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**Producing Media Knowledge: An Exploration of the Instructional
Landscape in Austin High School Media Production Classes**

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Dedication

To Mom and Dad, for not letting me watch too much TV

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Abstract

Producing Media Knowledge: An Exploration of the Instructional Landscape in Austin High School Media Production Classes

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This thesis is an exploratory study of media production classes in Austin, Texas. Through examination of Texas state standards, lesson plans, and interviews with educators, I construct a picture of the content and trajectories of media production education in Austin public high schools. The standards, teachers, production tools, and end products structure the classes toward vocational training, industrial practices, and discourses of digitality and newness. The structures avoid more traditional media study areas, such as history, criticism, and analysis. Despite some concerns about student's vulnerability and desires to empower them, the teachers also largely avoid discourses of media literacy. This study lays a foundation for further exploration of the ways in which media production education structures students' understanding of media, as well as for reflection on the necessity of more direct media education and media literacy intervention in young people's highly productive and media-rich lives.

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Introduction

Within the four walls of a classroom, the outside world is given structure and meaning. The confusing mass of experiences children have throughout their development are named, organized, and systematized. With the scientific mode of thinking employed in education, the outside world becomes something knowable and open to analysis. The curriculum offers tools for making sense of the world by delivering the fundamental concepts with which we interact with the world around us—mathematics, language, scientific processes, etc. Ignoring for a second the utopianism of this conception of education and focusing on the relationship this necessitates between learning and everyday life, the curriculum should be under constant scrutiny to assess its usefulness in preparing students for living in the world they inherit. In this case, we must consider which tools will best equip students to live in our world today. With the extent to which media are now present in virtually every facet of everyday practice, what is the place of media education in the classroom? How important is it to learn ways of watching and producing media?

While discussion of the current technological and media landscapes are frequently fraught with clichés and gross overgeneralizations about novelty that frequently ignore history, I find youth are now faced with a set of opportunities for media interaction and manipulation that vastly overshadow those available to their parents when they were in high school. At present, we are experiencing a proliferation of content and an ever-expanding number of screens on which to experience it. With economies of scale and

increasingly efficient methods of production, sophisticated technologies for capturing, transmitting, and experiencing media content are becoming ever more commonplace. As tangible media artifacts become smaller, or reach the ephemerality of digitization, large-scale possession and transportation of content allows for increasingly broad relationships between audiences and content. At the same time, new technologies of self-programming make possible close associations with and control over media experiences that allow deep and intense media relationships. The increasing sociality of media, both traditional and new, facilitated by technology also gives youth new mediate ways with which to interact with the world. Social networking Web sites, for example, motivate users toward production skills as they curate their profile pages, taking pictures and video and sharing them with friends. It would be foolhardy at this point to speak with certitude of any technological future or to make any evaluative comparisons about the effects of changing relationships in media interaction, and it is not my intent to do so. However, this proliferation of media technologies has a necessary effect on the fabric of everyday experience, especially for today's students. As a result, the ways in which they learn about and understand these media that make up the world around them have profound effects not only on individual experience, but social practice and cultural existence.

In some instances teachers include media in the classroom, and thus bring the structural imperatives of the educational environment to bear on them. This may occur in an English classroom, through a lesson on drama or adaptation, or perhaps in a history class as a period illustration or visual aid. Movies may be used as rewards or entertainment in the classroom, or to fill an empty period for an absent or overworked

teacher. And some classes do focus on media directly, bringing the same systemization and modes of academic thinking found in other subjects to bear on media. Historically, classes that substantially taught media knowledge worked from film appreciation and analysis paradigms, teaching great works in a primarily literary mode. Within the last few decades a significant movement has called for media literacy education as part of the curriculum. In this case, media literacy refers to the ability to read and interpret media forms and the messages therein, often with an additional focus on critical engagement and awareness of social effects—usually negative. In both media appreciation and media literacy, the classes focus on the act of consumption, educating in one case proper taste, and interpretation in the other. However due to the increasing availability and falling costs of sophisticated production equipment within the last decade, high schools have begun offering industry-level media production classes that rival those available to college film students. While earlier media-oriented classes may have incorporated media production—shooting on Super 8, for example—the tools were not up to par with professional standards.

Austin, Texas, is one city where students are able to undertake formal media production education in secondary school. Several Austin area public high schools offer classes in production, offering a site for an exploratory study of how these classes structure and project ideas about media for their students, allowing some comparison to other paradigms of educational media understanding. While other media discourses and modes of understanding outside of those provided by hands-on production could be likewise useful to students, and perhaps would be more desirable to media scholars, the

classes present a functional, systematic engagement with media in the educational environment for Austin high school students, (perhaps) fulfilling the educational mission of providing students with tools for knowledgeable media interaction. The classes focus on educating the tools and methods of production, while other discourses—media literacy, film analysis—trickle in along the way.

As a result, the means of interaction with media knowledge embodied by these Austin classes present an avenue into considering how such production classes structure media knowledge and formulate particular ways of understanding media forms, uses, and social meanings. The production focus also allows an avenue into some historical comparison, to times when access to and mastery of production technologies was not an option afforded primary and secondary school students by formal education, if at all. To this end, this study will in part introduce a historical dimension to the teaching of media and media production, showing the persistent circulation of discourses about media and education that date to film's earliest operation as a mass medium, as well as the ways in which these discourses have shifted, changed, and fallen in and out of favor.

Because of the academic production context, there are particular implications for students' understanding of media, some of which will become more distinct as a result of this investigation. The Austin classes function in a loosely coordinated way—as my later findings will show—through regular meetings between the teachers, as well as a common set of standards and lesson plans—making the classes a somewhat cohesive whole. The classroom environments and teaching imperatives are built through the combined interaction of teachers and the institutional and administrative structures within which

they work, making both the instructors and the standards the primary actors in defining instructional content and goals.

These Austin media production classes allow me to reflect on the role of education within the formation of media understanding. This study is the first step into larger questions surrounding this subject, laying the necessary foundation by exploring the content and structural imperatives of some of the Austin media production classes and forming a descriptive analysis of their operation. This exploration of Austin area schools does not intend in any way to fix the meaning of media production within the Austin classes, or provide a generalizable explanation of what happens in all media production classrooms, but it does intend to offer a snapshot of how one set of teachers, interacting with Texas curriculum standards, are negotiating the meaning of media production in their classrooms at this point in time.

Research Question

This study is designed to answer one guiding research question: How are high school students in Austin, Texas, being instructed to think about media through its production? As a result, I have a secondary and more specific question, and a slightly easier one to answer, which is: What are the contexts and conditions in which this happens? The study is restricted in scope to Austin because of my immediate geographical constraints but benefits from a cohesive group of collaborative teachers and coordinated course planning. High school classes are also something of a necessity because they allow the exploration of more coordinated, systematic, and sophisticated media production education. In addition, the production focus teaches a particular kind of

association with media worth exploring. This question is fairly limited in scope, since it is limited to a small geographic area, specific population, and particular educational approach, but this specificity allows a degree of depth and exploration that a large-scale study would preclude. Because of this restrictiveness, however, it is difficult to find other scholarship with which to compare it, as well as from which to draw support. As a result, it is difficult to place this study into a specific academic conversation about media production education in Austin, because no such conversation exists. Larger national conversations, especially those about media literacy, do provide some resonance with this question on a general level, but the specificity of the Texas standards, as well as their particular mobilization in the Austin schools, complicates a totalizing conception. In later sections, I will consider some of the relevant literature to the study and practice of media education and production-based media education.

In order to answer these questions, I consider the forces structuring the education experience: the state-mandated education standards—the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)—and the teachers who facilitate the learning process. These two structural forces interact to form the educational matrix within which the students learn. The project of this study is to construct a picture of this educational matrix as it faces the students, then draw out the relationships to media this matrix presents, favors, and encourages. The teachers' histories, tactics, and goals all play a part in building this educational structure, which I will pull apart as I analyze and draw conclusions. The teachers also work within the institutional limits of their districts and the TEKS, which have their own goals and methods available for consideration. Due to the subject's small geographical and

temporal scope, as well as the lack of associated and relevant research, this can only be considered a preliminary, exploratory study. In addition, because few studies exist with which the results could be compared, the study is a descriptive analysis of an underexplored phenomenon.

Significance

Due to this lack of associated research, the study has significance as an entry into education scholarship from a media-oriented perspective. This interdisciplinary focus is also of value because of the linkages that are possible by looking across academic fields, resulting in dialogue and the opening up of new perspectives and ways of approaching problems. Part of my project here is to integrate some of the aspects of media and education research in order to understand better the interplay between the education of media production, media literacy, and the ways society interacts with media. While this study by no means defines this relationship, it does provide more context and conceptual frames from which to approach and assess it. I see this as making one primary intervention into each of these two academic fields. In education research, I want to overcome some of the resistance to media production as a valuable object of study, placing media literacies alongside other literacies emphasized by contemporary education thought, especially in the move toward standards-based education. In media studies, I want to foreground the often-invisible role education plays in formulating understandings of media for students through institutional engagement, and to advocate for more robust media education efforts informed by media theory to empower students toward

thoughtful and progressive media interaction as active members of our shared media culture.

The remainder of this study is divided into three chapters followed by a conclusion. The first chapter begins by introducing a historical dimension to the study of media production education, tracing the concerns and preoccupations of contemporary educators and theorists to earlier movements, while drawing distinctions between the current production paradigm and older more appreciation- or history-inflected approaches to media in the classroom. Next, more contemporary research on media education will show how educators are thinking about media education in our current digital media moment, including discourses of media literacy and production. Using a combination of education and reception theories, I construct a conceptual frame to study the creation of a structural environment—between the Texas education standards and the teachers—within which students learn. From this I elaborate my methodology for exploring this educational environment to conclude the chapter. In the second chapter, I execute the method, finding the ways in which the standards and the teachers construct this environment—examining their goals and how they work to establish them—through an examination of the standards documents, the teachers’ lesson plans, and the teachers’ own statements about their jobs drawn from personal interviews, with particular focus on the available tools, example texts, classroom process, and desired end products. In the final chapter, using my understanding of the structural landscape of the classroom from the interviews and standards, I synthesize some broader messages about the nature of media and desirable modes of media interaction in comparison with other paradigms of

media education discussed in the first chapter. These are not necessarily about media production specifically, but assume that the restriction of media study to only its production in the academic context constructs an environment in which media production knowledge *is* media knowledge due to the authority of the classroom space. This final chapter is followed by a conclusion, which discusses in part the limitations of this study, as well as avenues for future research.

Chapter One: History, Theory, and Method

While this study focuses on contemporary teaching methods, goals, and materials facing the high school media production student at this moment, there is an important historical dimension to the scholarship on media education as well. Like all cultural discourses, rhetorics about youth and media have genealogies and histories that resonate across time and then shape and structure contemporary ways of thinking. Consequently, I will first survey the history of early media education, which focuses on direct intervention into student tastes and viewing practices. Also important is the research following the more contemporary move to media literacy as an educational imperative. A final field of research I will consider focuses on the teaching of media production. Significantly, much of the more recent research overlaps among these educational paradigms, making the categorization of these approaches somewhat artificial.

EARLY MEDIA EDUCATION

From the 1920s into the early 1940s, a film education movement developed in the United States as a loose association of scholars, educators, social critics, and reformers that advocated for organized, systematic primary and secondary school courses in film appreciation and analysis. While the movement no longer exists, its work continues to resonate with contemporary spectators and has significant bearing on the practice of contemporary media education. In “The Revenge of the Film Education Movement: Cult Movies and Fan Interpretive Behaviors,” Janet Staiger shows how viewers in the 21st century use methods of interpretation that mirror those advocated by the movement,

showing the extent to which the movement continues to effect media knowledge and interaction. With initial work in 1990 by Lea Jacobs in the film education movement, and subsequent work by scholars including Eric Smoodin, Richard deCordova, Anne Morey, and others, the film education movement has gone from a phenomenon ignored by media scholars to a locus around which to center work on the reception of film, especially by children, in the early twentieth century, recovering a history of audience study that pre-dates the academic turn to reception in media studies in the 1970s.

Jacobs's study laid the groundwork for research into how the film education movement attempted to "regulate the conditions and effects of film viewing," principally on children, as well as on criminals and working class spectators, who were viewed as susceptible to undo influence from the movies they watched (Jacobs 2). Jacobs both presents the methods and materials used by the movement as well as identifies its primary tenets and goals. Her account starts with the Progressive tradition in education and culture at large that sought to enlighten popular tastes—in this case, in film preferences—beginning in the 1910s. Cultural worth, for Progressivism's adherents, had much to do with traditional notions of high art in other media, including literature and painting, leading to a preference among the movement leaders chiefly for European art films as the cinema par excellence. The second antecedent to the movement is the Payne Fund Studies of 1933, which used social science methods to measure the effects of moviegoing on children, including how they affected crime, delinquency, morality, and even sleep. The studies also offered ways in which these effects could be controlled, leading to the film education movement's attempts to train students how to be good spectators, and thus

good citizens. These training efforts place the movement in another philosophy of education camp: the social reconstructionism of the 1930s. In this tradition, society needs fixing, and the best way to accomplish this is by educating new generations of students to take the place of older, misguided citizens rather than re-educating society as a whole. As a result, the film education efforts aim not only to rescue children from media control, but also to revive society as a whole, allowing viewers to tame the culture industry by being more discerning.

Richard deCordova has observed that these concerns with audience effects in sociology precede the move in media studies to ethnographic rather than theoretical audience reception study in the 1970s and '80s. Because of the Payne Fund Studies' sometimes-questionable results—and often-transparent motivations—contemporary researchers are hesitant to see any value in the Payne Fund Studies and others like them. However, the reformer's fears about how the children viewed the films rely precisely on an understanding of meaning production at the site of consumption, the same understanding that anchors contemporary reception study. DeCordova credits the social concern for children as the initial impetus behind studies like those funded by the Payne Fund but claims subsequent studies never escaped a construction of the child audience as completely defenseless before the photographic image, susceptible to every suggestion. These same concerns about media influence have not left the realm of popular discourse, continuing to circulate around children and youth to this day. It is in this context that saving children by bringing cinema into the classroom makes sense, providing a way in which concerned adults can reassert control over the relationship between children and

the movies—a relationship that would otherwise take place in a large dark room away from the watchful eyes of parents and other adults.

Chief texts in the movement include Sarah McLean Mullen’s *How to Judge Motion Pictures* (1934), as well as William Lewin’s *Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools* (1934)—published by The National Council of Teachers of English—and Edgar Dale’s *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures* (1933). In addition, the company Teaching Film Custodians (TFC), which was backed by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, distributed Hollywood-made short films—some of them cut from longer features—designed to facilitate classroom instruction and discussion. For example, shorts of literary or historical importance could be screened for their educational value. Additionally, lessons on character and behavior could be made by using scenes with young characters engaging in more or less desirable activities. In 1935, TFC released the “Secrets of Success Series,” followed by the “Human Relations Series” in 1936, both aimed toward character education, while using films the students would likely have seen anyway (Morey 178). According to Jacobs, some of the shorts would use footage from Hollywood features but remove the resolution to the conflict, using the resulting open-ended film to spur discussion and creation of possible endings by the students. While coming from a variety of sources, including educators, academics, and the film industry itself, the texts worked to construct a particular type of spectator. Chiefly, the movement imparted preference for a strong directorial presence, for films that engaged with social problems, and for a vague “authenticity” or “plausibility” designed to counter Hollywood’s more fantastic flourishes. The fear, drawn from the

Payne Fund Studies, was that these overly fantastic elements led to an “emotional possession” whereby the young viewers were unable to question critically what was happening onscreen, leading to fears of undue influence from the movies.

Eric Smoodin takes up the importance of directorial presence in his account of film education as it pertains to Frank Capra. Capra, along with Cecil B. DeMille, was frequently cited as a director of quality films. Smoodin also points out that Capra was one of the few directors promoted as a star in the same way leading actors were, although due in part to his employer’s lack of marketable acting talent. The rise of the auteur theory both in France and the United States had yet to occur, but the film education reformers placed importance on the director as a way to encourage a deeper understanding of the filmmaking process. As a result, the taste hierarchies advanced by the movement privilege directorial knowledge and awareness as a distinguishing factor between educated viewers from casual fans. Anne Morey describes it as replacing fan knowledge with production-based knowledge, locating the director as the center of production. Lewin’s research in *Photoplay Appreciation* found that less than twenty percent of students took the director into consideration when choosing to see a movie. However, after going through the instruction, almost half of the students paid attention to them. The increase in interest clearly excites Lewin, who sees learning about the director as an “excellent way to begin the consideration of photoplay appreciation” (Lewin 14-15).

Smoodin also points out how gender played into appreciation of directorial presence, and film as a whole. Lewin placed director appreciation as primarily the province of boys who, as the logic goes, naturally have more of an affinity for the

technical and managerial work of the director. This meant the girls were expected to “masculinize” their appreciation of film away from their perceived preoccupations with glamour and stars and toward directors. Staiger reproduces a page from Dale’s *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures* in her account of the movement’s history, showing twelve “Outstanding Motion-Picture Directors,” including not only recognized auteurs like Chaplin, Eisenstein, and Lubitsch, but also less-acclaimed directors including Frank Borzage, Herbert Brenon, and Lewis Milestone.

Capra’s position as a director of quality is especially illuminating, since his reputation was for producing films that engaged with social issues—although perhaps with more levity than some would have liked—and that were engaging for audiences as well. Capra was heavily celebrated in popular culture, winning several best picture and best director Academy Awards. He also produced a series of message-laden films, especially focused on economic disparity and abuse of power—like *Meet John Doe*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*—and a desire to speak directly to his audience devoid of frills and flourishes. By being both socially conscious and popular, Capra embodied the goals of the film education movement, showing that the kinds of films the movement preferred for their positive impact on society could also have broad appeal.

As Morey argues, the emphasis on the director leads to a thoroughly industrial orientation with the movies rather than a spectacular one focused on stars. Morey contextualizes this industrial orientation in the larger progressive context of constructing better consumers who place more demands on producers. By emphasizing students, the

reformers had the best chances of controlling the future film audience's preferences, thereby dictating production indirectly. Jacobs's account of the TFC curricula culled from Hollywood films reinforces this industrial relationship since the movement was relying on Hollywood, in part, in order to remake Hollywood. Morey also identifies filmmaking and screenwriting correspondence courses of the 1910s and '20s, like that of the Palmer Photoplay Corporation which—although not explicitly directed at children—fostered education of the production process in the context of self-growth and potential economic gain, but also declining in success by the 1930s. This self-mastery-through-education narrative also encapsulates the progressive project, especially in the emphasis on technical knowledge. By inviting film consumers to envision themselves as film technicians, the production process could be demystified, allowing the public to assume a mastery of film as a medium as well, and remain at a distance from its enticing spectacle. There is little possibility offered for the students to actually become film technicians, only to acquire a more complete understanding of its inner workings. The decline of these more technical education courses corresponds with an increased level of control over the production process exerted by the studios as they eschewed freelance screenplay submissions for adaptations of studio-owned material in the 1930s, reflecting the extent to which the only way to learn to make movies was to go to work in Hollywood.

The movement's preference for social engagement over entertainment is not a simple repudiation of all pleasure but rather an interest in "well-defined kinds of spectacle in the service of historical pictures and literary adaptations" (Morey 167). Using established standards of social and artistic worth in the arts, and especially with

regard to literature, the cinema could be saved from its vacuousness through social reconstructionist-motivated film going, encouraging students to attend and demand more artistic pictures and thereby increasing their production and popularity. In the 1930s, Dale and the National Council of Teachers of English intended to place film among the high arts as part of their project of cultural uplift. This use of film as a directly educational medium belongs in the larger context of raising popular taste and constructing a more literate, knowledgeable society (Jacobs 37). Of course, films available to students at the theater were not exclusively literary or historical in nature, so the movement could only go so far if it promoted only the desirable films exclusively. As a result, the students were asked to judge within the movies they watched whether or not the plot or characters had any redeeming qualities.

Mullen's guide to judging movies asks student to consider "the most important question of all: Does the play have any social value? Does it leave some part of its meaning in the minds of those who saw it and will it govern their thoughts and actions after they have left the theater in which it was shown?" (Mullen 47). She goes on to provide criteria to identify a presence or lack of social value. Bad pictures create "ill-will toward individuals, professions, or races" and destroy "faith in human relationships," including marriage (Mullen 47). Bad pictures also glamorize the lives of "gangsters, criminals, and debauchees" and through "clever acting and a thrilling story" make viewers feel that "peace should be overturned" (Mullen 47). Conversely, a picture is good if it "establishes decent attitudes, creates happiness, arouses and spirit of general goodwill, encourages the onlooker to worthy efforts, and gives due praise to high ideals"

(Mullen 47). Mullen then points to the power of the motion picture, its broad appeal, and its control over audience emotions as motivation for the students to demand “good pictures” (47). The worries about glamorizing crime follow neatly from the Payne Fund Studies’ findings that movies promoted delinquency and crime among youth, and run parallel to more film industry-focused censorship efforts that created the National Board of Review and eventually the Hays Code. Smoodin extends this desire for a social consciousness in Hollywood films to include an insistence on “anti-war, anti-imperialist films that dealt realistically with issues of class and race” (79-80). This preference for films that engage with social issues is particular to the film education movement, and is less prominent in subsequent film education efforts.

Although the movement only worked as a loose association of scholars, theorists, technicians, and reformers, the consistency of the ideas—production knowledge and proper aesthetic training lead to more critical viewers who constrain cinema’s negative effects and structure a more socially relevant and progressive film industry—make it a cluster of media discourse worth preserving and using in comparison with other moments in media history, education history, and media education history. The censorship efforts of the 1930s and ‘40s, along with the postwar decline in theater going and the competition from other mass media, largely took the wind out of the movement’s sails, although as Staiger’s research in “Revenge of the Film Education Movement” shows, its discourses remain in circulation. However, the extensive and concerted effort to instruct proper meaning production at the point of reception remains unique, and there has been little like it since. Recent movements toward production education, as well as media

literacy, revive some of the movement's goals and rhetoric—such as the focus on social effects—but lack the scope or tone of crisis endemic to the education efforts, as well as the associated goal of institutional Hollywood reform.

CONTEMPORARY MEDIA EDUCATION FROM 1970

While film and media education has by no means disappeared, its continued existence has received relatively little scholarly attention. Despite a lack of academic engagement from media and cultural studies, it remains a point of interest for those engaged in pedagogy and instruction as well as the research thereof. A survey of the decades since the film education movement's heyday in the 1920s and '30s reveals an ongoing undercurrent of film education scholarship, primarily with a focus on the practical applications of media education to the core curriculum and vocational training. There is relatively little literature across the 1950s and '60s, but the increasing availability of media production and viewing technology in the late 1970s and '80s facilitated a renewed interest in media in education. The resurgent literature consistently works to justify the importance of media education in relation to traditional subjects, while also stressing the importance of cinematic literacy in a more mediated world, both to serve as an inoculation against manipulation and to integrate students' everyday lives more completely into the education process by meeting their needs and interests. Reading these blends of educational scholarship and teaching guides also shows the extent to which academic film study and its competing theoretical turns—auteurism, formalism, screen theory—extend into more practical considerations of cinematic meaning.

In the introduction to his 1977 dissertation, *The New Literacy: A Manual for High*

School Film Teachers, Harold Mark Foster begins with a call to action, terming young people as largely “visually illiterate,” borrowing from the alarmist work of Robert Gessner as well as Neil Postman that focus on the number of hours young people spend watching television as always already deleterious. This illiteracy makes them susceptible to media manipulation, prone to confusing fantasy with reality, and unable to enjoy films in any meaningfully sophisticated way (1-2). The rest of Foster’s dissertation functions as a training manual, equipping contemporary teachers with possible activities, as well as a formalized lexicon for teaching and discussing film by drawing on contemporaneous efforts in academic film studies to construct a semiolinguistic model of film operation. Foster echoes the concerns of the older Payne Fund worries about media influence, combining them with newer explanatory theories that place cinematic power within the apparatus of film experience, constructing an environment in which students require defense against being overwhelmed by the media image. Foster’s methods envision film instruction in a thoroughly traditional way, with a series of key films taught to show the best the medium has to offer, drawing a quality distinction from the rest of the media landscape. Foster uses revolutionary rhetoric to place the media environment in the discursive realm of upheaval, with verbal and literary education in decline, hoping that media education can allow educators to reach a *détente* between more traditional education and the imagined future of media domination of society. The combination of older and more recent scholarship in Foster’s guide also shows in his incorporation of an underlying aesthetic bias that favors European art cinema and thoroughly canonized American auteur films from the likes of Hitchcock, Welles, Godard, and Kubrick.

Hannah Elsas Miller's *Films in the Classroom: A Practical Guide* appeared at about the same moment but takes a more practical and less overtly theoretical approach. Miller spends much less time debating why media education is important and much more time making it clear what materials and equipment a teacher would need in 1979 in order to teach film effectively. Miller looks back briefly at the history of film education, finding that initial enthusiasm in the 1930s had translated to very little growth over the next several decades, with many of the roadblocks raised in the past still hindering the spread of film education in the 1970s. Directed at teachers and librarians, *Films in the Classroom* not only explains acquisition and proper use of hardware—as well as sources, titles and descriptions of individual films—but also how to overcome obstacles to teaching film, such as institutional objection and scarce equipment and financial resources. Reading both Miller's and Foster's work also reveals the difficulties to media education posed by being restricted to viewing primarily through film projection—with its cost, space requirements, and the availability of films—although video was beginning to gain traction as a film format at the time. In both cases, film education is primarily a product of controlled classroom viewing, based on the idea that simply substantially including media in the classroom is a step in the right direction.

In the early 1980s, Joan Driscoll Lynch's dissertation explored similar territory but took a much more social science-inflected approach to examine film education—how it is used, in what courses, and by what sorts of instructors—through a study of schools in two Pennsylvania counties. In *Film Education in Secondary Schools: a study of film use and teaching in selected English and film courses* (1983), Lynch begins from a similar

place as Miller and Foster, citing the comparative amount of time students spend interacting with media and engaging in education. This establishes an opposition where the media and the school are competing for time to impart information, values, and attitudes, setting up a zero sum game in which the school is losing ground to the cinema. Like Foster, the goal of film education for Lynch is both inoculation and intellectualization, raising defenses against media control, while also inducting the students into the aesthetic hierarchies that structure the world of intellectual film analysis. Lynch places this beside other arts education goals, taking a decidedly auteurist approach to film, advocating film as “the ideal media through which [a student] might develop awareness of the role of the artist as a commenter on the current concerns of society” (4), theorizing film as primarily message transmission from an authorial filmmaker to a viewer. Lynch does stray from the formalized notions of film as language that circulated in academic film study at the time, taking a more audience-focused approach to film form, allowing that dissolves, for example, need not always denote a lapse of time but can be open to interpretation, although such a meaning can be conventionalized through social process. This approach draws largely on Christian Metz’s notion of film language as a system of interlocking codes.

Through a combination of survey research and classroom observation, Lynch found that film was primarily used as supplemental and peripheral to more traditional modes and subjects in the Pennsylvania schools. This happened most often when literature teachers supplemented the study of a book with a screening of its film adaptation, if time allowed them to do so, as a way to generate comparisons between the

two media and to engage less interested students in the study of literature. In both cases, despite Lynch's initial advocacy, in practice the teachers structured film as less important and unworthy of strenuous academics consideration. As a result, film discussion and analysis was found to occur in primarily a literary mode with even the majority of teachers who taught exclusively film-focused courses employing a film-as-literature interpretive paradigm. The approach also emphasizes reading texts at face value and constructs a relationship to media that largely ignores the historicity of artifacts and the material contexts of their production.

Within the last decade, publishers have continued to produce media-related instructional materials and textbooks for primary and secondary school students, including the sorts of viewing guides and sample lessons that made up the output of the film education movement. However, these guides are typified by an understanding that students are already knowledgeable viewers who can bring their skills as media spectators to other subjects, mobilizing these skills as useful tools to explore traditional subjects in new ways. This is a sharp break from fears of students being overwhelmed and living lives of facile media reproduction, instead seeing their media knowledge as at worst merely benign. At the same time, this paradigm largely abandons any designs on training students to interact with media more critically, either assuming they are already literate enough or else the project is futile. The same National Council of Teachers of English that published the film education movement works of Dale and Lewin continues to publish film teaching guides—including William V. Costanzo's *Great Films and How to Teach Them* in 2004 and John Golden's *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in*

the English Classroom in 2001—using contemporary films to teach critical viewing in much the same way. At the same time, social studies pedagogy has made a move toward concerted use of media as an educational tool. In the collection *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film* (2006), various authors put forward frameworks and methods to teach history effectively with film, advocating the harnessing of students’ already close relationship with media toward the higher goal of education. In this way, the authors are clearly within the progressive education tradition, incorporating and addressing students’ lived experience as useful raw materials that can be successfully incorporated into core instruction.

Consistent in these more recent books is the emphasis on media as educational tools, mobilizing students’ already developed interpretive virtuosity in the service of primarily literary and history education. In their introduction to *Celluloid Blackboard*, Alan S. Marcus and Thomas H. Levine advocate the teaching of film to develop what they call “historical film literacy”—a critical knowledge of both film conventions and historical consensus that allows the students to engage with subsequent historical depictions in media with a better developed interpretive lens. This approach accepts the extent to which media depictions of history structure popular understanding of the past as well as the role of entertainment in generating interest in a subject typically seen as dry and unexciting. At the same time, the authors accept that media use cannot be a magic bullet to rescue history from a lack of student interest as well as cautioning about the extent to which historical films hew to accepted notions of historical accuracy. The goal is to both encourage critical engagement with history through media depictions while

creating a wariness about the constructedness of those images. The authors go on to cite a 2005 study of Connecticut and Wisconsin secondary history teachers about their use of films, finding that more than 90% used some portion of a feature film—the cited examples are almost exclusively large budget Hollywood film from the last thirty years: *Forrest Gump*, *Glory*, *Schindler's List* —an average of once a week. This research is coupled with accounts of the media habits of students, finding that much of their exposure to historical periods comes through audiovisual media rather than more traditionally studied print sources. For Marcus and Levine, film education is a way out of this double bind, accepting that students are drawn away from print to audiovisual media while acknowledging that these media depictions of history are often deemed inaccurate or overly entertaining. By educating both film literacy and encouraging historical interest through media use, history students can be saved from their own disinterest while becoming more critical media consumers.

This same utilitarian approach to film education, as a means to buttress the learning of other subjects, extends further outward to less traditionally valued subjects like health and physical education. While the health class short film or filmstrip has become an object of derision and camp rereading, contemporary Hollywood films are seen as immune from this ironic and kitschy viewing position. In *Teaching with Movies: Recreation, Sports, Tourism, and Physical Education* (2008), authors Teresa O'Bannon and Marni Goldenberg make the media-as-tool construction explicit, taking an even more pragmatic approach than Marcus and Levin by viewing films as tools for illustrating concepts being taught. This approach to visual representation of abstract concepts finds

the use of films to be largely unproblematic, reducing the emphasis on media literacy and emphasizing the extent to which today's young people make sense of their world through media. For O'Bannon and Goldenberg, media education begins with the assumption that students are already accomplished spectators and do not require interpretive education. Instead, media education is the mobilization of the students' already existing media knowledge to connect with an abstract concept deemed necessary by the instructor or institution.

Of particular importance to media education as a mode of spectator cultivation is the role of the classroom and the pedagogical mode as structural forces acting on students' viewing behavior and relationship to media. Underpinning the earlier film education movement—and echoed in more recent literature—are the assumptions that bringing media into the classroom changes the stakes for reception. The environment imposes the rigors of academic thinking onto media experience, redefining quality and instructing in new and different tools for interpretation. Just as in literature, where a book can mean very different things inside and outside of the classroom—which leads to a division between educational and leisure reading, along with a host of attendant taste and quality associations—so too can the classroom effect such distinctions and induce different viewing behaviors. Compared to other venues for media interaction, such as the theater or the home, the classroom is a different sort of social space with different behavior expectations and different discourses. In particular, the presence of peer students alters the process of media interaction and interpretation, giving students a shared network of media knowledge from which to draw and expect to draw.

In Letizia Caronia's study of television viewing in an Italian elementary school, she displays the role of the classroom context on the students' behavior. Because of the school's role as a site of cultural socialization, Caronia argues it is also an ideal site for the acculturation of students to media. Her data show that the environment had a significant effect of the intensity and length of attention, as evidenced by the increased concentration on the screen when a teacher is present. In addition, even when the teacher was absent, the adult's role as an activity-setter in the social world of the school meant that the students retained an orientation to viewing as an important activity. The social environment of the school and the vocal nature of its process privileges conversation, especially in the form of questions and answers, making educational viewing a more dialogic and interrogative process, allowing the instructor to direct these conversations as a way to consider the practice of television itself and how to properly interact with media in the classroom. Because the school remains the source of proper knowledge, as opposed to vernacular or mundane knowledge, the viewing practices of the educational institution have the resulting ability to structure viewing in all other contexts.

Over the last several decades, media education has taken on the goal of instructing media literacy in place of—or in combination with—media knowledge or aesthetics. While media literacy does place a greater focus on identity issues and representation, the ideal spectator envisioned by the film education movement—possessing a distanced relationship to the film image, equipped with comprehensive knowledge of media operation—is using the same sort of critical approach to viewing as that advocated by media literacy education, albeit with a different name. In his discussion of teaching media

literacy through *The Simpsons* and its use of parody, Jonathan Gray cycles through a few definitions before settling on W.J. Potter's, asserting that media literacy's objective is to "provide the raw materials and tools required to develop an awareness of how media are constructed, by whom, and with which meanings privileged or excluded, how consumers engage with them, and to what individual or societal effects" (225). Gray gives his own definition of media literacy as "one's understanding of the medium, what one knows or expects of its structure, genres, and tropes, and how one has been trained to make sense of its messages, style, and rhetoric" (223).

Gray further elaborates by describing two primary approaches taken by media literacy educators and theorists. On the one hand, Gray identifies those who hew to an inoculatory approach giving students the tools to interact properly with media texts and avoid being manipulated, educating students to be explicitly resistant viewers, while also assuming they would be otherwise helpless and vulnerable. Foster belongs squarely in this camp, as well as Gessner and Postman, due to their focus on audiovisual media as primarily harmful and something youth must endure. On the other hand, Gray opts for a more active conception of the media literacy education process that encourages students to interrogate media texts constantly and compare them to lived experience in order to give them context, while not imposing any particular interpretation or critical judgment as more proper or correct. This first approach is more akin to the history of media education, especially in its insistence of retaining hierarchies of taste and proper interpretation, while the second is relatively more recent and less widespread, derived primarily from the cultural studies tradition.

Daniel Klipp's 2008 master's thesis explores the extent to which media literacy functions as a component of educational standards in the United States. The more recent standards-based education movement comes under scrutiny here, and Klipp places the contemporary media literacy environment within this system of standards and prescriptive education. Starting from a consideration of classroom power dynamics and the role of the school as an institution of hegemony, Klipp identifies the tension between the rigid standards of contemporary education and the shifting nature of young people's lives and their educational needs. Klipp then examines the standards set by different education bodies, including the national curriculum of Canada, the British Film Institute, and smaller bodies like the Center for Media Literacy in the United States.

In his examination of the language arts curriculum standards in the United States, Klipp analyzed the standards of all fifty states and the District of Columbia, finding that although there were significant variations in the degree of application and theoretical bases for the curricula, almost all have integrated media technology into their language arts standards to some extent. Thirty-one of the standards frameworks do "explicitly define media and visual texts as essential to the study of language arts" (Klipp 54); however, the definitions and scope of the media components differed substantially across the states. On the whole, the frameworks relied on cultural studies and semiotics-based approaches while primarily neglecting considerations of political economy and audience pleasure. The findings show an overall move toward explicit media literacy standards as part of media education in a larger language arts framework but not to any great extent or with much uniformity. It is important to point out that Klipp's use of language arts

standards does preclude other sources of media knowledge, including specific media categories in some cases, as well as production and vocation oriented classes, while privileging a film-as-literature interpretive paradigm.

Henry Jenkins's work on fan behavior and textual manipulation, especially in *Convergence Culture*, adds another important dimension to this understanding of media literacy by focusing on media production. For Jenkins, media literacy is more than just understanding and interpreting, but also self-expression (170). Jenkins also introduces a political dimension, just as controlling literacy has been a traditional way to control populations and maintain control by limiting the ability of people to participate in cultural practice. Focusing on *Harry Potter*, Jenkins finds that young people take on and manipulate aspects of the metatext—encompassing the books, movies, toys, games, etc.—as they acculturate into what Jenkins calls “convergence culture”—the amassing and interlinking of media and media practice facilitated by new technologies, conglomerated production, and savvy, purposive consumers. Examining the effects of media production by students, according to Jenkins, cannot be done by itself but should occur within this larger understanding of converging media interaction. As a result, production of media by students is also a process of acquiring literacy, as well as technological proficiency, cultural knowledge, and construction of a more well rounded interpretive peer group through sharing individual preferences, creations, and collaborations. Media convergence also means that these cultural knowledges are not as distinct from everyday life, that the acquisition of media knowledge facilitates the acquisition of other sorts of knowledge. Jenkins argues that the processes by which

viewers, and especially students, learn about media outside the classroom provide models for learning in other areas, constructing “affinity spaces” within which students are comfortable learning. As a result, the project of media-based education is to reconstruct these same spaces within the school environment, allowing students to be comfortable as they explore other subjects. This links back to two previous ideas: the progressive tradition in education—meeting students where they are and incorporating their interests into the classroom—and the cultural studies movement in media literacy—recognizing students’ own media pleasures and encouraging the incorporation of lived experience into media interactions.

Jenkins’s focus on individual, conscious manipulation of texts and production technologies provides a link to further studies of media education in a primarily production context. Advocates of production-centered media literacy efforts assert that just as print literacy is both the ability to write as well as read, production must accompany interpretive education for students to learn effective tools for interacting with media. This production focus is especially prevalent in an age when cameras are small and cheap, editing can be done on a computer, and products can be completely digital—facilitating easy exchange through social media. In both the historic mobilization of production education identified by Morey through correspondence courses like that of the Palmer Photoplay Corporation, as well as the advocacy of production knowledge by Mullen, Dale, and Lewin in their film appreciation contexts, it is important to consider to what ends production is taught. It is likewise important to note that while students may have gained production knowledge, there was no such scholastic path in the early

twentieth century toward work in the film industry, which relied on apprenticeship to train its workforce. As a result, in the majority of the film education movement contexts, production education does not necessarily have any link to eventual vocations, but allows a more informed understanding of film experience, leading to a sort of media knowledge “inside baseball.” In this case, the production education is put in service of developing more nuanced film interpretation and appreciation in order to prevent negative influence and promote cultural uplift. In Jenkins’s advocacy of production and textual manipulation, he sees the creative work as a way to impart media literacy and the means to function in a media-rich society. This emphasizes the extent to which theorists rarely see production education as an end in itself, but put it to work to achieve some seemingly higher purpose.

In *Media Education: Literacy, Learning, and Contemporary Culture* (2003) David Buckingham seeks to construct a rationale for media education. As part of this project, he generates a list of strategies for using and teaching about media in the classroom. He includes production in this list as a final addendum, stressing that from his point of view “production is not an end in itself,” and education misses the mark when it focuses on “training [students] in technical skills” (Buckingham 84). For Buckingham, any educational engagement with media should be aimed “to produce *critical* participation in media, not participation for its own sake” (84, emphasis in original). The role of production here is reduced, and Buckingham does not encourage production as a method by itself, but contained within a larger system that employs a variety of methods. Buckingham is dealing specifically with the application of media education to the

national curriculum in the UK, but his prescriptions about the usefulness and necessity of media education are for the most part universal, advocating for media education “across the curriculum” into all possible subjects. However, this approach atomizes the engagement with media into a range of instructional environments with varying goals that lead to differing uses, foreclosing on the possibility of cohesive, useful media understanding.

Renée Hobbs deals with this issue within her explication of “The Seven Great Debates in the Media Literacy Movement” (1998). Intended to foster debate among the various theorists, scholars, and educators committed to the idea of media literacy, the essay in part foregrounds the extent to which the movement lacks a cohesive focus and direction. In the debate about production specifically, Hobbs identifies the conflict over the extent to which production should be an essential feature of media literacy education, finding that teachers tend to emphasize either creative expression from empowered students, or vocational training through collaboration and the accumulation of industrial knowledge for less gifted students (20). The latter focus comes up for some critique, leading to fears that industrial knowledge is not critical or analytical knowledge. This does sometimes have a tinge of intellectual bias in practice, where “low-ability students are allowed to ‘play’ with video-based and computer technologies, whereas high-ability students get more traditional print-based education” (Hobbs 20).

More recently, Hobbs, along with Amy Jensen, revisits this debate in a journal article titled “The Past, Present, and Future of Media Literacy Education” in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, published online in 2009. In a similarly

constructed essay, Hobbs and Jensen dwell on other debates—such as the conflict between “protectionist” and “empowerment” wings of the media literacy movement identified earlier by Gray—but there is no longer any such debate about the role of production in media literacy education (1). According to the authors, while production was once seen by theorists in the 1970s and ‘80s as an empty method that turned “media literacy education into a set of technical operations—just learning how to use tools” (3)—contemporary conceptions focus on digital media production and the work students do online as part of their complicated, media-rich lives. In this more modern conception, this production education allows students to take part in cultural exchange. In other words, mediated expression allows students “to join the community that was previously only experienced from outside the window,” or to join in ongoing cultural conversations as “a citizen of the world” (Hobbs and Jensen 9). This puts production education in the service of citizenship, which is mediated through a sense of democratized media interaction devoid of traditional divides between production and consumption.

Throughout these approaches to media production as a pedagogic tool, scholars take steps to minimize the production of media for its own sake, looking for better goals toward which to direct students. As a result, the production education itself receives only a portion of scholarly attention, since students are always making things in order to be better viewers, or citizens, or learners. It is difficult to assess to what extent this subordination of production education to other aims must always be the case, but it does prompt for an investigation of production education to discover to what ends students are learning to produce in each iterative mobilization. That is, while students may have

learned production knowledge in the 1930s in order to avoid being overwhelmed by the image, or likewise in the 1990s to be more media literate, to what ends are they learning in the Austin media production classes? This is another way of phrasing my research question, which leads to an investigation of the resulting understandings of media that follow from the particular iteration of media production taught in Austin public high schools.

THEORY

The subject of this study requires a necessary combination of theoretical approaches. As a media scholar, I bring a set theoretical foci and preoccupations to the study of education. At the same time, as its own academic field, education has its own theoretical literature, debates, and conceptual frames. As a result, I am bringing an education theory—social-constructivism derived from the work of Lev Vygotsky—to bear on the problem of media production education. Vygotsky’s theories focus on the sociality of education, finding that interaction between student and teacher, or student and more knowledgeable peer, is essential to forming academic understanding. Vygotsky’s focus is on literacy and language acquisition, especially the ways in which simpler communicative acts combine and build on each other toward more sophisticated expression. In an exploration of the process by which students acquire increasingly nuanced production skills, building toward a sense of knowledgeable expression through media production, this theory seems apt. Vygotsky also provides a model for seeing teachers as not just stolid sources of authority in the classrooms, but active participants in structuring the course of their students’ production knowledge acquisition. This education

theory must be reconciled with understandings of how individuals interact with media, and learn to interact with media, from media studies scholarship. In all, these theoretical frames construct media production education and interaction as highly social and socialized activities, driven by individual knowledge histories and intersectional identities.

Theory: Social Constructivism

In education scholarship, Vygotsky's writings in *Thought and Language* and *Mind in Society* constitute the chief texts of social constructivism, or the theory that learning, and especially language acquisition, is a chiefly social activity defined by relationships between students and teachers, as well as students and their peers. In Vygotsky's short academic career in the 1920s and '30s in Soviet Russia, he worked to bring a Marxist framework to bear on understanding child development, thought, and language acquisition. Relying on experimental data on animals and humans, he constructed a theoretical framework that foregrounded the historicity and sociality of learners. For Vygotsky, learning is made up of concepts, discrete units of knowledge that allow for varying levels of complexity and increasing systemization. These concepts are formed by chaining ideas together and require a readiness on the part of the student to learn them. Concepts can be academic (sometimes called scientific)—derived from socially accepted sources of learning—or spontaneous (also called mundane)—derived from everyday experience. Media production presents something of a challenge here because media production knowledge need not be academic, and indeed most media interaction likely occurs in thoroughly mundane ways. However, the inclusion of media

in the classroom as a tool, the spread of media literacy and production education discourses, and the addition of media to curricula and institutional standards render the media concepts taught in schools thoroughly academic. In order for a student to develop an academic understanding of an idea, the concept must fall in his or her zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is a theoretical construct used to explain how the process of knowledge acquisition occurs between individuals in a social way. The ZPD is the "discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance," that is, the range between what the child knows and is capable of knowing with help (Vygotsky *Thought* 187). For Vygotsky, the whole project of instruction is operating within the ZPD of students to draw them along with helpful interactions while expanding the ZPD toward ever more complex and systematized knowledge. This makes instruction a strategic process, reliant on constant assessment and readjustment of students' ZPDs in order to tailor lessons to present ideas with which students are capable of interacting. Extensions of this theory by Jerome Bruner use the metaphor of "scaffolding" for this intervention, giving a material image to the process and making the process of learning like construction (Bruner 77). This approach to learning makes the process highly social, since the interaction between student and teacher, as well as between a student and more knowledgeable peer, plays a crucial role in concept development.

These interactions rely heavily on mobilizing prior knowledge as well as a shared system of meaning. In order for a concept to lie within a student's ZPD, previous

concepts upon which it builds must be internalized. For example, in order for a child to learn types of trees, he or she must have a concept of tree-ness. Using the process of internalization—that is “the internal reconstruction of an external operation”—a mediated experience allows knowledge to be mobilized as a tool for learning (Vygotsky *Mind* 56). The mediation would be most often theorized as an instructional intervention, but this is a versatile process that can take place between peers as well. The mediation is the moment when the instructor scaffolds the student to turn a sign—or knowledge unit—into a tool which can then be applied to a new problem. The intervention shows the value of the sign to the child, giving it utility as a tool. This occurs within the student’s ZPD, with the teacher drawing a link between what the student already sees—the sign—and how that sign can be used. The process of internalization makes use of students’ existing mundane knowledge—the product of sensory interaction with the world—and begins to create chains of knowledge that form higher and higher conceptions. The Austin production courses largely proceed in this fashion, as students are introduced to tools available to them in production that they then master, turning their new knowledge into a way to learn a new tool by uncovering new problems, including the creation of more sophisticated products.

As these tools uncover new signs, the chains begin to systematize. The mundane knowledge from sensory interactions are internalized and linked together as they are turned into tools and systemized with scientific concepts to form generalities. As children progress as students, the practice of academic concept formation also crosses over into spontaneous concept formation. Vygotsky states “Systematic reasoning, being initially

acquired in the sphere of scientific concepts, later transfers its structural organization into spontaneous concepts” (Vygotsky *Thought* 172). As a result, the mundane knowledge chained into pseudoconcepts can be systematically organized into scientific understanding. Because signs only hold meaning within a system of relations which lend context and relational meaning, as signs systematize in ever more complex ways, they develop deeper meanings and associations. More complex systemization is a feature of academic concepts, while spontaneous concepts will be organized in a much more haphazard fashion. As a result, knowledge develops “not in a circle but in a spiral, passing through the same point at each new revolution while advancing to a higher level” (Vygotsky *Mind* 56). This final step is also important because it emphasizes the pervasiveness of education in structuring everyday life—in delivering systems of thought and conceptual organization that are mobilized in other non-educational areas. For example, learning the scientific method in science class gives students a way to approach problems in everyday life. Learning stories in literature class educates students in how to narrativize their own lives. This fragmentation of literacy into discrete meaning units significantly mirrors semiotic theory, especially in its reliance on meaning from within a system of related signs. However, Vygotsky focuses on the constructive use of the signs to build toward more sophisticated understandings, and the signs are not entirely subject to intersubjective negotiation, but rely on a sense of academic authority that dictates proper knowledge—in this case the school.

In applying Vygotsky to media production education, it is immediately apparent that the scientific/spontaneous distinction is significantly less distinct. While scientific

concepts in traditional subjects like mathematics or language are taught at an early age, with little competition from spontaneous notions, and build on one another as students progress, media production education has no such academic trajectory. Because of the extent to which media permeate everyday life, the sustained media interactions undertaken by members of society from childhood would result in fairly sophisticated understandings of media that are nevertheless non-academic, leading to a sort of vernacular media literacy that is organized intrasubjectively independently of an official source of knowledge. The media literacy rhetoric in the cultural studies wing values this vernacular knowledge, looking for ways to combine it with accepted media literacy knowledge rather than replace it. Because of the way structures of scientific thinking permeate everyday life as a result of education, these mundane media concepts can be reorganized in scientific ways and may incorporate scientific concepts such as interpretive skills learned in literature classes or historical knowledge in understanding films set or produced in the past. However, in high school media education, although it occurs at a later stage than other foundational subjects, these developed and sophisticated mundane concepts can be mobilized and linked with scientific media concepts and need not replace them. As a result, for example, fandom for a mainstream film can coexist with knowledge of its stereotypical depictions of its characters.

A second crucial facet of social constructivism to link with my study of media production education is the role teachers play as structural actors defining the scope and direction of education. Because their interventions as scaffolders play a crucial role in allowing students to master concepts, when and to what extent teachers contribute will set

the horizons for what students can and should learn. This relies on three factors: the teacher's own knowledge, an accurate assessment of the student's knowledge and ability, and the willingness of both student and teacher to collaborate. With this theoretical understanding of the teacher's role in the classroom, it is possible to conceptualize the instructional landscape facing students through an examination of the teachers and their methods, goals, and personal histories. While standards and other such institutional constraints clearly play a role in defining the scope of instruction, teachers likewise structure the availability and trajectory of knowledge through their own interventions and preoccupations.

Theory: Audience Reception

From Vygotsky, I am drawing a link to reception theory, insofar as reception is about how individuals relate with and understand media. My focus on reception here is not about understanding how people respond to media texts, what they remember about them, or how they interpret them, but rather how they conceptualize them: how people understand what films, television programs, etc., are and do. The Vygotskyian connection is in tracking how these media concepts come to be, under what conditions and through what interventions they arise. In examining the media production classes, I am investigating the social role played by the teachers in drawing their students toward particular understandings of media and in analyzing the understandings of media themselves.

In order to conceptualize my understanding of the media spectators being produced, I must separate my theorization into two categories: how viewers are socially

and culturally constructed, and how these viewers operate in interaction with a text. In this first instance, the social construction of spectators, I am operating from a historical materialist position, emphasizing the accumulated experiences of viewers within a complex of social relations that are determinant and pervasive. Media interactions are a significant part of this web of relations, enforcing and informing the practice of everyday life. This view is from Janet Staiger's historical materialist approach to media reception which privileges the contextual factors a viewer brings to a media text over the text itself in defining the experience. Staiger defines these contextual factors as "intertextual knowledges (including norms of how to interpret sense data from moving images and sounds), personal psychologies, and sociological dynamics" (*Perverse Spectators* 1).

Individual spectators are differently virtuosic in their mobilization of media knowledge frameworks for interpretations. As a result of a lifetime accumulation of media experiences—as well as meta-media experiences like reviews, interpretive conversations, fan activities, and media education—viewers mobilize a history of contextual knowledge in their interactions with media texts. My approach emphasizes the individuality of spectators, recognizing that each has a different, and differently organized, set of media knowledges. At the same time, I recognize that these media knowledges can have significant overlap among individuals as a result of shared experience, for example, or arising from shared identities. However, by theorizing spectators as individuals, I hope to avoid some of the essentializing research that treats identity groups as the source of interpretive ability, denying the multiple levels and identities with which people live their lives. I am not denying the impact of identity

groups on spectatorship, only that the way in which these personal identities intersect and interact occurs differently on an individual level.

These spectators are not only intersectional but historical as well. This historicity of viewers is especially important when considering the impact of childhood and education. While many theories of spectatorship emphasize the historical context that informs spectatorial behavior, viewers are too often thought of as always acting as rational adults. Or, if a child or youth audience is discussed, it is perpetually a young audience, studied for the purpose of identifying the viewing behavior of children or young people. The continuity of a spectator from childhood to adulthood is seldom investigated. While I am not able at this time to study such a phenomenon over time, it is important to remember that the students subject to the instruction I am studying will incorporate and draw on the media production knowledge as they continue to grow—and change—as spectators throughout their lives. In addition high school students are especially prone to transition as they become adults, and their media lives should be no different, making this an especially fruitful time to investigate what media knowledge frameworks students are presented in the production classes. This also draws an important link back to social constructivism, which is likewise concerned with the historicity of individuals as learners, emphasizing the extent to which media interaction itself is an education in media, and that we continue to develop and chain concepts throughout our lives.

METHOD

In order to understand how Austin high school students are learning to interact with media production in the classroom, I have used a combination of methods to attempt to construct a holistic picture of the instructional complex. The exploratory and descriptive goals of this study also guide the methods by directing them toward deeper local knowledge and away from attempts at broader conclusions and comparative analysis. In order to understand the students' instructional environment, I focus on two structural forces shaping the instruction: the institutional standards and the teachers. Each source necessitates a corresponding methodological frame. First, I analyze the Texas state standards and how the teachers engage with them in the creation of lesson plans. Second, I draw data from the teachers themselves who are facilitating the media production instruction. As a result of the multiple data sources, each must have a correspondingly appropriate method of data collection. For the standards documents and lesson plans, I used textual analysis, looking for the ways in which the standards and plans work to limit or encourage particular interpretive and creative approaches and understandings of media production, as well as some content analysis, tracking the prevalence of certain phrases, words, and discursive tropes. For the teaching analysis, I have employed semi-structured interviews with the media educators, asking about their classes, their roles as teachers, and their own personal histories and sources of knowledge.

Reading the standards allows me to construct the institutional contexts within which the classes occur. I have collected data related to the educational standards in order to assess in what way they structure, or attempt to structure, the trajectory of media

production education. These data are both in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)—the state’s master set of standards for public education—and the district’s own Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs). While these standards and guidelines are not direct reflections of the classes themselves, or what students learn from them, they do provide the context within which the teachers teach and within which the students learn. Reading these documents lends itself much more to content and discourse analysis, especially due to their chart- and list-based organization. Reading for the recurrence of particular words and phrases, the language in which particular concepts are described, and the headings and subheadings within which they are organized reveals the structure of the courses and their institutional imperatives directing media production education. After analyzing the standards on their own, comparing them with the IPGs allows me to analyze the ways in which the teachers are engaging with the standards, how they are prioritizing its guidelines, and where they are extending beyond them.

I conducted the interviews one-on-one and in person with the teachers, four in total, along with some follow-up questions through e-mail. Three took place in the teachers’ classrooms, with the fourth at a coffeehouse. The interviews lasted about one hour. The teachers all teach media production classes in the Austin metropolitan area. Three—Gil, Dave, and Vanessa—work in the Austin Independent School District (AISD), where a total of six teachers currently lead production classes, while the fourth—Emily—is employed by the neighboring Eanes Independent School District but taught previously in AISD until two years ago. I contacted Gil through a fellow graduate student and then made contact with the others through this first teacher, doing small-scale

snowball sampling. However, I was unable to interview all of the active Austin production teachers because not all of them responded to communication or were available for interviews. At the same time, because of the extent to which the teachers are networked and share materials, and because of the overlap among the data gleaned from our interactions, I concluded four was a sufficient number of interviews from which to make some exploratory and descriptive conclusions about Austin's media production education landscape.

The teachers in the sample obviously only allow these conclusions to be about *public* high school classes, rather than the programs offered in all Austin high schools. This study avoids the inclusion of private schools in the sample in part because of the coordination of the public school teachers, allowing for the construction of a fairly cohesive production education approach across the Austin area schools. In addition, the public school focus assumes private schools offer deeper—and better-funded—media and production programs for interested students, especially in schools with more specific fine arts orientations. As a result, the public schools serve as a baseline for all possible media production education offerings, further emphasizing the introductory nature of this study. Subsequent investigation would attempt to map the more specific variations and directions of the individual schools and classes, but must have a foundation from which to work and draw conclusions.

In the interview portion of my methodology, I am relying on two method texts: Robert Weiss's *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*, and *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* by Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and

Linda Shaw. As an outsider to the classes and their culture, I have limited ways to view the world of media production instruction. With more resources, it would be possible to observe classes, but such a process—while valuable—would not allow me to understand why the instruction is taking place and why in these ways in particular. In order to explore the motivations, underpinnings, and goals of media production education, I must learn from the educators. For Weiss, interviewing allows us to “learn about places we have not been and could not go and about settings in which we have not lived” (1). Even if I could spend time in these same classrooms, I would not have the benefit of the years of experience, knowledge, and self-analysis afforded the teachers I interviewed. Additionally because of concerns about children’s privacy and safety, talking with teachers is the better way to engage with the classroom environment in some situations.

The type of interviews is also important since all are not the same and the methods depend on the situation and desired result. For example, “if statistical analysis is our goal, we would do better to use a survey approach,” but “if we depart from the survey approach in the direction of tailoring our interview to each respondent, we gain in the coherence, depth, and density of the material each respondent provides” (Weiss 3). Because the study is limited to just a few respondents and not a large population, depth should be the goal. As well, the study is not designed to compile data on a broad scale or to allow longitudinal or cross-sectional comparisons dependent on stable data points, so a more quantitative approach is certainly unwarranted. Likewise, the goal of the study is not to develop generalized information about media production education as a whole but

to consider how it happens in Austin, Texas, at this particular point in time. As a result, the method and goals of the analysis are closely and symbiotically linked.

Weiss lists a series of research aims best suited to qualitative interviews. Among them are “describing process,” and “developing holistic description,” both of which are accurate descriptors of my own project, which attempts to understand how media production education happens from a variety of teachers’ perspectives (9-10). The interviews are decidedly non-strenuous, due to the subject matter and respondents. Had my project been to interview a less visible and more guarded population, I would likely have needed a more persistent and codified method of questioning, using more interview management techniques to control transitions and ensure I gained the information I was trying to draw out. However, because the population of high school teachers is easily accessible and often engaged in public debate about educational standards, the process was relatively simple. I relied on only a few question prompts and then allowed the respondents to direct our interaction, offering follow-ups and clarification questions as needed. Because the purpose is exploratory and descriptive—trying to gain an understanding of a less visible phenomenon—the emphases driven by the respondents and the questions to which they gravitated most readily demonstrate how they organize their own jobs and indicate what is most important to how they think about media production education.

When engaged in the interviews themselves, I opted to hand record the responses rather than use audiovisual means like a tape recorder or camera. In part, this is an acceptance that such recordings do not capture the totality of an interaction but only do so

in a certain way from a certain perspective. Furthermore, this awareness of the role audiovisual recordings play in creating a perception of truth and accurate depiction of reality has a larger connection to the thematic focus of this study on how students perceive the media with which they interact. According to Emerson, et al., a “transcript thus selects particular dimensions and contents of discourse for inclusion while ignoring others” (9). In my situation, the scope and tone of the interviews had less to do with issues of inflection, gesture, or other discursive elements like pauses and facial expressions. Because my focus was limited in scope to information about the classroom, I was more concerned with lists, titles, and steps, which are easily recorded by hand. Although this limits me to those quotations that I immediately recorded because they seemed useful at the time—which does not allow me to uncover new valuable quotations after the fact—because my goals remained fixed, the salience of particular ideas at the time of the interviews and at the time of my analysis was largely unchanged.

As a researcher, I must be aware of the ways in which my methods inscribe the words of the respondents, “*transforming* witnessed events, persons, and places into words on paper” (Emerson, et al. 9, italics in original). As a result, my notes are conscious efforts to record the information I find most valuable and in ways that bridge my thoughts and those of my interlocutor. For example, in recording an idea I may use the language of the interviewee or rephrase in a more succinct way or use more academic language specific to my research and related literature. Being aware of this process as it occurs allows me to foreground the act of intersubjective translation, accepting that it occurs,

while also attempting to mitigate it by always engaging in reflective, conscious note taking.

The interviews were semi-structured and only followed a loose set of questions geared to fill in a few topic fields. I asked all the teachers a variation on the question, “How did you get to be doing what you are now?” by way of introduction and also to open up discussion of their own biographies and how it informs what they do. I also asked them to describe their class, as well as how it fits into their school’s culture and Austin culture at large. I asked the teachers to describe what they wanted students to take away from the class, to tell me what the big lessons were that they wanted to impart. I asked the teachers to tell me what materials they used in their classrooms, whether texts, media examples, tutorials, etc. I asked the teachers to place themselves and what they do within different academic conceptualizations of media study, whether media literacy, production, film study, film appreciation. These goal questions offered some structure to the interactions, giving me another line of inquiry to use when the conversation on the previous one ran out. I typically opened with the question as written in my notes then followed up with questions as the teacher responded, making note of asides which could be useful later. The relaxed structure led to teachers finding their own emphases and driving the conversation in the direction of their own preoccupations, sometimes leading in unexpected directions, but also revealing where the teachers were most passionate and invested.

Chapter Two: Learning Structures

In this chapter, my goal is to outline the structure of the Austin media production classrooms, finding what forces are at work to direct the course of education. To this end, I am focused on three forces exerting control over the trajectory of the classes: the educational standards, the teachers themselves, and the classroom environment and process. By mapping the structure of the classes, I hope to set a foundation from which to engage with their content, especially as sources of knowledge about media through its production. The standards have an obvious role as the source of educational goals—especially in setting a vocational focus for the classes—but it is worthwhile to consider how they are enacted in practice, pulled from their sedentary existence and used as the skeleton on which the class is assembled. In addition, the role of the teachers as Vygotskyian scaffolders means they act as structural elements as well. Because the teachers will intervene in their students' ZPDs in particular ways, dependent on their own proclivities, preoccupations, and goals as well as their level of understanding of their students, the teachers' actions will significantly structure the content of instruction. Further, the available means of production and desired products likewise exert control over the ways in which the students interact with media through its production, forming an overall thematic focus on digital tools and products, and a conscious avoidance of traditional discourses of media knowledge.

This chapter prepares me for a discussion of the larger conceptions of the nature of media that the teachers present to their students through the class structures and their

production focus in particular, especially in light of discourses in contemporary media study, including media literacy, as well as in comparison to earlier paradigms of media education explored in Chapter One.

STANDARDS

Because the teachers, in planning and carrying out their jobs, must first engage with the educational standards prescribing their roles and objectives, I begin my analysis by considering how the standards define media production education and what goals they set for students. It should be made clear that although the standards are fairly prescriptive in tone, their mobilization can occur in a variety of ways according to the instructor's own preoccupations. In analyzing the content and organization of the standards documents themselves, I find they establish the centrality of vocational training to the production courses, both for media-focused jobs and in the job market in general. The standards also direct the students toward an increasingly industrial orientation as they progress within the curriculum sequence.

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the master curriculum document for the state, defines the mission and content of the production courses. The inclusion of a course in the document does not necessarily mean it is taught, but only that it is possible for a Texas high school to teach it. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) produces and maintains a continual review process over the TEKS, in addition to managing textbook use, assessing student and school performance, and administering state and federal funds. Because of periodic review, a new version of the section containing media production classes is in the works for the upcoming 2010-2011 school

year. The TEKS as a whole are divided among subject area sections such as social studies or language arts. The media production education courses belong within the state's "Career and Technical Education" (CTE) section, within a subsection called "Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communication." This section is more accurately called a "career cluster" by the document, showing the extent to which the media production education is defined in terms of vocational training. The division between the CTE courses and the others—called academic courses by the TEA—presents a sharp view into how contemporary education theorizes educational goals as balancing traditional subjects and preparing students to live and work as citizens. The courses taught in Austin-area schools that are the subject of this study are listed in §§130.85-130.87 in the revised CTE TEKS for 2010-2011. The TEKS lists the courses as "Audio/Video Production," "Advanced Audio/Video Production," and "Practicum in Audio/Video Production." The courses are listed as a sequence, with each subsequent course relying and building on the one before. As a result, the standards use very similar language, showing a genealogy between the courses while also deepening the knowledge and skills and directing the students toward a more industrial orientation.

The existence of the media production education under the umbrella of "Career and Technical Education" certainly shows a choice, as it could just as easily have been placed underneath humanities, fine arts, or language arts. This overarching vocational orientation permeates the language of the individual course standards, couching the media production knowledge within a framework of future employment opportunities. The beginning of the introductory Audio/Video Production course description defines

two goals: “developing technical knowledge and skills needed for success in the Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communications career cluster,” and “develop[ing] an understanding of the industry,” especially of the classical Hollywood production process (TEKS §130.85.b). Throughout the production course outlines, the language employs a rhetoric of work, stressing the use of skills to produce a product and ways to maximize efficiency and quality. The standards privilege production knowledge and avoid using other paradigms of media knowledge, emphasizing the ability to conceive of and bring forth a product across all stages of production using technical means. As a result, any other media knowledge is subordinated to this imperative to produce, the same one under which an industrial worker operates, no matter the field of production.¹

In the course sequence from the introductory production course, to the advanced class, to the practicum, the guidelines move toward an increasingly industrial orientation and focus on vocational preparation. Following from the introductory course’s goals, the advanced production course sets out to educate “advanced knowledge and skills needed for success” along with an “advanced understanding of the industry” (TEKS §130.86.b). The transition to the advanced course also adds a more detailed outline of the production process and employs a higher level of detail in describing the technical knowledge

¹ The educational system, especially under standards-based education, in part imposes this production imperative with its focus on periodic assessments and evaluation of progress, which mimic the mandates to meet performance goals and quality standards in the production of commodities. Other features of the Austin schools further emphasize this use of technical education as a structural force. For example, Travis High School, labeled as inadequate by the assessments mandated by No Child Left Behind, has undertaken reorganization into five Small Learning Communities (SLCs) that focus on vocational fields. The students are directed to select one in the eighth grade, structuring their education through career and life choices. The school has since been deemed academically acceptable.

standards. These elaborations include specific equipment use and manipulation, a focus on industry terminology, the introduction of budgeting and staffing concerns, working with contracts, and product delivery (TEKS §130.86.c.11-14). The advanced course further wants students to “understand the roles of various industry professionals” and “understand the opportunities in the industry for freelance contractors” (TEKS §130.86.c.15). The course also prescribes knowledge about modes of distribution and includes a section about the Federal Communications Commission and its standards and operation (TEKS §130.86.c.16).

The practicum course directs the students toward an “increasing understanding of the industry,” especially “in a studio environment” (TEKS §130.87.b). The course adds a section of skills related to workplace leadership in a creative environment, stressing teamwork, stress management, and the ability to “conduct and participate in meetings to accomplish work tasks” (TEKS §130.87.c.7). The practicum directs the production model learned in the previous courses into a system of “client-based production,” teaching students how to meet with clients, reach target audiences, incorporate client feedback, and deliver the product in the manner best able to achieve the optimal effect (TEKS §130.87.c.11). The knowledge and skills set out by the practicum are designed to prepare students for a career in the media industry, working in an organized mode of production that favors efficiency, targeting audiences, and collaborative decision-making in the service of capital.

Outside of the media production-specific knowledge and skills, the guidelines list a series of general workplace skills the course is intended to instruct, further amplifying

the vocational focus of the media courses. These include the development of “professional communication strategies” such as giving presentations and using “public relations skills” (TEKS §130.85.c.2). The students are also expected to use information technology applications—e-mail, desktop publishing, presentation software—for related tasks outside of production, such as group interaction, pitch meetings, and pre-production (TEKS §130.85.c.4). Further guidelines for workplace safety, leadership, ethical decision-making, and time-management would be used in virtually any professional environment (TEKS §130.85.c.6-10). These same non-specific employability skills are present throughout not only the entire media production track but also the entire Career and Technical Education (CTE) section of the TEKS under the same subheadings and in the same order. These organizational similarities also show the ways in which the media production classes fit into the core curriculum as a whole. While Texas requires set courses in certain subject areas—language arts, mathematics, science, social studies—no such CTE requirement exists, although the production courses can fulfill some non-essential math and science elective requirements after completing basic courses in these subjects, as well as a credit in technology applications. As a result, the production courses are designed for students to use toward their elective credits, allowing students to gain employability skills regardless of which CTE course is chosen.

The Texas curriculum requirements for public high school graduation divide the core curriculum into four subjects—math, science, social studies, and English language arts—with each student needing to complete four credits in each subject. These sixteen credits make up the majority of the twenty-six required for “Recommended” graduation

(Austin... 40-43). Students must also pass all four subject area tests of the Texas Assessment in Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in order to graduate. There is a minimum graduation plan that lightens the subject area requirements in all but language arts and requires only twenty-two credits, but must be approved by the student's parents (Austin... 34). The schools offer full year classes, which earn students one credit, and semester-long classes for half credits. The recommended plan also requires one and a half credits in physical education, two credits in a language other than English, one half credit in health, one credit in "Technology Applications,"² one in fine arts, and a half credit in speech. This leaves three and a half elective credits to be satisfied by any other TEKS-listed course offered by the student's school.³

As a result, the media production courses comprise only a small part of the available education landscape and are not marked as essential. In the classes I studied, teachers reported a total of between one hundred and one hundred fifty students registered across all levels of their production courses this year, on campuses with between two thousand and three thousand students. As a result, the production courses are part of the larger non-essential curriculum that must serve broad goals of producing well-rounded students, but also impart skills that prepare students for specific academic

² This includes courses in computer science, desktop publishing, digital graphics/animation, video technology, web mastering, as well as some media production courses depending on their technology focus (TEKS §126.21).

³ At Austin High School, for example, this includes three language arts electives, two speech electives, five journalism electives, fifteen theater electives, twelve social studies electives, twenty fine arts electives, sixteen music electives, eight dance electives, nine general electives, and twelve business electives, as well as courses in three vocational "pathways": six with an arts, humanities, and communication focus (three of which are media production), five with a social service focus, and four with a technical focus.

and employment futures. To make matters more complicated, in order to complete a full track of production courses, a student must devote almost all of his or her available elective credits toward this goal.

While the TEKS are heavily prescriptive of the goals of the courses, they do little to define the ways in which the classes are enacted. As a result, the individual teachers construct Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs) to lay out the details of instruction that will be used to meet the goals defined in the TEKS. Within the Austin classes I studied, a group of the area's production teachers—including the four teachers I interviewed and a few others—met and collaboratively wrote a single shared set of IPGs for the Audio/Video Production and Advanced Audio/Video Production classes, as well as a draft overview for the Practicum course, which the teachers in my sample group shared with me.⁴ These documents may not necessarily reflect how the individual teachers conduct their classes exactly, but they do reflect a commonly agreed upon set of teaching goals by the teachers. These IPGs are made up of several documents with increasing levels of complexity: a year overview, an overview of each of the six six-week instructional periods, and a breakdown of the daily tasks within each week. The IPGs are written in the form of a chart, with the year and six-week overviews divided into sections: key concepts, content and skills, resources, suggested student outcomes or products, and assessment. These are divided across the smaller subdivisions of the instructional period, whether the six weeks or individual weeks within the six weeks.

⁴ A sample set of IPGs from the Audio/Video Production course is provided in Appendix A.

The content and skills row of the chart denotes which parts of the TEKS listing for the course is fulfilled by the given instructional period. The weekly IPGs add an extra level of specificity, with the TEKS goals for each week playing a prominent role. The IPGs reflect the industrial and vocational directives of the TEKS not only in content but in their language use as well. The IPGs emphasize crew hierarchy, pitch meetings, and client relationships. As the weeks go on, the amount of direct instruction is limited and the classes become increasingly project-based, foregrounding a sense of education through experience, as well as hewing to a Vygotskyian constructivist approach that builds from simpler to more complex manipulation of tools. The IPGs also emphasize peer evaluation as a method of assessment, instructing in the collaborative nature of institutional media production. The resources sections emphasize software and technology, with individual pieces of equipment and applications being listed exhaustively. The outcomes and goals are written, with little exception, in terms of the technical skills students are expected to learn and the desired end products they are expected to create.

One aberration from this project focus is a week in the fourth six-week period of the advanced class, under the heading of “media literacy,” in which students are expected to “analyze and summarize the history and evolution of the audio/video production field.” The weekly IPG for this instructional goal lists a series of tasks related to it, such as “Discuss key elements in film history by decade” and “Discuss the evolution of filmmaking technology with examples.” This pair links the history of film as a medium with its material existence as a product of technical manipulation. In addition, the

evolutionary metaphor naturalizes the history of technology and makes the changes over time seem inevitable rather than the product of economic forces and inequalities.

The IPG also wants students to “View scenes from and discuss touchstone films from each decade” and “Discuss the impact of film and media on society and vice versa.” While this does broaden the scope of the course to include other realms of media knowledge, there does not appear to be any integration of this material into other parts of the yearly IPG for the course, and this only corresponds to one subsection of the TEKS for the advanced course: “The student applies knowledge of design systems. The student is expected to analyze and summarize the history and evolution of the audio/production field” (TEKS §130.86.c.5). This description does not refer to any specific knowledge of film history per se but to film production history, which is much more pertinent to the goals of the course. The use of the term media literacy is also quite suspect, since its mobilization has little resonance with the ways Gray, Jenkins, Hobbs, and others define it, an issue I will explore further in Chapter Three.

As a whole, the IPGs show how the different subsections of the TEKS will be carried out, filling in the different requirements over the course of the year. The way these requirements are met could certainly differ by teacher and school, and even within the collaborating group of Austin teachers who crafted this set of IPGs, but the process of writing them forces the teachers to identify the TEKS goals and organize their teaching around fulfilling them. The process of writing the IPGs, therefore, is the process of engaging with and satisfying the TEKS guidelines, although the order and manner in which this happens is left for the teachers to decide. For example, the standards do not

impose actual lessons, materials, or assessments onto the teachers, but they must negotiate their own goals and ideas within those structured by the state standards. This process of negotiation assures that the teachers must first engage with the standards, including their vocational and industrial imperatives, prior to designing their own daily interactions with students. As a result, the classes—and the media production education experience afforded the students—are the product of negotiations between the teachers and the TEKS standards.

TEACHER BIOGRAPHIES

Before going too much further into the data gained from conducting the teacher interviews, it is useful to consider salient features of the teachers' biographies, educations, and work histories that come to bear on their teaching. Because, like the standards set by the TEKS, these features of the teachers' identities serve a structuring role in the classroom experience, the teachers' own knowledge will form the boundary of instructional possibility. Most of the teachers have an undergraduate film production education that they bring to bear on their teaching, but they also have a diversity of work and life experiences, emphasizing the extent to which there is no clearly defined path to teaching media production. This is further emphasized by a common narrative of accidental teaching.

Of the four teachers interviewed, three had undergraduate film educations—all of them in production—while the fourth had a BA in theater, followed by a stint at a vocational film academy. Two of the teachers did their undergraduate work at the University of Texas at Austin in the Department of Radio-Television-Film (RTF). None

of the teachers went on to earn advanced degrees in media studies or media production; all entered the workforce instead. Nevertheless, the teachers spoke about using their undergraduate experience in structuring their courses, attempting to teach their high school students the same skills the instructors had learned in college. At the same time, the teachers recognized that their students were not likely to be receptive to some of the more traditional film studies lessons they went through as undergraduates, especially with regard to film history and viewing canonical films. Gil identified some of the lessons he learned in college production courses that he brings to bear on his classes as working with others, competing to get one's creations out into the world, preparing for real world work, and finding a niche in the production process in which to specialize. Often a small sense of jealousy among the teachers appeared at the opportunities these classes presented high schoolers, opportunities that were not available to them until later in life. Contemporary production technologies—with their broad availability and lower cost—allow high school students to have the level of engagement with media and versatility in its manipulation that was not afforded the teachers until they went to college. As a result, the teachers feel an obligation to make their classes relevant to their students and at the same level as their own film educations, making it their goal to prepare interested students to enter the workforce at the end of their high school years just as they were able to do after college.

Despite similar educational backgrounds, the work experiences of the four teachers are fairly diverse. One went into advertising, another worked in film production, another in public relations, and one worked as a barista and musician before editing news

packages for the Austin FOX affiliate. This diversity speaks to the volatility of a media production degree since the teachers did not easily find success in the film industry and the range of possible jobs for which it prepared them. This sense of broad vocational possibility, and caution about not achieving overwhelming success, is present in how the teachers go about their jobs. Gil saw himself as something of a myth-buster when it comes to media success, likening his role to telling high school student-athletes they will not all be able to play professional sports. At the same time, Vanessa felt that filmmakers are prepared to do almost anything, seeing production as a job that incorporates and facilitates skills useful in any environment, skills such as collaboration, self-expression, project management, and problem solving. As a result of their own diversity, the teachers recognize the range of jobs for which their classes could prepare students, encouraging students to try out different production roles and investigate ways to integrate their assignment with work in their other classes, using a short film assignment, for example, to produce a video for a presentation in another class.

Coupled with these diverse histories, the teachers all had a sense of accidentally becoming teachers. All had initial designs on media production work that fell through for one reason or another. All had stories about how, through happenstance or serendipity, they interviewed for jobs as teachers, never having expected to do so. All of the teachers went through emergency teaching certification—which requires work experience for Career and Technical Education classes in Texas. This type of accidental trajectory reveals the extent to which there is no established training route for people to become media production educators. As a result, the teachers saw themselves as somewhat

nontraditional and employed methods that eschewed more traditional teaching accoutrements like textbooks and lectures in favor of video tutorials and collaborative group work. The accidental nature of their teaching certifications also means that the teachers had spent relatively little time in the classroom and received little traditional teaching education and training. While Emily had been employed thirteen years and served as something of a trailblazer for production classes in Austin, the others have been on the job for only a few years. The way the teachers stumbled onto their jobs also gives their classes a sense of being hidden or mysterious to the outside world, since they only accidentally became aware teaching production was an option for them. Dave talked about frequently surprising outsiders with what his students could accomplish and what tools were available to them, reporting people responded by asking “they’re doing this in high school?”—a question he had asked when first finding out about the production classes when approached about interviewing for a teaching job.

COURSE STRUCTURE

In addition to the roles of standards and teachers in structuring the courses, the available equipment and technology, as well as the assignments and desired end products, further organize the course of media production education in particular ways. When asked about the makeup of their classes they focused most prominently on two thematic registers. First, they focused on the digitality and sophistication of the technology and software used by the students, employing words like “state of the art” and “industry standard” to describe them. The teachers also focused on the extent to which their classes went against traditional notions of film study, especially as experienced by them as

college film students, placing their classes in a kind of new frontier that focuses less on canons and more on engaging directly with students' existing media interests. The example films used by the teachers are seemingly all over the place, with each teacher reaching some sort of negotiation between their own media interests and their students' preferences, although the teachers did not employ a significant number of commercial feature films, using some—mostly in clips—in combination with shorter films and Internet videos. As a result, the example texts used in the classroom fall across a broad spectrum, including recent features like *Iron Man*, popularly canonized films like *Jaws*, and academically canonized films like *Psycho*.

In order to discuss the first thematic field of digitality, I will begin by exploring the technological landscape afforded the students by the classes. By digitality, I mean the quality of being digital, which applies to the equipment used by the students and their end products, as well as the nature of much of the students' everyday existence, mediated by digital means of communication, devices, and cultures. In this case, digitality also functions as a discourse, connoting newness, interactivity, and ease of use. The schools provide sophisticated equipment, including high definition cameras and Macintosh computers, and many have dedicated sound recording booths and green screen studio rooms. Funding for three of the schools' production programs comes from the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 the fourth school uses a combination of Perkins funds and a municipal bond issue to finance its technology. Students use and learn industry-level software like Final Cut Pro (FCP), Pro Tools, Final Draft, and After Effects. The students learn software skills, especially editing

with FCP through manipulation of stock footage, toward the end of the first six-week grading period in the introductory production course. The teachers use video tutorials to show how to carry out common tasks. For Gil's classes, he records his own tutorials, narrating his actions as they happen on the screen.⁵ Later in the class as students make complete products—movie trailers, music videos, news packages—they use the tools in practice. If the students progress in the production class sequence, advanced courses focus more on technological mastery, with the advanced courses preparing courses for FCP certification, which requires passing an exam showing skill and proficiency operating the software.

The classes also lack traditional texts, further reinforcing the sense of teaching on the cutting edge. None of the teachers use a textbook, preferring video tutorials, handouts, and live demonstrations. Gil linked this lack of a textbook to a transition in the sources of media production education teachers. Whereas teachers used to be drawn from language arts into media, he argued, bringing their preference for written texts, current production teachers are drawn from the industry and have no such bias for older media. The tutorials show how to carry out a specific task using the software, for example, or demonstrate proper manipulation of the equipment. The teachers use video sharing Web sites like YouTube or Vimeo to post the videos and refer students to them through course Web sites and digital syllabi. Dave characterized this text-less method as “the future of teaching.” Rather than having an authoritative text, he takes the opportunity to teach how

⁵ Gil's tutorials can be found online at <<http://vimeo.com/channels/gil>>.

to access information and how to gauge its legitimacy. He sees this as a unique feature of the digital environment and its breadth of available information. In another deviation from traditional texts in favor of digital ones, one teacher loans iPod Touches to the students, loaded with tutorials and review information for his advanced students who are in the process of studying for Final Cut Pro certification. This way, the students access the information in an individual, self-directed way, working toward their own mastery of the technology. The teachers give a variety of rationales for the high technology nature of the classes, including the vocational goals of the courses, the sense that students already interact in a primarily digital mode, and the ease of broad participation in media dialogues afforded by digital technology. At the same time, the teachers do caution against an overly utopian sense of the possibilities afforded their students by technology, making sure to teach students that despite the tools available, production still requires labor. They see technology as not providing short cuts, but making more sophisticated work possible.

The newness of the technology and software is deemed important as a result of the vocational orientation of the classes because students need to learn to use the tools used by professionals. The vocational imperative of the classes justifies the cost of the equipment and software, placing it within eligibility for Perkins funding as well as legitimating it in the face of administrative and parental concerns. In the advanced production classes, the students were prepared to take the Final Cut Pro certification exam, usually in a student's senior year. Emily wanted to acquaint her students with the Apple operating system, referring to this as computer literacy that is invaluable in the

workplace, especially for creative professionals. When I asked the teachers to describe the content of their classes, they often defaulted to lists of the equipment and software they wanted their students to master rather than goals for end products, emphasizing the mobilization of technology over artistic expression. Using, becoming comfortable with, and mastering this broad range of technological tools was also conceptualized as a way to allow students to try out a variety of production roles, making them better prepared for media production vocations.

From the perspective of the teachers, the engagement with digital technology seemed like a natural fit for the students. While the teachers did think of themselves as sources of better and more professionalized knowledge, they also emphasized the extent to which they see the students as already living in a technology-saturated digital world. The teachers' conception of their students as on the cutting edge is a feature not only of how the teachers see their students interacting with technology but also in the perception of their students' tastes and collective knowledge of media history. The teachers reported finding that their students seldom had significant knowledge of more than the last few years of media offerings and were often restricted to the films and television programs most widely available and easily accessed. This would include both mainstream Hollywood features that are part of their cultural experience as moviegoers and mediated through marketing campaigns, as well as celebrated works that persist in popular memory like *Star Wars* or *The Shawshank Redemption* through spin-off media or frequent airing on television. Dave talked about a lesson he used to teach about the difference between analog and digital technologies, but has since abandoned. He found his students struggled

with the distinction because they lacked a frame of reference for analog technologies.

“It’s all digital now,” he said.

The products of the classes’ production efforts also focus on the theme of digitality. The teachers characterize their end products within this digital space, using the standards of quality and modes of presentation of digital video, and especially online video, to set standards for the productions. As a result, students are directed toward making quality short-form work that could be published and distributed online, including as part of a sustained narrative, such as a webisode. At the same time, the students are directed away from making content geared primarily for flash-in-the-pan attention. Dave said he tells his students “we’re not making YouTube videos here.” Gil’s classes also have a broadcast component, so his students also produce the school’s morning announcements, which follow the form of a news broadcast with anchors and short news packages. The short length of the products necessitated by the time limits of the school day and the preference for experiencing and understanding all parts of production within the school year leads to particular forms best suited to this environment. As a result, the IPGs focus on particular generic forms for the introductory classes, prompting students to make music videos, trailers, advertisements, and news-style documentaries.

The digitality of the classes was also framed through the ease of cultural exchange and participation facilitated by the use of technology. This in part draws on the digitality of the final products, but focuses on the implications of this digitality for distribution. Emily stressed the use of social networking services within the students’ social circles, emphasizing the ease with which the students could share their work with each other. She

used this performative aspect as a way to encourage her students to generate content they would be proud to show their friends. This kind of social networking objective also has an important purpose as training for later vocational networking and equips students for the process of sharing their work online with potential employers, clients, and collaborators. This also meant that through digital distribution channels and video sharing sites students could reach a wide audience of other digitally literate people. For Emily, the digitality was also important because of the ease with which it was possible to enter student work in contests and film festivals. For example, the Web site Withoutabox.com—a division of the Internet Movie Database—allows digital submission to a large number of film festivals, many of which often have categories specifically for student or young filmmakers. Through digital channels like this, students can enter competitions and receive recognition for their work from the early stages of their development as creators—recognition that is as important to the teachers as it is to the students.

Despite much of the positive rhetoric of this digital discourse, some of the teachers did raise concerns about how their students related to the technological tools available to them. Teachers cautioned against buying into the discourses of laborsaving and easy solutions that often circulate around state of the art technology. One teacher found that many of his students equated mastering the technology with the ability to produce a quality product. He saw this linkage as a myth bought into by the students who often expect to be able to produce high quality content without significant effort. Vanessa saw that her students were often unaware of the hidden work of creative projects, finding

that the digital process of production made it difficult for her students to see it as labor. In this way, the teachers are not only employing digitality as a thematic focus, but are also offering a crucial adjustment to its meaning for their students, laying bare the many steps that students elide in their own semantic linkage of digitality with ease-of-use. To this end, while the classes focus on mastering technology, significant portions of the IPGs are devoted to pre-production and critique, emphasizing careful planning and reflection as necessary to effectively using the tools to their full effects, making the technology use purposive and reflective.

In addition to a focus on organizing their classes through technology, the teachers placed the goals and content of their classes in contradiction to their experience of more traditional film study education at a college level. This spreads the concern with newness that the classes' digitality connotes over into issues of curriculum content. As revealed in the teachers' biographies, three of the four received degrees in radio, television, and film—two of them at UT-Austin—while the fourth took a vocational course after earning a BA in theater. The teachers tended to talk about their transformation away from the traditional film study they received in college through a narrative of what-not-to-do as a media production teacher. Having initially taught their classes to reproduce their experiences of film school, the teachers found a lack of interest among their students for these more traditional methods, as well as some difficulty working within the time limitations posed by the school schedule which precluded the screening of entire feature films. Eventually they made concessions by adapting to their perceptions of students' goals and tastes. Several of the teachers mentioned they had used classically canonized

films, and in particular *Citizen Kane*, to ill effect in their classes at first, but had since abandoned them. The teachers also reported using few entire films or even lengthy examples, using primarily clips or short films as illustrations. As a result, the teachers largely abandoned doing significant historical and aesthetic education, focusing on technical mastery first, while encouraging students to develop toward more nuanced understandings of media on their own. For example, Vanessa sponsors a film club at her school that meets during lunchtime to watch film or television programs. She also includes an ongoing project called “cinematic moments” that requires students to bring in a favorite or important clip from a film that is meaningful to them to share with the class. This allows some broader discussion about quality and personal taste.

The quest for relevance to student tastes led the teachers away from teaching the classical canon and toward a combination of less consecrated films and clips used to illustrate specific technical or stylistic lessons. For example, teachers reported using *Bowfinger*, *Iron Man*, and the films of Steven Spielberg and Robert Rodriguez as fodder for teaching examples. *Citizen Kane* in particular came under heavy fire in these accounts for its length, lack of color, age, and perceived lack of relevance to students. Dave talked about using *Kane* in his first year as a teacher, but found that students responded by saying “this is in black and white,” which became an all-encompassing critique and prevented him from using any other black and white film examples in his class. Teachers talked about using examples with which the students were already familiar, using this prior knowledge as a base on which to add deeper understandings of particular elements of production or film form. The teachers also pointed out that their students were not

making extended, highly wrought feature-length films but short-form content. As a result, the use of short examples and avoidance of longer, more complicated films hews to the classes' production imperatives to streamline to process. Gil used *Iron Man* in his 2009-2010 introductory class as a catchall example for every technical and stylistic element he teaches, preferring the continuity of a single film already known to his students. Emily will often screen "making of" featurettes for her students, focusing on the production process rather than final products. The desire to be relevant to students' lives not only provoked the use of more recent mainstream and incomplete texts but also led to the use of films that spoke to students' own lived experiences. Vanessa uses the film *Three O'Clock High*—which reworks *High Noon* into the story of a student awaiting, and trying to avoid, an after-school fight—as a way of addressing student's lives as students. Dave talked about using the short film *Victoria para chino*—which re-tells a true story about immigrants who died in a refrigerated truck being transported from Mexico into Texas—to address his school's large population of Latino students and their cultural experience.

Although the teachers accepted that students were not receptive to the film school examples and methods, several of the teachers nonetheless expressed regret that the students were unwilling to watch more classic films and the desire to teach students more traditional film history and criticism. The framing of these as dreams the teachers lamented not being able to fulfill, both due to institutional constraints and a perceived lack of student interest, places their current classes in opposition to the academic study of film in which they participated as college students. Teachers focused on a sense that students had a limited sense of the possibilities available to them, but needed help to

move to more sophisticated media texts, and would only do so after finding their legs as creators and media viewers. The teachers talked about having a few students who are heavily invested in more traditional film study, but that because of the broad spectrum of students and their differing appreciation of classical films, engaging with these students' cinephilia proves difficult and to some extent counter-productive to the goals of the class and the larger vocational demands imposed by the TEKS. This also points to the extent to which the teachers, even as they work to structure their classes in particular directions are themselves constrained, not only by the standards but also by the receptiveness of their students.

These larger goals, as defined by the TEKS standards, as well as the teachers' adaptations and mobilizations thereof, define the structural landscape of instruction for the students. Because the classes also avoid authoritative textbooks, the teachers are afforded an even larger role as sources of knowledge and Vygotskyian scaffolders. By enacting the state standards through IPGs, then translating these lesson plans into actual classroom activity, the teachers direct their students toward certain understandings of media and media production that focus on digitality and newness through the influence of technology and the generic and formal requirements of desired end products. In particular, the standards, as well as the teacher mobilization thereof, privilege a vocational mindset, guiding students toward a thoroughly industrial orientation. The teachers' biographical histories, especially as university students and creative professionals, provide structure by influencing their understanding of film education and the vocational landscape available to their students. The teachers position their classes

through themes of technology and avoidance of traditional film study. The technology theme structures the class as chiefly mastering a medium through its tools of manipulation and creation. Mastering these tools will also benefit the students should they go to work in the media industry. As a result of taking the advanced production classes, students will be able to immediately go to work upon graduation having gained FCP certification, as well as created a clip reel, portfolio, and résumé. Digitality also dictates products, which are primed for digital distribution in familiar forms already associated with limited length. The theme of newness relies on the break the teachers envision between their methods and those they experienced in film school, especially in their use of noncanonical example texts.

Chapter Three: Understanding Media through Production

This broad exploration places vocational training, technological mastery, and ahistoricity as the structural hallmarks of the particular iteration of production education presented by the Austin high schools. Having identified these features, it is worthwhile to place these within larger discourses in contemporary media study, especially those focused on media literacy, as well as in comparison to earlier paradigms of media education explored in Chapter One. This chapter, relying on the structural understanding of the classes from the previous chapter, will place the media production education within these other discourses, divided among four prevailing messages about media that the Austin classes are presenting to their students as they learn through production. These are the ends toward which contemporary production education in Austin is being put, just as other production education paradigms worked specifically to instruct better consumption, citizenship, or learning. Because of the impact of the classroom environment as a source of official knowledge and role of the teachers as strategic scaffolders—both drawn from Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory of education—the resulting messages about media delivered to students have significant effects on what students learn and how they will think.

Synthesizing the content of the TEKS standards, the IPGs, and the teacher interviews, I found that four messages about media permeate the instruction: media as everyday life, media as the communication of ideas and emotions, media as collaborative, and media as something the students are capable of mastering. These four messages form

the landscape of instruction for the students, setting the horizons of media understanding. Because of the synthesizing and descriptive nature of this study, these messages may at times contradict. While these are salient ways in which the teachers instruct about media through production, they do not necessarily cohere into a fully integrated whole, making even their categorization something of an artificial and misleading process.

Media as Everyday Life

In their statements about goals and what they wanted students to take away from the classes, the teachers tended to stress the importance of media production to living in and interacting with others. For the students, this presents a picture of media as the fabric of our society and the means of worthwhile interaction. Because the teachers already live intensely media-saturated lives as creative professionals and students of media production themselves, their assertion of the importance of media to everyday life makes perfect sense. Similarly, the teachers see their students as already heavily imbricated in media cultures as well. The teachers' attempts to rectify their students' perceived need for media literacy also reinforces the sense that media are already intensely integrated into everyday life. Further, the teachers bring a sense of larger national and global interactions taking place through media within which they want their students to be able to participate. Finally, the sense that media production teaches the process of living and working in any profession gives further credence to the teachers' sense that media production knowledge is knowledge for living in our society.

From earlier discussions about how teachers envision themselves on the cutting edge of technology, I have provided a sense of how the teachers envision their students'

media lives. To some extent this is a product of the teachers' own media saturation. All of the teachers had their own media production education as undergraduates, and all worked in media-related fields before becoming accidental teachers. Many remain active in some sort of extra-curricular production activity and may not think of teaching as their ultimate profession. The teachers' desire to address students' existing media knowledge through the use of relevant examples in the classroom, as well as attempts to draw reluctant students toward more classically canonized works shows a conception of the students as already skilled media consumers, albeit misguided ones. The teachers talked about the extent to which their students used their media knowledge in their own productions, especially in discussion of what the teachers saw as clichéd or overdone tropes replicated from texts popular among youth. For example, Vanessa found her students, especially males, wanted to produce films involving guns and violence drawn from the action films they watched. She used a project that required her class to make a trailer for a non-existent film to encourage students to work through their Hollywood clichés and regurgitated formulae, finding that her students are initially wont to heavily reproduce ideas from media of which they are fans. The teachers saw the popularity of their programs as further testament to the media saturation of their students' lives.

The teachers did find some of their students' media choices troubling, however, not only because of the replication of violence and Hollywood clichés but also because of media's replication of social inequalities and overt attempts at persuasion. The teachers expressed an overall sense that while the students are frequently interacting with media, they lack the tools to do so without being overwhelmed and unduly influenced. This very

nearly recalls the “inoculatory”/“protectionist” approach to media literacy, especially in the sense of students’ vulnerability in relation to media. Dave spoke about wanting to help students avoid “the traps laid for them,” and be able to tell when “someone is selling something” to them. These metaphors speak directly to the media literacy project of helping students build defenses to stop harmful messages. On the whole, however, the teacher’s concerns are not necessarily about sinister manipulation, but about the dissolution of the students’ unique identities and the eradication of their possible contributions to creative dialogue and social process. This valuing of student agency and individuality has more of a resonance with the “empowerment” approach to media literacy, but with a particular focus on the students as producers. Similarly, the avoidance of classically canonized films and explicit taste hierarchies in the classes in favor of more popular texts from a variety of sources allows for a democratization of proper texts and encourages students to form their own media understandings through personal canons. The overlap between the inoculatory and empowerment approaches within the classes reveals the extent to which the debates in media literacy remain unsettled, somewhat in contradiction to the sense in Hobbs and Jensen that they had been reconciled.

At the same time, the teachers avoided explicitly laying hold of the legacy of media literacy. Even though they expressed some fairly classical media literacy concepts, the teachers were hesitant to own the term itself, shying away from calling anything they did “media literacy” at all. For example, Gil was quick to dismiss it as something reserved for English teachers trying to edge into media, and that his background in advertising production made him ill-suited to teach it, despite advertising being one of the

primary foci of media literacy education. Just a few minutes before, Gil had mentioned the pleasure of teaching students to watch more carefully so they could notice the construction of media texts, and how he felt like he was opening his students' eyes to the hidden world of media production. This rhetoric of "eye-opening" could easily be subsumed into a media literacy framework. When I asked Emily about media literacy's relationship to her classes, she focused on digital and technological literacy, specifically in her desire to have her students comfortable working on a Macintosh computer, and did not mention any concerns about media influence, taking an optimistic view of her students' abilities as media consumers. The confusion about the relationship of media literacy to these teachers concerns—despite their clear resonance with the movement's ideas and goals—speaks to the resilience of the discourses about young viewers' vulnerability that predate the media literacy movement, arising from early media reformers like the film education movement. The coincidence of some of the rhetoric is somewhat difficult to reconcile, and it would be demanding to trace each of the various discursive strands from the teachers to their origins to prove or disprove their relationship to the media literacy movement specifically.

The Texas standards likewise have a complicated relationship with media literacy. The term appears once in the IPGs, as a key concept in the first week of the fourth six-week grading period. The term's use shows at least a familiarity with the concept among the educators, who wrote it there in the first place, but also replicates their inconsistencies about its meaning as revealed in the interviews. As I identified earlier, the term is used to mobilize a requirement in the TEKS (§130.86.c.5) that focuses on the history of

production technology primarily. However, one day in the week is devoted to the activity, “Discuss the impact of film and media on society and vice versa,” which vaguely approaches some of the project of media literacy, but only on the broadest level of society at large. This new apparent contradiction reveals the extent to which the teachers and the resulting class structures lack a coherent concept of media literacy, or its importance for the production courses specifically, not to mention the students. This does not discount, of course, the ability of the teachers to diverge from the limited media literacy content of the TEKS and IPGs to make more direct appeals to the students’ need for media defenses—they definitely identified this as a concern in the interviews—but any protracted media literacy efforts would likely divert time from the more central goals of technical knowledge acquisition and product development.

In part, revealing the production process accomplishes some media literacy education implicitly, showing students how messages are constructed and geared toward particular audiences, recalling Jenkins’s emphasis on production and manipulation. For Jenkins, production allows consumers to reclaim the ability to participate in their ongoing culture, reclaiming the ability to make meaning as well as receive it. His focus on convergence collapses production and consumption into each other, making media participation both activities at once, and production knowledge specifically part of media literacy. From this perspective learning production will lead directly to more informed consumption. In practice, the classes show that this may not always be the case, especially when the production education has a specifically vocational rather than exploratory or ludic purpose. If anything, the production focus indoctrinates students to

the other side of the media literacy movement's concerns, showing the persuasiveness of media in order to help students be better persuaders, instead of how to better negotiate the act of being persuaded. This does not so much break down the barrier between production and consumption as reinforce it. Especially in an age of digitality and declining mass media influence, the eradication of this distinction may not be so celebrated by aspiring media professionals.

The teachers also articulated a larger picture of media's importance to everyday life on a national or global scale, seeing the media lessons the students learned as the essential knowledge for functioning in an increasingly mediated world. Hobbs and Jensen expressed similar optimism that "the creation and distribution of mediated messages" from students allowed them to be "citizen[s] of the world," participating in decision-making and cultural conversations (9). Emily talked about this on a nationalist level as helping America compete in the global economy, making sure the students were well-equipped to maintain America's success as a cultural producer. Through media, teachers envisioned the students as able to communicate and rise above their circumstances and youth, allowing them to participate in larger dialogues. Dave talked about giving voice to his students, many of who were likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged. He admitted, as though it were undesirable, to being somewhat political on this point, seeing his students as dealing with an uneven playing field. This echoes Jenkins's optimism about the equal participation in culture afforded by media production. Through media savvy, Dave envisioned his students as able to both avoid deleterious media messages, and craft their own, allowing them to participate in larger conversations from which their

circumstances may have previously excluded them. This is a simplified understanding of the public sphere at work, especially a public sphere mediated by technology.

Media Communicate Ideas and Emotions

Teachers also framed media production as the communication of ideas and emotions. This plays out in both how the teachers instruct the students to read the film examples used in the classes as well as how the students are taught to envision their own work as content creators. This relied on two primary discursive tropes that placed media as the product of individual visions and as more than simple entertainment. Like the link between media and everyday life, this communication element of media experience relied on a sense that the exchange of information and ideas is a crucial part of social process and defines the success or failure of cultural participation within this mediated sphere. This conception of media as communication was especially attuned to drawing out a sense of authentic expression from the students—reflecting a facet of their personality—and relying on a conception of quality media experiences as those that provoke emotional responses and effect change as a result.

Much of the rhetoric of communication revolved around equipping students to articulate their individual visions and ideas. The teachers stressed the students' individuality and their differing creative, vocational, and social needs that can be met through media production. Like the use of noncanonical media examples, this reflects an empowerment model of media literacy by emphasizing students' individuality. For example, the teachers were careful to point out that not everyone taking their classes is a natural filmmaker and not all will pursue creative careers, but all of the students bring

interests and knowledge to the production classes which the teachers wanted to include in the process. By envisioning media as this somewhat simplified system of interpersonal message transmission, the teachers also worked to empower the students by making their individual voices valuable and important, further drawing a link to a cultural studies model of media literacy articulated by Gray.

This kind of singular expression was presented to some extent as a kind of auteurism although the students were producing on a much smaller scale and with far fewer collaborators, making individual expression much more feasible. However, there were some strains of media from singular authorship taught through some of the textual examples employed by the teachers. Vanessa uses the films of Cameron Crowe to teach about the ways in which directors exhibit common themes and stylistic choices across their oeuvre. Dave uses the films of Steven Spielberg as a corpus—especially *Jaws* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*—finding his students are already familiar with much of his work and that the Spielberg name stands as a mark of quality. This singular communication model was not exclusively focused on the director as the source of authorship, either. In one of the programs the writer was privileged to a significant extent, in part because of the school populations' larger need for literacy education due to underperformance. While the auteurist direction of this concept mirrors the film education movement's own discussion of directors and their importance, the recourse to authorship here is put to a very different end. Whereas the film education movement placed directorial knowledge as the marker of a sophisticated moviegoer who saw a director as a versatile technician and manager as well as an effective social communicator, this authorial focus relies

specifically on discussions of personal authenticity and emotional affect. The role of a director in the production classes is not as a broad social commenter, making sweeping statements about society—as in Capra’s frequent engagement with democracy and class—but as a distinct individual. By stressing the importance of students articulating their own personal visions and ideas, the teachers are striving to uncover their genuine and unfiltered selves.

This rhetoric of authenticity is related to a desire among the teachers for a vision of media experience that goes beyond entertainment. In this conception, the teachers constructed a teleology of increasing quality and desirability from entertainment to art. On the side of entertainment are terms like Hollywood, cliché, regurgitated content, and violence. On the side of art, the teachers placed emotion, authenticity, and creative confidence. As a result, the teachers wanted to move their students toward the art/”quality” end of the spectrum and away from entertainment. This was most prominent in the expression of emotion, which the teachers read as the ultimate goal. Gil makes a point of asking his students chiefly how they want their audience to feel, placing emotional effects above anything else. Vanessa related this to the conception of media as interpersonal communication, by deeming the best directing as that which conveyed information along with feeling, bringing forth personal reactions to a filmmaker’s personal communication. Dave used an example from a school-wide screening of a film produced by one of his advanced classes. The students made a horror film, shot in part in the theater in which it was screened, and were ecstatic at its ability to scare their fellow students. The emotional reaction transcended its somewhat clichéd formula, resulting in

what the teacher and students saw as a genuine communicative interchange between the student creators and their audience.

Media as Collaboration

Owing to the fragmentary nature of education, the individuality and structural importance of each teacher, and the only somewhat coordinated way in which the teachers interact, this next semantic understanding of media seemingly contradicts the previous one. While I have just explained how the teachers approach media production as individual expression, they also identified media production as distinctly the product of collaboration. This seems to be a contradiction, but in fact this understanding of media as collaborative solves its own paradox. The teachers' own experiences as film students and as creative professionals instructed them in the necessity of collaborative work. In addition, the interplay among the various teachers—sharing lesson plans, working on ways to meet standards, and encouraging better work among themselves—also leads to a collaborative environment. The teachers rationalize this equation of media production with collaboration through their understanding of the importance of such collaborative work in the professional world and everyday social function. This conception of collaboration also stresses the diversity of people and the myriad skills and sets of knowledge they bring with them to media production, resolving the paradox of media as both product of individual expression and collaborative work, allowing each to express their own personality within a larger framework of cooperation.

Because of the extent to which the teachers, and the TEKS standards that guide them, organize their classes as vocational preparation, the ideas about media produced by

the classes are reliant on understandings of the process of production that adhere to professional practice and industrial output. As a result, the teachers stress the extent to which their students are being prepared for professional work. The teachers talk about an industry-level vocabulary and working on the same equipment and the same software as people who make films for a living, so the corresponding imposition of collaboration into this process gives it the same industry-level connotations. In Dave's advanced production classes, in order to facilitate collaboration he designs the workflow of assignments such that it is impossible for any one student to gain control over the entire process. The productions follow a division of labor drawn from classical Hollywood production, which does include a student who acts as director, but this director role is minimized by scheduling assignments so they overlap, leaving one project in pre-production while the other is in post. As a result, any student who tries to assume authority over a production cannot do the same for the next, or in order for him or her to see a project through to the end, he or she must work with students as acting as writers or editors, and cannot do all of the jobs in either case. Teachers also act as collaborators themselves in the classrooms, acting at times as producers and creative consultants on projects, further reinforcing the importance of working together by modeling such behavior themselves.

The importance of the diversity of collaborators to this conception of media production also shows a strong link between the teachers' biographies and their work. Just as the teachers bring diverse experiences and creative histories to their jobs, their understanding of media production as collaborative stresses a diversity of people, skills, and knowledges as central to any creative endeavor. The teachers work to include their

students' myriad interests in their instruction. The earlier importance of students' individual visions lays the foundation for this conception of collaboration. In this sense collaboration is not the elimination of individuality in service of a smoothed over consensus but instead the creation of a forum in which the students retain and are able to express their uneven individuality alongside each other. This is a sharp break from more prescriptive education models, which work to instruct one set of proper knowledge across all students, no matter their individual needs, receptiveness, or trajectory.

As a result of this collaborative theme, the teachers tended to think of production roles as niches rather than jobs since the former connotes the carving out of a unique role while the latter has a much more boilerplate, depersonalized connotation. The perception of production as requiring a diversity of skills and mindsets further strengthens this conception of media production as collaborative. Because the teachers see production as incorporating a variety of creative, professional, and interpersonal skills, the importance of diversity becomes a foregone conclusion. This recognition of the diversity of their own experiences, and the value thereof, is reflected in the way the teachers attempt to integrate the diversity of their own students' needs, prior knowledges, and media goals into instruction. For example, Emily begins the year in her introductory production course by conducting one-on-one interviews with her students to identify their interests and goals for the class and then works to integrate these interests and use the range of abilities to the most productive ends.

Media as Available for Mastery

A final conceptual frame used by the teachers to talk about media production places texts and their means of production within reach of the students. The teachers at times employed a rhetoric of demystification, revealing the hidden secrets of textual construction, thereby allowing their students to produce, share, analyze, and manipulate media texts. Drawing on their histories as media professionals, the teachers worked to pull back the curtain on the production process and the tools and skills it requires. This was especially important in their discussion of the software and technology that the classes made it possible for the students to access. The discussion of media as within reach was also present in the way teachers placed their classes within local film cultures. A further component of this discourse levels the playing field between the students and media texts in general, empowering them to be more critical and engaged in media cultures through knowledge of the texts' inner workings. This final point has a strong media literacy resonance.

Mastery through technology was certainly the most prominent way in which teachers sought to make media available to their students. The vocational imperative of the classes privileges this sort of technical knowledge as students check off boxes beside the equipment and software applications they can use. By shifting media mastery into the realm of technology, the ephemerality of media is reduced by the materiality of the means of production. Instead of academic concerns about the nature of media and the visual apparatus, students learn about cameras and how they work. Instead of starting with any theoretical understanding of editing, including montage, creative geography,

jump cuts, etc. the students learn how to use Final Cut Pro. The Final Cut Pro certification is particularly important in the classes, and all of the teachers mentioned it as a goal for their advanced production students.

By working toward a technical certification, the students are trained in a thoroughly organized way—receiving documentation and proving themselves through a standardized method of examination—that results in an authoritative sense of media mastery that relies on the strength of two institutions: the school as source of knowledge and Apple Corp. as producer of software and technology of the highest quality. The centrality of the Final Cut Pro certification to the students' mastery of media production draws on the circulating discourses of Apple's preeminence among creative professionals, its authorship of industry-standard software, and its semantic equivalence with sleekness, performance, and the cutting edge of technological evolution. Because the students can be certified while still in high school, the teachers also give them a sense of being ahead of the curve. Because the teachers did not have the same opportunities, only receiving access to similar tools once in college-level film school, this image of media through technological mastery is filtered through their own experience. On the whole, the classes allow students to use these understandings of the role of technology in production to equate technical mastery with mastery of media themselves. While this may be a false equivalency, it does achieve the important result of giving students a more confident base from which to interact with media, possibly leading to more thoughtful, critical viewing.

Teachers also give students a conception of media production as within reach by showing them available channels through which they can participate in creative

expression. Because film festivals have categories for young filmmakers, the students have ready outlets for contributing to artistic dialogue. As a result, students can quite easily receive recognition, accolades, and artistic validation on a broader scale than their own immediate social circle. Teachers mentioned student entries in the Austin Film Festival and South by Southwest film festival that had won awards in the past as well as entries at festivals elsewhere in the nation. Students have also entered contests with corporate sponsors to win prizes. One of the schools has a relationship with the Austin Film Society that allows one student to intern with the organization for credit, participating in another facet of local film culture. These outlets allow students to receive recognition and further establish themselves in media culture. Because the classes make these channels available to the students, their media worlds are broadened and their confidence as worthwhile contributors to the media landscape is bolstered. As a result, the seemingly opaque process by which a creator finds an audience is made transparent, and students need not fear toiling in obscurity. This creates a sense of media as not something delivered to students from afar, arriving fully formed, but something made by someone like them, working through the same channels to reach someone willing to interact with their content.

By pulling back the curtain on media, bringing students into a closer relationship to its inner workings, the teachers are also presenting its components as not only within reach but available for manipulation. This allows students to take control of their media experiences, mobilizing the breadth of their media knowledge, both from formal education and their own history of media interactions, in their creative work and

interpretive activity. This is the point where the classes most closely replicate Jenkins's utopian media literacy vision by creating active interpreters who playfully manipulate texts as the raw materials in our shared culture. At the same time, this is one of the least explicit messages about media production and interaction the classes make possible. The ways in which the teachers present media examples in the classroom plays a significant role in creating this sense of media manipulation, albeit implicitly. Because the classes tend to use short clips and pertinent examples rather than entire feature-length films, the classes present purposive textual fragmentation as acceptable and useful. Further, because the clips are used systematically, rather than for a general sense of enjoyment or pleasure, the media become utilities rather than art objects. As a result, the meanings of media as texts are subordinated to the necessities of production, restricting the realm of potential meaning to its usefulness as a technical or stylistic example. This makes them available to the students for manipulation, removing some of their auratic power as creative works. To some extent, the teachers are advocating a kind of bricolage, finding meaningful and personally affective media segments and using them as raw materials for creative production. Vanessa's "cinematic moments" project models this more directly, encouraging students to find useful fragments from larger film texts. As a result, the students are exposed to a variety of texts, as well as the relationship between them and the students' everyday lives, giving students an impression of media as composed of bits and pieces, each of them meaningful, constituting a multi-directed whole.

While these are not the only media discourses circulating within the classes, they are the most salient of those discussed by the teachers in the interviews. It is also worth

noting that these are not authoritative statements about the content of the classes, but the best composite image I can construct on the basis of what the teachers reported about their classes—owing to the descriptive nature of this study and its corresponding methods. The statements about media in particular are somewhat more complicated to construct, in part because of the abstractness of media understanding. While in Chapter Two I could rely more directly on statements about how the teachers envision their jobs, ideas about media necessarily had to be synthesized from contextual information. While these may not reflect the content of the classes, they do reflect the way the teachers think about their jobs and what is important to them in the teaching of media production. They focus on media production as central to everyday life, as a form of interpersonal communication, as the product of collaboration, and as a phenomenon that the students are capable of mastering. These discourses are generally ad hoc in nature, and the teachers did not identify larger sources of these ideas such as a theorists or important texts. The extent to which vocational imperatives permeate these discourses is also an important feature of these four fields of media discussion, although finding a vocational undercurrent in the media discourses is not particularly unexpected, especially given the extent to which the classes are directed at career education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are quite rightly a mixed bag. In undertaking an exploratory study, I have little investment in making judgments in particular about media production education or in making comparative or definitive findings. I quite purposefully avoided working from any hypothesis, instead operating inductively, discovering conclusions and trends within a corpus of data. These findings here are the result of working through a body of information—TEKS standards, IPGs, and teacher interviews—looking for salient points, recurring rhetorical tropes, and guiding narratives that circulate in the media production classrooms. Working from a social constructivist perspective, the ways in which the teachers conduct themselves in social relations to their students, that is, how and when they offer help to scaffold a student within his or her zone of proximal development, forms the structure of the learning environment. Not unexpectedly, these structural interventions do not cohere into a sensible and interlocking whole, although there are strong recurring themes.

Following first from the guiding vocational imperatives of the TEKS standards, the teachers construct IPGs to mobilize the standards in practice. Salient features of the teachers' biographies shape the course of instruction, as do the requirements, tools, end products, and example texts. The teachers discussed their classes using two large themes that typify their instruction—teaching on the cutting edge and working against traditional notions of media study. From the resulting composite class structures, the teachers broadcast a few recurring lessons about the nature of media learned through its

production, presenting media as central to everyday life, as essential forms of personal communication, as the product of collaboration, and as something the students can master and manipulate.

While I did identify ways in which media literacy rhetoric appears in the structure of the production classes, they do not invoke it to any great degree, and superimpose newer and more historical media concerns. Further, although media literacy language was invoked to some extent, teachers shied away from making it a point of emphasis. While there are opportunities for students to gain a more empowered relationship to media from production education—by learning about media construction, understanding producers’ motivations, de-privileging canonical texts, etc.—these appear to be mostly incidental to vocational training. Although they talk about ideas similar to those of the media literacy movement, they resisted identifying with it explicitly.

The teachers also differ sharply from the media literacy zeitgeist by avoiding significant integration of digital and new media literacies into media production education. While current trends in media literacy, as identified by Hobbs and Jensen, have moved in a distinctly convergent, new media direction, the Austin production classes retain a preference for film and video. While the classes do encourage digital sharing and distribution as important skills for expressing one’s work, finding audiences, and practicing work-related networking, these new media uses are subsumed by the importance of producing quality audiovisual media. The courses also privilege a physical, collective audience in the way they culminate at the end of the year with a film festival where student work is shown to an audience of friends and family.

Returning to my research questions—How are high school students in Austin, Texas, being instructed to think about media through its production? What are the contexts and conditions in which this happens?—the concepts gleaned from the research data only offer partial answers. In particular, the first question deserves further investigation, while the second is somewhat better defined. While I did identify four recurring ideas about media expressed by the teachers, the resilience of these conclusions bears further investigation of other classes, as well as repeated and more intensive study of these same classes. In particular, their relevance in practice must be explored before they can be said to define media for the students in any rigid way. The second research question is somewhat better defined, since the media discourses are channeled first through vocational imperatives, then through the focus on technology and software mastery, and finally through a rejection of academic film study. As a result, the understandings of media are configured through a system of knowledge in the service of quality production aimed at newness and originality.

It is precisely the impact of this production focus that I was unprepared to assess at the outset of this study. Having conducted my research exclusively within media production classes, I wonder how this production imperative structures media and media production understanding in fact, and how differently media knowledge would be structured in other classes without a production focus. In order to find out I would need to be able to compare the classes with courses employing a critical, analytical, or historical approach to film. This leads me to formulate another research questions, that is: What does it mean to think of media primarily in the context of its production? This question is

much more phenomenological than exploratory, seeking to fix the meaning of a particular realm of experience. Explicating the discursive features culled from the interviews also provokes further questions about where the teachers acquired their own media and media production understandings and how widely these rhetorics extend within their educational circles. While I did identify the social aspect of the teachers' professional lives, in their collaboration and strategic engagement with the TEKS standards, their larger functioning within their schools and school districts remains opaque. I have only explored a small facet of the many ways in which the teachers have occasion to mobilize, work through, and represent their own understandings of media to others.

While this is not a definitive entry into the subject, merely an exploratory one, this study does provoke further questions and investigation as well as give a set of findings against which to make future comparison. Though I have been hampered by a lack of relevant literature from which to draw inspiration and information, as well as the unpredictability of inductive and interview-based research, I have been able at least to provide a foundation for further investigation, both in Austin and elsewhere. It is always possible to identify limitations, and especially so with human subjects who only have so much time they can devote to interviews, but making a first step into a new realm of research is always a worthwhile endeavor. It is my hope that this contribution will allow a broadening of interest in media production studies to consider the function and effect of education within the realm of media interaction and interpretation.

Appendix A: Instructional Planning Guides

This appendix provides sample Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs) selected from those provided to me by the Austin media production teachers. The first is the year overview for the introductory production class, followed by one of the six-week grading period IPGs and a single week IPG from the same class for illustrative purposes. The year overview of the IPGs extends for several pages.

Table A1: Audio/Video Production Year Overview

Time/Pace	1 st Six Weeks	2 nd Six Weeks	3 rd Six Weeks	4 th Six Weeks	5 th Six Weeks	6 th Six Weeks
Key Concepts	Classroom/Lab Procedures	Basic overview: 3 steps of production	Introduction to Audio Basics	Reinforce first semester skills	Preproduction, Production and Post Production for final project.	Basics of Television Production: Demographics, Developing Story Ideas.
	Introduction to Digital Video and the Digital Workstations	In depth Preproduction: treatments, storyboarding, location scouting, scheduling	Microphone History and Pick up Patterns.	Revisit crew hierarchy and positions, on-set language	Final Projects: Screenplay, 12+ pages	Shooting an Interview, News Package, and B-roll.
	How to use DV camera – White Balance!	Scene/set language	How to connect microphones to cameras. Practice.	Read a professional screenplay. Evaluate and explore elements	Final Film music video 2 PSA	Basics of Studio Production
	Camera Safety procedures and tripod use	On set procedures and Crew Dynamic	How to Mic a scene	Writing screenplays: Full treatment	Interview “Parody” – recreate a project	Basics of Studio Production
	Composition and Photography Terms	Appropriate Elements for high school arena, things to consider and copyright	Voice Overs	3 act structure and proper script format	Goal: Preparing portfolio.	Anchoring
	Essential Shots and Camera Movement.	laws for music/video	Basic Sound Design	Pitch Sessions, read-arounds, and peer evaluation	Producing portfolio quality media- via client expectations/ contest entry requirements/ industry standards	Studio Hand Signals
	Basic Blocking and how to work in groups for in camera edit	Project: Movie Trailer	Soundtrack Pro	Color	Focus on working for clients. Target a project or work to contest/client expectations and deadlines, etc	Self reflection
	EDITING Basics in Final Cut	Treatment, storyboarding, location scouting, etc.	Editing workflow and exporting	Very Basic Lighting: Available Light, Reflection	Distribution	Final Exam Review
			Final Review			Peer and course evaluation
						Exposure to software packages. Introduction to Audio/Video 2

Time/Pace	1 st Six Weeks	2 nd Six Weeks	3 rd Six Weeks	4 th Six Weeks	5 th Six Weeks	6 th Six Weeks
Content and Skills	TEKS 1B, 11E, 2B, 2E, 3, 9B, 10, 14A, 14C, 14G, 14I, 14J, 2F, 7A, 7B, 9B, 11C, 6A-C, 9C, 11D	TEKS 14A, 14B, 1A, 1B, 12A-F, 1A, 2A-G, 8B, 1A, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 8B, 12D	TEKS 11A, 13C, 3, 11A, 11B, 13, 10, 14, 4, ALL (through review for final)	TEKS 1A, 3, 4, 8A-C, 14D, 1A, 3, 4, 8A-C, 14D, 12Bii, 12Bv, 1B, 3, 6A-C, 13Bi-iv	TEKS 4D, 4E, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D, 5E, 5F, 5G, 2C, 3A, 3C, 4A, 4C, 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 2A, 2B, 2D, ALL (Through production of final project)	TEKS 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 2A-2G, 2B, 3, 4, 7A-7D, 8A-D, 10, 11C, 11D, 12, 13, 14, 5A-F, ALL (review for final)
Resources	Text, Handouts, Campus Handbooks, Dress code, Syllabi Digital Workstation Cameras, Tripods, Manuals, Text, Handouts, White Card Example Footage	Text, handouts, camera, tripod, monitor, television, and film examples. Computer lab, firewire, manuals, editing software.	Text, handouts, camera, tripod, monitor, television, and film examples Microphones: dynamics, condenser, various directional Computers with Soundtrack Pro or other audio editing program. Audio Example of Voice Over Computers with Color or other Color editing program. Text, final, film equipment. As needed for review	Handouts, Review Materials screenplay samples Handouts, Final Draft, CELTX, or some other scriptwriting software feedback rubric Lights, cameras, tripods, screen and projector	Text, cameras, DV tapes, tripods, computers, editing software Final Cut. Decks, Monitors, MAC lab Media Schools, and Industry web resources: Austin Film Society AFF Young Filmmakers Program Screenwriters Guild. Final Draft.com	Computers, cables, handouts, Cameras, Tripod, Lights, Microphones, Tapes, Computers, cables,

Time/Pace	1 st Six Weeks	2 nd Six Weeks	3 rd Six Weeks	4 th Six Weeks	5 th Six Weeks	6 th Six Weeks
Suggested Student Outcomes or Products	<p>PROJECTS: Students demonstrate ability to follow procedure. Students identify classroom expectations and appropriate work habits</p> <p>Students Learn to use workstations-Make directories, file management, adding programs to the dock, customizing workspace.</p> <p>Students demonstrate proper use of camera and tripod.</p> <p>Students learn shot types.</p> <p>Students learn basic camera angles.</p> <p>Students apply 4 rules of composition- Rule of Thirds, Simplicity, Framing, Leading Lines.</p> <p>Students apply learned shots vocabulary, and Operate cameras to produce diversity of shots.</p> <p>Students learn how to block a scene-walk-ons, walk-offs etc..</p> <p>Students learn to work in groups and apply teamwork skills.</p> <p>Students produce and judge their rough cut/ first attempt.</p> <p>Students revise edits, correcting previous errors.</p>	<p>PROJECTS: Students identify responsibilities of different crew positions and elements of 3 phases of production</p> <p>Students practice skills in class and develop a DV storyboard, using the learned compositional terms and concepts.</p> <p>Students identify film festivals and contests for entry</p> <p>Handouts, internet, Students utilize camera and computer to log and capture video. Students, operate software and practice using B-roll/ stock</p> <p>Students demonstrate knowledge of keyboard functions, and shortcuts.</p> <p>Students produce a rough cut of a video production.</p> <p>Examples include: short narratives, student journals, short advertisements, single day shoots, etc,</p> <p>Students produce a fine cut of a video production</p>	<p>PROJECTS: Students analyze the importance and history of microphones. Students demonstrate an understanding of how microphones work</p> <p>Students demonstrate proper microphone procedures and employ microphones for practical on set uses</p> <p>Students learn and demonstrate how to spot sound effects, mix music, and VO together to create sound design.</p> <p>Students demonstrate mixing skills by adding all sound effects to a project.</p> <p>PROJECT: Students learn how to balance whites and blacks, add secondary colors and the workflow between the Final Cut Pro Studio software.</p> <p>Students are provided review materials from the entire semester to review for the upcoming semester exam.</p>	<p>PROJECTS: Students demonstrate a higher level of understanding of skills and concepts.</p> <p>Students can name resources available for story development.</p> <p>Students understand logline structure and application.</p> <p>Students produce formatted scripts</p> <p>Students provide thoughtful feedback on scripts and demonstrate a working knowledge of the elements of dramatic writing.</p> <p>Students familiarize themselves with lighting equipment.</p> <p>Students can set up 3-point lighting.</p> <p>Students demonstrate a working knowledge of basic lighting principles.</p> <p>Students apply learned skills to properly light a variety of scenarios.</p>	<p>PROJECTS: Produce a media product such as:</p> <p>A competitive entry for Austin Film festival</p> <p>Final Project Short</p> <p>Screenplay (15 min.)</p> <p>Final Project/ Portfolio Piece</p> <p>Decision Development Production Outline</p> <p>Preproduction begins</p> <p>Crew Assignments Scheduling</p> <p>Shooting and Editing</p> <p>Middle point evaluation</p> <p>Re-shooting</p> <p>Distribution, Focus on working for clients.</p> <p>Tailor work to contest/client expectations and deadlines</p> <p>Plan a "public" (non-class members) screening of final project</p> <p>Self reflection</p>	<p>PROJECTS: Students complete activities</p> <p>Student generated notes</p> <p>Students produce edit for teacher and student self evaluation.</p> <p>Students produce news package</p> <p>Students practice anchoring behind news desk and practice hand signals</p> <p>Self-reflection paper. Students judge how well they performed over the year based on teacher and student generated rubrics. Fill out end of year survey</p>

Time/Pace	1 st Six Weeks	2 nd Six Weeks	3 rd Six Weeks	4 th Six Weeks	5 th Six Weeks	6 th Six Weeks
Assessment	Handouts requiring parental signature returned. Equipment checkout forms signed. Camera test, Camera safety test. Demonstration of shots as requested by instructor Six weeks exam on skills learned and procedures.	Teacher generated rubric and critique and Teacher Six Weeks Test Over Skills Film Festival Worksheet Lighting Safety test Plot or Diorama Teacher checklist or acquired skills Classroom critique	Microphone Quizzes In Camera edit with sounds captured for review. – rubric used for assessment. Also peer evaluation by showing to class. Camera edit with sounds captured for review. Rubric used for assessment. Demonstrate skills by adding sound to an established program. Students export final project for review by teacher with a rubric. Teacher checklist, peer input and evaluation. Students export final project for review by teacher with a rubric. Also peer evaluation by showing to class. Students are provided review materials from the entire semester to review for the upcoming semester exam.	Review Quiz Logline worksheet Research worksheet Pitch Presentation Peer and teacher evaluation Script Teacher check list, peer input and evaluation, student self evaluation. Teacher evaluation Skills assessment.	Completed Production Outline Crew Assignment list Production schedule Teacher checklist for Preproduction Materials: Storyboard Script Treatment Research worksheet Teacher and student evaluation for raw footage, rough cut, and final cut. Feasibility of distribution and screening plan (rubric)	Quizzes, Rubric for editing exercise, Rubric for project, Final Exam Grade

Table A2: Audio/Video Production 4th Six-Weeks Overview

Time/Pace	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Key Concepts	Reinforce First Semester Skills. Revisit Crew Hierarchy and positions, on-set language Story Development How to generate ideas Loglines	Pitching Read a professional screenplay. Evaluate and explore elements. 3 act structure	Proper script format – Final Draft Write the story	Continue writing Read arounds Peer Feedback and Script Editing	Continue writing Read arounds Peer Feedback and Script Editing	Basics of Light: Quantity, Color, and Contrast Basic 3-point lighting Available light and adding to available light Reflection Using filters
Content and Skills	1A, 3, 4, 8A-C, 14D	1A, 2A-G, 4, 8A-C	1A, 3, 4, 8A-C	1A, 3, 4, 8A-C, 12Bii, 12Bv	1A, 3, 4, 8A-C, 12Bii, 12Bv	1B, 3, 6A-C, 13Bi-iv
Resources	Handouts, Review Materials	Handouts, screenplay samples	Handouts, Final Draft, CELTX, or some other scriptwriting software	Handouts, feedback rubric	Handouts, feedback rubric	Lights, cameras, tripods, screen and projector
Suggested Student Outcomes or Products	Students demonstrate a higher level of understanding of skills and concepts. Students can name resources available for story development. Students understand logline structure and application.	Student pitch a movie idea to the class. Students demonstrate an understanding of the 3-act structure and elements of screenplay.	Students produce formatted scripts	Students provide thoughtful feedback on scripts and demonstrate a working knowledge of the elements of dramatic writing.	Students provide thoughtful feedback on scripts and demonstrate a working knowledge of the elements of dramatic writing.	Students apply learned skills to properly light a variety of scenarios. Students can set up 3-point lighting. Students demonstrate a working knowledge of basic lighting principles.
Assessment	Review Quiz Logline worksheet Research worksheet	Pitch Presentation Peer and teacher evaluation	Script	Teacher checklist, peer input and evaluation, student self evaluation. Teacher evaluation	Teacher checklist, peer input and evaluation, student self evaluation. Teacher evaluation	Skills assessment.

Table A3: Audio/Video Production 4th Six-Weeks, Week 6

Core Lessons---Average 45-50 Minutes Per Day				
Strand / Topic	Matrix #	TEKS / Knowledge & Skill	TAKS Obj.	Principles of Learning
Audio Video Production I		1B, 3, 6A-C, 13Bi-iv		Accountable Talk Clear expectations Recognition of Accomplishment
Week #	Pace / Day	Student Expectations / Lesson Activity		Student Work / Products
6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basics of Light: Quantity, Color, and Contrast 		Student generated notes.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate basic 3-point lighting. Students practice their own 3-point lighting set-up 		Students set up 3 point lighting
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate using available light and adding to available light for a scene. Demonstrate using reflective lighting. Students practice using available light and reflective light for a scene. 		Students set up scene with available light and reflective light.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the use of filters for lighting and have students practice. 		Students use filters to light a scene.
Modifications	Materials / Resource(s)	Assessment	Teaching Notes	
Provide written and verbal instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lights, cameras, tripods, screen and projector 	Students apply learned skills to properly light a variety of scenarios. Students set up 3-point lighting. Students demonstrate a working knowledge of basic lighting principles.		

The IPG forms are boilerplate across subjects, leaving some of the fields in the weekly IPGs empty because they do not pertain to the production classes. The TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills), which students are required to pass in order to graduate, does not gauge media production knowledge or skills in any substantial way. The Matrix number refers to the Austin Independent School District’s own curriculum standards, which do not address media production specifically, focusing on the Texas core subjects of math, science, social studies, and English language arts.

This weekly IPG is typical in its lack of specificity about lessons or tasks for particular days. Most only define tasks to be carried out over the course of a week, with some tasks recurring across weeks due to the project-based nature of the classes.

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Vita

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