

Slicing and Dicing: Using Video Editing Software to Teach Film

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Film and television courses have become standard in many English, humanities, and communications departments. While these courses can cover an array of topics, many departments' introductory courses include a formal analysis of film. Traditionally, formal analysis includes screening films and having students analyze formal film elements, either in class discussion or course papers (e.g., Restivo 1995; Tomasulo, 1995; Welsch, 1997). However, film ripping¹ and editing software provide film students opportunities to break films into scenes and remix them, creating their own texts. "Slicing and dicing" films in this way provides film students opportunities to actively engage with films and even produce their own videos explaining how films work as textual and cultural objects. Media production challenges students to combine formal and narrative elements for deeper analysis. The purpose of this study is to gauge students' perceptions on learning basic film studies concepts in a 300 level "Introduction to Film" course from more actively engaged "slicing and dicing" activities as compared to traditional reading, viewing, lecturing, and discussion activities.

Literature Review

When we began this project, we were unable to find any synthesis of film pedagogy. With that in mind, we have catalogued here some essential texts on the teaching of film. Film is

one of the most interdisciplinary topics taught on college campuses and, as such, we see a variety of approaches to when and how film is used, taught, and assessed. Ultimately, however, very few articles are written about using video editing software as a learning tool in the classroom. Film editing can help students use digital tools to build upon their existing experiences, both of viewing and making, to create new knowledge.

Teaching with film

Multiple disciplines discuss using film to teach disciplinary content; examples include using film to help teach literature (Collins, 1995; Goldstein, 2010), math (Darling, 2018), education (Backenroth & Sinclair, 2015; Greene et al., 2014; Meyer & Vellani, 2014), research methods (Saldaña, 2009), sociology (Daniels, 2012), foundations of English (Hepple et al., 2014; Mills, 2007), and history (Ginsberg, 2004; James & Berg, 1989; Metzger, 2007; Schul, 2014; Stoddard 2012). Some scholars also use film to understand how education and teachers are depicted culturally (e.g., Keroes, 1999; Saltmarsh, 2011). Many of these scholars, however, discuss showing (screening) films as the pedagogical process used within the classroom (e.g., Greene et al. 2014; Saldaña, 2009; Sjöstedt, 2015).

When articulating why they used film in their pedagogy, most scholars discussed how films reinforced course content. For example, Metzger (2007) lists various historical competencies films help teach (p. 67) while Greene et al. (2014) claim they choose films to “evoke emotion and thought” (p. 660). Many scholars also emphasized that film provided more robust pedagogical opportunities. For example, Backenroth and Sinclair (2015) claim a film-enhanced pedagogy “exhibits the major characteristics of progressive constructivist education” (p. 64) while Stoddard (2012) claims film can “foster inquiry and deliberation” (p. 281). Wynn (2012) argues that films provide an excellent example of how multiple elements come together to

create a nuanced argument, helping students to see how use of tone, style, and structure create a message (pp. 146-7). Scholars like Eddy and Bracken (2008) argue that using movies and video clips could function as a “springboard” for active learning (p. 125). Although the pedagogical method described only emphasized showing films, Sjöstedt (2015) emphasizes the multimodal dimension of film as a form of an “active learning” methodology.

Many scholars argue that using film in their classes also helps foster critical media consumption (e.g., Burn, 2016; Giroux, 2004; Haydari & Kara, 2015; Niemi & Multisilta, 2016; Smythe, Toohey, & Dagenais, 2014; Vidmar & Bosnic, 2006). These pedagogues argue that educators should take up the “challenge” of “using film as a site of critique, understanding, and struggle” (Giroux, 2004, 126). Stoddard’s (2012) study of two instructors using film in their courses found that the students engaged more deeply with the films and the course content when both the instructors and students critically understood the film as “a construction of the past” (p. 277).

Some instructors use film to teach both critical media consumption and production literacies. Schul (2014) has students produce “desktop documentaries” in history courses. Both Hepple et al. (2014) along with Mills (2007) have students produce claymation films (stop action films) to promote multiliteracies, and Burn (2016) has students produce machinima (using video games to generate animation sequences). Morrell et al. (2013) encourages using assignments that promote both critical media consumption and production to help educate underserved youth. Niemi and Multisilta (2016) assign digital storytelling with the idea that “learning happens as a result of dialogical interactions between people, substances and artefacts” (p. 452). Darling (2018) found that students who made videos about math problems became more confident and

“proud” of their work (p. 60). The consensus of the literature on using film to teach disciplinary content is that it is engaging and effective.

Teaching film

Parallel to teachers using film in other disciplines, film scholars focus on teaching film critically (e.g.: Champagne, 1997; Cragin, 2015; Dalton, 2003; Denski, 1991, Denski, 1994; Projansky, 2004). There are a number of publications that discuss teaching specific sub-topics in film studies, many around different national cinemas (e.g., Chakravarty, 2007; Hess, 1988; Welsch, 1999). Publications about a specific film course resemble Boruszkowski’s (1985) piece on teaching a course in “Experimental Film”; the publication includes a course outline of readings and viewings.

There are a few pieces of scholarship that focus on teaching the general or introduction to film studies course. Wright Wexman (1985) discusses whether the field should develop a canon (similar to traditional literature pedagogy). Tomasulo (1995) provides explicit strategies and resources on teaching an introduction to film course, including: having access to film clips² (especially those with explanatory annotations) and slides, made directly from film prints. He argues “frame enlargements display the artistry of the filmmaker in a format that allows for relaxed study and attention to style and meaning” and “details that were not noticed during the screening can be pointed out and analyzed” (p. 76). Restivo (1995) provides a list of example “feature” film clips that demonstrate various film concepts such as editing and mise-en-scene.

Scholarship about film pedagogy also demonstrates the turn to active learning. When Welsch (1997) assigns an essay project analyzing the mise-en-scene of a single shot, they also asks students to draw the shot.³ Mauer (2001) has students make “film stills” (photographs of imaginary films) and analyze them “into the language of interpretive criticism” (p. 91). Bell-

Metereau (1999) cites Paulo Freire and Plato to justify having students produce a short film adaptation video project in a film adaptation course. Multiple scholars discuss assigning students production projects to help film students interested in production classes to bridge the theory/production divide (Hershfield & McCarthy, 1997; Kavoori, 2007).

More than essays and exams

A number of film studies teachers assert that having students produce more than essays or exams has additional benefits beyond demonstrating student learning. Higgins (1991) asks students to break down a film that already exists and potentially remix as a form of political action, noting, “to uncritically follow and imitate the dominant mode of production is similar to making a political statement: to perpetuate the status quo of visual representation” (p. 18). Both Sandler (2014) and Juhasz (2009) teach Jenkins’ (2006) concept of convergence culture by asking students to work in and learn from multiple media. Sandler’s students follow particular texts or stories across media and produce “creative theory” essays and “integrated, multi-platform marketing strategies” (p. 85). Juhasz’s class focuses on YouTube and students complete all of their work within the YouTube platform. Juhasz states, “We burrowed within the corporate system, respecting its rules and limitations, all the while repurposing its aims, and using its vernacular to engage in its analysis” (p. 149). In this way, creation of film can be the course content in addition to merely serving to illustrate course content.

Remix pedagogy

Research and scholarship emphasize the need for students to actively engage with course content (e.g., Blumberg, 2009; Fink, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Weimer, 2002). Faculty are shifting to pedagogies that emphasize both active learning as well as help students develop 21st century skills and digital literacies. Various education organizations have endorsed learning

activities that describe, explain, and persuade with technology (Conference on College Composition and Communication 2004; Council of Writing Program Administrators 2008; National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 2005; NCTE 2008; and Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2011).⁴ EDUCAUSE's annual student technology usage survey (Dahlstrom et al., 2011) claims "a surprising number of students say they are not fully confident that they have the technology skills to meet their needs" (p. 20) and that "technology can make learning a more immersive, engaging, and relevant experience" (p. 10). As more students will be asked to interpret and produce multimodal texts in both academia and the workforce, an understanding of essential formal elements will be necessary, or as the National Council of Teaching English (2005) states, "In personal, civic, and professional discourse, alphabetic, visual, and aural works are not luxuries but essential components of knowing" ("Position Statement"). Film courses can be a valuable tool in creating multimodal readers and writers.

Remixing expands our understanding of avenues for learning with technology. Lessig (2008) defines remix culture as the ability for individuals to use existing media to move readers from primarily consumer uses of technologies, to collaborators with media producers (p. 106). Other scholars have taken Lessig's observation about online culture to apply it to classrooms; for instance, DeVoss and Ridolfo (2009) have used remixes to teach students about rhetorical delivery by analyzing news stories remixed for different audiences. Edwards' (2016) work builds on this scholarship, asking how best to define remix for composition, tying remix into pillars of the rhetorical tradition. In doing so, Edwards connects remix to the rhetorical notion of imitation. Imitation recognizes the collaborative relationship entered when one uses content from another source to build their own arguments (p. 44). Edwards argues for a "four-part typology to parse

out digital transformative work: assemblage, reappropriation, redistribution, and genre play” (p. 46).

Focused more on memes, Carter and Arroyo (2011) make the direct connection between Jenkins’ (2006) notion of participatory culture and what they call a “pedagogy of participation” (p. 293). Pedagogies of participation teach not only the content, but also the human condition in this historical moment. Burwell (2013) notes that remixes allow students to consider the value of their own ideologies and cultural values.

Remixing the Introduction to Film Course

A pedagogical emphasis on film theory can “treat film in a manner that is overly formalistic and pretentiously scientific, trapped in a jargon that freezes the worldly dimension of film as a public transcript that links meaning to effect” (Giroux, 2001, p. 587). Deacon, Morrison and Stadler (2010) similarly suggest that “the traditional division between theory and practices as oppositional activity systems and modes of producing, with ‘texts’ on the one hand and analysis the other hand,” has been perpetuated by scholars (226). Film studies instructors are starting to use active learning and remix pedagogies to break down this divide.

Hershfield and McCarthy (1997) propose methods to teach “critical production” to aid in teaching theory/media studies to people who want to produce film. Hershfield and McCarthy argue “that video and film production, when considered as something more than the transmission of basic technical skills or conventions, can be a valuable way of getting students to think critically about media in general” (p. 112). In short, production helps students learn critical understanding of how the film works as a larger text. Welsch’s (1997) *mise-en-scène* analysis of a single shot similarly helps students learn critical concepts of film studies:

The mise-en-scene analysis gives students a chance to learn basic skills of visual analysis through careful, steady observation of the image. It opens their eyes to the complexity of visual design and gives them practice at incorporating visual analysis into argumentation. (105)

Specifically, Welsch allows “the student to select a shot that appeals to him or her” (p. 103) for analysis, claiming “whether or not I have explicitly taught this material in the classroom, it is possible for students to learn key introductory concepts from the questions themselves” and that the project “creates a shared vocabulary of basic concepts, whether I teach them or not” (p. 104).

Even with a variety of video editing software available, few studies exist on using video editing software as a pedagogical tool for teaching film, specifically teaching formal elements of film. Video editing software enables opportunities for students to incorporate applied practices into their critical analysis, building confidence in their ability to identify and discuss formal elements of film because they have used these elements to create videos of their own.

Methods

To help students learn key vocabulary and basic concepts in an introductory film studies course, we constructed assignments similar to Welsch’s mise-en-scene analysis. For example, we asked students to select a scene from one of their favorite films, rip it from a DVD, and then analyze and remix the shot to better understand and appreciate editing (among other film studies concepts). In short, we asked them to “slice and dice” a favorite scene from their favorite movie to learn about film. Students analyzed time in a parallel manner to how Welsch prompts students to analyze space. Instead of enlarging the image, we asked students to slow down their viewing of shots. Students in the class were then asked to perform increasingly more demanding activities

that required them to use digital editing software to create a new text, slicing and dicing to remix. These activities began as low stakes assignments and became progressively more demanding. The final project for both classes was a short piece that the students had edited themselves. Examples included such genres as a remixed trailer, a music video, and a short narrative film.

Research objectives

We began this research with following research questions:

1. Do students perceive that they better understand specific film course content after participating in a “slicing and dicing” activity?
2. Does the perceived difficulty of working with a newer technology negatively impact student engagement and learning within a slicing and dicing activity?

Participants

Participants for this study were solicited from the same film course taught in two different semesters at Old Dominion University. English 312, The Film, serves as an introductory course on formal and theoretical approaches to examining film. Rochelle Rodrigo was the instructor of record in fall 2012, and Jamie Henthorn the instructor of record in summer 2014. Henthorn had observed the 2012 class as part of an independent study on teaching film and the two sections shared similar assignments, learning outcomes, and organization. Institutional Review Board proposals were pre-approved for collecting data from both sections of the course.

Both courses were taught in a computer lab, where students had access to iMovie as well as other software, like Handbrake. Outside of class, students had access to iMovie in several student computer labs on campus. While some students in the course planned to go into media production, many of the students took the class to fill a 300-level humanities course or as an elective because they enjoy watching films.

After an in-class session that incorporated slicing and dicing techniques, students were asked to take a survey on their previous experience with film courses and comfort level with slicing and dicing activities (Appendix A). Students then took a separate survey (Appendix B) about the slicing and dicing activities. Students had time to complete both questionnaires in class before the end of the class period, and surveys were administered during the class period where both classes learned how to rip scenes from DVDs using HandBrake. Surveys were administered by a colleague who was not involved with the course, and the instructor did not review the surveys until after final grades were submitted. Of the 38 students enrolled in these classes (25 in 2012; 13 in 2014), 21 students took the initial technology comfort survey (14 in 2012; 7 in 2014) and 20 students responded to the survey relating their experiences on the “analyze your favorite scene slicing and dicing activity” (14 in 2012; 5 in 2014).

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaires were constructed and collected in SurveyMonkey (with an encrypted survey collection function). The first survey (Appendix A) was designed to collect students’ previous experience with video editing software and their perceptions of what they learned. Cataloging experience was important because of how often students’ experience with technology is taken for granted. The second survey (Appendix B) asked students about their experiences with the slicing and dicing activities.

We downloaded the results after the semester was over so that students did not feel as though their participation in the project affected their course grade. Questions were chiefly asked on a Likert-type scale response for clearer consensus among participants; these responses were compared with qualitative open-ended responses. Open-ended responses were coded using key terms from the questions and/or codes that emerged from the responses. Researchers coded

independently, reaching consensus in the second cycle of analysis. This practice ensured that a wider range of codes were considered before we reached agreement.

Results

Of the 17 questions we asked, 16 produced clear and focused responses. Survey 2, question 2 was removed from our study because the question was leading. Ultimately, no conclusive findings came from survey 2, question 2. Of note, one student participant had a very negative reaction to the course on the survey. We included some of their responses below; we worked to do so in relation to other participants to make the negative responses representative. The results grouped into three major categories: participants' expectations and experiences with technologies, participants expectations and experiences with film classes, and participants' perceptions of learning engagement and achievement.

Technological expectations and experiences

Having reviewed the first course's survey data, in advertising the 2014 course, Henthorn promoted the class as one where students would learn the basics of editing; therefore, the 2014 student participants were more likely to expect the hands-on activities using digital technologies. For example, participant 1 from 2014 was "hoping to sharpen up on my editing skills and learn more about programs." Word of mouth may be another factor; while the university is big, more than a few of the 2014 students probably knew someone who had taken the 2012 course.

Since the 2014 course advertisements emphasized that students would be learning and working with editing software, it is not surprising more than 50 percent of the 2014 participant anticipated using technologies in the course whereas only 21% (3/11 participants) expected to use technologies in 2012. Considering that ENGL312 is a basic introduction to film studies

course, we are not surprised fourteen of the total twenty-one student participants (67%) claimed they did not anticipate that they would use video editing software in class; this was not a production course.

Acknowledging that access to digital technologies means both having the physical and material access as well as the knowledge and experience to use it, we asked participants about their previous experience with and confidence of using video editing software. Although they were not expecting to use digital technologies in the course, over 50% of each section's respondents had prior experience using digital editing software (8/14 in 2012; 5/7 in 2014). One of the 2012 participants chose "other" and wrote about using digital editing software for class assignments; we moved that to a "yes" answer.

Student participants familiar with digital editing applications were asked which ones; collectively, the two courses generated the following list: iMovie, Final Cut Pro, Final Cut Express, Adobe Premiere, Audacity, Pro Tools, Celtx (storyboarding software), Windows Movie Maker, Pinnacle Studio Editing, Vegas, Youtube editor, After Effects, and 'editing software.' The five participants from 2014 only mentioned using iMovie, Final Cut, and Adobe Premiere. The more advanced editing applications were listed by the 2012 participants who had taken film production courses. Many of the participants who had used editing software before were familiar with multiple editing applications; this might account for the high number of "very confident" video editing software users reported in Table 1. All but one of the participants who felt confident or very confident about their ability to use video editing software to create class assignments were from the 2012 section.

Table 1

Confidence Using Video Editing Software

Term	Very Confident	Confident	Ambivalent	Unsure	Very Unsure
Fall 2012	4	5	1	4	0
Summer 2014	0	1	5	0	1
Total	4	6	6	4	1

Once they had completed the slice and dice activity, we asked participants to rate the difficulty of using various software (Table 2).

Table 2

Ease/Difficulty of Technologies

Term	Very Easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very Difficult
Fall 2012	3	3	5	2	1
Summer 2014	3	1	1	0	1
Total	6	4	6	2	2

Considering more than half of the participants did not expect to use digital technologies, having the majority (80%) not finding the technologies difficult to use was a pleasant surprise.

In an open-ended follow up question, we asked participants to describe the most difficult aspect of using the various technologies. In coding this response, we combined descriptive coding with values coding (Saldaña, 2016). The chief struggle participants had in working

through class assignments was moving the project through open-access and proprietary software (5 of 14 in 2012 and 2 of 5 in 2014). Six participants across the sections discussed familiarity with software being difficult, and seven discussed compatibility of the software with their needs and/or hardware was an issue. One student participant from each section mentioned having difficulties with the hardware. Some representative comments include:

- Participant 9 (2012): “Handreak [sic] was a little difficult to use at first. If it would have worked properly, I would have said it was incredibly easy.”
- Participant 5 (2014): “Troubleshooting, or converting avi files to mov files in order to use iMovie. However, we did not learn this in class. I know this from experience.”

Participants who were unfamiliar with Macs (the biggest software issue) were also having more trouble using all software. Unfortunately, the lab offered no choice in operating systems. Of note, however, the second largest response (4 of 14 in 2012 and 2 of 5 in 2014) was that nothing was particularly challenging or that the assignment was easy.

Pedagogical expectations

We asked participants about their pedagogical and technological expectations and preparations for ENGL312. Ultimately, we discovered that regardless of their experience with video editing software, past experiences and expectations for an English class led participants to expect a more traditionally designed course focused on understanding film through reading and discussion.

Experience with prior film courses

The initial survey primarily asked information about participants’ expectations and experiences with previous film courses and digital technologies. The second and third questions asked if participants had taken film classes before and, if so, what courses. Half (7 of 14) of the Fall 2012 participants had taken film courses, whereas less than half (2 of 5) had from the 2014

group. Three participants from 2012 and the two from 2014 had taken at least one course in film production. Examples of film production courses mentioned included screenwriting, digital filmmaking, and cinematography. Two participants from 2012 mentioned taking one or more film history courses, while a few others mentioned courses like Intro to Film, Literature in Film, and Film Appreciation.

If participants had taken film courses before, we asked what type of teaching and learning methods were used in the course. We provided example language they might use: *reading, writing, lecture, discussion, group work, any technology facilitated activities, etc.* In describing their other film courses, they described a mixture of methods. Both 2014 participants mentioned “lecture” with the one student participant who had taken numerous production classes also mentioning “hands on work.” The participants in the 2012 section gave parallel responses. The three participants who explicitly took production courses mentioned more hands-on, production oriented activities like “hands-on technology” and “how to film;” one claimed “Pretty much overall everything that needs to get done and how it’s done.” Both the participants that took production courses as well as the participants that had taken other introductory, history, and film and literature courses listed common teaching and learning methods: reading, writing, lecture, discussion, group work, watching films. Several classes followed a lecture and discussion mode, but film production and screenwriting courses usually had students developing films and scripts within the course.

Expectations for this course

When asking about pedagogical expectations in an open-ended question, participants reported that they expected a more traditional, discussion-based, use of class time where they expected to be assessed through writing. We provided the participants with the same list of

example activities from the question about teaching strategies from prior courses (e.g., reading, writing, lecture, discussion). Many used language from the example list as well as provided other ideas of what they expected. By and large, participants expected courses structured much more like those discussed in our literature review. The number one expectation that participants had was that they would write (5 in 2012 and 2 in 2014), with one 2012 respondent stating they thought we would do less writing. This was followed by discussion (5 in 2012, 1 in 2014) and a tie between technologically facilitated activities (2 in 2012 and 3 in 2014) and no expectations (3 in 2012 and 2 in 2014). For technological facilitated activities, one of those responses was the expectation that there would be less technology used in class. Interestingly, only three respondents, all from the 2012 course, reported that they expected to screen films. Writing and discussion may have featured heavily because this was the only film class offered by the English department. Likewise, 300 level courses in English and communications are referred to as writing intensive courses. Participant 4 from 2012 claimed, “I expected writing because it was under English rather than Communication or Theater.”

Because participants took this initial survey after the course had already started, they were able to make some reflective and comparative answers, like expecting less work. For example, some participants were surprised, and participant 13 from 2012 explicitly stated that they expected to screen films in the course. We had designed the course similar to a literature course where participants were expected to access and screen films as homework. Other comparative comments included:

- Participant 6 (2012): “i thought it would be much less technical, however I'm pleased with the teaching- i really didn't know what to expect”⁵
- Participant 4 (2012): “hands on activities helped”

One participant in 2012, participant 1, misunderstood the question and focused on the content they expected “what is film, what happens, how it happens, choices on certain things....”

From this, we can see that participants were expecting a more “hands-off” vs “hands-on” structure to class and assignments. Participants mostly expected to read and talk about movies. They did not expect to watch many films, let alone edit them. These expectations are sometimes learned from previous courses, but also derive from the department offering the course.

Efficacy of ‘slice and dice’ activities

With a better understanding of what participant preparation and expectations were for a film course, we then wanted to collect data on participants’ perception of learning. Of the 38 students enrolled in these classes (25 in 2012; 13 in 2014), 20 students responded to the second survey about “slicing and dicing” a film (14 in 2012; 5 in 2014). We did not collect names in either survey; participant numbers across the surveys do not align with the same student participants. Ultimately, we found that participants found ‘slice and dice’ activities to take a great deal of time and effort; additionally, they also reported that these activities both reinforced what they learned through reading and class discussion, and they afforded participants the chance to practice 21st century digital skills participants found lacking in other courses.

Student engagement & learning

After inquiring how easy participants found the task to be, we asked participants whether they found the activity engaging and helpful for them to learn the formalist film concepts we taught in class (e.g., framing, editing). Seventy percent of participants found the work to be “engaging” or “very engaging,” fifteen percent found it to be “neither” engaging or boring, fifteen percent found it to be “boring” or “very boring” (Table 3).

Table 3

Engaging Assignment

Term	Very Engaging	Engaging	Neither	Boring	Very Boring
Fall 2012	2	9	2	0	1
Summer 2014	1	2	1	1	1
Total	3	11	3	1	2

Even more participants (85%) found the assignment “helpful” or “very helpful,” with the three remaining participants distributed over the other three responses “neither,” “useless,” or “very useless” at 5% each (Table 4).

Table 4

Assignment Helpful for Learning

Term	Very Helpful	Helpful	Neither	Useless	Very Useless
Fall 2012	4	8	0	1	1
Summer 2014	4	1	1	0	0
Total	8	9	1	1	1

The student participants were then asked an open-ended question to help describe the responses above, specifically asking if the slicing and dicing activities helped them engage the film and the course concept differently when compared to more traditional reading, writing, lecturing, and discussing activities. Participants provided a variety of answers, making this data a little more

challenging to summarize. Because students took the class for a variety of reasons, what they found engaging might necessarily be varied. The most common response regarding how these activities differed from a more traditional course was that they were able to apply what they were learning to a favorite film (8 of 14 in 2012, 2 of 5 in 2014). Others reported that working with a film through ‘slice and dice’ activities provided a detailed, deeper, understanding of the readings (3 of 14 in 2012 and 2 of 5 in 2014), augmenting what they learned through more traditional means. Participant 1 from the 2014 class reported a positive assessment of the connections between their work and their reading:

By the activities being more hands on, it allowed us to see what the chapters [were] discussing and get a better understanding. Often when something is read, you understand what the book says but you do not completely grasp the concept. Putting what we learned in action sheds light to the information. A person once told me that, “Knowledge without application is just information.

A few participants (2 of 14 in 2012 and 1 of 5 in 2014) felt the activities being hands-on was helpful, with the one participant in 2014 noting that it would be important to future career work.

Participant 6 (2012) expressed that they felt the time spent doing this activity affected the time we could spend covering the content another way:

It is a better hands on approach, but it was time consuming and overall I do not think that I was properly introduced to the important topic, I feel like instead I was asked to learn the material on my own and then apply my understanding to the slice and dice.

Another student, Participant 3 from the 2012 section (who responded negatively to every question on this survey), had nothing positive to say: “It didn’t. I could care less about slicing. This isn’t an editing class.” Participant 6’s and Participant 3’s (2012 section) frustration emulates similar student frustrations when their expectations of how the class would work were disrupted by active learning assignments (e.g., Wood, 2018, p. 3).

Since assignments were slightly different in the two courses, it is not surprising that there were differences in perceptions of what participants learned. More, 57% (8 of 14 participants), of the participants in the Fall 2012 section claimed to have learned more about the scene they analyzed. Only 40% (2 of 5 participants) of the 2014 participants said they learned more about the scene. Of those who answered that they learned something, they too had a variety of responses of what they learned. Since many undergraduate students in an introduction to film class like to focus on the story of the film, we were not surprised that the highest number of participants said they learned more about elements related to the theme, plot, or meaning of the narrative (3 of 14 in 2012 and 1 of 5 in 2014). We were excited to see the variety of formalist film elements mentioned (e.g., number and length of shots, lighting), at least by a few participants. This could mean participants were able to explore their own interests in these activities.

We specifically asked participants if they thought they could apply what they learned to other films (Table 5).

Table 5

Transfer Learning to Another Film

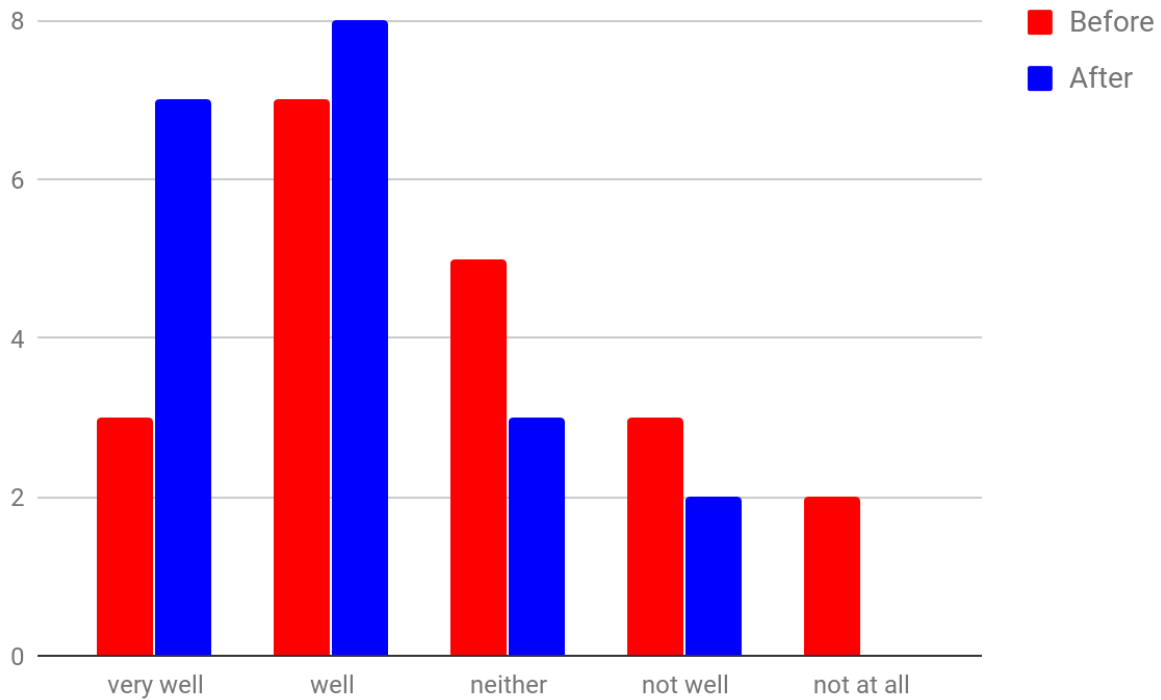
Term	Very Easily	Easily	Neither	With Difficulty	With Extreme Difficulty
Fall 2012	5	7	1	0	1
Summer 2014	2	3	0	1	0
Total	7	10	1	1	1

We were thrilled that 85% of the participants said that they could apply these concepts “easily” or “very easily;” again, with the three remaining participants distributed over the other three responses “neither,” “with difficulty,” or “with extreme difficulty” at 5% each (Table 5).

Although we acknowledge that these survey responses of student participants are perceptions of their learning, it is noteworthy that most of them (79%, 15 of 19) understood the topic either “well” or “very well” after completing the slice and dice activity (Figure 1).

Figure 1

How well participants perceived the topic before and after completing the slice and dice activity.



However, when tracking the growth by participant (Table 6), it appears the Summer 2014 group perceived increased gains in learning when compared to the 46% (7 of 15) of the 2012 group who perceived that their learning remained the same.

Table 6

Perceptions of Gain in Learning

Term	Increased by 2	Increased by 1	Remained the Same	Decreased by 1
Fall 2012	3	4	7	1
Summer 2014	0	4	1	0
Total	3	8	8	1

Of the eight participants, total, who perceived that their learning remained the same, half of them already felt like they understood the content “well” or “very well;” meaning, learning gains might be harder to measure if they already felt they understood the content (Table 7).

Table 7

Levels of No Learning

Term	Very Well	Well	Neither	Not Well	Not at all
Fall 2012	2	2	1	1	0
Summer 2014	0	0	1	0	0
Total	2	2	2	1	0

The concern, obviously, is with the three participants (15% of the total 20 student participants) who believed they did not understand the content and did not feel they learned anything completing the slice and dice activities.

The last question was open-ended and asked student participants to add any general comments about the slice and dice activities. The five responses covered a variety of topics; however, we could generalize negative and positive comments about large topics such as time, technology and affect (Table 8).

Table 8

Other Comments

Code	Fall 2012	Summer 2014	Total
Negative: time-consuming	P3, P7		2
Positive: technology	P2		1
Positive: affect	P13	P1	2
Positive: helpful	P7		1

When asked if they had anything else they would like to say to help us in this study, we had two participants who gave detailed responses. The first, Participant 2 (2012 section), said:

Please do this more often. As a technology major and senior preparing to graduate, I'm both excited to see that these sorts of actives [sic] are taking more ground in the classroom, as well as disappointed that I was not able to engage in more activities of this type during my own education.

The other, Participant 3 (2012), claimed:

This whole class and assignment is a waste of my time. I want to learn about films and watch them in class. I dont [sic] want to spend my time accomplishing the same amount of time staring at a wall for 6 hours a week. It's WAY too much work. It's a 312 INTRO class, not a graduate level editing or writing intensive course.

Participant 3 from 2012 was the participant who perceived the activity negatively across all of the surveys; they also claimed that they did not understand the concepts well (“not well”) to begin with and did not improve, could not transfer what they learned to another film (could apply with “extreme difficulty”), and found working with the technologies “very difficult.”

Discussion & Conclusions

Not only were participants generally successful in creating complex texts, but they also found slice and dice activities reinforced key formalistic concepts from the textbook. This section will consider some of the approaches that led to this conclusion. It may be that experience with social media and the availability of Web 2.0 tools have given students more casual practice with editing. For instance, pervasive smartphone ownership means students have more experience with using cameras than any previous generation. The availability of such technology might be one reason why this endeavor was much more successful than previous studies found. Simply, students are more comfortable reading and working with audiovisual texts and working with editing software, even if that software was not for editing video. Likewise, enough students had experience with video editing software and were able to help other students who needed help. Students were confident in their ability to use iMovie early in the semester, even though they had little experience with the software, because they felt familiar with software in general.

In designing this final assignment, we took the approach that many writing instructors do and scaffolded assignments to help students build skills to create increasingly complicated projects. Students were introduced to iMovie on the first day of class. Students then created film annotation assignments where they broke down a scene from their favorite film and annotated it

in iMovie. By the time students were expected to create mashups and short films, they had experience using the basic features in iMovie and had analyzed how different formal elements of film worked as they approached creating their own text.

Finally, reflection was key for these assignments. Students submitted reflections that asked them to explain formal choices made in their projects. These reflections were a major part of the final assignment. By the end of the course, students seemed to value the reflection and knowing that they would have to explain the choices that they made. This likewise required them to connect what they were doing with core themes addressed in readings and discussions.

Student expectations

In looking at the data collected during these courses, two major discussion points arise: students' confidence with technology and their expectations for a film course. The first aspect of this study that must be highlighted is how we think of students as users of technology and how they think about their own expertise with technology. Most of the students had little to no experience using video editing software, and even fewer had experience using video editing software in an educational setting. However, most of the students were overwhelmingly optimistic about their ability to master software quickly. By and large this was the case. All the students in these courses were able to meet the basic requirements of this assignment for their final project. They were able to edit different pieces of film together to make meaning. While only receiving very basic instructions on how to edit in iMovie, students were able to build on that knowledge to create more intricate films, incorporating sound and layered images. In the Summer 2014 course, where they had more liberty with their final project, students likewise used editing, filter, and light techniques to create complex short films. While students lacked formal

training in using iMovie, they were very comfortable with the idea of breaking video down into parts and recreating something new with them.

The second major issue surrounded student expectations. When students entered the course, their expectations did not meet the instructor's plans for course content or pedagogical strategies. While Old Dominion University does a good deal to introduce students to technology, and many of the professors within the English department are dedicated to teaching students to compose in a number of different media contexts, students come into a film class with the expectation that the majority of the workload for the course will be reading and watching films in class. While other institutions might factor in an extra hour into a film course with the expectation that class screenings will be held, our department does not. Students were able to access assigned films through popular streaming sites like Netflix or the school's library. Likewise, students in literature classes are expected to have come to class having read the course material. This marks a shift in how we see the use of class time in film courses now, and some students could see editing work as adding more work expectations on students. The data we collected here shows that while students do not expect editing to be part of the course, they were not generally opposed to it. Likewise, students who were open to doing these types of assignments found that working hands-on with films helped them to better understand the core concepts they tackled in their reading even though, as students also highlighted, the course instructors spent less time on traditional lecture and group discussion.

Material and legal considerations

We could not ethically share and suggest this pedagogical strategy without discussing various material and legal considerations associated with slicing and dicing film activities. Scholars teaching film have recognized cost as a significant problem for various types of

activities (Bell-Metereau, 1999; Boruskowski, 1985; Burt, 2003). Although it is now easier for both instructors and students to rent and screen films, we acknowledge that having students screen all the films outside of class, as well as gain access to and rip their favorite films, places a significant financial burden on the students. At least for required film screenings for all students, instructors may want to work with their librarians about purchasing and streaming films through the ID authenticated and password protected learning management systems most colleges now have.

We both comfortably feel that students slicing and dicing films fall squarely within the realm of fair use. However, to further protect students--especially those working with contemporary or extremely popular films, we suggest that students not publish their work outside of classroom spaces (both physical and virtual). The Society for Cinema and Media Studies' "Statement of Best Practices for Fair Use in Teaching for Film and Media Educators" (2008) argues that it is necessary for both faculty and students to use pieces of texts for teaching and student's own work and also discusses provision for film and media educators to circumnavigate DMCA's "anti-circumvention provision" (p. 160).

Overall, our slice and dice approach does demand a significant amount of class time. In the Fall 2012 course, this came at the sacrifice of lecture time. After reviews mentioned that students wished there were more lecture and discussion time, the Summer 2014 course incorporated more mini-lectures and discussion but watched fewer films. This hands-on approach to teaching film had its benefits and hindrances, but ultimately worked as a viable way to teach and reinforce principles of film for a general population of students interested in film.

Endnotes

1. By “ripping” we mean converting a film into an editable format.
2. In 1995, it was much more difficult for film instructors, like Tomasulo (1995), to make clips and bring them to the classroom.
3. Of note Henthorn was assigned an assignment similar to the Welsch (1997) activity in an undergraduate film class. This assignment encouraged her to become an academic and influences how she teaches today.
4. Many other disciplinary organizations also made this shift (e.g., Association of College and Research Libraries 2015; Mathematical Association of America and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics 2011; National Science Teachers Association 2011); however, we are both housed in Departments of English.
5. When we have included direct quotes from student’s responses to open-ended questions, we have left any spelling or other surface level irregularity as input by the student participant.

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Appendix A: Film Pedagogy, Initial Survey

1. Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire today. As was mentioned during the request for participation, your instructor, _____, as well as _____, are working on a project about whether or not students better learn concepts of film elements by hands-on editing activities with different films and film clips. Shelley and Jamie have regularly referred to these as “slicing and dicing” activities. I am hoping you can help us by sharing experiences and perceptions after completing these slicing and dicing activities.

If you agree to participate, you will complete two questionnaires tonight. The first is a general questionnaire about your expectations of teaching methods in a film class as well as your prior experience with film editing software. Then, after each slicing and dicing activity you will complete another questionnaire about your most recent slicing and dicing activity. Each of the questionnaires should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can choose not to complete the questionnaires or you can refuse to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable with. However, we do hope you will help ODU by answering as truthfully and completely as you can. Although the questionnaires are not anonymous, we are only asking for your names so that we can align your answers over the different questionnaire sets. No one will look at the results of any of the questionnaires until after final grades are submitted in December 2012. Once we have accessed the data, we will immediately replace your names with random pseudonyms. We will keep what we learn confidential and will use pseudonyms when reporting out data. The results of this study

will be both be used internally at ODU as well as presented at conferences and/or published in a journal.

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by _____ (Old Dominion University, Department of English, Batten Arts and Letters 5000; _____@odu.edu; 757-683-3997).

Statement of Consent

I understand that by completing this questionnaire, I am acknowledging that I have read the above information and have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers. I am also acknowledging that I have received a copy of this form for reference should I need the information contained herein.

I Understand and Give Consent

I Do Not Give Consent

2. Have you taken a film class before this prior to this class? yes no Other (please specify)

3. If yes, how many (and if you remember, what were their course prefixes, numbers, and titles).

4. If you have already taken a film class, what teaching and learning methods did that class engage (examples include reading, writing, lecture, discussion, group work, any technology facilitated activities, etc.)?

5. Prior to taking this course, did you have any expectations for what teaching and learning methods a film class would include (examples include reading, writing, lecture, discussion, group work, technology facilitated activities, etc.)?
6. Did you anticipate that you might use technology, such as video editing software, before entering this class? yes no
7. Do you have experience using digital editing software (handbrake, iMovie, Adobe Premiere) before this class? yes no Other (please specify)
8. If so, what software have you used and what types of video projects did you work on (person, professional, academic, civic, etc.)?
9. On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you feel using video editing software to create classroom assignments?
- 1 = very confident
- 2 = confident
- 3 = ambivalent
- 4 = unsure
- 5 = very unsure

Appendix B: Film Pedagogy, Slice and Dice Survey

1. *Same consent question as the first survey.*

2. Briefly describe the recent “slice and dice” activity you just completed. What were you asked to do? What technolog(ies) did you use? Why do you think the instructor asked you to complete this project? What do you think the instructor hoped you would (better) learn from this activity?

3. On a scale of one to five, how easy or difficult was it to use the technolog(ies)?

1 = very easy

2 = easy

3 = neither

4 = difficult

5 = very difficult

4. What was the most difficult thing about using the technolog(ies)?

5. On a scale of one to five, how engaging did you find this assignment engaging?

1 = very engaging

2 = engaging

3 = neither

4 = boring

5 = very boring

6. On a scale of one to five, how helpful was the assigned activity towards your learning the concept?

1 = very helpful

2 = helpful

3 = neither

4 = useless

5 = very useless

7. How and why do you think slicing and dicing the film caused you to engage the film and the course concept in a different way compared to more traditional reading, writing, lecturing, and discussing activities?

8. Did you realize something about this scene/film that you didn't know before?

yes

no

If yes, what?

9. On a scale of one to five, how well do you think you can apply what you learned in this specific context to other films?

1 = very easily

2 = easily

3 = neither

4 = with difficulty

5 = with extreme difficulty

10. On a scale of one to five, how did you understand the chapter content before the slice/dice activity?

1 = very well

2 = well

3 = neither

4=-not well

5=not at all

11. On a scale of one to five, how did you understand the chapter content after this slice/dice activity?

1 = very well

2 = well

3 = neither

4=-not well

5=not at all

12. Is there anything else you want to share about slicing and dicing film activities?