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Instructional Innovation Grant: TLI

### I. Rationale

Several courses offered by the Media Arts department (most for our own majors, but also a Core Curriculum course for non-majors and a corresponding Honors course) demand that students are exposed to, and interact with, diverse media content. It is important that these examples be very recent, often unfolding in real time. It is equally important that Media Arts students develop facility with working in a multi-media environment as they prepare for careers in various communications fields. This proposal addresses both of these needs.

All Media Arts courses would be improved and enriched by ready access to a variety of media. It is particularly important for students in Media Arts to become familiar and comfortable with the process of accessing content from a variety of media, and, more importantly, to gain the ability to evaluate content according to its provenance. While most students today have a high degree of technical facility, their critical judgment skills are often poor.

Teachers' efforts to provide multimedia experiences which are well integrated with their lecture material currently involve assembling a patchwork of gear, cables, electronics brought from our homes, material displayed on tiny laptop screens (Also brought from home) and other and similarly unwieldy arrangements only Rube Goldberg could love.

This is troublesome, time-consuming, and distracting for both the teacher and the students. Designing a well-integrated presentation in this situation is very difficult, often resulting in media presentations, which are awkward appendages to a lecture.

One course that particularly demands access to current media content is CMA 6, Media Ethics. Because all media are changing with remarkable rapidity, and new media, (the internet, cell phone cameras, digital video...) in particular, are creating novel ethical problems almost daily, it is critical that students have the opportunity to apply the ethical principles and thinking processes they are learning in class to content drawn from today's media environment.

Our intention, therefore, is to develop a prototypical multimedia curriculum for this existing course (Current syllabus attached), which is required of all students majoring in any Media Arts program, and at the same time to develop a model and a multimedia system that will enable us to modify several other courses in a similar way. Also, once the Media Ethics course is up and running, we will explore the option of a hybrid (partly on-line, partly classroom) and then an entirely on-line version of this class, and then several other classes that ought to make consistent use of multimedia materials. These are critical pedagogical steps that must be taken in order to educate Media Arts students who are prepared for careers as media professionals, which is our department's primary mission. It will also help us meet the expectations of the increasingly technology-savvy students who enroll in our programs. Finally, a multimedia-based version of CMA 6 will lend itself to larger numbers of students per class, thus fewer sections, once the course is established successfully.

## **II. Methodology**

The process of developing a technology-based course must always begin with the curriculum, not the technology. Therefore, the first step in this process, already underway, will be to review the syllabi, texts and other materials now being used in all sections of Media Ethics (4 per year, taught by three different faculty members), in order to create a unified, strong curriculum which can utilize diverse media content to the best advantage, and also remain flexible in its ability to incorporate current media issues and events as subject matter.

While the curriculum continues to be refined during the course of the Spring 07 semester, we will review technologies now available at Post for the purpose of capturing, editing and presenting media content, and critically analyze multimedia courses offered on the campus, and perhaps elsewhere as well. We will begin the latter effort by contacting each academic department, as well as IT staff, and gathering information about media-based course offerings. We will then contact faculty members who have developed these courses and discuss their experience, teaching strategies and presentation design with them.

We will identify the most effective technologies for our purposes by matching the curriculum objectives of Media Ethics to the capabilities of various technologies, always using our curriculum as a starting point. Teaching outcomes tend to be poor when technology drives the course content, no matter how captivating the technology may be. While we will consult experts on technology choices, based on our teaching needs several capabilities are clearly required and would enable us to create a start-up version of the class, specifically, the ability to:

- Capture digitally, store and edit video, as well as present it in a classroom;
- Transmit video in real time in the classroom;
- Digitally record, edit and present audio material;
- Transmit audio in real time to the classroom through speakers;
- Download or scan print materials and present them as readable to an entire class through projection.
- Download or digitally record, store, edit and present film in the classroom;
- Format integrate and organize this material in the context of a multimedia lecture/presentation
- Upload the course material for on-line instruction or podcasts.

Of particular importance is preparing students to carry out assignments, which require them to access course content from various media independently. It is therefore important that we address students' access to media on campus and at home. While most students are well equipped with the latest digital technology, there are substantial numbers who do not own or have access to, or are uncomfortable with these devices. This is particularly true of non-traditional students.

Thus, in addition to consulting with other faculty and technology experts, we will conduct a survey of Media Arts students to determine their current media access, media use and media ownership. This survey has already been prepared and will be

administered to all students enrolled in sections of Media Ethics for Spring 07. A copy of the survey is attached.

### **III. Needed Resources and their Costs**

At this point it is possible to identify equipment essential to launching this course. Other equipment may be identified as necessary as plans progress. Some items could certainly be acquired later and/or from the department's operating budget. Overall, our intention is to create a largely portable version of a "smart" classroom that can be shared by Media Arts faculty for this, and eventually several, classes. Since "smart" classrooms are in very short supply in the Humanities building, we will select our technology so that it can be easily moved to a classroom for presentation purposes, and used by the faculty member for preparation.

Laptop MacBook Pro G5 with DVD capability, iLife and iWork(separate) software.	
.....	\$2,000.00
Projection Screen .....	\$400.00
Ipod with video capability (The department already has ipod speakers).....	\$250.00
Ipod AV cable.....	\$25.00
DVD /CD burner, Titanium Toast.....	\$99.95
iWorks software.....	\$99.00
Total*.....	\$3,372.95

\* While this amount exceeds the maximum for the TLI grant, the Media Arts Department is prepared to contribute.

### **IV. Timeline (Including assessment procedures)**

Spring 07- (pre-grant period) devise and carry out survey (attached) of Media Ethics students concerning their access to and facility with various media technologies and software; conduct follow-up discussions with students.

Summer 07: Continue refining curriculum, based on Spring 07 teaching input, gather information about additional technology options, capabilities and costs.

Sept.-Nov. 07: Visit and analyze classes on campus now using multimedia presentations. Conduct discussions with instructors, and other experts available on campus. Interview students where possible.

Nov.-Dec. 07: Create and administer a special course evaluation for use with students in current CMA 6 classes, focusing on the current role of technology in the class and their learning experiences. Construct focus groups drawn from these classes to explore student attitudes and expectations regarding multimedia course materials and their ability to work independently on media technology -dependent assignments

Dec. 07-Jan. 08: Acquire needed media technologies and related equipment; arrange for on-campus training for instructors if needed.

Jan.-May 07: Conduct sections of CMA 6 using multimedia materials. Repeat CMA 6 evaluation procedures described above with these students at the end of the semester. Their responses will be used as a basis to revise curriculum and media assignments in preparation for Fall 08.

May-July 07: Analyze course outcomes in terms of student grades, evaluations and focus group responses, compared with students in the “ old” version of the class as taught in the Fall 07 semester. Make changes in curriculum and teaching methods as needed.

#### **V: Outcomes:**

For students-

- Improved learning of ethical problem solving in “real world” contexts
- Greater interest and awareness of ethical dimensions of contemporary media content
- Greater awareness of the impact of each technology on ethical situations
- Increase independent learning

For faculty-

- Greater involvement with, and awareness of, new technologies, which will positively influence the department as a whole
- Develop a model for use in several other courses in the department
- Create the foundation for an on-line version of this class and eventually of others, which could be utilized throughout the university

#### **VI. Assessment**

Assessment procedures are delineated in the timeline above. These consist of student surveys; focus groups and achievement analyses, comparing current instructional practices with the new media based teaching.

In addition, we will gather information from instructors, using a checklist followed by one-on-one interviews about level of student involvement, attendance, comprehension and performance. Special emphasis will be placed on the question of whether use of media technologies increases students’ willingness and ability to engage in independent learning and thinking about ethical problems.

All measures will be used initially in Spring 07 and Fall 07 in order to establish a basis for evaluating Spring 08. The purpose is to determine whether the class has

been improved in any or all of the outcomes dimensions by the integrated multimedia presentation.

Specific instruments to be developed (in addition to the existing student evaluations) are:

- Student questionnaire concerning the effectiveness of use of media materials in the class;
- Instructor check sheet and follow-up interview concerning student performance (see above)
- Student focus groups –questions to be derived from questionnaire responses.
- Comparison of all results from Fall 07 to those of spring 08. This assessment will continue beyond the grant period as we refine the course, and expand to other courses.