting this generation.</b>	Automobiles. The Pill. Computers. TV. Shopping malls.	Calculators, transistors. Computer games. Color and Cable TV. Remote Control. Push-button telephones. PC's. The Internet.	CNN, MS-NBC, MTV, VH-1. Niche TV channels. DNA testing. Cloning. Electronic security devices. Cell phones. Beepers. Texting. Twittering. AI. E-Bay and Amazon.com.
<b>Shared values.</b>	Rebellious, challenge the status quo. Change. Question Authority.	Disconnected. Fragmented. Freelancers. Inward focus. Importance of personal benefits. Delayed emotional development.	Values conscious, teamwork. Respect for authority. Race and gender neutral.
<b>Ramifications for teaching and learning.</b>	Show respect for their strong opinions. Must listen intently and reassure. Avoid hot button words and phrases. Give latitudes in assignments. Explain difficult concepts through stories from real life.	Provide structure and support resources. Charts, diagrams, visuals. Internet. Seel them on personal benefits of own point of view. Use popular personalities as examples.	Lecture only to establish parameters. Listen intently. Infuse technology wherever possible – E-mail, Internet. Stress ethical aspects of own point of view. Use service learning strategies.

(Howe, Strauss, 2000)

Today's young people are breaking with their elders—the Generation X-ers. The X-ers *X-treme* approach to life holds little interest for the Millennials. They prefer teamwork to being free agents. They would rather work together than get in your face. They involve themselves politically rather than tuning out the politicians. They value the community rather than the individual. They prefer school colors and letter sweaters to corporate swoosh. IUPUI has its very own *O-Team* (Orientating Together Educating as Mentors), crammed full of students wanting to make a difference in a team setting. These carefully selected and vetted students are instrumental in making the gateway courses successful. By acting as mentors, coaches, and informal advisors to first-year (Gateway) students, they make a tremendous impact on the college careers of the freshmen in their charge.

The Gen Xers often think of themselves as trend-setters and trailblazers for the upcoming teens, but they really know very little about teen culture. The unpleasant aspects of the Gen X-ers—iconoclasm, narcissism, cynicism constant argument over action- is being taken the other way by the Millennials. They opt for patience, conformity, the good of the group, and a focus on deeds over words.

Taken along with their yen for technology, it is an easy stretch to use technology to teach these young people. Because Millennial students are so familiar with technology-- the Web, cell phones, and texting-- they want to see technology used innovatively. Hence, by using film innovatively, the bridge from the Boomer or Gen-Xer to the Millennial can be crossed. A middle-aged instructor may not appear to the students to be current with modern technology. If that same teacher uses technology interestingly, then the ideas and lessons can be presented successfully.

The characteristics of the Millennials dovetail with Peter Elbow's ideas for teaching composition in groups. If teachers can get them in groups to discuss different aspects and applications of what they see on the screen, then they can

achieve the community Elbow talks about in the writing classroom. Elbow goes on to say that there are two ingredients in real learning:

1. The ability to apply already-learned concepts to the widest range of data; or to recognize the widest range of potential instances of the concept.
2. The ability to construct new concepts.

(Elbow, 1986, p.14)

Paolo Freire's ideas about pedagogy were similar. He argued that using any means necessary to teach was fair game. To Freire, the education process must be "free." That is, it should be unencumbered by any restraint. The learner should learn freely. Freire believed that freedom will be achieved through *praxis* or informed action. Praxis will be realized when a balance is struck between theory and practice. So the use of film and video in the college classroom is a very real option for the devotee of Freire. For example, the Aristotelian ideas about persuasion can be illustrated through the practice of showing a film in the classroom. Watching salesmen persuade in *Glengarry Glen Ross* is a fine way to demonstrate Aristotle. The practice of using the theories on film goes a long way to illustrate the ideas of the philosopher (Freire, 1972).

The Millennials are intimately familiar with technology and the Internet. In fact, they use the Internet and their cell phones to connect with people in new and unique ways. They are constantly in contact with their friends. They may receive over 100 text messages in a single day. At any rate, they double the text-messaging of the Gen X-ers (Pew, 2007, p.2).

They are a sociable group, and have also been called the "Look at ME" generation. Web sites like *MySpace*, *My Yearbook*, and *Facebook* allow them to post personal dossiers complete with photos and personal profiles. Most Millennials have used these social networking sites, and more than 40 percent have created their own profiles (Pew, 2007, p.2).

Because they have so completely embraced the technological world, they are well-aware of its advantages and disadvantages. Though they think the new cybertools make it easier to make friends and meet people, they also acknowledge that such cybertools can “make people lazier” (Pew, 2007, p.2). While adept at the use of technology, they do not see it as the solution to all their problems. Ironically, it is the Greatest Generation who sees technology as a be-all and end-all for mankind. The Millennials enjoy and use technology, but the thing they really like is to see technology used in new and innovative ways. Therefore, using film in innovative ways in the classroom is something which would appeal to them (Pew, 2007, p.2).

The Millennials are big moviegoers. Eleven percent of those born after 1980 attend movies at least weekly. Forty-seven percent say they go at least monthly. This is compared to 28 percent Gen-Xers who go monthly, 22 percent of Boomers, and 14 percent of Seniors. When Millennials view films at home they watch DVDs or videos rather than cable or regular television (Pew, 2007, p.21).

The Kaiser Family Foundation has an interest in young people and the media. It found:

1. 19 percent of children aged 1 and under have a television in their bedrooms.
2. 29 percent of children aged 2-3 have one.
3. 43 percent of kids aged 4-6 have one in their bedrooms.
4. 36 percent say they are watching more television online.
5. 13 percent have a DVR.

The study goes on to say that 83 percent of children under the age of six use screen media at least two hours per day. The study suggests media usage increases with age as the six year olds use visual media almost twice as much as toddlers (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009).

So, it is safe to say the Millennials are video-literate by the time they graduate from high school and enroll in college. Watching televisions and looking at screens is old hat to them. Diego Vasquez from *Media Watch Magazine* writes



that television viewing is increasing among college students. Thirty-six percent of them watch their television online. Vasquez goes on to say college students are watching shows like *24* and *Entourage* rather than reality programs (Vasquez,2007).

Using film and other media to teach Millennials complements what other pedagogists have in mind. David Bartholomae writes that:

To speak with authority (our students) have to speak not only in another's voice but through another's code; and they not only have to do this, they have to speak in the voice and through the codes of those of us with power and wisdom; and they not only have to do this, they have to do it before they know what they are doing, before they have a project to participate in, and before, at least in the terms of our disciplines, they have anything to say.  
(Bartholomae, p.156)

Steven Johnson thinks all the media and TV exposure has been a good thing for young people. In *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*, Johnson tells the reader his "book is an old-fashioned work of persuasion that ultimately aims to convince you of one thing: that popular culture has, on average, grown more complex and intellectually challenging over the past thirty years" (Johnson, Steven. p. xv, 2005). He goes on to discuss the *Sleeper Curve* where he seeks to "undermine the belief that...pop culture is on a race to the bottom, where the cheapest thrill wins out every time", and is instead "getting more mentally challenging as the medium evolves" (Johnson, p.132-133).

If Johnson is right, then educators should take notice. He claims video games and television are not only good for the Millennials, but rewarding. Video games reward immediately, so there is no delay. The brain has a natural circuitry for reward that ties in with video. As the brain is rewarded, it seeks more reward/stimulation. With more stimulation, learning is achieved. They learn as they play and watch. So something is to be gained from instant gratification (Johnson, p.34).

Johnson draws a connection between the brain and how it responds to the virtual world. To make a long story short, he sees the complexity of modern television and video games as enhancing the intellects of the people who play and watch them—the Millennials. Modern television plots are better drawn and brainier. The story lines of programs like *The Sopranos* and *Deadwood* make the programs of twenty years ago appear primitive. It is also easy to see how *Pong* and *PacMan* look primitive today when compared to *Grand Theft Auto* and *Halo*. So the Millennial audience is sophisticated. It gets it. And it really gets it through film.

Rather than being dumbied-down by the media, the Millennials are rather media-savvy. If an instructor is going to use media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom, he or she had better know how to use it effectively. It must be used in novel and interesting ways, because it has a tough audience. To illustrate this savvy by these young viewers, Johnson talks about the elimination of the *flashing arrow*. The flashing arrow is a signpost used by the filmmaker to help the audience know what is going on. For example, if there is a close-up of a telephone, the audience expects it to ring. If a hand-brake is shown as left off a in car on a slope, the audience knows the vehicle will shortly begin rolling downhill. Johnson tells us that the video signposts are disappearing, therefore making the audience work harder to figure out what is happening in the film (Johnson p. 73-75).

However, the Millennials have their dark side as well. In their book *Developing Adult Learners: Strategies for Teachers and Trainers* Taylor, Marienou, and Fiddler paint a less rosy picture of the cohort when talking about them as students:

- Academically, Millennial students might be expected to:
1. Expect to be entertained and might become easily bored.
  2. Be positive and expect things to work out for them.
  3. Not be interested in books and reading or other behaviors usually linked to academic success. They may have low motivation to do traditional *school work*.

4. Act like consumers and want to negotiate. They also expect to be treated like customers with attention paid them on demand.
5. See education as a commodity which is purchased or maybe accumulated as a product which is external from them. It might not be seen as something which is part of them or part of some kind of transformational process.
6. Believe they are entitled to good grades just for showing up for class. They may expect academic success with little effort.
7. See education as a passively acquired commodity with the accumulation of credits as the end result.
8. Have little respect for authority and dislike rules of conduct.
9. Grow defensive when faced with constructive criticism.
10. Have poor goal-setting skills, or even little desire to set goals at all.
11. Have low academic skills.
12. Be comfortable with technology.
13. Not have good abstract reasoning abilities and may function at lower cognitive levels.
14. Be the recipients of grade inflation.
15. Have a naïve view of the future.

The Millennials have a disconnect between what they want from school and what they expect from an education and what college has to offer. These students generally want academic success without having to put forth the effort. The college establishmen--teachers and advisors-- have trouble accepting this divergence from traditional college expectations. The standard introductory collegiate spiel of spending three hours of preparation for every hour spent in class is met with stiff resistance.

So they have their own notions about schooling and media. The Millennials know what they like and when they like something, then they go after it. They have no qualms about downloading film or music from the Internet without paying for it. Forty-six percent of them say it is all right to download such things for free, as opposed to 28 percent of the X-ers and 20 percent of the Boomers and Seniors/Matures (Pew, 2007, p.22). Perhaps this mindset jibes with the notion that plagiarism is more acceptable these days than in the past.

Some data is now available about this cohort in the workplace:

1. They make up 16 percent of the workforce, but the number is growing steadily. (Baby Boomers make up 40 percent Gen-Xers make up 36 percent, and the Matures make up 8 percent).
2. These are young people who have always worn a helmet when riding a bike, and they have always won a trophy when playing a sport.
3. They want “feedback, flexibility, and fun. “
4. They want to do meaningful work right away. They want the work to be interesting. They can mean that they are reluctant to pay dues on the job, much to the chagrin of the Gen-X-ers.
5. They want their careers to speed up and slow down as needed.
6. They do not like dress codes, and see no need for them.
7. They ignore the office hierarchy and go right to the top with a problem, much to the chagrin of their Boomer and Gen-X supervisors. They see no reason why they cannot speak to the big boss. In college, they go right to the dean with a complaint rather than department chair.
8. They are used to multi-tasking, and so see keeping the nose to the grindstone as being boring.
9. They are used to E-mailing and texting so they see memos, meetings, and speaking and writing formally as being a drag.
10. Because their own communication, language, and writing is so new and cutting- edge they see older cohorts resistance to it as being. They see older workers as being afraid of the new ways to do things.
11. They have a sense of entitlement that can be off-putting, because they have grown up being wanted and told they are special.

(Alsop, 2008)

Millennials look for their instructors to do the following:

1. To know and care about them.
2. Outline clear and concise expectations.
3. Make sure the expectations must be fair and reasonable.
4. Be sensitive and flexible to their diverse demands.
5. Use class time effectively.
6. Value student classroom input.
7. Project a persona that includes spontaneity and humor.
8. Effectively tie assignments to the information discussed in class.
9. Display positive treatment of individuals, such as spending extra time meeting with them.

Richard Light in his book *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* tells us that today's college students believe they:

1. Learn through extracurricular activities and that should be encouraged by their instructors.
2. Learn more in highly-structured classes with frequent assessment.
3. Are more successful when they do their homework in groups rather than alone.
4. Benefit from faculty mentoring.
5. Learn a lot from diverse peers when activities are effectively organized.
6. Benefit from time management in relation to their academics.
7. Care about developing their writing skills.
8. Are enthusiastic about studying literature and language.

## Chapter Four: Film as a Pedagogical Tool

As many instructors have discovered, film makes a superb pedagogical tool. Not only can it be used to illustrate obvious literary ideas in the film adaptations of works of fiction, it can be used to prompt discussion of any number of disparate ideas. As Aristotle said: “The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance” (Aristotle, n.d.). For example, I have used the battle scene from *Paths of Glory* to illustrate Isaac Rosenberg’s poetry and I have used the *Pope of Greenwich Village* to exemplify culture.

To informally quantify student reaction to the films I have used in class, I have designed a questionnaire asking students to rate “watchability” of the video, learning effectiveness of the video, and enhancement to the lesson by using the video. By “watchability” I meant did they like it, and was it worth watching? It comes as no surprise that the students overwhelmingly liked the films, preferring dramas to documentaries. I will include the survey results throughout this chapter.

Because most students like film and video to begin with, it is not beyond reason to think that using video in class can be advantageous. As Howard Gardner has said: “Stories are the single most powerful tool in a leader's toolkit” (Gardner, 2009). And film can tell a great story. So, coupling film with the written word is not much of a stretch to Millennials used to years of watching *Weeds*, *Arrested Development*, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. They have been conditioned by and are familiar with the media before they come to college. Taking advantage of their media literacy should be a no-brainer for a teacher with *withitness*.

## Using Nonfiction

Using non-fiction books in teaching composition encourages the instructors to be as innovative as the writers they are teaching. The non-fiction book *Dead Man Walking* has been used in the IUPUI English W131, Elementary Composition I for many semesters. As it happens, there is a very good film adaptation of the book. For classroom use, the instructor should first play the video, and then discuss it at length. The students should then write responses to the film, and respond to each other's responses. The written and verbal responses stimulate their creativity, and some very good essays follow. By using the film to support the book, several ideas can be discussed:

1. the differences between the book and the film;
2. capital punishment;
3. poor people and prison;
4. the unfairness of the prison/judicial system  
(e.g. OJ Simpson, Phil Spector);
5. spirituality and religion;
6. forgiveness;
7. crime;
8. hatred.

The film touches upon all these points and more, in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. The execution scene is one the viewer is not likely to forget. Sean Penn's apotheosis is powerful, though the linking of the convicted rapist/murderer to Christ might prove to be a bit much for some students. The scene is best followed by a discussion of the crime and what is proper punishment. The instructor is well-advised to avoid discussions pertaining to the family and what they want, as they (family members) rarely espouse forgiveness. Also, it is necessary for the instructor to be very careful not to promote his/her own agenda. It is interesting to note how few students really support the death penalty. My classroom surveys over six semesters reveal that only about one in four favors it.

As a complement to *Dead Man Walking*, I would suggest a second film dealing with a similar topic: *In Cold Blood*. Not only was it really the first of its kind and an instant classic, it can be easily compared with, and discussed along

with, *Dead Man Walking*. The two films have much in common, but are different enough to prompt comparison.

Both films explore murder and its aftermath, yet in different ways with different styles. The 1967 film was shot in black and white, giving it a dreary, good versus evil tone. The reverse chronological order of the film lends it an evil matter-of-factness. The banality of the evil deeds is presented. By letting the audience get to know the two killers, the filmmaker allows empathy to enter his narrative. The color of the 1995 film (*Dead Man Walking*) is in stark contrast to the older black and white film (*In Cold Blood*). The washed-out visuals of *Dead Man Walking* harken back to the older film, but rather than evoke the older film they continue it. Metaphorically, the age of black and white television has been replaced by the age of video.

A good deal of discussion about crime, punishment, and society can be elicited from these two films, but what about the structure of them? How are their stories told? Much can be done in the classroom with the rhetorical structures of each. For example, the styles of the two can be compared and contrasted, as can the themes. *In Cold Blood* is jarring and disturbing, while *Dead Man Walking* is more lyrical. The older film has a voice-over with a jazz soundtrack, while the newer film has music by Bruce Springsteen. As Dick and Perry travel across the American West they become demented Jack Kerouac's and Neal Cassidy's. Mathew Poncelet remains in Louisiana, another victim of an unjust society and its unjust prison system. The gritty realism of *In Cold Blood* is absent in *Dead Man Walking*. Whereas realism tends to be non-judgmental, and almost journalistic, the naturalism of *Dead Man Walking* is quite evident. This is all evidenced through the protagonists: society produced Mathew (naturalism), while Dick and Perry produced themselves (realism). By exposing students to a second film, they are presented with another perspective. The other perspective may be a better one, and it makes them stretch their writing chops to have to think about it.



In “Film as a Teaching Resource” Joseph Champoux suggests several functions of film in the classroom: film as case, film as experiential exercise, film as metaphor, film as satire, film as symbolism, film as meaning, film as experience, and film as time (Champoux, 1999). In this thesis I have used his model with some modifications.

### **Film as Metaphor**

Just as metaphors can serve many functions in prose and poetry, they can do the same thing when using film to enhance pedagogy. Film can help to clarify complex thoughts. It brings clarity to abstract thoughts, thoughts can be magnified or exaggerated for dramatic effect, and clear perception can be gained as well (Cooper, 1986). Though they are really just comparisons, students often think metaphors distort facts or exaggerate meaning, rather than enhancing it. On the contrary, metaphor is a tool of the imagination and helps to stimulate imagery visually or on paper. Facts are not distorted, but rather experienced in a new way. The impressions left by a metaphor will often outlast other memories (Cooper, 1986).

The first two *Godfather* films are excellent examples of ways metaphor can be used in film and in teaching. Because the stories are so compelling, the audience becomes compliant and buys into the lessons on power the film provides. It seems perfectly normal for Michael Corleone to ruthlessly kill his own brother so he can maintain his power-base. The audience (sutured early-on to Michael) believe this, even though they would have to see the inherent corruption in Michael. In fact, the more corrupt Michael becomes, and the deeper he sinks into the inferno the more the audience is pulling for him. Students are quick to understand the corruption metaphor used this way. Pretty pictures with good music and dialogue can go a long way in pressing points home.

Below are some examples of films with readily identifiable metaphors:

1. *Affliction*: As Wade's toothache gets worse the more he becomes like his abusive father.
2. *American Beauty*: The inner beauty of one girl versus outer beauty of another.
3. *Badlands*: The simple shots of the fish and the cow underline protagonists Kit and Holly's simple childlike thoughts about death.
4. *Cool Hand Luke*: The courageous little guy versus the unjust system.
5. *Diner*: The diner is the womb to which they all return.
6. *Insomnia*: In a world where everything is topsy-turvy, going through the floor is like Alice entering the looking glass.
7. *King Kong*: Beauty and the Beast on steroids.
8. *The Last Picture Show*: The sweeping shots at the beginning and the end illustrate the futility, tininess, and vulnerability of life.
9. *Memento*: People's memories- short-term versus long-term.
10. *The Red Violin*: the woman's Tarot reading is really the violin's.
11. *Saturday Night Fever*: The journey to maturity. Brooklyn represents immaturity, while Manhattan represents maturity.
12. *The Shining*: The hedge maze reflects protagonist Danny's madness.

### **Film as History or Time**

Using film to teach history is accomplished rather easily. If you were to teach a lesson about Pearl Harbor, perhaps you could use the film *Pearl Harbor* to underscore the lesson plan. But there is one thing wrong with that logic: panned by the critics, *Pearl Harbor* is a rotten movie. As William Schneider and Robert Rosenstone say, you *can* use a film which spouts bad history to teach history, provided you quickly follow up with correct history. Dr. Schneider even went on to say "there is no such thing as bad history." But if the film is bad and anachronistic, no amount of explaining will make it a good pedagogical tool.

Because historical films are really about today, the historical film can also be used to teach about today, and things happening in the here and now. John Ford's *The Searchers*, though set in 1870s Texas, is really a commentary on

American race relations and xenophobia. *Easy Rider* can be interpreted as a Western of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, commenting on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, comparing the two and finding very little difference. The desperados of old are chasing the American Dream and coming up short.

Here is a list of teachable films with teachable historical topics:

1. *Barry Lyndon* (D. Stanley Kubrik, 1975)
2. *Becket* (D. Peter Glenville, 1964)
3. *Gallipoli* (D. Peter Weir, 1981)
4. *Gettysburg* (D. Ronald F. Maxwell, 1993)
5. *Glory* (D. Edward Zwick, 1989)
6. *Malcolm X* (D. Spike Lee, 1992)
7. *Paths of Glory* (D. Stanley Kubrik, 1957)
8. *Reds* (D. Warren Beatty, 1981)
9. *Spartacus* (D. Stanley Kubrik, 1960)
10. *Summer of My German Soldier* (D. Michael Tuchner, 1978)
11. *Tale of Two Cities* (D. Jack Conway, 1935)
12. *Zulu* (D. Cy Endfield, 1964)

When using film to teach history or to talk about the past, it is most important to place things in the proper context. A short talk before the film rolls to put things into context, followed by a post-film discussion reiterating and expanding on those ideas goes a long way in helping the students to make the most of their viewing experience. Even essay questions about how the film “got it wrong” would serve the same purpose.

### **Film as Case Study**

Case study is an obvious use of film in the classroom, and may be one of the first things that comes to mind when film is considered as a pedagogical tool. Well-made films, those which are well constructed with a good plotline and a coherent story, will work well as a case study. Well-acted and well-directed film scenes present material more dramatically and can engage the student differently and perhaps better than print can.

Well-chosen films as case studies can help develop students' analytical skills. Several scenes from *Office Space* do a terrific job of showing how the modern individual fares in the modern work environment. This film can be used alone or in conjunction with the Herman Melville novella *Bartleby the Scrivener*. In that story, Melville tells the tale of a young scrivener disenchanted with the workplace of the Industrial Revolution. After a while, Bartleby simply stops working saying he "would prefer not to." Just as Bartleby "would prefer not to," Peter Gibbons, the *Office Space*'s protagonist, pines for a life of "doing nothing."

The individual versus the modern workplace is a hot topic these days. Both works parody the world of modern work. This world of work is presented as the be-all and end-all of human existence. However there is one character who sees things clearly and revolts: Bartleby/Peter. Just as the Industrial Revolution displaced the craftsman and the rural laborer, the Computer Age displaces the Twenty-something. Students readily identify with Peter Gibbons, if not Bartleby. Perhaps Bartleby is better fodder for literature courses.

Modern work was a hot topic in 1936, when Charlie Chaplin produced *Modern Times*. That film has many inventive and terrific routines and scenes which discuss the struggle of common man against the dehumanizing effects of the Industrial Age and the social institutions surrounding it. In a trance with wrench held aloft like a flag, the little tramp madly tightens everything he can, including the noses of the people in his way. He chases women with buttons on their clothing eager to push and tighten them. Back in the factory he pulls all the levers and switches he can until things start to blow up. He picks up an oil can and continues his mad industrial arabesque until a man in a white coat takes him off to the loony. He has literally become a "nut" himself.

Most of the students in an entry-level college course are familiar with dehumanizing jobs. Most have a work history. Many of them have performed demeaning jobs like fast food service or retail work. They can easily understand

the dehumanizing aspects of modern work, so the lesson hits home and makes the right points about education and career.

Some film scenes can be used to demonstrate integrative cases where several topics or problems can be discussed under the umbrella of a single film. There are some scenes in the film *Crimson Tide* depicting stress, conflict, resolution, decision making, and leadership problems. The film is perhaps based on the premise that American submarine commanders have the authority to launch missiles on their own if they are not in communication with the President. The plot line is quite similar to the events which occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, where a Soviet submarine officer convinced his two associates not to fire the missiles they had been ordered to fire until they could obtain order clarification from Moscow. The film makes a good case study of decision-making and chain decisions.

The title character in *Jerry Maguire* demonstrates the ups and downs of starting a business. The other characters challenge him and he must earn their support back, just as one must in business. Just as commerce is a constant struggle between market forces with a small business owner trying to keep his enterprise afloat, *Jerry Maguire* struggles for his moral center. The irony of the film and one of the things that makes it so interesting is that Jerry's downfall is the result of his having done the right thing. He has done something good by writing his mission statement, and has to pay the price. The capriciousness of the world of modern work is explored in the film.

The composition classroom can be a good venue for the discussion and teaching of case studies, and the ability to use film in teaching them is still a good implement in a repertoire of classroom tools. Perhaps the technical writing classroom is more germane. However, understanding which films work where and how can only enhance good practice in the classroom. Because there are so many films saying so many things about so many topics, the pedagogical opportunities are almost limitless.

## **Film as an Exercise in Problem-Based Learning**

Because film has so many unique qualities that lend themselves to looking at problems and other experiences, it can be used for analysis. Since problem-based learning can be both a curriculum and a process, it is flexible enough to be used with film pedagogy. Since it is characterized by its use of open-ended problems, students working in small groups, and teachers acting as facilitators rather than lecturers, it is adaptable to classroom where discussion and application are the norm. In such learning situations, students assume increasing responsibility for their own learning. The students quickly begin to realize that learning can occur anywhere in any situation

A good application of using film in a PBL scenario would be to use a film like *All the President's Men*. That film has several scenes in which the characters are working on important problems, tossing around ideas, and then arriving at conclusions. The students learn how their classroom activities have real-world applications. Students could analyze these scenes in small groups using some general information about problem-solving, how personal decisions are made, and how group decisions are made to make recommendations on decisions in general. The scenes can be analyzed using the Vroom-Yetton-Jago decision model. The model is a very good way to mine and form knowledge. It offers five styles of decision-making:

**Autocratic I (A1)** – The leader solves the problem using the information available.

**Autocratic II (A11)** – The leader obtains the information from the group, then decides alone. The group may or may not be informed.

**Consultive I (C1)** - The leader shares the problem with the members individually, asks for input from them, then decides alone. There is no collective meeting.

**Consultive II (C11)** – The leader shares the problem with the group, but decides alone.

**Group 11 (GII)** - The leader discusses the situation, then focuses and directs it without imposing his or her will. The group then discerns the final decision.

The fifth style (GII) is the most germane for the group purpose, as Millennials are somewhat resistant to being told what to think or believe. It is best practice to let students in groups teach each other (Vroom and Yetton, 1973). Therefore, learning can be a journey or exploration, rather than indoctrination.

### **Film as Lampon, Cultural Criticism, and/or Satire**

Satire is an effective form for conveying concepts to students. Humor and ridicule are used to contrast pretense and reality. Irony is king in satire. Showing a film containing irony, such as the Coen Brothers' *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?*, can provide a valuable lesson in the use of irony and social satire. It can also give the class insight on the importance of irony to the ancient Greeks, and how irony has functioned in literature since. The film begins with an invocation to the muse, much like Homer's *Odyssey*, and progresses from there. Just as the ancient Greeks used irony to communicate their message to their audience, the Coen brothers use it to lampoon modern America.

Because there is no pretense, fairness, or charade in satire, it can distort reality any way it wishes. It is what it is. Any distortion simply highlights the shortcomings and foibles of a single person, a group of people, or a society. Therefore, the viewer or reader is literally compelled to see the object of the ridicule. It does not have to be fair, because it goes overboard in the lampooning.

Since *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* is set in the American South of the 1920's, the audience is really part of the joke. The film is really a series of vignettes (like *The Odyssey*) where the hero faces a series of obstacles like the Cyclops, the sirens, and the lotus eaters. Ulysses Everett McGill (George Clooney)

must overcome trials and tribulations like Odysseus does. And, like Odysseus, Ulysses uses his quick mind and nimble tongue to evade trouble. The picaresque tale is really a road picture like those of Hope and Crosby, and perhaps a homage to them as much as to Homer. The South with its chain gangs and racism seems far removed from America of 2000. But is it? Since historical pieces are really about the present, does the audience gets it that the Coen brothers are making fun of us, all of us? Is the world of 2000 really all that much different from the world of 1920?

The 1995 satire *Election* was put to good use during 2008, an election year. Lots of good thought and conversation came of it. The film is a metaphor for American politics and ambition, also ridiculing the education establishment and educators, and accurately satirizing American spirituality. Here are some *prayers* from the candidates in the film:

**Tracy Flick:** “Dear Lord Jesus, I do not often speak with you and ask for things, but now, I really must insist that you help me win the election tomorrow because I deserve it and Paul Metzler doesn't, as you well know. I realize that it was your divine hand that disqualified Tammy Metzler and now I'm asking that you go that one last mile and make sure to put me in office where I belong so that I may carry out your will on earth as it is in heaven. Amen. “

**Tammy Metzler:** “Dear God, I know I don't believe in you, but since I'll be starting Catholic school soon, I thought I should at least practice. Let's see. What do I want? I want Lisa to realize what a bitch she is and feel really bad and apologize for how she hurt me and know how much I still love her. In spite of everything, I still want Paul to win the election tomorrow, not that cunt Tracy. Oh, and I also want a really expensive pair of leather pants and someday, I wanna be really good friends with Madonna. Love, Tammy.”

**Paul Metzler:** “Dear God, thank you for all your blessings. You've given me so many things, like good health, nice parents, a nice truck, and what I'm told is a large penis, and I'm very grateful, but I sure am worried about Tammy. In my heart, I still can't believe she tore down my posters, but sometimes, she does get so weird and angry. Please help her be a happier person because she's so smart and sensitive and I love her so much. Also, I'm nervous about the



election tomorrow and I guess I want to win and all, but I know that's totally up to you. You'll decide who the best person is and I'll accept it. And forgive me for my sins, whatever they may be. Amen. “

(*Election*, 1999, Dir. Alexander Payne)

There is irony even in the names of the characters. The German surname *Metzler* means *butcher* in English, as the brother/sister combo of Paul and Tammy literally butcher each other resulting in Tracy Flick winning the election. The German Surname *Flick* means “one who can repair anything.” So Tracy is headed into the political arena where deals are struck and the fix is in.

Students in IUPUI Gateway classes react favorably to *Election*, probably since they are only recently removed from the high school environment themselves. It was rated 8.58/10.0 for watchability, a little lower 6.72/10.0 for learning effectiveness, and 7.97/10.0 as a class lesson. The cliques, pressure, and teen angst are very much in the student’s minds as they watch the film, as they are not much removed from high school themselves. Good writing and discussion results, often with surprising insights. The following ideas are often discussed:

1. Hypocrisy
2. Politics/Student Government
3. Success
4. Ambition
5. Ruthlessness
6. Cost/Price

(Wieland, 2007)

### **Film as Symbol**

Film scenes can present a symbolic way of conveying theories and concepts. Unusual filmmaking techniques can suggest symbol. Lighting sound, sequencing, music, and other elements can lead the viewer to make the intellectual jump from the literal to the symbolic. Most moviegoers are thoroughly familiar with Luca Brasi and the fish from *The Godfather*, and nobody

misunderstands the meaning of “Luca Brasi sleeps with the fishes.” The sepia tones of the mise en scene of the film suggest the past, the old country, or fading memory (like photographs).

In Vittorio DeSica’s 1948 neorealist masterpiece *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*) the bicycle comes to symbolize almost all that is wrong in post-war Italy:

1. it is a mode of transportation for people with no place to go;
2. it represents fascism and the corruption of it;
3. the bleak future the Italians have before them;
4. work;
5. the class struggle;
6. fathers and sons (Antonio and Bruno);
7. moral superiority.

I have used the David Mamet film *The Edge* in class for several semesters. The students like it because it is a beautifully filmed adventure yarn which deals with survival, money, success, and death. A Kodiak bear (Bart the Bear) chases the main characters through the Alaskan wilderness. Because the protagonist is a billionaire, the students cannot help but notice the similarities between the chase (where people are gobbled) and corporate takeovers (where companies are gobbled). The more the beast eats, the hungrier he gets, much like Carl Icahn. Literally, there is a bear in the market, and students make the connection.

### **Film as Meaning or Message-Bearing**

Film is a very good venue for giving meaning to theories and concepts. The combination of the visual and the auditory in great films can convey messages better than spoken or printed words. Since film is a collaborative art, several artists are working together very hard to make an impact.

Films like Sidney Lumet’s *12 Angry Men* and Roman Polanski’s *Chinatown* can be used to illustrate conflict. The conflict shown in the former

while the jury deliberates can be more illuminating than any three lectures. Each episode ends with a vote that leaves the jury undecided. They are literally a hung jury through most of the film. The hung vote then goes on to become the conflict of the very next episode. And in the next episode guilt is used to propel the action of characters. Likewise, Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* can be used the same way. Jake Gittes's classic slap fest with Evelyn Mulwray literally demonstrates how conflict (the slapping) propels the plot. The scene is so jarring (and unsettling politically) it would probably not be shot today. Nevertheless, it beautifully illustrates plot progression and conflict. Both films have outstanding scripts and directors-Lumet and Polanski-and are powerful teaching tools.

### **Film as a Cultural Experience**

As Stadler said back in 1990, film's unique qualities create strong experiences for viewers. It can be used to introduce students to foreign cultures and ideas. A film like *Mediterraneo* can be used in just such a way. The film literally discusses what happens when cultures collide as they do in World War II Greece. The values and behaviors of Italian and Greek cultures are discussed and examined in the film. Another film, *The Pope of Greenwich Village*, analyzes several subcultures (Irish, Italian, and WASP) within the context of a larger culture (American). John Ford's cavalry trilogy examines the culture and values of America: the post-bellum West and the post-WWII society of the returning GI's.

When you use films to discuss culture, it is then easier to evoke response from students regarding their own culture. That is why films like *Office Space* and *Clerks* work so well in the classroom. It is easy for an IUPUI Gateway student to relate to a twenty-something recent college graduate. They have similar problems (dating, work, paying the rent) with the characters on-screen; hence they have an emotional connection with them.

Though *Office Space* was released in 1999, it relates to a 19<sup>th</sup> century Melville novella: *Bartleby the Scrivener*. Both stories deal with work, the workplace, bosses, and getting along at work. The students do not see the connection at first, probably because of Melville's style and syntax. However, they do come to make the connection between the two works and they begin to understand that concerns with work are concerns with work. It does not matter in which century you live. I have often had students write compare and contrast essays about the two narratives.

When Bartleby states "I would prefer not to," he is echoed by Peter Gibbons in the film:

**Peter Gibbons:** You see Bob, it's not that I'm lazy, it's that I just don't care.

**Bob Porter:** Don't... don't care?

**Peter Gibbons:** It's a problem of motivation, all right? Now if I work my ass off and Initech ships a few extra units, I don't see another dime, so where's the motivation? And here's another thing, I have eight different bosses right now.

**Bob Slydell:** Beg your pardon?

Bob Porter: Eight?

**Peter Gibbons:** Eight, Bob. So that means when I make a mistake, I have eight different people coming by to tell me about it. That's my only real motivation is not to be hassled, that, and the fear of losing my job. But you know, Bob, that will only make someone work just hard enough not to get fired.

*(Office Space, 1999, Dir. Mike Judge)*

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* can likewise be compared and contrasted with *Ten Things I Hate about You* (1999) a modern comedy of teen angst and coming of age. Petruchio's banter with Kate is echoed in the 1999 film:

**Patrick:** [*while trying to get Kat go out with him*] Well, the night I take you places you've never been before.

**Kat Stratford:** Like where, the 7-11 on Broadway?

**Patrick:** Someone still has her panties in a twist.

**Kat Stratford:** Don't, for one minute, think that you had any effect whatsoever on my panties.

**Patrick:** Then what did I have an effect on?

**Kat Stratford:** Other than my upchuck reflex, nothing.

**Kat Stratford:** Tell me something true.

**Patrick:** Something true... I hate peas.

**Kat Stratford:** No, something real, something no one else knows.

**Patrick:** Okay, you're sweet, and sexy, and completely hot for me.

(10 Things I Hate about You, 1999, Dir. Gil Junger)

Students have fun with the film and gain a better understanding of Renaissance drama at the same time.

### **David Mamet in the Classroom**

John Lahr, The New Yorker's theater critic, when writing about David Mamet, said he "belongs in the pantheon of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's great dramatists; no other American playwright, except Tennessee Williams has ranged so widely" (Lahr, 1997). In addition to being a world-class playwright, Mamet has also been a teacher. He has taught at Goddard College, Marlboro College, Yale, and the University of Chicago. So it is hard to separate Mamet the playwright from Mamet the teacher. Indeed, lessons are to be learned from his writing. Perhaps because he is a lifelong student of Aristotle, it is easy to find teachable topics in his plays and films.

Indeed, Mamet's topics have ranged from sexual harassment (*Oleanna*, 1994), to Depression-era bad boys (*We're No Angels*, 1989), to con men (*House of Games*, 1987; *The Spanish Prisoner*, 1997). His play about salesmen *Glengarry Glen Ross* is fascinating in its use of dialogue, delineation of character, and grasp of the hard realities of naked capitalism. Perhaps not since *Death of a Salesman* (1949) or the groundbreaking documentary *Salesmen* (1966) have peddlers been awarded such status by an American writer.

Like Hemingway's iceberg, the majority of Mamet's message lies beneath the surface. After repeatedly viewing the 1992 film version and reading the play's text several times, I came to the conclusion that it was not just *Death of a Salesman* updated to the 1980s. The piece has as much to do with rhetoric and creativity as it does with economics. Mamet's salesmen are not just peddlers or drummers; they are actors. Each drummer/actor must establish his own dramatic situation in order to ply his trade.

Because I worked in sales and marketing for many years, it became obvious to me that Mamet was exploring the creative world as much as the commercial one. Indeed, each sales call becomes a performance. Each performance is an ad libbed tribute to the training the salesmen received coming up. Levene trained Roma, and Roma mentions it. Levene calls Moss an "order-taker" (probably one of the worst things one salesman can call another). The sales call or "sit" becomes a performance. The drummer becomes the playwright.

One of the hallmarks of Mamet's style is his use of elliptical dialogue or *Mametspeak*, where he uses sentence fragments and ellipsis to suggest a trailing of thought, or an interruption of speech. The characters often speak in sentences which are never fully formed or finished. Mamet does this to simulate natural human speech patterns. Often a single word, phrase, or concept in an elliptical line triggers an interruption and spurs another character into action.

After graduating from college, Mamet returned home to Chicago to work. The less than ideal economy of the 1970s limited the job opportunities available to him. He took a job in a real estate office as a kind of office manager. His college degree did give him one skill: he could type. The office he worked in was similar to the one we see in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Men, working on only a "smile and a shoeshine" sold worthless Florida real estate to gullible prospects (Miller, 1999). Patricia Bizzell wrote that "mastery of academic discourse must begin with socialization to the community's ways, in the same way that one enters any

cultural group. One must first 'go native.'" (Bizzell, 53) So, in effect, Mamet went native.

Over ten years ago Joseph Harris wrote:

The borders of most discourses are hazily marked and often traveled, and that the communities they define are thus often indistinct and overlapping...one does not step cleanly and wholly from one community to another, but is caught instead in an always changing mix of dominant, residual, and emerging discourses. Rather than framing our work in terms of helping students move from one community of discourse into another, then, it might prove more useful (and accurate) to view our task as adding to or complicating their uses of language. (Harris, p.103)

By synthesizing classical persuasion methods with *Mametspeak*, Mamet achieves something remarkable; a blend of street jargon and classical rhetoric that employs Harris's idea of crossing lines of discourse. This scene from *Glengarry Glen Ross* demonstrates this.

**Levene:** Yes. I did. This morning. (to Williamson) What I'm saying to you: things can change. You see? This is where you fuck up, because this is something you don't know. You can't look down the road. And see what's coming. Might be someone else, John. It might be someone new, eh? Someone new. And you can't look back. 'Cause you don't know history. You ask them. When we were at Rio Rancho, who was top man? A month...? Two months...? Eight months in twelve for three years in a row. You know what that means? You know what that means? Is that luck? Is that some, some, some purloined leads? That's skill. That's talent, that's, that's...

**Roma:** yes...

**Levene:** and you don't remember. 'Cause you weren't around. That's cold calling. Walk up to the door. I don't even know their name. I'm selling something they don't even want. You talk about soft sell...before we had a name for it...before we called it anything, we did it.

(Mamet,1992)

Mamet worked in the office for over a year. He watched, observed, and absorbed the salesmen's mannerisms, speech, and personalities. Rather than rejecting the faux worlds they create, he came to understand and appreciate it. The rhythms and ellipsis he uses in *Glengarry Glen Ross* are theirs. The mannerisms are theirs. The personalities are theirs. As Aristotle said, "Men acquire a particular quality by constantly acting in a particular way" (Aristotle, n.d.). Unlike Arthur Miller, Mamet does not condemn these men. He does not judge. He lets the audience do that.

However, these salesmen are actors in a Greek tragedy. The mental and emotional violence committed by Baylen, the policeman, happens offstage (like it does in Greek tragedy). The interrogations are imagined, which makes them worse. Like Oedipus' blinding, Moss's and Arranow's interrogations must be horrible, at least from their standpoints. The structure of the persuasive speeches comes from Aristotle.

A few centuries before Christ, Aristotle identified several clusters of emotion and experience that influence decisions. In other words, he worked out the best ways to persuade. Indeed, the goal of all argumentative writing is to persuade the reader that the writer's ideas are more valid than someone else's. Those rules still work, and David Mamet saw them at work in the Chicago real estate office. Indeed, Mamet often cites Aristotle in interviews and in print.

Aristotle's three primary types of persuasion are: ethos, pathos, and logos.

*Ethos* is an *ethical* appeal based upon the character or credibility of the persuader. The person making the appeal is saying "buy this product", or "do this," because I say so. In other words, the persuader is of such high stature that his or her recommendation(s) should not be questioned. For example, Tiger Woods persuades consumers to purchase Nike sports equipment simply because he is Tiger Woods.



*Pathos* is a *pathetic* appeal based on emotion. The persuader uses emotional influence to persuade or manipulate. Insurance peddlers ask, “Who’s going to bury you? How will they afford it?” “What’s your family gonna do when you die?” It can also be used in other ways: “Feed the starving children, because you know it’s the right thing to do.” It is a tricky thing to persuade with pathos, because persuadees may feel manipulated. They may say to themselves, “Who is this person to say how I should feel about anything?” Parents can often use pathos effectively, especially when they are older: “Could you please close that door for me. You know I have a bad back, and might re-injure it should I get up and try to close it myself.” Politicians use pathos. The politics of fear of the 2004 election demonstrates it quite well.

*Logos* is *logical* appeal based on reason. The persuader uses rational argument to push his agenda. The only problem with logos is that it can be as manipulative as pathos. Statistics can be cited, experts can be used, and studies can be examined – all to the advantage of the person making the appeal. People are seldom as smart as they think they are. The “Ben Franklin Close” from is a fine example of manipulation through reason. Mamet knows this and uses it quite well in his film.

Aristotle considered two other types of persuasion: bribery and threats of physical violence. Though he knew they were effective forms of persuasion, he thought they were unseemly and not worthy of discussion in rhetorical discourse (McKeon, 1973). Mamet, on the other hand, sees their value and employs them in his film. Indeed, his video can be viewed as an ongoing exercise in persuasion. The characters are constantly angling, persuading, backing up and persuading again, and trying again to persuade.

*Nomos*, a term from Cicero, is probably best described as the use of shared cultural beliefs to persuade. It came along after Aristotle, but Mamet mixes it effectively with Aristotle’s appeals. The salesman employs nomos when he is trying to create or build empathy. Shelley “the Machine” Levene picks up a fly rod

at a prospect's home. Kenneth Burke called it *identification* and considered it the most powerful persuasive tool (Burke, 1969). The persuader tries to make the persuaded feel as if "we're all in this together" in order to manipulate he/she into doing what the persuader wants. Nomos asks: What do we have in common with each other? How can this connection be used to both our benefit? Can our shared characteristics be further developed? How can I persuade you that since I came to this conclusion, so can you? In other words, Mamet takes a cue from sales training and uses a classical tool to build empathy.

The goal of argumentative writing is to persuade the audience that the writer's position and ideas are valid. Or, perhaps, more valid than someone else's. Aristotle felt that pathos was the most powerful tool a persuader could use, but he thought the three forms should be mixed together for maximum effect.

What follows is a scene from *Glengarry Glen Ross* where Mamet mixes all five types of Aristotle's appeals to illustrate persuasion. Like Aristotle, Mamet mixes the appeals for greatest effect. A high-angle shot shows the entire real estate sales office. Cut to a low-angle shot of the Blake character granting him superiority and power in the scene. Indeed, the camera is looking up at Blake throughout the scene mimicking the views of the salesmen. This is a world where the lowly look up to the leader for guidance--despite the airs of toughness. I have annotated the text by directing the reader to Mamet's use of Aristotle's appeals.

*Glengarry Glen Ross*  
by David Mamet

***In this scene, Blake (Alec Baldwin) is confronting the employees of a tough Chicago real-estate office, Shelley Levene (Jack Lemmon), Ed Moss (Ed Harris) and George Aaronow (Alan Arkin) while their unsympathetic supervisor John Williamson (Kevin Spacey) looks on. If you would like, this monologue I'm sure can be edited into one incredibly long one, if you want to take out the lines from the other actors.***

**Blake:** Let me have your attention for a moment! So you're talking about what? You're talking about...**(puts out his cigarette)**...bitching about that sale you shot, some son of a bitch that doesn't want to buy, somebody that doesn't want what you're selling, some broad you're trying to screw and so forth. Let's talk about something important. Are they all here?  
**(ETHOS,NOMOS)**

**Williamson:** All but one.

**Blake:** Well, I'm going anyway. **(SALESMAN AS ACTOR)** Let's talk about something important! **(to Levene)** Put that coffee down!! Coffee's for closers only. **(Levene scoffs)** Do you think I'm fucking with you? I am not fucking with you. I'm here from downtown. I'm here from Mitch and Murray. And I'm here on a mission of mercy. Your name's Levene?  
**(ETHOS)**

**Levene:** Yeah.

**Blake:** You call yourself a salesman, you son of a bitch?

**Moss:** I don't have to listen to this shit.

**Blake:** You certainly don't pal. 'Cause the good news is -- you're fired. The bad news is you've got, all you got, just one week to regain your jobs, starting tonight. Starting with tonight's sit. Oh, have I got your attention now? Good. 'Cause we're adding a little something to this month's sales contest. As you all know, first prize is a Cadillac Eldorado. Anyone want to see second prize? Second prize's a set of steak knives. **(BRIBERY)** Third prize is you're fired. **(THREAT)** You get the picture? You're laughing now? You got leads. Mitch and Murray paid good money. Get their names to sell them! You can't close the leads you're given, you can't close shit, you ARE shit, hit the bricks pal and beat it 'cause you are going out!!! **(ETHOS)**

**Levene:** The leads are weak. **(LOGOS)**

**Blake:** 'The leads are weak.' Fucking leads are weak? You're weak. I've been in this business fifteen years. **(ETHOS)**

**Moss:** What's your name?

**Blake:** FUCK YOU, that's my name!! **(ETHOS)** You know why, Mister? 'Cause you drove a Hyundai to get here tonight, I drove a eighty thousand dollar BMW. That's my name!! **(ETHOS, LOGOS, PATHOS) (to Levene)** And your name is "you're wanting." And you can't play in a man's game. You can't close them. **(at a near whisper)** And you go home and tell your wife your troubles. **(to everyone again)** Because only one thing counts in this life! Get them to sign on the line which is dotted! You hear me, you fucking faggots?

**(Blake flips over a blackboard which has two sets of letters on it: ABC, and AIDA.) (ETHOS, LOGOS)**

**Blake:** A-B-C. A-always, B-be, C-closing. Always be closing! Always be closing!! A-I-D-A. Attention, interest, decision, action. Attention -- do I have your attention? **(ETHOS)** Interest -- are you interested? I know you are because it's fuck or walk. **(PATHOS)** You close or you hit the bricks! **(ETHOS)** Decision -- have you made your decision for Christ?!! And action. A-I-D-A; get out there!! You got the prospects comin' in; you think they came in to get out of the rain? Guy doesn't walk on the lot unless he wants to buy. Sitting out there waiting to give you their money! Are you gonna take it? Are you man enough to take it? **(PATHOS, NOMOS) (to Moss)** What's the problem pal? You. Moss.

**Moss:** You're such a hero, you're so rich. Why you coming down here and waste your time on a bunch of bums?  
**(Blake sits and takes off his gold watch)**

**Blake:** You see this watch? You see this watch?

**Moss:** Yeah.

**Blake:** That watch cost more than your car. I made \$970,000 last year. How much you make? You see, pal, that's who I am. And you're nothing. Nice guy? I don't give a shit. Good father? Fuck you -- go home and play with your kids!! **(to everyone)** You wanna work here? Close!! **(ETHOS) (to Aaronow)** You think this is abuse? You think this is abuse, you cocksucker? You can't take this -- how can you take the abuse you get on a sit?! You don't like it -- leave. I can go out there tonight with the materials you got, make myself fifteen thousand dollars! Tonight! In two hours! **(ETHOS)** Can you? Can you? Go and do likewise! A-I-D-A!! Get mad! You sons of bitches! Get mad!! You know what it takes to sell real estate? **(PATHOS)**  
**(He pulls something out of his briefcase)**

**Blake:** It takes brass balls to sell real estate.  
(He's holding two brass balls on string, over the appropriate "area"-  
-he puts them away after a pause)

**Blake:** Go and do likewise, gents. The money's out there, you pick it up, it's yours. You don't--I have no sympathy for you. You wanna go out on those sits tonight and close, close, it's yours. If not you're going to be shining my shoes.**(PATHOS)** Bunch of losers sitting around in a bar. **(in a mocking weak voice)** "Oh yeah, I used to be a salesman, it's a tough racket." **(PATHOS) (he takes out large stack of red index cards tied together with string from his briefcase)** These are the new leads. These are the Glengarry leads. And to you, they're gold. And you don't get them. Because to give them to you is just throwing them away. **(he hands the stack to Williamson)** They're for closers. I'd wish you good luck but you wouldn't know what to do with it if you got it. **(to Moss as he puts on his watch again)** And to answer your question, pal: why am I here? I came here because Mitch and Murray asked me to, they asked me for a favor. I said, the real favor, follow my advice and fire your fucking ass because a loser is a loser. **(ETHOS,PATHOS)**

(He stares at Moss for a sec, and then picking up his briefcase, goes into inner office with Williamson) (Mamet, 1992).

The Image Analysis Essay is the second of four essays assigned in IUPUI's W131 curriculum. Obviously, it has to do with analyzing an image. The students select an advertisement they find interesting. And that is the image they will

analyze. They also have the option of selecting two ads and comparing and contrasting them. It can be a difficult essay to teach as the students are often flustered and confused by trying to analyze an image/advertisement rhetorically.

Students are not accustomed to looking deeply into images. They are not accustomed to rhetorically analyzing something which may not necessarily be written. They are not accustomed to thinking of themselves as being cleverly persuaded or maybe manipulated into buying something. Aristotle's appeals are a main ingredient in the lesson plan for this essay, so handouts are provided explaining them. One of the parameters of the assignment is that the student must decide and prove which of the appeals is being used in the advertisement. To that end, the film version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* is shown to the class, with special emphasis placed on the Blake (Alec Baldwin) sales meeting. (This section of the play was added by Mamet when it was made into a film. He kept this new section in the play's text when it was revived on Broadway in 2006). The students are told to pay close attention to how the Baldwin character persuades – he uses all five of Aristotle's appeals. Later in the film, all the different characters try their hand at persuasion with varying degrees of success. Persuasion is demonstrated, and a lesson plan is born.

In order to quantify the results of all this pedagogical theory a sample was taken from several sections of freshman composition. The grades received on The Image Analysis Essay of eleven sections of Freshman Composition were analyzed. Five sections were taken from before the Mamet play was used as a pedagogical tool and six were taken after the play was adopted by the instructor. The results are startling:

1. Before the film was used the average grade on the Image Analysis Essay was 2.45 or a C+.
2. The section with the lowest grade was 1.98 or a C-.
3. The highest score was 2.85.

4. After the film was adopted the average grade rose to 3.51 or a B+. That is a full letter grade improvement.
5. The section with the lowest grade was 3.23 or a B.
6. The highest score was 3.89.

Though the analysis could be interpreted as easier grading the past couple of years, or better teaching the last couple of years, or better writers the last couple of years, the fact is that the grades improved considerably. The classes who wrote Image Analysis essays before the film was shown did not do as well those who saw the film as part of the lesson plan. Granted the Image Analysis essay can be a difficult paper to teach, as sometimes students have a hard time “getting it.” Whatever the case, the students “get it” better after exposure to *Glengarry Glen Ross*. I do not know if that is a tribute to David Mamet and his expert writing or to the pedagogy.

### **Teaching with *The Verdict* (1982)**

Courtroom dramas are a Hollywood staple: *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), *Inherit the Wind* (1960), *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), *Breaker Morant* (1980), *Paths of Glory* (1958) even TV's *Law and Order*. Filmgoers have demonstrated a sustained interest in watching court dramas on screen, and college students are no exception.

A fundamental scene in most courtroom dramas is the closing argument. In *The Verdict* Paul Newman plays alcoholic lawyer Frank Galvin. Galvin seeks not only to win his case, but also to redeem himself. He is a middle-aged man of once-great potential, who has squandered his life and career. Mamet, the screenwriter, resists the temptation to swing for the bleachers in his dialogue. Instead the power of Galvin's words spring from their simplicity, openness, and honesty. Newman/Galvin speaks in a low voice, never raising it. Powerful people do not have to raise their voices. Mamet uses Cicero's method, but in a condensed

minimalist form. Galvin's silence adds a dimension to the speech the audience would not have otherwise.

The Roman philosopher and rhetorician Cicero had some thoughts on argument and the teaching and presentation of it.

“Neither can embellishments of language be found without arrangement and expression of thoughts, nor can thoughts be made to shine without the light of language.”

“When you wish to instruct, be brief; that men's minds take in quickly what you say, learn its lesson, and retain it faithfully. Every word that is unnecessary only pours over the side of a brimming mind. “

“No one can speak well, unless he thoroughly understands his subject.”

“Neither can embellishments of language be found without arrangement and expression of thoughts, nor can thoughts be made to shine without the light of language.”

(Cicero/Tinkler, 1995. P.86)

Cicero organized his arguments along these lines:

1. **Exordium**- This section establishes the speaker's authority. It is ethos.
2. **Narratio**- This section is a statement of the facts. Narrative account. It is logos.
3. **Confirmatio**- This section is a statement of the facts. Body. Logos.
4. **Partitio**- This section is a statement of the facts. Outline. It is logos.
5. **Refutatio**- This section is a statement of the facts. It answers counter-arguments. It is logos.
6. **Peroratio**- This section sums things up and uses emotional appeals. It is pathos

(Cicero/Tinkler, 1995)

I have used the beautifully written summation scene from *The Verdict* (1982) to illustrate the use of argument. The film is based on character and



language, and Mamet shows us how a “less is more “argument can be just as convincing and effective as a polemic.

The setting is a courtroom. It is daytime. The camera is placed at a high angle, where it focuses on Frank Galvin (Paul Newman) and Mickey Morrissey (Jack Warden) in the bottom left of the frame. The high angle grants superiority to the unseen viewer, who is, presumably, the judge. The subjects of a high angle shot appear vulnerable or insignificant. The two characters in the frame are seen to be diminished in importance by the angle, reflecting their social status and standing in the legal community. The tension is palpable. Courtrooms are generally filled with tension because of the adversarial circumstances of the characters.

All the actors are looking slightly to their right.

ANGLE

**JUDGE HOYLE** Mr. Galvin...? Mr. Galvin, summation...  
**(Exordium)**

(pause)

ANGLE - GALVIN  
In front of the full jury box. (beat)

GALVIN  
(Sigh) Well, you know, so much of the time we're lost. We say, 'Please, God, tell us what is right. Tell us what's true. And there is no justice. The rich win, the poor are powerless...'  
We become tired of hearing people lie. And after a time we become dead... a little dead.  
We think of ourselves (beat) as victims. **(Exordium/Narratio)**

(pause)

And we become victims. **(Narratio)**

Mamet builds and creates tension through delays in action and dialogue. The frequent beats, pauses, and sighs underscore the stress and tension present.

(pause) **(Narratio/ Confimatio)**

And we become ... we become weak... we doubt ourselves...we doubt our beliefs... we doubt our institutions... and we doubt the law...  
**(Confirmatio)**

Perhaps Frank Galvin is speaking about himself here, as Mamet never lets the emotional state of his characters rest.

(beat) **(Confirmatio)**  
But today you are the law. (beat) You are the law... not some book ... not lawyers, not the marble statues or the trappings of the court...those are just symbols. **(Partitio)**

(beat) **(Refutatio)**

Of our desire to be just... **(Refutatio)**

The camera moves to a level angle with Frank Galvin suggesting equality and that the speaker is more than just a lawyer, but a man of the people.

(beat) **(Refutatio)**

All that they are... they are, in fact, a prayer... **(Refutatio)**

(beat) **(Refutatio)**

a fervent, and a frightened prayer. In my religion we say, 'Act as if you had faith, and faith will be given to you.' **(Refutatio)**

The camera focuses on the foreground (Galvin) granting him the power of signifier. The remaining people in the shot become the signified.

(beat) **(Refutatio)**

If...If we are to have faith in justice, we need only to believe in ourselves. **(Confirmatio)**

(beat) **(Confirmatio)**

And *act* with justice. **(Confirmatio)**

(beat) **(Peroratio)**

And I believe that there is justice in our hearts. **(Peroratio)**

(beat) **(Peroratio)**

He stands still a moment, surveys the courtroom, and returns to his seat. Morrissey squeezes his arm in support. **(Peroratio)**

The camera is at a medium high angle. This change of angle from the beginning of the speech suggests the judge is now viewing Galvin with newfound respect.

*(The Verdict, 1982, Sidney Lumet)*

Students react well to the clip of this speech. They “get it” that the speech has a classical structure at its root. They also “get it” that Mamet has changed that structure slightly and used modern dramatic techniques to enhance its meaning. The clip can be used early in the semester when explaining arrangement, or later in the term when discussing alternative structures of essays (open-form prose).

I distribute a handout to the class with *Argument* on one side, and the text of the speech on the other. We read and discuss the argument handout in class; then I show the clip from *The Verdict*. The students then annotate the text of the speech. I may have to show the clip more than once. That is all right, as it only takes a couple of minutes. No class time is wasted.

### **Teaching with *The Edge* (1997).**

This is an adventure movie set in the Alaskan wilderness. The film is beautifully photographed (Donald McAlpine) and acted (Sir Anthony Hopkins and Alec Baldwin star). Like other works by David Mamet, it is mostly concerned with character and language. Indeed, it would probably be all right with Mamet if the film were to be called a *linguistic thriller*. A great deal of the film is taken up by the study/discussion of film clichés.

The word *cliché* comes from the French printing trade, literally meaning a *stereotype*. However, it is not just something repeated over-and-over; it is more than bad jokes and commonplace expressions. It *is* something which is repeated, but it is also a conveyed idea or message (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Because a cliché is always linked to something, it must be considered a metaphor. If it is to be considered a metaphor, then it must certainly be regarded as one characterized by overuse. The cliché is also an analogy, one that works through overuse, and does not say or do anything original or helpful. Because of the overuse and familiarity of these metaphors, their users can be considered unoriginal or lazy thinkers. So writing with clichés is tired, uninspired, and boring. It is not the tight, clipped, original, poetic, and naturalistic language Mamet uses in his plays.

The most easily recognized aspect of David Mamet's style is his dialogue. It is sparse, clipped, and often profane. It has come to be called *Mametspeak*. Obviously, he is concerned with and very aware of language and its use. He defends his salty dialogue, saying, "the people who speak that way tell the truth. They don't institutionalize thought" (Salon, 1997). Mamet critic Anne Dean suggests that "from the bluntest of materials, Mamet carves his dialogue, establishes mood and character, and imbues his work with tension and movement. With apparently so little, he achieves so much" (Dean, 1990).

His reverence for language and the truth may be rooted in his Judaism. He is a believer in and seeker of the truth. He does not cotton speaking badly. Misspeaking ranges from gossip to speaking dialogue:

Gossip is the need to define social norms. We need to discover what's correct for the community. And so we gossip. And we need to identify ourselves as the good people. Jewish tradition calls it *lashon ha-ra*, 'the evil tongue.' And they see it as a great, great crime. In fact, Orthodox Jews won't say anything about anyone else. They won't say anything about third parties for fear of engaging in *lashon ha-ra*, 'the evil tongue.' And it's probably a very good idea. The idea that anybody could be a victim... a murderer... is terrifying (NPR Interview with David Mamet, 1994).

I believe Mamet's rejection of gossip is paralleled by his rejection of clichés. In his book *On Directing Film* he talks about the language and images of film, and he also comments on film cliché.

Here is why the images (of a film) have to be uninflected... you want to know *what happens next*...

*The purpose of the technique is to free the unconscious.* If you follow the rules ploddingly, they will allow your conscious to be free. That's true creativity. If not you will be fettered by your conscious mind. Because the conscious mind always wants to be interesting. The conscious mind is going to suggest the audience, the cliché, because these things offer the security of having succeeded in the past. Only the mind that has taken off itself and put on a task is allowed true creativity.

The mechanical working of the film is just like the mechanism of a dream; because that's what the film is really going to end up being, isn't it?

The images in a dream are vastly varied and magnificently interesting. And most of them are uninflected. It is their juxtaposition that gives the dream its strength. The terror and beauty of the dream come from the connection of previously unrelated mundanities of life. As discontinuous and as meaningless as that juxtaposition might seem on first glimpse, an enlightened analysis reveals the highest and most simple order of organization, and, so, the deepest meaning. Isn't that true?

The same should be true of a movie. The great movie can be as free of being a record of the progress of the protagonist as is a dream... The dream and the film are the juxtaposition of images in order to answer a question...

All film is finally a dream sequence... happen to tell the story well, each in its own way...it's all make-believe. The question is, how *good* make-believe is it going to be? (p.32).

Indeed, lashon ha-ra needs to be prevented because words cannot be retrieved and their damage is irreparable. One must avoid embarrassing others with foolish, silly, filthy, critical, or argumentative talk because it is contrary to the spirit within people. Death and life are in the tongue and we reap what we sow. We are our brother's keepers, and our motives must be pure to protect

others. Mishlei 30:32 says “If you have done foolishly in lifting yourself up... lay your hand upon your mouth” (Proverbs, Chapter 30). So to David Mamet, as a devout Jew, the use of language is spiritual.

Jews believe communicating clearly and saying things correctly is more than just a common courtesy, it is an obligation. One need only look at the Biblical story of “The Tower of Babel” to see God’s retribution for hubris – a breakdown of communication. Indeed, Jews are compelled to be always growing in their religion and their humanity. So, if a person is using clichés, stereotypes, and other forms of mis-speech, then that person is being lazy. He/she is not growing. And intellectual laziness is an anathema to Jews. They are compelled, as the Tree of Life is, to continually grow. If they are lazy or stagnant, then they are not growing and developing. As Aristotle said: “The beginning of wisdom is calling things by their right names” (Aristotle, n.d.).

Discussing *lashon ha-ra* in class is a useful pedagogical tool. When placed in context, it can be illuminating. A good discussion can examine the following questions:

1. What are the rules of communication?
2. Do they vary from culture to culture?
3. Do foreign ideas about speech and communication inform our own?
4. How do we view gossip?
5. How do Americans regard proper speech?

Additionally, the *lashon ha-ra* concept can be seen as an early how-to for writing and speaking.

In a scene from *Glengarry Glen Ross* Mamet’s thoughts on saying the right thing are presented. Shelley “the Machine” Levene is berating Williamson the office manager about what it means to speak correctly:

**Levene:** ...excuse me, nothing, you be as cold as you want, but you just fucked a good man out of six thousand dollars and his goddamn bonus 'cause you didn't know the shot, if you can do that

and you aren't man enough that it gets you, then I don't know what, if you can't take something from that...

(blocking his way)

you're scum, you're fucking white- bread. You be as cold as you want. A child would know it, he's right.

(pause)

You're going to make something up, be sure it helps or keep your mouth shut.

(Mamet, 1992)

Keeping this in mind, Mamet's audience begins to realize that the only characters who misspeak are idiots. They violate lashon ha-ra. His main characters do not, and their competence is obvious. Misspeaking is taboo in Mamet. It is only a small jump from the "evil tongue" to the cliché monger, and the concept is aptly demonstrated in the 1997 film *The Edge*. In that film Mamet takes on film cliché.

As mentioned earlier, Mamet satirizes stereotypes and clichés in the film. Roger Ebert says Mamet's "approach throughout the movie is an amused wink at the conventions he lovingly massages" (Ebert, 1997). The film satirizes several action movie clichés:

1. The naïve rich man with the beautiful wife.
2. The poor man is better equipped for survival due to skills gained while growing up in poverty.
3. The Rule of BADF (the Brother Always Dies First).
4. The ending where the two dead men are eulogized as saving the rich man's life.

The film makes a very effective lesson in the use of symbol, metaphor, and cliché in writing. I start the lesson by handing out a cliché packet complete with definitions, exercises, a video information sheet, and a list of movie clichés.

Here is an example of Mamet using a stock cliché joke:

**Green:** (Voice Over) Two guys in the woods. In a tent. Big bear comes up, he's gonna eat 'em. One guy reaches in his pack, starts putting on his running shoes. The other guy says "you idiot, you

can't run faster than a bear..." Guy says 'I don't have to run faster than the bear, I just have to run faster than you..."

EVERYONE LAUGHS ANGLE:  
INT. THE PLANE

**Morse:** You know why that's particularly funny...? (PAUSE)

The man would not be in the woods with his running shoes.

(PAUSE)

He wouldn't take them in the woods. So the joke indicates hostility on the part of the man who brought the shoes. (PAUSE)

It indicates, in effect, that he brought the other man into the woods to kill him.

Here is Mamet having fun with rich people clichés:

**Morse:** Did you know you can make Fire from Ice...?

**Green:** SHAKES HIS HEAD, DEJECTED, MEANING "NOT NOW..."

**Morse:** You can make fire from ice. Hello? I'm talking to you...

Do you know how that would be done? (PAUSE) Robert?

(PAUSE) Robert.

Can you think?

**Green:** You Yankees. Isn't it...? Isn't it?

**Morse:** Fire from Ice, can you think how?

Green: Sittin' up there... drinks and Golf. Screwin' the Maid

(PAUSE)

**But get you in an emergency....**

**Morse:** ...that's right.

**Green:** N'you bloom. You make me sick. You make me sick, d'you know that...?

**Morse:** I'm sure I do.

**Green:** You make me sick. What the hell puts you off... Jews and taxes, I'd bet.

Morse: I'm not dense Robert, I just have no imagination.

Fire from ice. Can you think how? Can you think how?

**Green:** I don't care how, Charles.

**Morse:** Do you want to die?

Here, the protagonist uses a cliché, then defies convention by taking charge of the situation:



**Morse:** What one man can do, another can do. Say it! Do you want to die out here...?

(PAUSE) DO you? (PAUSE)

(PAUSE) Do you hear me?

(PAUSE) "I'm going to kill the bear." Say it..

**Green:** . . . I . . .

**Morse:** Say it.. "I'm going to kill the bear." Say it.

**Green:** I'm going to kill'im.

**Morse:** And tomorrow we're gonna kill the motherfucker.

Mamet has fun here at the expense of an old racist cliché by having the black character (Stephen) deliver the punch line:

**Morse:** You saved me.

**Green:** Get over it, Charles - I just need you to navigate.

**Morse:** You saved my life.

**Green:** Well, I couldn't kill you with Stephen around. I'd have to kill him too, and he's the only one that knows how I like my coffee.

**Morse:** Come on, you saved my life.

**Green:** Buy me something nice when we get home.

**Morse:** How'd you like your coffee?

**Green:** Huh. I like my coffee like I like my women.

**Stephen:** Bitter and murky!

Mamet commenting on his career and the legal profession:

[after successfully fighting a bear]

**Morse:** For all my life, I've have wanted to do something that was, um, that was unequivocal.

**Green:** Well, Charlie, I certainly think this qualifies.

**Morse:** Or something.

**Green:** See, Charles, that's why they call it personal growth. A month ago, old Smokey here would've reared up, you probably would've called your lawyer!

**Morse:** Nah, I wouldn't do that to an animal.

What happens to those who do not think or use their creativity:

**Morse:** You know, I once read an interesting book which said that, uh, most people lost in the wilds, they, they die of shame.

Stephen: What?

**Morse:** Yeah, see, they die of shame. "What did I do wrong? How could I have gotten myself into this?" And so they sit there and

they... die. Because they didn't do the one thing that would save their lives.

**Green:** And what is that, Charles?

**Morse:** Thinking.

Miscellaneous clichés:

**Stephen:** A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.

**Morse:** Never feel sorry for a man who owns a plane.

**Morse:** Never feel sorry for a man who owns a bank.

Brains over brawn:

**Charles Morse:** Why is the rabbit unafraid?

**Styles:** 'Cause he's smarter than the panther.

**Charles Morse:** Why is the rabbit unafraid? Because he's smarter than the panther.

The pat ending:

**Reporter #1:** Mr. Morse, what happened to your friends?

**Reporter #2:** How did they die?

**Morse:** They died... saving my life.

*(The Edge. 1997. Dir. Lee Tomahori)*

Students react favorably to this film and lesson plan. In fact, it is ranked second out of all the films I have shown in composition classes: watchability was rated 9.2/10.0, learning effectiveness rated 9.2/10.0, and the film's ability to be used to teach clichés rated 9.4/10.0. I think Mamet's script and Tomahori's visuals had the most to do with this movie's effectiveness as a pedagogical tool.

*(Wieland, 2007)*

Overall, Millennial students learn from film. They have grown up watching movies, television, and playing video games. They react to images- 65% are visual learners – so it is only natural and normal process for them to learn in this way. The ones who do not- oral or tactile learners- still gain. Placing the tactile

learners in groups, and having the oral learners focus on dialogue can close any gaps there may be in the comprehension (Silverman, 2002).

## Chapter Four: The Future

Where do we go from here? If we are to teach the students of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, how do we go about doing it? Howard Gardner in his book *Five Minds for the Future* sees the future as a place having undergone a genetic revolution where students will say to teachers “these are the genes that are inactive, these are the ones that are working- teach me effectively!” (Gardner, 2008). He also sees megacities, trillions of dollars traded daily, and thinking machines carrying out human tasks.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century most people did not go to school, and those who did finished by about age twenty thinking they had no need for more education. Gardner says “nowadays... if one doesn’t keep up for three months one will never be able to catch up again...you know the speed with which knowledge accumulates in almost every sphere. Much of our education has to be self-education” (Gardner, 2008).

Gardner also believes that change will impact educational thinking as “many people work on problems which cut across disciplines” (Gardner, 2008). He thinks that “linear thinking doesn’t end, but non-linear kinds of thinking, systemic thinking, and dynamic models are in the ascendancy. So much of thinking within the box can be done by automata, and so the capacity to be one step beyond computers takes on additional importance. Most of our students are already way ahead of us digitally whether we are teachers or parents, and that raises interesting questions about what it is that they have to give to us and what it is that we have to give to them in terms of the educational dynamic” (Gardner, 2008).

Certainly it means that the new and innovative ways of using film to teach and instruct discussed in this thesis are pertinent and germane in this new century.

Gardner has developed his theory of the five minds. These are the minds Gardner sees as being at the “highest premium going forward”:

1. *The Disciplined Mind* has three connotations: regular, steady hard work; mastering ways of thinking; and becoming an expert in at least one thing.
2. *The Synthesizing Mind* is a mind which takes all the information we are presented with and synthesizes it for itself. It puts the information together in ways which cohere, which make sense. For “those involved in communication, as every teacher, parent, and professional is, the synthesis has to be transmittable to other people.”
3. *The Creative Mind* “comes up with new things which eventually get accepted... if it is too easily accepted, it is not creative...never accepted, it is just a false example. And acceptance can happen quickly or it can take a long time.” To be truly creative one must master a craft, and that takes ten years. It is thinking outside the box.
4. *The Respectful Mind* recognizes “that the world is composed of people who look different, think differently, have different belief and value systems, and that we can no longer be hermits and live in complete isolation.” It can understand better, and act on that understanding. It can give the benefit of the doubt to other people.
5. *The Ethical Mind* seeks to know its rights and responsibilities. It seeks: technical excellence, engagement, and ethical behavior.

(Gardner, 2008)

Therefore, the job of the educator is to teach to and nurture them all. It seems rather daunting, but it can be done. With flexible and curious teachers, all minds can be reached.

## **Conclusion**

Things are changing so quickly it is hard keep up. Students I taught in 1984 are now the parents of students I am teaching in 2009. The methods and techniques I used in 1984 were fine—in 1984. Today's students are at least as different from their parents as my 1984 students were different from theirs. So the teaching methods have to evolve just as the times have. VCRs were cutting edge in 1984, yet today's student may not even own one. DVDs and the Internet are now the preferred media for video.

Wegner, Kracauer, and McHale told us it is alright to use film in the classroom, and gave us a model for how to use it. Prensky and Hoechsmann told us our methods were not keeping up with our audience. Howe and Strauss told us about our audience. Hocks and Kendrick taught us about the connection between the image and the word. Bain and Gladwell let us know that new ideas and approaches were workable. David Mamet showed how to use the classics to instruct a modern audience. Howard Gardner gave us a direction to follow.

Therefore, using film to teach topics as divergent as history or metaphor or composition is no longer just a series of anecdotes, it is a practice. It is a powerful tool which can be used by any teacher. Given the nature and disposition of the Millennial student, I think it is a tool that will be used more and more.

Society has sped up, and so has the impartation of knowledge. It must be couched in such a way that our learners “get it.” And it must be accomplished quickly and interestingly. Film is a natural tool for imparting knowledge, and students are open to it. Using film innovatively and interestingly is a good way to teach the lesson, and that is no small thing.

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Recognized as a “faculty member who has made a difference” in student success by The Gateway Group. (2006, 2008, 2009)

#### PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

IUPUI STAR Mentor (2008-2009)  
IUPUI Gateway Scholar (2007)  
Member, English Department Executive Committee (2005-2006)  
Member, Liberal Arts Committee (2006)  
Panelist, Freshman Retention Discussion Group (2005-7)  
Panelist, Themed Learning Community Group (2005-2008)  
Participant, University College Learning Communities Colloquium (2004 – Present)  
Faculty Participant, IUPUI Democrats  
Faculty Participant, IUPUI English Club  
Faculty Advisor, IUPUI Rugby Club (2003)

#### PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

“Patterns of Three: Applying the Aristotelian Canon of Arrangement to Business Communications.” ITW Summer Institute. Indianapolis: 2005.

“Persuasion, Plot, and Conflict: Using Film to Teach Writing.” ITW Summer Institute. Indianapolis: 2005.

## **GRANTS**

**IUPUI Department of English Scholarship Grant (2005-2007)**

**Teacher-consultant to the National Writing Project (2006)**

**Fellow of the National Writing Project (2005)**