

The Truly Innovative Teaching Award (2015) Application

Section 1: Personal Information

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Section 2: The Innovation and its Application

Driven by past professional experience in story writing, media production and teaching, I currently incorporate filmmaking as pedagogy in Rhetoric and Composition courses that I teach at NMSU. As a teacher in the English Department at NMSU, I recognize composition and rhetoric as powerful tools of advocacy and social change. Recognizing the potential of filmmaking in serving multiple academic tasks, I require my students in any class I teach to make short movies to express their identities, to promote ideas, and to call for social change. I argue that filmmaking is an ideal project to teach research, critical thinking, group work, and composition in the academic sphere. In designing this project I adopt pedagogy empowerment (Freire, 1970), to enable students to be active social agents rather than passive audience or consumers.

Sadik (2008) argues that incorporating storytelling and filmmaking in education should be used as means to an end but not as the goal per se. Following Sadik's argument I implement filmmaking purposefully to facilitate students' learning to achieve the course learning outcomes. To do that, I teach academic concepts and topics through the three main phases of filmmaking; pre-production, production and post-production.

Pre-production Phase:

In teaching rhetoric, I present filmmaking as a rhetorical tool to create successful arguments using ethos, pathos and logos. This project comes after several scaffolding assignments of composition, argumentation and visual analysis. Filmmaking becomes then an assignment for student to apply what they have learned to make an argument and to target an audience beyond their teacher and their class mates. To make their short movies, I design my lesson plan for students to:

1. Communicate with each other to form groups of 3 students each.
2. Brainstorm for film ideas, and share their research results about social issues of concern.
3. Put a plan for their video by composing and revising their storyboard.
4. Search for credible information and statistics to support their argument and call for action.
5. Divide the filmmaking roles and responsibilities among their group members.
6. I teach basics of filmmaking techniques to include camera use, and filming techniques.

Through this phase I emphasize composition as a process that requires continued planning, researching and revision. In this phase I teach concepts of interviewing, ethics and active citizenship. In this phase students peer review each group's storyboard using the lenses of ethos, logos and pathos. Moreover, students recognize the value of revision in saving time, money and efforts by creating storyboards to precede the actual filming.

Production Phase:

In the production phase, students film and edit their movies. They might act, interview others or use ready clips, photographs and clip arts to compose an argument. In all cases, I emphasize that the professionalism in the technical aspects of the filmmaking are not my priority. What I care about, and what I emphasize in my rubric, is whether the rhetorical strategies that they followed were suitable for their targeted audience to achieve their specific purposes. Thus, students are free to use their phone cameras, still photo cameras or to rent free video cameras from the ICT on campus. Also, I don't

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require specific editing software for students to use, although I teach basics of editing using the free Windows Movie Maker software that's installed by default on PCs.

In this phase students do the following:

- Film and take photos.
- Interview others or act the scenes.
- Search for free copyrighted material to incorporate in their movies.
- Edit their videos.
- Create YouTube channel and upload their projects there.

Post-production Phase:

There comes the moment of truth, where students reflect on the filmmaking assignments, analyze each other's videos and evaluate their team members' group works. The evaluations and reflections on this assignment encourage student to consider the project for future classes and personal purposes, and it helps them to recognize how the project relate to the course learning outcomes. In every course I teach, I recognize that students always need reminder to connect their course with a practical, academic or personal environment beyond the class room.

During this phase students do the following:

- Fill an evaluation form of the project to reflect on what they've learned, the parts that they found useful the most, the parts that they felt challenging the most and they suggest ideas to improve the project in future classes.
- Evaluate their peers' team work by giving grades (50% of the overall filmmaking project). In their evaluation, they have to justify the grade they give, where I find them always careful and ethical in their evaluation..
- Conduct rhetorical analysis on a video that they chose from the class videos other than theirs. This way, students systematically explain why they liked or disliked the other group's video. This analysis then works as an advanced and thorough peer review task.

I used this filmmaking project in face to face and in blended classes. I also used it in teaching Arabic as second language, Rhetoric & Composition, and Advanced Listening and Speaking for ESL students. In every class, I tailor the assignment to align with the learning outcomes, my teaching philosophy and the students' particular needs. I find in result that this project successfully achieves several objectives:

- Engaging students in group work to act as active citizen who advocate for social change.
- Practicing the use of rhetoric to persuade.
- Enhancing students' skills of brainstorming, researching, critical thinking and writing.
- Appraising and celebrating students' effort by posting them on a website I created to show case the students' achievements. For students' work please visit the webpage:

<http://rhetor.weebly.com/>

Section 3: The Relationship with the Teaching Academy

Attending multiple workshops at the Teaching Academy helped me to enhance my pedagogy and course design and teaching practices. It is really hard at this time to tell which workshop contributed to what. My relation with the academy was extended by giving promoting my project around NMSU through them. In an effort to expand the implementation of filmmaking out of my own classes, I have conducted two workshops of filmmaking for NMSU faculty; the first was an introductory session (fall 2014) to explain the project and its various applications across the curriculum. The positive feedback

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that I received from the faculty attendees and their interest in using filmmaking in their courses encouraged me to design a second workshop in spring 2015. The second workshop was a longer blended 10 hour workshop in total for faculty to act as students in making short movies. In that one, I designed a Canvas course for the faculty to do collaborative work to prepare for their movies before they filmed and edited them in a two hour face to face session. While I used almost the same lesson plan that I use with my students, I had to tailor some parts to serve the faculty needs. For example, I added an introductory part where each participant had to state their teaching philosophy, then to connect it with their courses learning objectives and their students' need. Finally, I asked faculty to discuss how the filmmaking project was going to serve all the three elements. By adding that component, my goal was to emphasize filmmaking as a pedagogy tool to facilitate achieving learning purposes, and not to lead the learning process.

Section 4: Evidence on the Innovation's Positive Impact

Unlike other traditional assignments, all students enrolled in my classes submitted a complete short film for this assignment. In two composition courses 36 students provided written reflection on the filmmaking project by answering 9 open ended questions. Of the 36 students the majority indicated:

- 31: the project enhanced their understanding of rhetoric.
- 34: that they gained new skills that they weren't likely to acquire in any other class.
- 32: they are likely to use the new acquired skills in future class and personal projects.
- 33: the project engaged them in group work more than traditional group assignments.
- 33: they experienced the critical role of revision and feedback in enhancing their arguments.
- 33: recommended to repeat the project in other classes.

The faculty participants in the filmmaking workshops that I conducted through the teaching academy expressed their positive feedback in various ways. Faculty workshop attendees were able to create short movies and upload them on YouTube which provided them with hands-on experience of filmmaking. And for that they indicated in the teaching academy evaluation forms their gratitude for learning how to actually implement the project in their courses.

One faculty member shared with me: "I just wanted to share with you and show you how this course has already paid off! Back when Kefaya opened the Canvas course I was so excited to give this assignment, and I put it in the syllabus. I told the students they would make an instructional video on a Speech sound training technique, and I assigned groups to a technique. The video was a FINAL project, not due until the end of the semester. Well I had one group that was so excited about the assignment, they submitted it to me today Look what they did..."

Kefaya THANK YOU so much for teaching this course. I am just thrilled with their work! <http://youtu.be/XhuU3c5QSso>. They worked on it over MLK day break and then last weekend as well. I am just STUNNED at how they jumped at it.

Here is a direct quote from the two "We found it helpful having the opportunity to practice this technique, rather than just reading about it. Plus we had lots of fun making the video. "

Another faculty member discussed with me her desire to hire me during summer 2015 to teach her students how to use filmmaking to express their academic work. Moreover, The College of Engineering had already hired me during this spring to implement filmmaking in their introductory course for engineers. Many other faculty members, who heard about the workshops that I conducted, contacted me asking for other workshops in the future to adopt this innovation.

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Since I promoted this project through conference presentations and publication, Steven Varela, Associate Director of Academic Technologies at UTEP had invited me to conduct a workshop next summer to implement the filmmaking project in their curricula.

Student Letter 1

To: The Teaching Academy Advisory Board/ New Mexico State University

Re: Letter of Support/ The Truly Innovative Teaching Award

Dear Teaching Academy Board Member,

I would like to support my past professor, Ms. Kefaya Diab, in her application to receive the Truly Innovative Teaching Award (2015). This previous semester (fall 2014) I was enrolled in her Rhetoric and Composition class, where I gained skills that will be helpful to me throughout my academic career. Specifically, the most challenging, entertaining, and useful project we were assigned was Ms. Diab's filmmaking project.

The project Ms. Diab requested of us was to work in groups to create a 60 second rhetorical film. Upon hearing of this assignment, I was filled with excitement, but also apprehension, as this sounded like a very daunting task. As a class of engineering students, Ms. Diab tailored the assignment to our interests, requiring that our films be related to engineering topics. One additional requirement, was the inclusion of interviews in our film. This project offered a new medium for rhetoric that most of the class had never tried before, or even thought of. Because filmmaking was a new experience for many of us, it was a challenging, but also extremely fun project. Its uniqueness made me and my peers much more interested and excited about learning about and creating rhetorical artifacts.

The topic of my group's film was why students should become engineers. To convince our audience of this, we chose to interview several engineering department heads and highlight their careers throughout our video. Along with being innovative, challenging, and fun, this project gave me confidence to interview and speak with professors: a skill that will benefit me through both my academic career and the rest of my life. Obtaining the skill and confidence to preform interviews is, I believe, the most important skill I gained from this project. However, my favorite aspect of the project was learning more about filmmaking. Though it is not an essential skill, I am excited to use what I have learned about filmmaking in future academic projects or for fun.

Thank you for your time, and please consider Kefaya Diab's filmmaking project when choosing a winner for this award.

Sincerely,

Sophia Bailey

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Student Letter 2

Dear Teaching Academy,

At the start of the Fall 2014 semester a class of diverse Engineering Freshmen walked into Kefaya Diab's English 111 class. Among them was myself and it was evident that no one knew each other, so we sat in uncomfortable silence. Then Miss Diab walked in with an extremely high enthusiasm and this was the beginning of what I believed to be the most joyful and important class anyone of us would take in our college time. The ways in which Miss Diab taught were truly electrifying. I recall our first day, she got us together and had we wrote about how we see ourselves as writers. I started thinking that I lacked passion in my writing and I can imagine that's how most of us felt, being an engineer doesn't exactly entail being a good writer. Boy were we wrong and it was Miss Diab who showed us why. She showed us that being an engineer was more than just that, she taught us how to open up and to be more comfortable. She did this by getting everyone involved during conversations, even though I'll admit there were times I didn't want to speak; sometimes I just wouldn't know the subject matter. However; that never got us off the hook because Miss Diab had a way of connecting the subject to a story of her own and after she would have us tell a story that went along. This was memorable to me because not only did it start to loosen up the class but we all started to gain a better understanding of what Miss Diab was trying to teach us and I will take that lesson on with me because I truly believe it will help with any subject.

Miss Diab also always had us interacting with one another. She had us get into groups and create a promotional video; this project served many different functions to the class. It first taught us how to work together to achieve a goal. Secondly these videos are what we got to write about for our rhetorical analysis; I thought this was a great innovation because we had access to the sources of the videos which greatly improved our work on those rhetorical analyses. At the time we just saw it as fun interaction and help with projects and it was making the class even more enjoyable until soon as least for me it was the only class I looked forward to going to. At the end of the semester we realized everything Miss Diab was teaching us went beyond our English class and was honestly going to be more valuable to our engineering futures than any engineering class could be. She taught us how to socialize enthusiastically, how to work with people effectively to achieve a purpose, and most importantly, how to be passionate in what we do, with everything that we do. Miss Diab is a teacher I will look back on and credit success to her and I will never be able to thank her enough.

Regards,

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Student Letter 3

To: The Teaching Academy Advisory Board/ New Mexico State University

Re: Letter of Support/ The Truly Innovative Teaching Award

Dear Sir or Madam,

As a past student of Ms. Kefaya Diab, I'd like to support her application to receive the Truly Innovative Teaching Award (2015) for her filmmaking project in the Rhetoric & Composition class that she taught in fall 2014. I feel that Ms. Diab's innovation in having her students make videos to better understand rhetorical analysis has made a big impact on our learning in and enjoyment of the class. When we were given this project, we were placed into teams of 3-4 people and were encouraged to brainstorm topics in the field of engineering that we wanted to persuade people on. After topics had been chosen, it was necessary to think about the audience for our videos and the sources we would use to obtain information. One source of information we used was an interview we conducted with a knowledgeable person in our subject area. This was my favorite part of the project, because it allowed me to learn more about different aspects of engineering. In class, we spent some time examining the ways that factors such as music and camera angles made in our messages. The areas of logos, pathos, and ethos were the main areas focused on. With information compiled and filming tactics planned, we produced our videos.

After each video had been made, individuals chose a video made by a different team on which to write a rhetorical analysis. These analyses were based on the information given in the video as well as the ways that other aspects of the video appealed to the target audience.

Teamwork played a very important role in the project. Working in groups allowed for collaboration and delegation of the work that needed to be done. At the end, we gave grades to our teammates based on their participation and contribution to the final product. This allowed for reflection on how well the team worked together and on how work was split up and completed.

Through this project, I have become much more aware of the place that rhetoric has in the world, that it is not only present in literature, but also in commercials and even in day to day speech. This knowledge will be useful for the rest of my life as I participate in rhetorical situations in literature, speech and in other mediums such as film. Through this project, Ms. Diab has empowered her students to participate in rhetorical communication outside of just writing.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my knowledge; if you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me by phone at (303) 819-3042 or email at hmj2000@nmsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Hannah Johnson