

Teaching Millennials & Generation Z: Engagement through Film

Dory Hoffman
Adjunct Professor
English Department



Introduction & Overview

- Students from Millennial and Generation Z have a wealth of skills when it comes to filmmaking, social media, & social justice
- Many of these students are told not to use their phones in class instead of being taught *how* to use them
- Nurturing these skillsets through student short films allows students to work on skills needed in the new workforce landscape
- This presentation covers simple steps on how to teach students to make short films
- I use short films to spread awareness about bullying and suicide prevention and this assignment can be catered to any discipline



Power of Filmmaking



- The creative process of filmmaking enhances student comprehension of material, promotes creativity, teaches problem-solving, teamwork, and public speaking skills
- Filmmaking also utilizes multiple intelligences, allowing students to use visual, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, mathematical, naturalistic, visual and musical skills
- Students get to share their films on social media and join the larger conversation
- Students who have participated in this project have gone on to make feature-length films, write screenplays, and start their own YouTube channels

Making Short Films: The Assignment

1. Show a documentary. I show *Bully* (2011), which raises awareness about bullying & suicide prevention. Depending on your discipline, you may show a science, law, or nature documentary
2. Lead a class discussion on the documentary. You can find discussion questions for the film online or write your own. Ask the students what they learned from the film
3. Discuss the assignment. Students will work in groups of 2 or 3 and make a short 5-minute film. Students can make the film in the form of a movie trailer, documentary, or fictional story
4. Assign each group a different theme from the film so the projects are all different
5. Review free filmmaking apps like iMovie and Splice. Students will likely have suggestions
6. Have students work on their scripts outside of class using storyboards or documentary questions

Making Short Films: The Assignment

7. Designate one class session as a filming day. Encourage students to invite friends, family, and peers to help with the films. Most students enjoy the independence of filming on their own. Be available to help supervise student filmmaking and scriptwriting
 8. Designate 2-3 class sessions for screenings of the student films. Have students introduce their films, show their films, and have a Q&A with the class. Each group gets ten minutes to present
 9. As students are presenting, take notes on their presentation, and assign grades. (This provides a nice break from grading essays, mid-terms, tests, etc. as you can grade as the students present)
 10. Encourage students to share links to their films via YouTube and use appropriate hashtags
- *You don't need filmmaking experience to teach this lesson. Students just need one person in the group with a smart-phone and they can start filming! Please email me for more detailed instructions

Student Outcomes and Benefits

- I have taught this assignment for several years
- Students tend to get excited to take a break from traditional lecture/notetaking lessons
- This project also gives us a break as we can catch up on emails, grading papers, student assessment, etc. during the showing of the film and student work days
- There are also possibilities for positive feedback through awards shows. We have our own “Oscars” where we vote on films for awards like best soundtrack, editing, acting, writing, etc.
- We have an award for each group so everyone is recognized for their talents. During our “Oscars” which are 10-15 minutes, we have snacks, music, and it’s a lot of fun!



Student Testimonials from MTC

- “This film project changed my perspective on bullying. A lot of us think these *monsters* are just that, when in reality, they can be just as damaged as the victims they attack. This project helped me expand my knowledge of how we can prevent bullying.”
- “I got to use my screenwriting and acting skills and had a great time working with my partners. Since the project, we have made a feature-length film raising awareness on suicide and bullying prevention. We showed a film at a local film festival!”



Student Films & Helpful Links

- Bully Project Lesson Plan:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/10Mme3gIRciR_IfQM11B2YzftrzUDNUmp/view?usp=sharing
- Student film #1: Montgomery College, Maryland
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yJ3cRm87-g>
- Student film #2: Midlands Technical College, SC <https://bit.ly/2Tscwc5>
- Student film #3: Midlands Technical College, SC
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJ9eYl6Rf60&t=261s>

Thank You & Questions

- Special thanks to all my students who participated in these film projects throughout the years!
- Thank you all for attending my presentation. Please let me know if you have questions. I hope you will consider participating in the Bully Project or finding another documentary in your discipline
- Safe travels! - Dory Hoffman

