***WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES* PORTFOLIO**

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Expectations and Reality

Personal notes on a journey of discovery.

Part 1.

I originally decided to join the Writing in Disciplines Workshop to make a case in an academic setting for a different approach to writing … at least in my field, television. Traditional academic writing seemed useless in the television field, where we are training students for positions in television production, not academic analysis. Students must learn how to write television proposals and "pitches" as well as punchy, dramatic television scripts with a minimum of modifiers and no visual references. Although I was a firm believer in writing to learn, I did not see how it was applicable in my production courses, where I am really teaching what we used to call "shop courses" … how do you do something with your hands.

Here's how I put it on my application to join the fellowship.

> ***Letter of Application for taking part in the fall 2007 Semester's Writing in the Disciplines.***
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> *Television is a visual medium, but writing skills are essential to achievement. From the initial proposal to the final script, the quality of the prose determines the success of the project.*
>
> *Television proposal writing and fund raising pitches need to tell stories with compelling beginnings, middles and endings. They demand concise sentences with powerful verbs and few modifiers and they favor simple words with Anglo Saxon roots instead of long words with Latin roots. First sentences must be fresh, vivid and convincing. Repetition, vagueness, boilerplate filler and extra words must be ruthlessly eliminated. Convoluted academic writing must be re-worked. Executive Producers, funders and colleagues won't bother to read anything that doesn't grab and hold them.*
>
> *Television scripts need to be so stripped of unnecessary words and so focused that they read almost like poetry. Stendhal's comment that "Writing cannot be too simple, too direct," is made for television.*
>
> *Good writing, of course, is really re-writing. We teach our students to get their initial; ideas down quickly and then to rewrite and rewrite as they hone those ideas and find the words to express them. It is in re-writing that we discover what it is we are really trying to express. John Updike puts it well" "Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying."*
>
> *I edit my student's papers with the same care and attention that I give to professional colleagues. At the beginning of the semester, I am usually appalled*

> *by the loose, undisciplined and sloppy writing that I get. I am very interested in the process of improving our student's writing skills. Skillful writing is essential for a successful career in television and most other jobs in today's increasingly competitive marketplace.*

When I began to read the opening chapter of John Bean's *Engaging Ideas*, I was convinced that I'd made a mistake joining the seminar. The discussion of critical thinking seemed irrelevant to my production courses. "Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does [the student] think," Bean quotes John Dewey.[1] The quote is completely appropriate for a student in my production class trying to trouble shoot a complicated audio set up. By discovering the faulty battery, crimped cable, incomplete connection, bad mike placement or whatever the problems are by themselves, the students gain confidence in their ability to solve other problems. But their essential activity is not writing, but tracing cable connections and switch positions. Bean's quote from Kurfiss in which Kurfiss defines critical thinking as "an investigation whose purpose is to explore a situation, phenomena, question, or problem to arrive at a hypothesis or conclusion about it that integrates all available information and that can therefore be convincingly justified" seemed even less relevant to the vast majority of the writing I expect in my production courses.[2]

I am looking at the notes that I scribbled in the margin of Bean's book as I read "… writing instruction goes sour whenever writing is conceived primarily as a 'communication skill' rather as a process and product of critical thought. If writing is merely a communication skill, then we primarily ask of it, 'Is the writing clear?'" I was horrified. Bean casually dismisses most of the world's great writing, from the Greek plays of ancient Athens to the songs of Bob Dylan, all of which do far more than strive for clarity! According to my understanding of these lines in Bean, the qualities that I look for in the writing of my students are worthless: drama, passion, and emotion, and does the writing make us laugh and cry? Does the writer know when to remain silent and let the television pictures do the work? And then, of course, the big question we all ask is, "Am I changed, even if only subtly, by the experience that your movie has given me?"

I teach a visual media and we have a visual language that is as important in telling our stories as are the rules of good writing. The writing that we do has to serve the picture. Our explorations and discoveries take place visually.

So what does Bean have to do with me?

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[1] Bean, John C., Engaging Ideas, p. 4.
[2] Ibid p. 5.

By the end of Chapter 2, however, Bean's disarming modesty, reinforced by his repeated advice to use only what works for you, had charmed me. A series of enthusiastic explanation points identified strategies that resonated with my own experience or offered new ideas that I planned to use in my courses, collected together in "Fifteen Suggestions for Encouraging Revisions."[3]

Among them were "*4. Incorporate nongraded exploratory writing into your course."*[4] I had tried several of these assignments with great success. For example, students in my Advanced Production Class are required to produce a 60 second Public Service Announcement. I ask each of them to think up an issue, write a draft spot and a short pitch letter to defend the idea. Using Bean's "*5. Build adequate talk time into the writing process"*[5] I divide the students into teams. Each team selects the best idea their group has come up with … or they may come up with an entirely new concept … and they write it up as a group and then select one team member to present the pitch to the entire class. None of these steps are graded, but the final PSA the students produce is graded.

Bean's point 7. "*Build process requirements into the assignment including due dates for drafts,*"[6] is essential to the television production process, as is "*8. Develop strategies for peer review of drafts, either in class or out of class.*"[7] After each of their studio assignment, students are required to write self-evaluations of their project, and comment on the work of others who were helping them.

In Chapter 3, Bean poses the idea that both Professional and Personal writing are necessary to engage all learners.[8] In his four-point test on what kind of writing teachers encourage in their classes, I (not surprisingly) came out heavily on the side of personal writing. Less clear to me, was how Bean's "personal writing" corresponded to James Britton's scheme of classification that identifies three kinds of prose: "the '*expressive,' the 'transactional,' and the 'poetic.'"*[9] "Expressive" and "poetic" seem pretty much the same thing, except "expressive" writing is less polished, more off the cuff, like a first draft. It was reassuring to see that Bean was not quite as dismissive as he was with his comment about "mere communicative writing." He expands "poetic writing" to include "*fiction, drama, poetry, literary nonfiction."*[10] But the real revelation, it seems to me, comes on the next page when Bean discusses Stanford University political science professor Richard Fagan's decision to abandon academic writing for novels: "*My frustration stems from canons of propriety and evidence, from rules of the game that*

[3] Ibid. p. 33.
[4] Ibid. p. 33.
[5] Ibid. p. 33.
[6] Ibid. p. 33.
[7] Ibid. p. 33.
[8] Ibid. 38.
[9] Ibid. p. 47.
[10] Ibid. p. 47.

outlaw satire, indignation, passion, love, hate – in short, most of the feelings that are at the heart of our humanity."[11]

By now it seemed clear to this reader, that Bean's emphasis on academic writing is more a measure of the audience to whom he's directing his remarks, than it is to his own core beliefs. In fact, he writes *"the writing-across-the-curriculum movement, rather than being a monolithic attempt to enculturate students into academic writing, raises profound questions about the nature of the academy itself and about the epistemological assumptions that shape our teaching."*[12] What Bean seems to be doing is attempting to wean professors and students away from relying solely on professional writing in their academic work. I was hooked.

Finally, our first reading assignment ended with Bean's extremely useful discussion of grammar and language usage in Chapter 4. His footnotes revealed that there is a substantial literature devoted to these ideas, but they were completely unfamiliar to me. In fact, for years I have been editing my colleagues' scripts, proposals and pitch letters, because I was considered the best grammarian around (a dubious reputation based on the fact that I taught English once earlier in my career). I see now that most of the editorial changes that I suggested concerned language usage, rather than grammar, a much less intimidating standard to uphold. The charge of "bad grammar" suggests incompetence and ignorance, whereas recognition of inappropriate language usage implies simply a misunderstanding of context or a lack of experience with accepted norms.

Finally, on this issue of language, Bean reminds us that much of our ability to successfully manipulate language comes from our experience in reading the language. A good proportion of my students at Montgomery College are working in English as a second language and many of those to whom English is their native language come from homes and cultures that do not encourage a great deal of reading. These insights have made me much more tolerant and considerate of my students and what their cultural context means to their writing skills.

One of the most heated discussions in our first WID seminar meeting was about the grammar issue, and it seemed to me that those teachers from disciplines where rules actually work wanted to hold onto their grammar rules as well. But language isn't math.

Part 2

My notes seem to correlate pretty much with both the reading assignments and the seminar discussions, so this section starts after the first seminar. And I have to confess, that I attended the second seminar without reading the assignment. How like my students! I also need to mention that I have two daughters in college, one a Morehead

[11] Ibid. p. 48.
[12] Ibid. p. 50.

scholar at the University of North Carolina and the other a freshman at the New School in New York. Many of the assignments suggested in Bean are in use at both schools, and my daughters both love them, compared with the more “conservative” or “old fashioned” assignments they got at Sidwell Friends High School in Washington.

As a result, I had indirect contact with some of Bean’s specific suggestions, and I remained in some despair about the relevance of all this to me. At the end of the second seminar, I did my “I’m teaching shop courses” routine, when Rita suggested that I assign a “how to” manual. As soon as I got back to Bean’s text, there it was in a “write-to-learn” assignment on page 79, which basically suggested asking students to explain some process to someone who knew little or nothing about it.[13] The assignment was very popular, even though most students said it took them much longer to complete than the average test, and a few would have preferred multiple choice. A longer discussion follows below.

Bean’s discussion of the method of presentation resonated with my own experience, but he took it much further, making each step more self conscious and I have followed suit. Under the influence of Bean and the seminar, I scrapped a mid-term exam in my TR 130 class and replaced it with what I hoped would be a more engaging idea, and I tried to be much more explicit in my set up of the assignment. The assignment involved in-class informal writing which was used as the basis for a more formal report. A more detailed discussion follows.

As for proof reading your own work, I always encourage writers with whom I work to write a first draft entirely off the top of their heads. “Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation, or style, just get it out. Let your mind roam. Try not to think. Type,” I advise first time writers. The good writing that follows this purge of ideas onto the page is really re-writing.

Quotes from several writers make this point more eloquently.

> *When I say writing, O believe me, it is rewriting that I have chiefly in mind.*
> *— Robert Louis Stevenson*

> *Blot out, correct, insert, refine*
> *Enlarge, diminish, interline;*
> *Be mindful, when invention fails,*
> *To scratch your head, and bite your nails.*
> *— Jonathan Swift*

> *I can’t understand how anyone can write without rewriting everything over and over again.*
> *— Leo Tolstoy*

[13] Ibid p. 79.

My notes from our October 24th meeting contain some thoughts about "mini tasks." I ask my first year production students to write short, autobiographical papers about an important turning point in their lives. I read them over and make a comment or two, but I don't formally grade them. They use these essays as the basis for their first television interview script, which we actually produce. The assignment is included below.

The first assignment of my advanced production class puts the students in small teams. Each team must come up with a proposal for a five minute segment on some aspect of peanut and jelly sandwiches. Each team then picks one classmate to make a verbal pitch to the entire class, just like a professional "pitch session" in New York or Hollywood. This un-graded assignment is also included below.

One other exploratory writing assignment that I've found remarkably effective is to require students to write a self-evaluation of each production that they do. They are encouraged to reflect on their own learning experience and also to evaluate those colleagues who helped on their productions.

I have not yet tried the journal approach, but I look forward to doing so in a new class that I will teach in the Spring on Documentary Production.

Although the importance of using rubrics came up in the October 24th seminar discussion and in this section of Bean, a fuller discussion of rubrics belongs in Part Three of this self reflection. Most of the October 24th meeting was taken up with a presentation and discussion of Service learning, led by Lucy Vitaliti. [NOTE: I produced four ½ hour television programs on service learning several years ago and became a strong advocate of service learning.]

Part 3

What I would like to focus on in part three is how my reading of Part Three and our discussion on November 7th led me to conceive of a whole new way of teaching one of my less successful classes. I am using a syllabus developed by another teacher for this course, and despite my best classroom antics, my students are not engaged with the subject matter of the course. The course in question is a survey of the broadcasting industry from the late 19th Century to the present. Students are expected to learn a lot of technical terms and a few rudiments of broadcasting history. But why? Bean's "Strategies for Designing Critical Thinking Tasks" is a template for developing a new approach.[14]

As I understand it, the core idea is to convert students from passive learners into active seekers of knowledge. Bean's suggestion that we have to encourage students to "link

[14] Bean, summarized on pages 131-132.

concepts in [the] course to their personal experiences or prior knowledge" seems to me to be the key starting point.

Jumping ahead to Chapter 9 where Bean talks about the efficacy of teaching with small groups, he once again manages to provide a deeper understanding and analysis of the small team approach that we use extensively in our production classes. Television is a team effort. But I have not used it in an academic class.

Bean suggests that the ideal small group size is five, with six a second best.[15] Bean seems to support random grouping, but then admits to manipulating gender and language skills. (At the beginning of a semester, an instructor has little information to go on, so I am not yet sure how I will approach this issue.)

The greatest problem that I've had with the team approach in my production classes is the tendency of only two or three students to do all the work while the other students simply hang on their coattails. While this is revealed in the student's final self evaluation, it is sometimes difficult for the instructor to perceive it during the semester. Bean references D.W. Johnson and F.P. Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills,* 4th Edition, Prentice Hall, 1991, which apparently has self-monitoring questionnaires that could help this problem.[16]

Finally, on this question of learning in small groups, I was delighted when Bean mentioned that his small group approach, what Bean calls "collaborative learning," has led to student interaction outside of the classroom. This semester the students of my TR240/238 class (Advanced Television Production and Directing) decided to meet socially and invited their professor to join them. They are now talking about taking a winter trip to the beach at the end of this semester. This is particularly striking because of the wide cultural and ethnic diversity of this class: I have students from Serbia, Germany, France, Spain, Nigeria, Columbia, Brazil, Venezuela, Madagascar, the African American ghettos of Washington and the largely white suburbs of Montgomery County! As Bean says, working with such a diverse group of students "is one of the joys of teaching through small groups."[17]

Getting back to the class that I want to change, it is TR 129 Introductions to Broadcasting. Most of my students in TR 129 class are first year, with little or no knowledge of the subject matter. Therefore, Bean's strategies for Helping Students Read Difficult Texts[18] are highly relevant to the research that students would have to do in the approach I'm considering. The trade journals and historical accounts are as unfamiliar to most students as are carefully reasoned academic arguments. They will have to develop

[15] Bean p. 160.
[16] Ibid. p. 163.
[17] Ibid. p. 168.
[18] Ibid. p. 133.

"Cultural Literacy," adjust to new and unfamiliar grammars and learn new vocabularies.[19] To focus student's attention on the vocabulary part of this, I would distribute a list of the words with which they need to become familiar during the semester to understand the material they will be reading. I'd do this at the beginning of the semester. It would be the first item, after the syllabus and class schedule that I would ask them to put in journals that will be updated at the end of each class. The teams will make regular reports on the status of their research, based on their journal notes. They can refer to their vocabulary list when needed. The final exam might be a test of their knowledge of the vocabulary and a completed journal.

I like Bean's suggestion that some of this can be accomplished by the instructor sharing his own reading and note taking techniques with his students. I can envision live, real time Internet searches in a classroom with students suggesting search criteria based on their previous research.[20] And, of course, of all the many sources of information that we use, the Internet is undoubtedly the most prone to error and bias, so lessons in "double checking" and skepticism will be anticipated by many students and appreciated by all.

The team assignments would be a variation of Bean's concept of "Thesis Supported Assignments." My assignment would deal with something happening today that would encourage students to search both today's literature and historical documents for answers. Bean's discussion of how instructors can deal with research papers is relevant here. Rather than assign topics, I would attempt to assign problems. As Bean puts it, crediting Cohen and Spencer's work on mathematical assignments, "students do research to solve a problem; engagement with a question thus gives purpose and direction to their work."[21] Bean goes on to list the daunting problems that face first time researchers. I think many of these can be avoided by using a group approach, where peers quickly share skills and insights.

Some possible assignments :

1. Summarize the issues in the current Hollywood writer's strike. Tell us what's relevant from the history of union activity in radio and television. Answer the question: what would be best outcome of the writer's strike for us as viewers?

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[19] Ibid. p. 136.

[20] I'm aware that there is serious concern among some academics about the usefulness of the Internet, based largely on the lack of reliability of many of its sources. In my opinion, we need to teach students how to double and triple check facts, just as we would do in journalism, but the Internet is too valuable a source to ignore and it is much more attuned to most student's lives than academic libraries. This may be a liability for many academics, but a working knowledge of the Internet and its strength's and weaknesses is crucially important to people entering the world of broadcasting.

[21] Bean p. 201.

2. Advertising dollars are moving from broadcast and cable to the Internet. Compare this movement to the loss of advertising dollars from newspapers to radio, radio to broadcast television or television to cable. What affect, if any, will this movement have on radio and television programs in the future?

3. Media ownership is being consolidated in fewer and fewer hands. Tell us when this trend began and how it has affected the industry. Will the trend continue in the future and what are the consequences to us as viewers?

4. The First Amendment to our Bill of Rights forbids Congress from passing any laws "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." Telecommunications have always been an exception to this rule. Why has Congress passed laws that regulate what we can hear and see on radio and television and should similar restrictions be imposed on the Internet?

5. Most advanced democracies have heavily subsidized public broadcasting systems. The United States, by contrast, has a public broadcasting system that is only partially subsidized; most program funds must come from private individuals and corporations. Make an argument for or against the US system.

6. Describe the current laws relating to political candidates and broadcasting, and explain how they are being used today in the presidential election campaign. Are the laws accomplishing the goal they were designed to accomplish?

7. Describe the current cameras in the courts issue mentioning specific cases and what the trend looks like for the future.

Finally, the idea of creating rubrics for my writing assignments was brand new to me. In hindsight, this oversight seems strange, because over the five semesters I've taught, I've created increasingly precise rubrics for my students' television productions. The rubrics quantify what would otherwise be subjective, and they tell students what's important to me. I have attempted to create a rubric for one of my writing assignment for this seminar, and a more complete discussion can be found there.

To summarize: I began this seminar as a thorough skeptic and have emerged as a complete enthusiast. The WID has been an intense learning experience and tremendous success for me.

Formal Writing Assignment
Including Scoring Rubric

Fall 2007 Midterm Exam – A Shop Manual

In the fall of 2007, as a result of a suggestion in the WID seminar, I changed the midterm for my TR 240/238 Advanced Television Production and Directing Course from a "standard" mid term examination to a take home test requiring students to write a manual on different aspects of television production.

First, what follows is a copy of the standard exam as I intended to give it.

TR 240 Midterm ***Name: ____________________***
Fall 2007

1. The executive producer has complained about the "static look" and "uneven audio" of a recent production. Who is ultimately responsible for correcting such problems? ________________________________

2. What does the "iris" do? ___________________.

3. When does the video engineer adjust the iris? _____________________.

4. How does the camera operator calibrate a zoom lens (reach optimum focus)?
____
____

5. How can you be sure the camera is set for the color temperature you are going to be videotaping in?
____

Studio Production Centers *have at least the following areas:*
6. ______________________
7. ______________________
8. ______________________
9. ______________________
3 Point Lighting consists of:
10. _____________________ light
11. _____________________ light
12. _____________________ light
Name two additional studio lights that might be used in a lighting setup.
13.____________________light
14. ____________________light

15. What can a director use in place of a teleprompter?

____

16. Who on the production team relays director's cues to talent? -

____

17. Who is responsible for transforming a script into effective video and audio image? ______________________

18. Who does the actual switching and usually acts as crew chief for technicians?

____

19. Who is in charge of tape roll-ins and recording programs?

____

20. Who is in charge of content and details for an individual production?

____

21. Who is responsible for sound elements of a program.

____

22. Why types and/or recalls from a computer names and graphics?

____

23. What is the CCD? ____.

24. What is a CCU? ____.

List three things that a Video Switcher does

25. ________________________

26. ________________________

27. _________________________

28. What <u>equipment system</u> allows a studio team to communicate with each other? __________________________

Explain the following acronyms for camera shots

29. ECU

30. CU

31. WS

33. EWS

34. OTS

35 - 39. Write the standard show open and show close for a news segment in the appropriate script form. (5 points).

40 – 50. Prepare a lighting plot with set elements for a studio show on Competition Dogs and Their Owners.

NOTE: The test above is relatively easy, and it tests the basic knowledge of TV production terminology. It is also very easy to grade! But I have always doubted the real value of these tests and this semester I gave the students the following take-home test.

TR240/238 Midterm
Fall, 2007 - 50 points

Take Home Test

On this take-home test you will write sections of an instruction manual for people who know nothing about the equipment. Your "manual" must make it possible for novices to use the equipment or perform the task required without any additional outside help. Think each step through carefully. Use an appropriate, professional vocabulary. You may use diagrams and illustrations. Proof read your work by going over each step carefully.

You will be graded on the basis of completeness, clarity, brevity, accurate vocabulary and aesthetics.

NOTE: SELECT ANY TASKS FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST THAT ADD UP TO 50 POINTS OR MORE

1. *Working with equipment, lights and props in the MC television studio, what are the instructions necessary to create a two person interview set and light it with standard "cross-key" lighting. [Perfect score 20 points]*

2. *What instructions are needed for a three-person team to white balance the lighting set-up. What positions would the three team members hold and what would each of them do? Make sure you identify which members of the team do which tasks. [Perfect score 10 points]*

3. *What steps are necessary to create a slate on the DECKO? Make sure someone can follow each step that is necessary to create the slate. [Perfect score 10 points]*

4. *What steps are necessary to create prompter copy for someone on the set? How is the prompter hooked up in the studio? [Perfect score 5 points]*

5. *What steps are necessary to prepare audio for a two person interview? List the equipment that should be used and the step by step instructions to ready it for broadcast. [Perfect score 15 points]*

6. *Explain the basic function of the switcher and identify its major component parts. What instructions should the Director give to the Technical Director to start a simple two-person interview show. [Perfect score 20 points]*

7. *There is a videotape roll in for the interview show. Three members of the team will help get the VTR "on air" at exactly the right time. Who are the members of the team and what do they do? [Perfect score 10 points]*

8. *Step by step instructions for the Floor Director to set up the ICOM system. [Perfect score 5 points]*

In a discussion of this assignment on the WID MC forum, Dr. Deborah C. Stearns suggested that I might "think about the particular format you want the answers to use: This is the sort of thing that students often like to use bulleted points for, rather than paragraphs, and that seems perfectly appropriate to me. You might want to spell out your preference in the instructions (as you have noted with use of diagrams)."

I think Dr. Stearns' idea is excellent. In general, I find that the more specific I can be with what I expect from students, the more confident they are in doing my writing assignments.

A lack of direction on the format that I expected in this mid term test is probably responsible for the fact that while most of my students demonstrated an understanding of the processes they described, not all of them were able to create a really usable manual. Because my primary intention was to assess students' understanding of the shop course procedures, I did not weight their lack of crafting a useful manual as heavily as their understanding of the actual tasks they chose to write about.

Dr. Stearns suggestion that we ask students to write out a solution to a production problem in enough detail that a reader could implement the solution is a good variation on this theme. It could be very useful, for example, in those instances when I think the class as a whole needs a reminder on how to do certain basis tasks. My tendency up until this point has been to give them a short traditional quiz on the subject.

In the lively discussion that followed on the MC WID forum, Kathryn wanted to know if my students, like some of hers, used an overwhelming amount of detail, and I would say that they did not. I was also surprised to find that, unlike Kathryn, the writing mechanics of my students did not suffer. Katherine said that, "At first, sentences loose structure, punctuation disappears, and verb tense flies out the window. Over the course of the semester, these writers learn to integrate grammar, style, and technical information, but it seems to be quite difficult for them at first." In contrast, I got some of my better writing. It was if my students were actually committed to explaining something to someone, instead of fulfilling the expectations of their professor.

John Hamman pointed me to a fascinating study about when learning a process actually takes place. According to one study of rats, so called "smart rats" reflect on their trip through a maze to a cheese reward while they're eating the cheese and another group just thinks, 'great cheese!' (I imagine that these results are achieved by looking at the brain activity of the rats). In any event, the rats that reflect on their trip through the maze, do much better on future mazes even if the mazes are different.

As John wrote, “for any "shop" course I think the important part of the course is to think about what went well and what didn't. After the project is completed you can ask them to report on what went well and what didn't. Furthermore asking them what they would do differently next time is a valuable question for them and you.”

We build self-evaluations into every production assignment, and we encourage students not only to reflect upon their own experience, but also to comment on the performance of their team members on the project. I tell them (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) that this is an opportunity to “trash their colleagues.” They actually don't do that very often, although they do comment upon team members who don't pull their weight. Most of the comments are about their own expectations and what they could do better on their next assignment.

Hot Topics Grading - 65 Points

Student Name:________________________

Possible Points	***Objects to be accomplished in the project***	***Points Earned***
15	***Proposal and Research*** *(“Your topic may be of local, national or international interest. Proposal should be a selling document. Research should demonstrate that you have gathered facts and information about your topic.)* ***5 points off for every class your proposal is overdue.***	
5	***Production Meeting*** *(Leadership and preparedness).*	
10	***Visual Support Material*** *(At least 2, no more than 4 consisting of Videotape roll-ins, Still photos mounted on black cards, and/or Full screen CG graphics.)*	
15	***Paperwork due on production day (5 points each for Script and Crew list).*** • ***Script*** *(5 copies: Dir., Ass. Dir., Prompter, VTR, Floor).* • ***Crew list*** *(3 copies: EP, CG, Posted on board.)* • ***CG list*** *(2 copies: EP and CG)* • ***Lighting Plot*** *(2 copies: EP and Lighting Director)*	
5	***Program length*** *(Must be exactly 5 minutes.*	
5	***Personal appearance on camera and delivery.***	
10	***Complete Paper Trail,*** *Proposal; Script; Lighting Plot; Crew List; CG List; Self-evaluation.* ***5 points off for every class your paperwork is overdue.***	
65	***Total points earned***	

Dr. Christina M. Devlin raised another good point, which I arrived at myself entirely by accident. Christina said she liked the fact that I assigned different point values to different questions so that the students could choose to write about more topics in a less complex manner or more complex topics in fewer answers. I did this, because the course includes students with a wide range of skills. It's a combined production and directing course, and the directors have already taken the producers' segment. I hoped this choice of questions gave them some flexibility.

As with most of the assignments that I am giving these days, I offered extra bonus point for a personal evaluation and reflection upon the assignment. Here are some of the comments that students made. They are typical of the entire set of evaluations.

1. Blljana Milenkovic is a Serbian student, and English is her second language.

> *EVALUATION OF THE M I D T E R M E X A M*
>
> *I really like the idea of doing mid term exam the way we did it in the fall semester 2007. By giving us eight different topics, each of great importance for the broadcasting process, professor made me read and think more about the production than I would probably do for the test only.*
>
> *Thus, I had to think more about steps that one should take in order to make a light set, or setting the ICOM right. I had to think in a simple and efficient way so I could be able to explain to the amateur what all is about.*
>
> *Finally, I hope I succeeded in making some of the broadcasting tasks easy to understand and do.*

2. Jonathan Couts is a Montgomery County student

> Author's Note
>
> *It's not that hard to make a good show. just like it is not that hard to prepare a manual such as this one. It takes time and preparation, and of course lots of good notes. While it may not seem as important to know the technical terms of this field, it is vital to know them. The reason for that is when a person is communicating to another about what they need, such as BNC Cables. XLR cables, or a lavaliere mic. If you don't know what that is, then how can you take it to them?*
>
> *More important, I believe that his assignment has shown that organization of information is needed for success. Nothing can be completed if everything is done in a mess, and no attention is paid to the detail of our work.*

Dorothy Mbori is a Nigerian student in the Director's segment of the class.

> *TR 238*
> *I think the take home test was a really good idea because it made me study hard. I learnt some things that I didn't know about. The questions were a little broad and I didn't know how to shorten them and get the real required points across but I managed to do so. I also think that if I was just taking a regular test I wouldn't have been able to study the things that I had to study for this test. I would have just memorized some of the things I needed to pass the test. But in this case I had to understand what I was reading and put it in my own words while making sure that it made sense and that it could be understood by the person reading it.*
>
> *All in all, the take home test was a good idea from my point of view and I hope I get a good grade in it.*

Roxana Solano is a student from Columbia.

> *EXTRA CREDIT*
> *Overall I think the take home exam was very educational, but I would have personally preferred an in class midterm, simply because it allows me to truly test my knowledge on the spot. I liked doing the take home exam because it allowed me to revisit some critical areas of production work and how everyone is truly vital in the production process. Some jobs people might take for granted like the VT Operator should not be taken for granted because that position is in fact very important to the whole production process. Without proper knowledge in that position, the entire show could fail because certain roll ins were not brought in on time etc. I liked leaming about how to prepare for a two person interview, because most people would probably think the only thing you really need to do is mic and cue the talent. Learning how to truly set up for the interview is good practice because it's something you will always remember.*
>
> *I felt the take home exam really succeeded when it comes to informing students on the whole production process and how each position operates as a limb to a body with the Director acting as the brains that sends out the signals so each part knows how to operate and when. I wouldn't mind doing another take home exam but, like I said I'm used to the in class exams and answering multiple choice and fill in the blanks.*

A sample of the manuals that I received follows.

Sam Soroka, a Montgomery County student in the Production segment of the class.

CHAPTER 5: Micing a 2 Person Interview

When you are preparing Audio for a 2 person interview, there are standard steps that need to be followed to capture Great broadcast quality audio.

The first step is to gather all of the necessary equipment. Since there are 2 people involved with this interview we will need I microphone for each person. If the interview is being conducted inside of a studio or on location inside a building you will be using a certain type of microphone. A microphone called a Wired Lavaliere Microphone will be what we are looking for. A Wired Lavaliere Microphone is small in size and highly sensitive. It will have a clip included in the microphone kit which should be attached to the head of the microphone, if it is not go ahead and put it on. The Wired Lavaliere microphone will have a wire that runs to a metal stick type base with an "XLR" connection. XLR is the type of connector and wires that are used to connect audio devices with the least amount of electronic noise. Once you have 2 of these Wired Lavaliere Microphones "I for each person in the Interview." We need 2 XLR cables that will connect the microphones to the recording device, or the multi tap in the studio. There are several lengths of XLR cable, but there is never enough, so grab a cable that will be long enough to make it to the input from the microphones, and have a little left over. "Nothing wrong with having coils. Even though these microphones are connected with a cable they still need a single double A battery for the power supply. Grab at least 2-4 Double A's "Make sure to test them before you leave. That should do it for the equipment the next step is to set up the Equipment.

The 2nd Step in preparing Audio for a 2 person interview is to set up the equipment. Once you are at the recording location you will first take out the microphones from their cases. The stick shaped metal base that we talked about will unscrew at the crease. Unscrew the microphone, and insert I double A battery as shown on the plus minus diagram on the casing. "To make sure that you don't reverse the polarity. Once the battery is in. screw the casing back together, flip the toggle switch located on the side of the base to the ON position. You then connect the XLR cable to the bottom of the Microphone. The Male End "the end with 3 prongs" is on the Microphones base, so grab the Female end "the end with holes" of the cable and complete the connection until you hear a click. Once the connection on the microphone has been made follow the cable to the other end, and connect that end into the camera, multi tap, or the other device recording audio. Once that connection has been made set the microphone down and get ready for step 3.

The 3rd step in Preparing audio for a 2 person interview is to "Microphone the talent" or put the microphones onto the 2 people going on camera. Remember that Clip I talked about earlier. Well this is where it comes in handy. Take the microphone head with the clip already attached and ask the 2 people to run it under their shirts, and pull it out of the collar, or through a gap between buttons around the base of the neck area. Use the clip to clip it onto the collar, or the side of the shirt in the middle under the chin. Let the base of the microphone with the battery, and excess microphone wire sit next to the talent in the chair, or on the ground next to the chair. Once all this has been done we can continue on by getting Microphone levels, and adjust the levels on the recording device, or Camera. Have the talent sit down and talk at their normal voice, and pace. DO NOT have them say their ABC'S. Have them talk about their day at work, or what kind of pets they have. Adjust the levels in the recording device until they are right around negative 12 on the VU METER. The meter in the camera or recording device that has notches with numbers, and moving dashes along both sides of it. The moving dashes are the people's voices, and other noise that the Microphones are picking up. If you let them go past negative 12 there is a possibility for distortion. Its ok for it to go past it occasionally but not constantly. Once you have adjusted your levels to peak right around negative 12 you have completed the 4th step. In completing all 4 of these easy steps you have now completely and correctly set up audio for a 2 person interview. CONGRADULATIONS

Gregor Keitel is a student from Germany. He provided the greatest depth of information, and yet took a much more succinct approach to the same question, which is not to say that I don't like Sam's more colloquial advice as well.

10/16/2007
TR 238
Prof. Koch

TV Production Manual

1. LIGHTING FOR TWO

In this section of the manual I will explain an efficient way to correctly light two people for an interview; a method called "'cross key" lighting. Before we actually jump into the lighting procedure there are a few things to pay attention to. We have to arrange the set and the cameras prior to lighting. The term "cross-key" refers to the method of using two kev lights … one for each person, but at the same time each person's key light will act as a backlight for the other person. An additional fill light will be sufficient enough to illuminate both talents.

REMEMBER: When it comes to lighting more is never better. You should always try to use as few lights (actual lamps) as possible. After we arranged the set and *the cameras we can now go on to the lights. In a two person interview you want the two talents to slightly face each other. Only in this way can the key light act as a key and background light for the other person. Place the key light for one person behind and over the shoulder of the other person. That way it can act as key and back light. When using this method however, there cannot be any movement of the talents on the set. That is why we had to set up the studio and the cameras in advance. Now that we have the basic setup for the lighting we should talk about the needed light intensity to get a good picture quality. Light intensity is measured in foot-candies in the U.S. and in lux in most other countries. However, lux seems to be used more and more often in the U.S. nowadays. I will refer to lux throughout this segment of the manual.*

NOTE: One foot-candle equals 10. 74 Iux: multiply foot-candles by ten to get an approximate result for lux.

To get a better understanding about the intensity and the units here are some examples;

- *11 sunlight on an average day ranges from 32,000 to 100,000 lux.*
- *TV studios are]it at about 1,000 lux.*
- *a bright office has about 400 lux*
- *moonlight represents about I lux.*
- *starlight measures a mere 0.00005 lux.*

These examples already mention the common light intensity in TV studios. Even though most cameras can produce acceptable picture quality in low light environment, you should never accept low light intensity if it is avoidable. In studios I worked in, we usually tried to get a light intensity of about 1,500 lux right at the point where the talent is located. This way you are on the safe side.

2. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BALANCE

Now that we have a sufficient lighting and studio set up, we should calibrate the camera according to the light intensity. Consumer camcorders usually adapt automatically to changing light intensities. Yet, professional studio cameras should be manually adjusted every time the lights and the studio set up are changed. This process is called "white balance"- The camera needs a source color (white) to represent all the other colors correctly. If white balance is not done correctly or not at all, you might encounter blue, orange or even green color casts on the picture. So let's take a look at how we correctly set the cameras. You will need three members on your crew for this method; the video engineer, one or more camera operators (depending on how many cameras you use) and the floor director. After the lighting is done the video engineer will request to white balance the cameras. The floor director takes a white piece of paper on a stand

and puts it right where the talent interacts during the show. The camera operator then has to zoom in on the white sheet so there is nothing else but white on his viewfinder and focus the camera.

REMEMBER: The easiest way to focus the camera correctly is to zoom in on the edge of the paper first, focus and then pan/tilt to the center of the paper.

Once the camera is in position the video engineer will start, the white balance process. He uses several devices for this. The control room has a CCU (camera control unit) for each studio camera. The CCU allows the engineer to open or close the iris (the part of the camera that controls the amount of light going through the lens onto the CCD [charged coupled device chip). The camera's light levels are displayed on a vector scope with a scale from 0--120. The engineer will adjust the iris so it will hit 100. Now that the iris is adjusted the camera is ready to be balanced to white and black. The engineer has a switch on the CCU, which can be set to white and black (the camera actually reads all colors according to the white and black we are about to set, but since the camera simply closes the iris completely to get the source black, the process is called white balance). The engineer will now turn the switch to white; the camera adjusts for a few seconds and will come back on. When the levels on the vector scope a re still at 100 the engineer can turn the switch to black. After both colors are set and the levels are still on 100, the camera is set correctly.

NOTE: DURING WHITE BALANCE IT IS CRUCIAI THAT THE FLOOR DIRECTOR MAKES SURE NOBODY IS WALKING IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA OR MOVING THE STAND.

After completing the white balance the engineer will let the floor director and director know that the cameras are ready. We are now very close to actually start the production.

I include Gregor's Manual on working with the DEKO, because this is a very difficult tool to learn and I think Gregor has done a masterful job.

3. DEKO - GRAPHIC POWER FROM THE COMPUTER

The Pinnacle Deko 1000 character generator is a very powerful tool for full screen graphics, lower thirds, animations and even video clips.

In this tutorial however, we will concentrate on creating a full screen slate and also cover a little bit about lower thirds.

We will start by opening Deko on the CG (character generator) computer. The software will launch and will already open up the most important windows for *our goal. In the center of the screen the "program window" will appear. It actually feeds the switcher and can be changed in real time during the show.*

However, we will concentrate on pre-producing a graphic or state in Deko. We will start with the background. The default setting in Deko is a blank page, all grey areas will turn black when used as a full screen graphic, or they will be transparent when superimposed. So we will start by looking at the top part of the screen and search for a button with a small monitor icon on it. This switches the background on and off. Once We turned the background on we have to decide on a color. I recommend taking a color from the preset menu on the bottom right corner, instead of taking the time to create your own color or design. Now the colored background is visible on the screen. If you are satisfied with the design you can go to the next step.

Putting text on the Deko slate is similar to working with word. The arrow on the screen represents the position of the cursor. If you want to start your text in the middle of the slate just press enter until you reach the desired position. Now you can type in your text. On your left hand side you have the controls for the font. You can decrease or increase the font size, change the color, underline it, or even put an object behind it to make it stand out. Whatever you choose, make sure that it is easy to read. Pay attention to the inner frame on the program window; it is called title safe zone. Put your text within that zone otherwise it will be cut off.

Your basic slate is now finished. For creating lower thirds all you have to do is turn off the background and put the text in the lower third of the screen. Again create or choose a font and make sure it is easy to read.

You can also put some extra graphics or pictures in it. You can either create simple graphics in Deko with the object tool, but a better way is to create your graphics in advance with editing software like Adobe Photoshop or similar. Just make sure that the graphic has the right resolution and format as well as the right position.

NOTE: YOU CANNOT CHANGE THE POSITION OR SIZE IN DEKO LATER ON, SO GET IT RIGHT BEFORE.

Deko files are saved as dko files; however, Deko supports many other graphic formats:

- *.tga .tif .bmp .pcd .g .jpg .pcx .psd .wmf .dib .rle*

Let's take a look at aspect ratio and pixels when using both Deko and Photoshop (or similar). Windows and Macintosh based computer systems use square pixels to illustrate images whereas NTSC and PAL television systems use rectangular pixels. That means that images created on a computer at the correct resolution *and aspect ratio (720 x 540 \1 4:31) will look distorted on Deko because the square pixels from the computer output are squeezed into rectangular shapes making objects appear slightly thinner and taller than they actually are. Here is a method to display your created graphics correctly on Deko. When creating 4 x 3 images with Photoshop or other square pixel paint programs, make your image size:*

- *720 x 540 for NTSC*
- *768 x 576 for PAL*

Once you are done with the graphic save it to your computer for later editing purposes. Before you import the graphic though, change the image size to 720 x 486. Use 486 because Deko's video buffers are exactly 486 lines tall. The resized image will appear geometrically distorted on your computer monitor, but will display correctly when imported by Deko.

When you are done with the graphic make sure you have a transparent background and save it in a format that keeps the layers and especially the alpha channel. That way your graphic can be superimposed on top of the created state or during the show. I always create the background and graphics in editing software and just lay down the text in Deko. However, stick to Deko in the beginning to get familiar with the software and to avoid mistakes you cannot undo later in Deko.

Biljana Milenkovic is a student from Serbia. She chose to use a very abbreviated button style for her manual supported by diagrams. It is yet another approach to the basic lighting question.

Light set – two-person interview

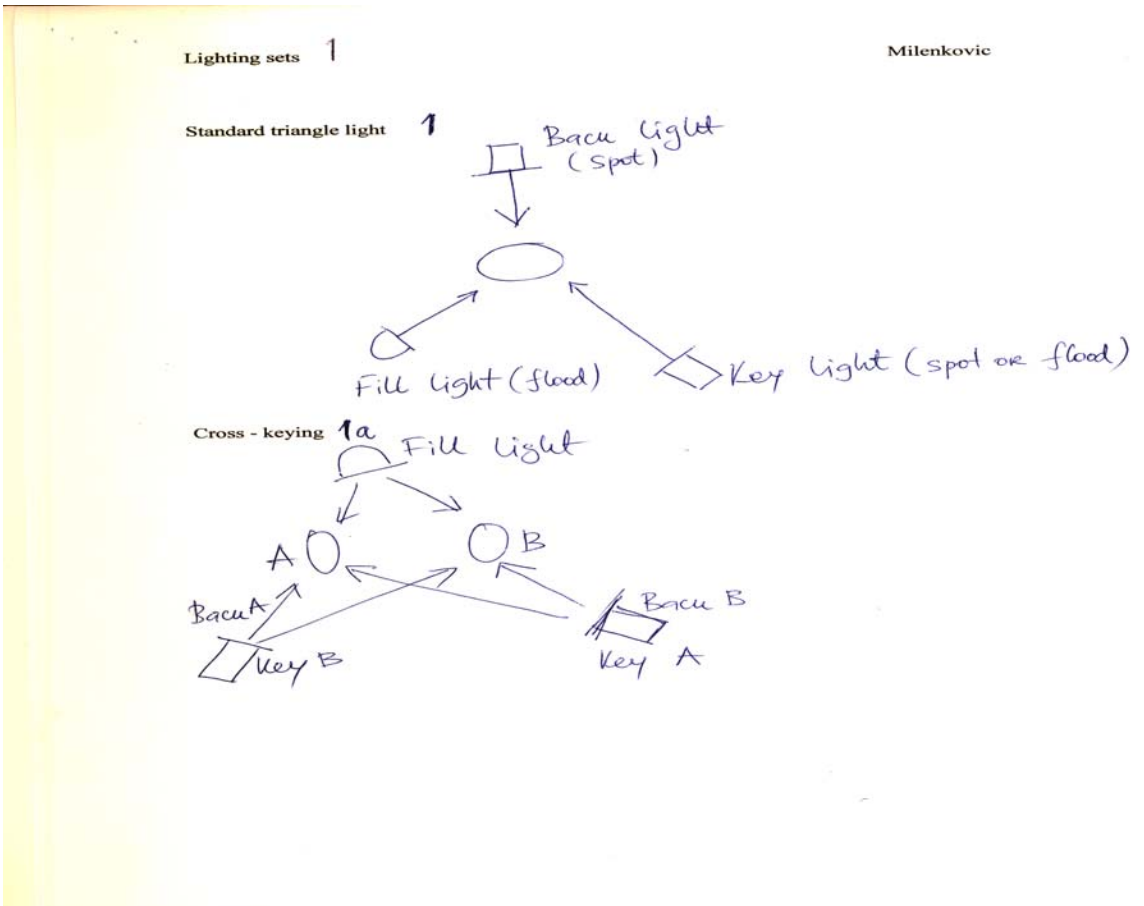
Standard triangle lighting consists of key, fill, and back light (see the picture 1). However, in some situations, one light can have double role, the key light for one person can become the back light for another one. This is known as cross-keying (see the picture l a).

In a two person interview, you should position them as shown on the picture 2, and set the lights in a way that will insure that one light has a double role (back and key).

Production crew (students) should set the studio.

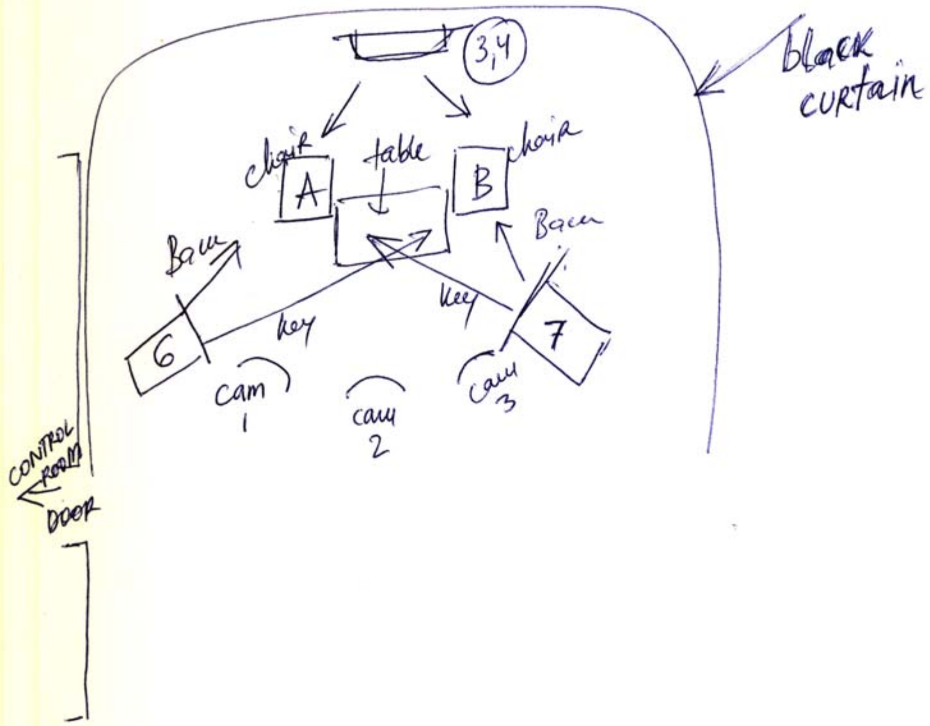
- *set the chairs and the table as shown on the picture 2*
- *turn on the light board (ask Professor Koch if you cannot find it)*
- *turn off the neon lights*
- *set both people in position*

- *while setting the lights, audio operator can set the microphones, wired lavalieres*
- *bring up the FILL light (should be 3 or 4 on the board)*
- *bring up KEY/BACK lights (should be 6 and 7 on the board)*
- *measure the light (250- 300 candles)*



Lighting set 2 Milenkovic

Two person interview – design and lights



Biljana Milenkovich also described the process of setting up an ICOM system with diagrams.

icom Milenkovic I

1. each camera should have a headset on it

2. the number of cables (with the male and female end) you need depends on the number of cameras you have . If you have 3- cameras- production take 3 plus 1 cables

3. connect the cameras' intercom boxes within each other using the cables by putting the male and female ends in the designated area(it says INTERLOOP)

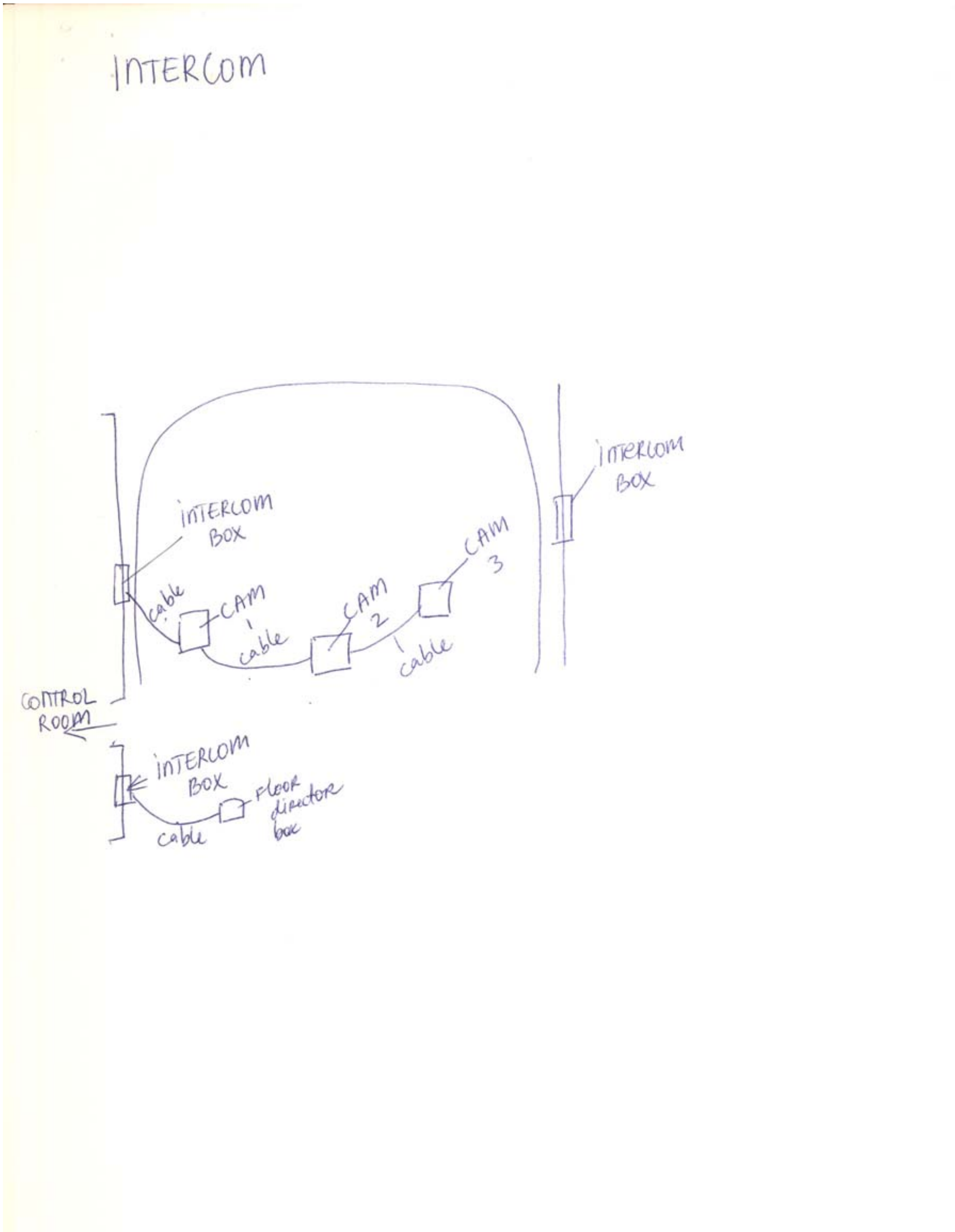
4. connect each intercom box with the headsets

5. connect one camera to the INTERCOM box on the wall (each studio has several- the studio at MC has three, two on the wall with windows, one on the opposite side wall, see the picture). By doing so, all cameras are connected and are getting tone from the same source

6. finally, connect "Floor director's" intercom box with the headset and the separate INTERCOM box on the wall(it is usually marked -floor director intercom)

7. make sure everyone on the set but you has their microphones off

8. unless told otherwise, you should communicate with director



Overall, the Production Manual Mid-term was an excellent experiment that I will repeat in the future. In re-reading my students' work to make selections for this portfolio, I decided that I would not give any guidance on format in the future. I think students took different and equally effective ways of writing the manual, and I want to leave that challenge up to them.

I also think that it would be useful to develop a rubric for evaluating their papers, which would give them guidance about my overall expectations and help make the process of grading simpler and quantifiable.

So here is a stab at a rubric for the Production Manual Midterm.

A Rubric for Assessing the Production Manual Midterm Assignment
Fall 2007, TR 240/238

Area Assessed	Mastery 10 - 9	Good 7 - 8	Adequate 4 - 6	Inadequate Below 4
Understands production process described.	The manual evidences deep knowledge of the process.	The manual evidences complete understanding of the process.	The manual evidences general understanding of the process.	The paper fails to demonstrate an understanding of the process.
Complete	The manual covers every step necessary to complete the task and adds useful additional information.	The manual covers every step necessary to complete the task.	The manual covers the essential steps necessary to complete the task.	The manual fails to cover the essential steps necessary to complete the task.
Organization and Structure: Comps. A, c, above	The manual's organization and format are highly logical and clear.	The manual is easy to follow.	The manual is generally readable.	The manual is difficult to follow.
Use of appropriate technical language	The manual uses every technical term possible with great precision.	The manual shows a complete command of all technical terms.	The manual shows correct use of all technical terms.	One or more technical terms are used incorrectly or not used at all.

Clarity and Conciseness: (Sentence-level concerns, such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and other mechanics)	The writing style is clear, concise, fluent and eloquent, with effective sentence variety to control tone and rhythm. Diction choices are highly precise, and there are very few or no grammatical errors.	The writing style is clear and pleasing, with variety of sentence structures and no patterns of grammatical errors. Diction choices are accurate.	Writing is clear and not excessively choppy nor wordy. Grammatical errors are infrequent and do not include errors that impede comprehension (such as fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, shifts in person or tense).	Writing is unclear due to abruptness, wordiness, misspellings, and/or grammatical errors.

I plan to provide students with a copy of the rubric along with the assignment. This should help show them what's important to me. I am also keeping this year's tests as examples of the best work that meets the criteria I've outlined, which I can share with students when I make the assignment.

Informal Tasks

In my introductory course in television production, my first assigned task asks the students to prepare an informal, two-page essay on some aspect of their lives. I read these profiles and make suggestions in some cases, but I don't grade these assignments.

In a second step, the students turn these essays into television scripts that we then produce them in the studio.

The only grade that I give for this entire assignment is a student's "crew grade," which is measurement of their performance as members of a production team (are they helpful, do they come on time and help set up, do they stay and help clean up, are they cooperative and are they learning their essential production skills).

Here's the assignment as I hand it out.

> ***TR 130 – Pre-Production Practice***
> ***Background Interview***
>
> *This is a practice session. Students will be judged solely on their crew attitude, not their hosting or producing performance.*
>
> *We are producing a soft news segment for news magazine show, a 3-minute interview with a member of the class. Where are they from? How is where they are from different from the Washington DC area? What are their favorite activities? Etc. Remember it is frequently the simplest (dumbest!) questions that provoke the best answers. What would I want to tell my friends about this person? What will people talk about at the dinner table?*
>
> *Step 1: Write a 2 page essay on some aspect of your life. Remember the standard expectations for a piece of writing: a compelling narrative (a story) with a strong beginning, middle and end. Illustrate your essay with two or three visuals (stills will be fine for this exercise).*
>
> *Step 2: You will convert your essay into a television script based on an interview format. You will use the standard script format with a scripted opening and close and a set of questions that will last for approximately three minutes.*
>
> *Here are the guidelines*
> - *Producer is the guest and writes out questions for the host.*
> - *The host asks follow-up questions of his or her own.*
> - *Prompter script copy for the beginning, middle and end with questions.*
> - *Generic CG slate, title and format for lower third supers.*
> - *Set – two chairs on two risers with table and flowers.*

- *Lighting – key, fill and two backlight. Maybe another light to help the key. When you have a successful lighting setup, draw it out on a lighting grid.*

Step 3: We will produce the segments in class.

TR130 – Mid-Term – Rough Cut Screening Notes

Another example also comes out of my work in the WID seminar, I changed my traditional TR130 Midterm from a "standard" test to a two part assignment designed to engage my students' critical skills as television producers. As it happened, I was working on a documentary about the Homeless World Cup, and we had just completed a rough cut of the film. This is traditionally the point at which the filmmaker shows the film to other people, including the client if there is one, to get their "notes" and suggestions about what works and what doesn't work.

I showed the students the cut in a classroom setting and instructed them to takes notes during the screening. This was the informal or "free writing" part of the assignment. I did not look at these, but I asked my students to use them as the basis for the notes on the film. I also asked them to write a paragraph on where in the network's broadcast schedule the show should be aired.

Here is the assignment.

> *TR 130 Mid Term Exam, Fall 2007*
>
> *You are a mid-level executive at a major sports cable network. Your network wants to promote soccer as a sport worth watching, and it has commissioned a documentary on one aspect of the soccer world. Your job is to watch the "fine cut" of the documentary and provide the production company with notes. Keep in mind that this is only a "fine cut." The music cues are all temporary; the final type fonts have not been chosen; the voice over is scratch only; there hasn't been any audio mixing or color correcting. Your notes should focus on such elements as story telling, clarity (are you ever confused), pacing and audience interest.*
>
> *Here's how you'll do it. Watch the documentary with a pencil and paper and take notes as you go along. These notes can be "automatic writing." Just get your thoughts down as quickly and accurately as possible.*
>
> *When the documentary is over, find a computer and type your notes over, cleaning up the grammar and spelling and adding details as they occur to you.*
>
> *Finally, write a brief one paragraph statement on what time of day the documentary should be aired in the US Market. The network needs to use its time*

slots carefully. It doesn't want to waste prime time on a weak show. Where would you put this documentary and why do you choose that time slot?

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches

The final informal writing assignment that I want to share with is a project that I do at the beginning of the semester with my TR240/238 students (a combined class of Advances Production and Directing course). I have used the idea of peanut butter and jelly since I began teaching this course five semesters ago, and it has evolved considerably over time. In the beginning, I required a rather standard cooking show approach in which students actually made sandwiches, but I gradually allowed the students to take more and more initiative, and I've gotten some remarkably creative ideas. That's why the assignment is so brief, maybe even vague.

TR 238/240 Spring 2007
Professor Christopher Koch

Assignment 1

P & J Sandwich

1 page pitch for a show on "Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich."

Any approach you want to take. Compelling pitch, grammatically correct, complete sentences, correct spelling, typed, 1 inch margins.

Research suggestions

"Peanut Butter and Jelly" - 1,250,000 Google hits.

"Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich" – 226,000 Google hits.

"Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich" video 50,000 Google hits.

http://www.videorambler.com/2006/05/peanut-butter-and-jelly.html

Peer Review Proposal for New TR 129 Course

Peer Review is a concept that I've thought about, but have never used for a writing assignment. We use peer review as part of our production courses to review student productions. Now I plan to extend it to my TR 129 Introduction to Broadcasting course. This is what I've gathered from my reading, our discussion and my own limited experience.

1. It is very important to set peer review projects up properly, not simply as a learning gimmick but as part of a fully professional environment. Peer review is not only an excellent way to learn. It is also preparation for the real world beyond college. And the ability to give constructive criticism and to accept criticism, even when it seems harsh, is an essential survival skill in the professional world. Students need to know that peer review is a critical part of their education.
2. Students need to be guided on how to conduct peer review. The first question should deal with overall clarity. What is the purpose, the audience and goal of the writing? The peer reviewer should be able to restate this to the writer. The reviewer has to be sure that he or she understands the writer's intentions.
3. Be supportive. Tell the writer what works and what you like about the essay.
4. Make your points in terms of your own experience of the writing. For example, instead of saying "this is confusing" say "I got confused here." Instead of complaining about a lack of supporting evidence for an argument, say "without more supporting evidence, I'm just not convinced." You are telling the writer what works and doesn't work for you. It's his or her job to figure out how to fix it. Done correctly, this is a much less threatening approach to criticism
5. Do unto others … don't say anything you wouldn't want to hear yourself.
6. On the other hand, it is best to be completely honest in conveying your own experience of the piece.

With that in mind, here is a draft of the peer review assignment that I would hand out.

Peer Review – TR 129 - Semester Project

Author:________________ Paper Title _______________________________

Reviewer:___________________________

Each student's project will be reviewed by a student peer two times during the course of the semester: the first review will be at mid-term when the reviewer will look at the project's topic, audience, research goals and overall argument; the second review will look at a first draft of the project and focus on helping the student prepare a final draft.

Why are we doing peer reviews? It is not only an excellent way to learn, it's also preparation for the real world beyond college where peer review is part of most work flows. The ability to give constructive criticism and to accept criticism, even when it seems harsh, is an essential survival skill in the professional world.

The goals of this peer review are 1) to help improve your classmate's paper by pointing out strengths and weaknesses that may not be apparent to the author, and 2) to help improve editing skills.

INSTRUCTIONS

Read the paper assigned to you twice, once to get an overview of the paper, and a second time to provide constructive criticism for the author to use when revising his/her paper. Answer the questions below.

Task	Comment	Work Remaining?
Is the purpose, audience and goal clear and can the peer reviewer restate them to the writer?		
Was the material organized in a way that was logical, clear, and easy to follow? Explain.		
Did the writer cite sources adequately and appropriately? Note any incorrect formatting.		
Did the writer make some contribution of thought to the paper, or merely summarize data or publications?		
Was the writer's writing style clear? Were the paragraphs and sentences cohesive?		
Were there any grammatical or spelling problems?		