Videopaths to Learning American Government

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Many years ago, when I was a high school student, I enjoyed seeing films in my history class because they were more entertaining than an hour with the teacher. I suspected that my teacher liked showing films because they were more relaxing than an hour with his students. While the class watched the films, students and teacher struck a non-aggression pact, passing the time together in pleasant pursuit under the guise of education. Perhaps that explains why I never showed a film in class through my first 26 years of teaching political science to college students. Not only did I question whether students really learned more from watching a film than they got from an hour of lecture or class discussion, but I also felt I was reneging on my teaching responsibilities.

The Video Encyclopedia

I changed my attitude and practice when I discovered The Video Encyclopedia of the 20th Century, an outstanding collection of film clips and video footage on prominent personalities and events in American political history, produced by CEL Corp. This rich collection of source material, consisting of thousands of memorable segments depicting our social and political culture, is available on some 80 videocassettes or on some 40 videodiscs. The collection is exceptionally well-documented and thoroughly indexed, which invites instructors to be selective in choosing and showing film segments that take only a few minutes of class time. The video format, especially the videodisc format, facilitates selecting material for class viewing. These features persuaded me to show portions of The Video Encyclopedia to students in my large lecture course on American Government and Politics in 1987—the first time I ever violated my principle and used "movies" in class.

Among the events I showed to my students were film clips of the demonstrations at the 1968 Demo-cratic National Convention in Chicago, to set the stage for my lecture on "unconventional political participation"; portions of the 1973 Senate Watergate Hearings, to begin our discussion of the Constitution basis of our political system; and the speaking styles of Presidents Roosevelt to Reagan, to provide background for my analysis of presidential popularity. These film clips had been pulled from the videodisc collection, edited onto videotape, and projected on a large screen for viewing during class periods by about 200 students. In no case did the videos consume more than 25 minutes, and most of the selections took only about ten minutes at the start of each period.

Students clearly enjoyed these videos, and their reactions prompted the production of a 90-minute videotape on American politics from material in The Video Encyclopedia. My publisher, the Houghton Mifflin Company, sponsored its production to provide the videotape to colleges that adopted our American government textbook, *The Challenge of Democracy*. [2] As described in an ancillary publication, [3] the videotape contains film clips on five topics: 1. The Watergate affair; 2. Political parties and campaigns; 3. The presidency; 4. Civil rights and equality; and 5. The Vietnam War.

Although the videotape is only 90 minutes long, it contains hundreds of separate film clips, and retrieving any particular segment from videotape is somewhat difficult. If the material on American government selected from the many videodiscs of The Video Encyclopedia were restored to videodisc format, I mused, the segments could not only be accessed instantaneously, but the new videodisc could be accessed through a computer program, making for a multimedia learning environment that students could access outside of class.

The Democracy HyperCard Stack

I approached Apple Computer with a proposal to teach my large course in American government in

**VIDEO FOOTAGE OF THE WATERGATE HEARINGS
ENHANCED STUDENT UNDERSTANDING**

information about the video events that the student was about to view and hear.

Students selected a path to one of the five units by clicking on its title. Here is the explanatory text in one screen of the Watergate unit:

Investigative reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post* soon uncovered a link between the Watergate burglary and the forthcoming election. Four of the five men were Cuban exiles, but the fifth man, James McCord, was a former CIA agent who was working in the White House as a security coordinator for the Committee to Reelect the President.

At a news conference five days later, President Nixon denied any connection with the break-in. Ron Ziegler, White House Press Secretary, repeated the denial.

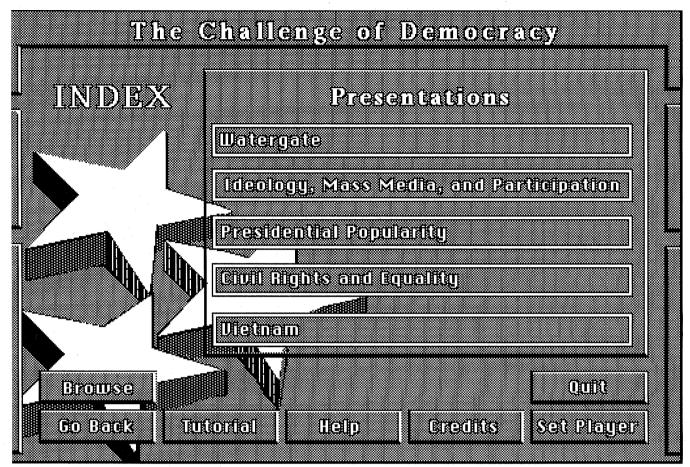This screen is accompanied by a video, lasting less than a minute, of Ziegler denying any White House involvement in the Watergate break-in after the story broke. Most film clips were similarly brief. Few lasted more than two minutes. Information in other screens describe events leading to the Senate Select Committee hearings on Watergate and to key portions of those hearings, including John Dean's unshakable testimony about White House involvement and Senator Baker's memorable query, "What did the President know and when did he know it?" The videos continue with revelations from the White House tapes, the roll-call vote in the House Judiciary Committee to recommend impeachment on three counts, and President Nixon's final appearance at the White House before departing by helicopter. The last video shows President Ford announcing his pardon of Richard Nixon.

Each unit concludes with a computer screen posing questions to be discussed in the student's weekly discussion section. For example, the Watergate unit ends by saying, "Now that you have read and viewed this presentation of the Watergate affair, what do you think about the crime and the punishment," and asks:

• Was the break-in at the Democratic Headquarters and the subsequent attempt at a cover-up sufficient grounds to impeach a president?
• Was Nixon right in resigning from office follow-

spring 1990 using multimedia to augment my lectures.[4] Apple kindly provided seven Macintosh SE computers and funds to purchase an equal number of Pioneer LD-V4200 videodisc players and television monitors to create the multimedia stations used in this project. The University Library cooperated by purchasing modular carrels designed to accommodate the equipment and installing them in its Media Facility,[5] where the students did their multimedia assignments. With assistance from Pioneer Communications of America, the material in the videotape was reproduced on three sides of two videodiscs in CAV format.[6] Only one-third of the 238 students enrolled in the course were assigned (arbitrarily) to sections that used the videodiscs. Another one-third found themselves in sections doing research with computers, but not using multimedia.[7] The final third were in traditional discussion sections. Each of four teaching assistants taught three sections of approximately 20 students each, using a different method in each section.

My colleagues in Academic Computing at Northwestern University created a general HyperCard authoring stack for linking the video frames with text displayed on the computer screen.[8] I used this tool to create separate "paths" to the video events for the five units in a "Democracy" stack. Each path consisted of from 17 to 36 computer screens containing background

OPENING MENU FOR THE DEMOCRACY HYPERCARD STACK

Videopaths *(continued)*

ing the committee vote, or should he have demanded that the issue be decided by the full House?

- If Nixon had been impeached by the House, should he have fought to the end and demanded trial by the Senate?
- Did President Ford act in the best interests of the nation by pardoning Richard Nixon?
- Were constitutional issues really involved in the Watergate affair?

These questions, and others asked at the end of each unit, were designed to encourage discussion of the topics portrayed in the videos.

The content of the other four units can be summarized more succinctly.

Mass Media and Participation

Unit 2 on "Ideology, Mass Media and Participation" covers three different but related topics. The first segment briefly portrays liberal and conservative views of the role of the federal government in the economy during the Depression as represented by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his Republican oppo-

nent in 1936, Alf Landon. The second segment shows how presidential campaigning styles were affected by television, as illustrated first by films of Roosevelt and Truman and then of John Kennedy and Richard Nixon in the 1960 campaign debates. The third segment focuses on unconventional political participation, vividly portrayed by the demonstrations outside the 1968 Democratic Convention, which resulted in clashes between youthful protestors and the police and national guard.

Unit 2 concludes with these discussion questions:

- Why do you think voters in the 1930s accepted President Roosevelt's case for "government as the solution," whereas voters in the 1980s accepted President Reagan's view of "government as the problem"?
- Has television contributed to the quality of election campaigns and to the quality of the candidates?
- Was the demonstration at the 1968 Democratic National Convention a legitimate expression of unconventional political participation?
- Did Mayor Daley and the police act properly in suppressing it?
- Do you think that the new Mayor Richard Daley is ready to host another Democratic National Convention in Chicago? Is the party?

Presidential Popularity

Unit 3 on "Presidential Popularity" assumes that most students in the introductory course on American government can judge the popular appeal of Presidents Reagan and Bush from watching them frequently on television, but that relatively few students have had much opportunity to judge the quality of previous presidents. The videopaths then show selected film clips of the presidents from Roosevelt to Bush, following each clip with a screen commenting on presidential popularity in the context of sample survey data. For example, a clip of President Roosevelt's famous "I hate war!" speech in 1936 and his dramatic address to a joint session of Congress asking for a declaration of war in response to the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor is followed by a computer screen reporting Gallop poll data on his popularity.

Unit 3 concludes with these questions:
- Would John F. Kennedy's popularity have held up if he had been able to finish his term in office?
- Why is it that people perceive Reagan as one of our most popular presidents when the poll data show otherwise?
- Is there any relationship between presidential popularity and the ability to get Congress to cooperate with the president?
- Is there any relationship between presidential popularity and presidential "greatness"?
- What chance is there that history will revise the public judgment of any of our least popular presidents?

Civil Rights and Equality

Unit 4 on "Civil Rights and Equality" begins by linking the civil rights struggle of the 1960s to actions taken by President Truman in the 1940s, to President Eisenhower's use of troops to carry out a court order to integrate a high school in Little Rock in 1957, and to President Kennedy's nationalizing the Alabama National Guard in 1963 to insure a court order to admit two black students to the University of Alabama over Governor George Wallace's opposition. The rest of the unit focuses on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership of the civil rights movement, including his prophetic speech in Memphis the night before his assassination. It closes with these questions:
- If democracy means majority rule, why shouldn't a white majority be able to curtail the voting rights of a black minority?
- Should social equality always take precedence over personal freedom in prohibiting all forms of racial discrimination?
- Was non-violence the right strategy for the civil rights movement?
- If Martin Luther King had not been assassinated, would he have been a candidate for president? If so, would he have done as well as Jesse Jackson?
- Women have also fought for social equality. How has the civil rights movement differed from the women's movement in relying on the federal government and in relying on its own leaders?
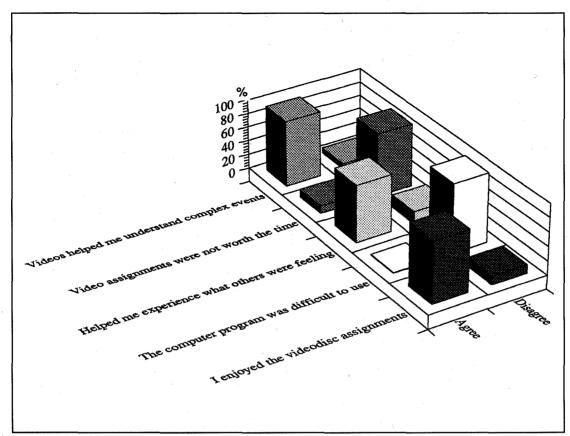
The Vietnam War

Unit 5, "The Vietnam War" begins by noting that few students realize that American military involvement in Vietnam lasted for more than 14 years, about twice as long as World War I and World War II combined. It contains several computer screens at the beginning explaining how the U.S. got involved in such a disaster and shows how the war played on the television screens of the public at the height of our involvement. It ends with these questions:
- Would U.S. involvement in Vietnam have been any different if President Johnson had asked Congress for a declaration of war against North Vietnam?
- Would the outcome of the war have been any different if President Johnson had granted the extra troops that General Westmoreland requested in 1968?
- Was the "domino theory" validated in Southeast Asia?

TABLE 1: Video Units, Computer Screens and Viewing Time

Videopath Unit	Computer Screens	Approx. Time
The Watergate Affair	36	35 min.
Ideology, Mass Media and Participation	20	25 "
Presidential Popularity	32	30 "
Civil Rights and Equality	18	20 "
The Vietnam War	17	20 "

STUDENT RESPONSES TO VIEWING THE VIDEODISC UNITS

Videopaths *(continued)*

- What effect, if any, has the "Vietnam paradigm" had on American foreign policy in Nicaragua?
- What lessons should the Russians have learned from Vietnam when they entered Afghanistan?

Rating the Videopaths

When the students were asked at the end of the course which of the five videopaths "was most important to your understanding of American politics," 41 percent chose the Watergate unit, compared with 27 percent for Civil Rights; 14 percent for Presidential Popularity; 11 percent for Ideology, Media and Participation; and 6 percent for Vietnam.

Overall, the videodisc units were well received by the third of the class that saw them. Of the 78 students who completed the special questions pertaining to the multimedia sections, 93 percent agreed that "The realism of the video segments helped me understand complex events more than simply reading or hearing about them." Another 89 percent disagreed that "The video segments were not worth the time they took away from reading the text." About 82 percent agreed that "The videos helped me feel what others were experiencing in unfamiliar situations." Virtually every-

one (99 percent) disagreed that "The program was difficult to use." And 89 percent agreed that they "enjoyed doing the computer and videodisc assignments." Moreover, several students said that they got the sense "of being there" when they watched the videos.

Measurement Difficulties

Nevertheless, analysis of data collected on students in the multimedia, computer sections and traditional sections—which is too complex to summarize here—showed no significant differences, either in course performance or on questionnaire items dealing with students' appreciation of the course.[9] But this is not inconsistent with other attempts to detect differences in performance due to variations in methods of instruction.[10] Certainly one can argue that multimedia produces other forms of learning not measured by course performance or attitudes. This surfaces in a student's comment on viewing Martin Luther King's 1963 "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial: "I sat there and bawled. I felt like the biggest jerk. I was sitting in the library with the headset on bawling, and people were walking by, looking."

Clearly, the video stack to The Challenge of Democracy contributes something to students' understanding of American government and politics, even if we cannot quite measure what that is through grades and conventional survey items. The challenge now is to determine what, if anything, the students really learned from the videodisc experiences that they enjoyed so much. Is multimedia simply another "pleasant pursuit in the guise of education," or does it produce some certifiable results? Those of us who are experimenting with this form of educational technology in our classrooms must squarely address this question. ■

Products and companies mentioned in this article:
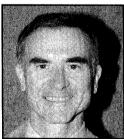CROSSTABS 2.0; Houghton Mifflin Co.,
Boston, Mass.
Macintosh SE, HyperCard; Apple Computer,
Inc., Cupertino, Calif.
Pioneer LD-V4200 LaserDisc Player; Pioneer
Communications of America, Inc., Upper Saddle
River, N.J.
The Video Encyclopedia of the 20th Century;
CEL Corp., New York, N.Y.

References:
1. The videotape was prepared with the assistance
of Richard Johnson in Northwestern's Language
Laboratory and Ethan Cosgriff, a graduate
student in political science.
2. Janda, K., Berry, J. and Goldman, J., *The
Challenge of Democracy: Government in
America*, Second Edition, Houghton Mifflin,
Boston, Mass., 1989.
3. Janda, K., Berry, J. and Goldman, J., *Video
Guide for The Challenge of Democracy,* Second
Edition, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Mass., 1989.
4. Philip Galanter, Manager of the Advanced
Technologies Group in Academic Computing of
Northwestern University, joined with me in
submitting the proposal.
5. I thank Stephen Marek and Stuart Baker in the
Library's Media Facility for their cooperation in
this project.
6. Richard Johnson, who edited the videotape,
also supervised creation of the videodisc.
7. The main computer program they used was
CROSSTABS 2.0, which allows students to
analyze public opinion and voting behavior at the
1988 election and the voting behavior of
members of Congress in 1988. CROSSTABS,
written by Philip A. Schrodt and Kenneth Janda,
won an EDUCOM/NCRIPTAL Distinguished
Software award in 1987. The program is
available in both Macintosh and DOS versions
and is distributed by the Houghton Mifflin
Company.
8. William Parod wrote the HyperCard stack for
linking images on the videodisc with the text in
the computer screens. Philip Galanter helped with
the HyperCard design.
9. The results of the experiment will be reported
in "The Theory of the Laser Class," a paper
prepared for delivery at the 1990 Annual Meeting
of the American Political Science Association
August 30 in San Francisco. They will also be
presented at the October 1990 EDUCOM
meeting in Atlanta.
10. Research findings in the education literature
on this point are summarized in "Implementing
and Assessing Computer-Augmented Teaching in
the Large Lecture Course," by Judith Keig
Ingram, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation,
Northwestern University, 1987, pp. 27-31.

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