

Chapter 12

From Page to Screen: Creating a Multi-Modal Framework for Transformational Learning in a New Semiotic Domain

Claire Goodman
LIU Brooklyn, USA

Lynn Hassan
LIU Brooklyn, USA

ABSTRACT

*This chapter analyzes the practices and teaching philosophies underpinning a cross-genre graduate class: *From Page to Screen*. It discusses how transformative learning tools engage students in a progressive learning arc, moving from a traditional semiotic domain (classic literary short story) to a new semiotic domain (short film). It demonstrates the journey from theory to practice, wherein experimentation, collaboration and actualization produces a final “product” that is visual and performed, derived from a text-based literary form. The class trajectory is instructive for students needing to gain multi-modal skills for professional engagement where the writing and development of scripts are the bread and butter of the media world. The chapter asserts the need to look at all forms of communication in terms of their representation across different modes – linguistic, actional, and visual – that have different organization and meaning-making systems.*

INTRODUCTION

The class *From Page to Screen* is taught as part of the curriculum for the Media Arts Master of Arts graduate program in the Media Arts Department, Long Island University, Brooklyn, New York. This program, launched in 2000, was specifically designed to integrate theory with practice, intellect with creativity, concept with production. Its curriculum comprises a fifty-fifty split of theory and production courses, which teachers and students synthesize into one of six Areas of Concentration to create

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2808-1.ch012

From Page to Screen

an explicit framework for transformational learning and skill acquisition. The rationale was to create a program that escaped the traditional strangle-hold of either/or skills necessary for learning, or for succeeding in the media industry. It is within this philosophical and pedagogical context of the program as a whole, that an integrated class such as the multi-modal *From Page to Screen*, is taught.

The goal of *From Page to Screen* is for students to adapt or appropriate a literary short story into a screenplay for an imagined prototype for a short film (15-30 minutes) suitable for cinema or television. Adhering to the philosophy of educator Maxine Greene, that learning can

only happen for students if their imaginations are released, the class is intended to act as a “crucible of learning” that explicitly integrates theory and literary analysis with actualized performances for the camera. A class in which students create drama and image from a text-based work, where the process of enactment demanded by a screenplay that not only transforms the text into the final product of a short film, but brings students in touch with their imaginations.

The short story assigned for this class is *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson, published in 1948 in the *New Yorker Magazine*. As their semester-long assignment, student pairs develop a screenplay for the short film, with the narrative extrapolated from the central idea of *The Lottery* story. (See Appendix A for an on-line story summary.) The rationale for choosing *The Lottery* as a text is because of its inherent appeal to the reader’s emotional response, a critical component of learning engagement. Maryanne Wolf, author of *Proust and the Squid*, cites neuroscience to support this claim:

As David Rose, a prominent translator of theoretical neuroscience puts it, the three major jobs of the reading brain are recognizing patterns, planning strategy, and feeling. Any image of the fluent, comprehending reader shows this clearly through the growing activation of the limbic system – the seat of our emotional life – and its connections to cognition. This system, located immediately below the topmost cortical layer of the brain underlies our ability to feel pleasure, disgust, horror, and elation in response to what we read. (Wolf, 2007, pp. 141-142)

Students are given plenty of latitude to make their own interpretation of the story’s concept, context, characterization, and setting. Although students write their screenplays in pairs, the work of table-readings, feedback, casting, and directing is a group effort. Students have the opportunity to experiment on many different creative levels, integrating the imagined skills of a director, cinematographer, and actor with that of a screenwriter. This multi-modal approach is designed to not only encourage a more holistic grasp of story-telling, but also the critical role of literature and performance within it.

FROM PAGE TO SCREEN LESSON PLAN

Over a fourteen-week semester, the modes of learning, class activities, and assignments for the class are broken into a multi-unit sequence of steps outlined below. Students are given a Creativity Rubric (See Appendix B) which is adapted from the Association of American Colleges and University’s *Creative Thinking Value Rubric* to make explicit from the outset the benchmarks for learning success in the course. Both the steps below and Creativity Rubric evolved from an integration of concepts and language outlined in Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning (See Appendix C) and premised on Mezirow’s (1985) Transformative Learning Theory. This theory asserts that transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldviews and specific capacities of the self, and is

11 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/from-page-to-screen/187334

Related Content

Digital Play and Legos as Rehearsal for Writing

(2018). *Digital Initiatives for Literacy Development in Elementary Classrooms: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 110-128).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/digital-play-and-legos-as-rehearsal-for-writing/188081

Technology of Conducting Group Training to Increase Communicative Competence for Teachers of Socio-Humanitarian Disciplines

Natalia Moskvicheva and Svetlana Kostromina (2019). *Modern Technologies for Teaching and Learning in Socio-Humanitarian Disciplines* (pp. 36-66).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/technology-of-conducting-group-training-to-increase-communicative-competence-for-teachers-of-socio-humanitarian-disciplines/222517

Effects of Computer-Based Training in Computer Hardware Servicing on Students' Academic Performance

Rex Perez Bringula, John Vincent T. Canseco, Patricia Louise J. Durolofo, Lance Christian A. Villanueva and Gabriel M. Caraos (2022). *International Journal of Technology-Enabled Student Support Services* (pp. 1-13).

www.irma-international.org/article/effects-of-computer-based-training-in-computer-hardware-servicing-on-students-academic-performance/317410

Managing the Utilization of Technologies in Adult Education, Training, and Administration: The Case Study of Turkish MoNE

Mehmet Durnali (2020). *Utilizing Technology, Knowledge, and Smart Systems in Educational Administration and Leadership* (pp. 1-19).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/managing-the-utilization-of-technologies-in-adult-education-training-and-administration/247255

Relationships Between Teacher Presence and Learning Outcomes, Learning Perceptions, and Visual Attention Distribution in Videotaped Lectures

Qinghong Zhang, Xianglan Chen, Yachao Duan and Xiaoying Yan (2022). *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Education* (pp. 1-15).

www.irma-international.org/article/relationships-between-teacher-presence-and-learning-outcomes-learning-perceptions-and-visual-attention-distribution-in-videotaped-lectures/304079