

**DAVI THORBURN:** In thinking about how the course has to evolve given the availability of all this new technology, one thing I've especially thought about-- worried about, actually-- is how much of my own lecture material, which I now have on video to make available to them, as against my live performance, and whether my live performance is even necessary at all. How does it differ from-- and I still haven't worked that out.

For two semesters now, I have taught the course with a combination of live lectures and video lectures. And I've asked the students to tell me in commentaries whether they saw much difference, and whether they preferred one to the other, or whether they had strong feelings. And so far, the testimony has been, meh. They don't seem too interested in the question, which makes me a little nervous, actually.

So my feeling is that it's still an open question. One thing I definitely have decided I will be able to do with this video material is using it in other courses. If I am in an advanced course in film, and students haven't taken my earlier film course, I can send them to this material and have them use it. So it's immensely valuable as a teaching tool. But how to integrate it into the existing course remains a conundrum I haven't quite figured out.

As I've begun to work on this, now it's been some years since I've started to have some video lectures available. I think I realize that I was naive in imagining that the transition would be easy, that moving into a video format was simply a matter of transferring what I say, because in fact, the live environment turns out to be more central and more important. And my feelings as I'm in the live environment turn out to be more essential and more important than they might otherwise be.

There's something about being in a live environment that affects me, and I think other teachers, maybe not all teachers, but other teachers very deeply. I used to have the fantasy when I was in front of a large audience of students, maybe as many as 100 or 150, I had the delusion or illusion that I was in touch with every student in the class, and that every single one of them was paying attention, and then when they didn't, I could feel it, and that I could see there was a student who would stop paying attention. I would somehow walk in that direction of the class or get that student's attention.

Now, I'm sure it was a fantasy because how could you be aware of 100 students? But I had

the illusion that I was aware of them. I was certainly aware of many of them. I was aware of them as individuals. I was aware of whethet-- and I felt I had them wrapped.

And when I felt I was losing them, I would change pace. Maybe it has something to do with a theatrical aspect to me that really doesn't help much with being a good teacher. But maybe it does help with being a good teacher, and that maybe good teachers do have to have a bit of the ham in them and like being in front of audiences.

This is a special problem for the Western, because it celebrates American individualism so powerfully. The iconic scene of the Western in which two men wearing gun square off against each other, and the quicker one survives, that scene of the quick draw, and of the [? dif ?] and the dusty street, can be said to be a kind of embodiment of these values in which you have to rely on yourself.

You can't rely on someone else. You can't rely on the government. You can't rely on the Sheriff. You can't rely on the police. You can't rely on your neighbors. You have to trust yourself.

And in fact, one of the ways you can see the power of these Western mythologies operating, as it seems to me in some sense, one of the great divides in the States today over the question of guns and gun control is partly grounded in these myths of individualism, that the Western mythology has been promulgating since before the advent of the movies.

And I think part of what makes my teaching good is that I'm in a kind of trance when I'm in front of a class, in the sense that I am utterly oblivious to what I look like, I know for one thing. I have done teachers nightmare kinds of things, like having my shirt unbuttoned without realizing it, or coming in with my hair incredibly askew without knowing about it.

Once I gave a lecture at Yale. I had young children at the time. And I had a child. My wife was with the two other children. I had to take a child to a doctor.

We took him to the doctor. But I had to go to give my lecture. So I took him into the lecture hall. And I sat him down in the corner of the lecture. And he was about seven years old.

And he sat nicely in the seat for a little while. I wasn't paying attention to him. Then he climbed up. I was lecturing on a stage.

And he climbed up on the stage. And he went behind me. And he sat in a big chair behind me.

And he made faces.

And the students begin to laugh. And I couldn't understand what was going on. But it taught me a great lesson in the theatrical reality of the lecture hall. So I've come more fully to understand that things that are hard to articulate or that I at least had not much thought about, certainly have not been written about in pedagogical literature, about the ambiance of the live classroom has some effect on lecturing.

I mean it should have effect in smaller classrooms even more fully, I think. But for lectures, I think it's important too. And the transition to purely video lectures loses that. How big a loss that is, or whether that loss can be compensated for in other ways is a good question.