TEACHING VISUAL MEDIA LITERACY: AN EXAMINATION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL VERMONT
- VISUAL IMAGERY AND FILMMAKING

A Thesis in
Art Education
by
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ABSTRACT

In this study of the work and experiences of high school students as they develop 21st century learning skills, I, as teacher-researcher, interpret and analyze digital imagery produced and analyzed by the students in my courses during the 2015-2016 school year. This study is intended to highlight the importance of visual media literacy coupled with technology as a tool for revealing meaning in and from public, and student generated imagery. This study uses narrative inquiry paired with action research because these methods study experience through storytelling. The high school at the center of this study is a relatively small, rural school in northeastern United States working intentionally to incorporate 21st century learning into curriculum instruction, and student learning. Through examining my own teaching and the work of my students I make connections between 21st century learning skills, arts-based education, and technologies; and I stress the importance of decoding and analyzing corporate and student generated visual imagery.

Through collaboration and discussion I guide students toward becoming visually literate, an important skill for communication and a way to understand and navigate the increasingly image-saturated culture in which they live.
Table of Contents

Figures ........................................................................................................................................ VI

Acknowledgments .......................................................................................................................VIII

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

Context of the Study: A Need for Digital Media Literacy ................................................. 2

Significance of the Study .............................................................................................................. 6

Chapter 2: Literature Review on Teaching Visual Media Literacy ........................................ 9

3R’s X 7C’s = 21st Century Learning ......................................................................................... 13

Chapter 3: Methodology: Narrative Inquiry Methodology with Action Research .......... 16

Delimitations ................................................................................................................................. 17

Chapter 4: Analysis of Becoming Media Literate: Tech-Tuned and Media Fluent .......... 20

Decoding Advertisements and Visual Imagery ................................................................. 33

Digital Storytelling and Independent Learning ................................................................. 41

Learning By Doing ......................................................................................................................... 45

StoryHackVT ................................................................................................................................. 48

Chapter 5: Findings: Incorporating Visual Literacy Education into High School .......... 55

References ..................................................................................................................................... 61

Appendices

Appendix A: Thesis Questionnaire ............................................................................................... 65

Appendix B: IRB Exemption Determination .............................................................................. 68

Appendix C: Disney Remix Assignment Sheet .......................................................................... 69
Appendix D: Mickey Mouse Monopoly Viewing Companion ........................................ 70

Appendix E: Six Keys to Screenwriting ..................................................................... 71

Appendix F: Screenplay Format Worksheet ............................................................... 72
Figures

Figure 1: The 21st Century Knowledge-and-Skills Rainbow. Source: Partnership for 21st Century Learning.

Figure 2: J. J. Abrams Directors Project screenshot. Created by a Film Art II Student in 2015.

Figure 3: The pie chart presents the survey findings of the learning styles that the students in my courses identified as their preferred mode of study.

Figure 4: Screenshot of a Twitter feed class discussion during the 2015 Oscar Awards Ceremony.

Figure 5: Five-minute film analysis from a Film Art I student. Grade 12, 2015.

Figure 6: Data from a survey on technology in the classroom given to students in Digital Imaging and both Film Studies courses during the 2015-2016 academic year showing Internet access and YouTube use outside of school.

Figure 7: Gender Ads Project - Decoding Advertisements worksheet.

Figure 8: The Bubble Project - Students working collaboratively to comment on and respond to advertisements from spanning several decades.

Figure 9: Reproduction of Leonardo Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, used in the Bubble Project assignment.

Figure 10: 1982 LEGO advertisements, used in the Bubble Project assignment.

Figure 11: Students work together to complete their class’s short. The script was written by a student who gave instruction to their classmates acting in the film or doing camera work.

Figure 12: The P21 Framework represents both 21st century student outcomes (represented by the arches of the rainbow) and the support systems (represented by the pools at the bottom) (Framework for 21st Century Learning - P21 2007).

Figure 13. Student worked in a small group activity for the Citizen Kane Keys to Screenwriting assignment.

Figure 14. Student work in the same small groups as activity one for the second part of the Citizen Kane Keys to Screenwriting assignment.
Figure 15: A High School junior, enrolled in the Digital Imaging course and who intends to pursue a degree in digital arts, taking notes at the Fall 2015 Woodstock Digital Media Conference in Woodstock, Vermont.

Figure 16: StoryHackVT 2014 Team Photo - These five participants worked together to create a multimodal story in a 24-hour time period for the digital storytelling contest, created in 2012.

Figure 17: 2014 StoryHackVT team, brainstorm and collaborate using digital technologies to write their script.

Figure 18: The team setting up for their presentation on September 28, 2014, after working for 24 hours straight on their project and presentation.

Figure 19: Day 1 on the set of Bitter Losses, SC’s senior project.

Figure 20: SC behind the camera, framing the shot and directing the actors.

Figure 21: SC (far left) outlines his vision for the scene, and his plan for the shot.

Figure 22: Data from a survey on technology in the classroom given to students in Digital Imaging and both Film Studies courses during the 2015-2016 academic year showing Internet access and YouTube use outside of school.

Figure 23: Screenshot of a student’s front page for a Film Art II history timeline and presentation.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I, metaphorically, sit in a unique place as art educator at the high school where I teach. My art courses are not standardized. I am the only person in the building with the credentials to teach Digital Imaging and Film Studies. Because of this individuality, I am not bound to a curriculum as core classes are. I do not have federally mandated standardized testing for my students, and many students see my classes as a respite from the rigors of their core course work. This combination of liberating factors gives me freedom to teach the National Core Arts Standards for Media Arts through a 21st century learning framework. This study is intended to highlight the importance of visual media literacy coupled with technology as a tool for revealing meaning in and from the public, and student generated imagery. By reflecting on my year-long courses to collect data, I was able to build a close relationship with my students, enabling me to collect meaningful empirical data. The curriculum for Digital Imaging and Film Studies is a collection of computer-based assignments, mainly driven by a final product, a digital work of art. In an effort to understand how my students use and interact with media day to day, I distributed a Google Survey (see Appendix A). The survey was optional, and did not affect the high school students’ grade. Throughout the study, I documented experiences of learning as they display student growth when studying and analyzing visual imagery.

The study begins with a literature review focusing on the research and importance of providing students with 21st century media literacy education, from this point it moves
into the need and importance of teaching digital media literacy, and the methodology and process in which I researched and collected data. It then moves into my analysis of data by looking at the work of my students from multiple learning environments in and outside the classroom, and culminates with my findings regarding how to incorporate visual media literacy in a 21st century learning environment.

**Context of Study: A Need for Digital Media Literacy**

The need to incorporate digital media literacy into the art and core education classroom is imperative. The current educational system in the United States was created through three major historical shifts in society that have left residue in today’s schools. The early educational practices of an agrarian society shape the school calendar we use today. The Industrial Age brought about notions of efficiency and standardization. The current Knowledge Age values access to empirical data. “It has been observed that today’s education systems operate on an agrarian calendar (summers off to allow students to work in the fields), an industrial time clock (fifty-minute classroom periods marked by bells), and a list of curriculum subjects invented in the Middle Ages (language, math, science, and the arts)” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 12). When the Industrial Revolution began in the 18th century, the U.S. economy was based primarily on manufacturing. Today, the U.S. has shifted to a society “based on data, information, knowledge, and expertise” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 4). Although manufactured products will always be

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1 The high school discussed in this research uses 84 minute class periods and classes meet every other day.
needed, the Knowledge Age has changed production processes, which has ramifications for art and design education.

Media tools and an understanding of visual media literacy is a necessity for today’s students. Prior to the 21st century, literacy was defined by a person’s ability to achieve basic educational skills. These were known as the 3R’s; reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic. But with the rapid change in technology and the introduction of online resources, the concept of literacy has been redefined. Just as reading was made possible and necessary by the printing press, and arithmetic essential to the introduction of money, computer technologies are changing the way society makes sense of the world (Collins, 2009). Today, to be literate involves visual media literacy, and refers to a person who cannot only read and write, but interpret, evaluate, collaborate, and navigate a multi-dimensional, fast-paced digital environment (Chauvin, 2003). “Students must become literate in the understanding of visual images. Our children must learn how to spot a stereotype, isolate a social cliché, distinguish facts from propaganda, analysis from banter, and important news from coverage,” says Ernest Boyer (1989), past president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Center for Media Literacy). Students are using digital tools and technology without being asked to do so. When they go home and Google an answer to a homework question or search for images related to an area of study, the world pours into their lap through the Internet. Digital literacies can be taught and tracked through digital means. similar to the ones I use in my classroom (Schoology, Google Classroom, Youtube, Dropbox, Google Forms, and Google Drive), to teach and investigate visual media literacy.
In my first year teaching (2011-2012) most students and teachers were still using pen and paper to teach or complete assignments. Even I used paper rubrics and assignment sheets to provide feedback and introduce new information. At the beginning of my second year, the administration recognized a need to improve the feedback loop to students and began providing professional development opportunities to learn the Google suite. I have since installed Dropbox accounts for Digital Imaging and Film Studies to share course documents and act as a shared drive. I have also converted my entire Digital Imaging and Film Studies course curriculums to the online web based learning management system, Schoology, in an effort to connect tech savvy teenagers who use technology on a daily basis to complete work and do research with the information and standards outlined in the course syllabus. As the students and I became more and more comfortable with the technology available I began pushing my students further, using the software as a means of collaboration, analysis, and organization.

The high school at the time of this study had 805 students enrolled during the 2015-2016 academic year, of that population 72% were White, 1% were African American, 9% were American Indian, 1% were Hispanic, and 17% were multi-racial. The student body is varied socio-economically, showing that 52% of the student population participates in the state funded free and reduced lunch program (see Table A).²

The school services students who are raised on farms; whose parents are physicians; students who are from affluent professional families; and students whose families are on government assistance. For some, a high school diploma may be the highest edu-

cational marker in their family. Teaching this eclectic student body can sometimes be a challenge; however, teachers can learn to communicate their content area in the language and style their students understand as digital natives making the learning and classroom expectations relevant to the learner and more in sync with the demands of our continually evolving technical society (Collins, 2009).

This school is working intentionally to incorporate 21st century learning skills into curriculum, instruction, and student learning. Having spent much of my life in an urban area of the country, moving to a small northeastern town has been a big change. The high school in this study has a maple sugar house on the premises and the agriculture students lead cows past my classroom window regularly. I have overheard many conversations in my own classroom and bellowing through the halls referencing advertisements, tv shows, famous stars or imagery seen in print and digital media in comparison to themselves and/or the environments in which they live, proof that media literacy education is important to help the students sift through the ever growing amount of media information that students are bombarded with daily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Student Population</th>
<th>% Using FRL</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Multi-Racial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missisquoi Valley Union High School</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enosburg Jr/ Sr High School</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellows Free Academy (St. Albans)</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

World Media Group, LLC. (2015)
Significance of Study

Today’s students are often referred to as the digital generation, or as Marc Prensky (2001) designates, *Digital Natives*, with Internet access in the palm of their hands they are consuming an incredible amount of media and information on a daily basis. Fifteen years ago, Prensky (2001) stated that students can be described as “native speakers” of today’s digital language [that] we have access to [such as] devices and systems that were unimaginable just twenty years ago (p. 1). Access to, and use of, mobile devices continue to become a part of many who live in the United States. Visual literacy is the ability to critically view and analyze imagery (to ask questions and uncover the meaning behind an image message or advertisers intended meaning), create or remix images, and make judgments based upon thoughts and ideas gained through the experience empowering the viewer to become media literate through deconstruction and analysis.

Students interact with technology daily, if not minute-by-minute; in fact adolescent-age students spend as many as twelve hours a day engaged with media (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2010). Use of social media and the consumption of visual imagery and videos accessible online inform students’ perceptions of the world. In a study on cell-phone activity, female college students spend an average of ten hours a day on their mobile devices and male college students spend close to eight hours a day on their mobile devices, potentially derailing their academic performance (Roberts, Yaya, & Manolis, 2014). Many students constantly use social networking and video sharing (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter). They also, use apps like Snap Chat, Instagram, Vine, and Tumblr on smartphones and mobile devices. Teachers also consume mass media and use educa-
tional apps like the Google Suite, Schoology, Blackboard, and grade book applications.

Through this deluge of technology and media, students and teachers alike need to be vigilantly aware of what they are consuming and producing through the art making process, how they are interpreting the information consumed and how it is incorporated into the core of their learning.

In the 2014-2015 school year the school revised its cell phone and electronic device policy, which asks students to refrain from having their devices out during educational time. The policy states:

In order to maintain focus on an academic experience of [a high level] and quality, students’ cell phones and other personally owned devices used for communication and entertainment are not to be used in any office, class, ART [academic round table], study hall or other academic setting unless permission is specifically granted and its use [is] defined by a social contract or a supervising adult.

In my classroom, I ask students to use personal technology, computers, and the Internet to complete assignments, watch instructional videos, and access their Google Drives and our Google Classroom. By having a dialogue surrounding responsible use of technology, we increase student awareness of these devices and build trust and relationships in the learning space. However, teachers and staff have misinterpreted the school’s policy in ways that have resulted in inconsistencies. Not being digital natives, some teachers have not recognized the students’ ability to compartmentalize the use of their mobile devices. Digital natives can
differentiate between technology use for pleasure verses technology use as an educational resource and/or learning tool. For example, “a growing chorus of students say they are required to step back in time when they enter the school building each morning, powering down the productivity, learning and connectedness tools they use outside of school and that many adults now take for granted,” as stated by Julie Evans, chief executive officer of Project Tomorrow (Jolls, 2012, p. 7). If we do not embrace and re-evaluate our systems for technology use to parallel how students use it for their learning, friction and tension between the students and teachers will continue to rise and become more of a problem to students’ learning.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review on Teaching Visual Media Literacy

We are exposed to hundreds, even thousands of images and ideas coming from all avenues of technology: television, movies, websites, social networks, games, direct mail, billboards, and more. The media and images they produce is no longer shaping our culture, it has become our culture (Thoman, 2004). People who own smart phones or other mobile devices are walking around with their heads in a screen experiencing a virtual world instead of the world around them. Douglas Rushkoff (1999) has called the current generation “screen-agers” because they move through their daily lives on a series of screens that are being accessed and changed constantly (p. 19).

The National Core Media Arts Standards (NCMAS)\(^3\) is part of the framework of my research.

The National Core Arts Standards are framed by a definition of artistic literacy that includes philosophical foundations and lifelong goals, artistic processes and creative practices, anchor and performance standards that students should attain, and model cornerstone assessments by which they can be measured. The connective threads of this conceptual framework are designed to be understood by all stakeholders and, ultimately, to ensure success for both educators and students in the real world. (Conceptual Framework | National Core Arts Standards, 2014)

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\(^3\) The National Core Arts Standards are a voluntary group of standards developed by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. The Media Art Standards are a subset of these standards. [http://tinyurl.com/px4a9rm](http://tinyurl.com/px4a9rm)
I used the NCMAS to evaluate learning that promotes analysis, evaluation, and production. In this study, students evaluated how their personal values and point of view are included or excluded, from messages; how media can influence belief systems and behavior; and how to use digital technology to complete student work. I use student-generated examples, documented experiences, and challenges that students have addressed as the nonfiction texts for my research. In chapters 4 and 5, I provide documentation and anecdotal reflections connecting students’ school experiences with those outside the classroom.

The Partnership for 21st Century Learning is an online resource for parents, teachers, school administrators, and anyone who is interested in weaving their teaching with 21st century skills. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning’s vision and mission states:

- All learners need and deserve 21st century learning opportunities to thrive as tomorrow’s leaders, workers, and citizens.

- Learning takes place throughout life in many places and spaces. From birth through their careers, learners need a broad range of experiences that develop their skills, dispositions and abilities to succeed. A strong foundation for success is rooted in learning that happens in and out of school.

- 21st century learning environments and opportunities are essential to prepare all students for the challenge of work, life, and citizenship in the 21st century and beyond, as well as ensure ongoing innovation in our economy and for the health of our democracy.

One of the literacies the 21st century learning framework highlights is Information, Communication and Technology Literacy (ICT) (P21, Framework Definitions). With ICT Literacy, students are expected to use technology as a tool in their research, organization,
social interactions, and communication through media and imagery. People need to know
how to use the knowledge they have acquired from years of education by being able to
think critically, apply knowledge to new situations, analyze, collaborate, problem solve,
and make decisions. In today’s world, a collection of advertisements and imagery pro-
vides students and teachers with a nearly limitless resource for real-world learning
(Thoman, 2004). In my research of media literacy, I found group labels such as early and
late adopters (Prensky, 2001), digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001), screen-agers
(Rushkoff, 199), luddites, and digital natives (Prensky, 2001). In today’s schools, we see
students who are truly self motivated; students who go through the motions, but pass, and
students who tune-out entirely (Prensky, 2005). Digital natives are a group that I am most
concerned with as a high school art teacher. They find the devices stashed away in their
pockets much more interesting than what is presented in the classroom. So how do teach-
ers engage this group? With more and more personal devices in the hands of our student
body their mantra is becoming “engage me, or enrage me” (Prensky, 2005, p. 60). Teens
today have not experienced life without technology. To ignore this media rich generation
is shortchanging them. Activities that involve creating media messages for our students
honed skills for core classes as well as fulfill their arts education requirement.

Media literacy can help students develop critical thinking skills. It is a process
that explores questions about the imagery students experience every day. Online re-
sources are a large part of the Design and Film Studies courses offered at the high school
participating in this study. Two of the websites accessed by students enrolled in the Digi-
tal Imaging course are The Gender Ads Project\(^4\) and The Bubble Project.\(^5\) The Gender Ads Project website provides students with a place to access advertisements and imagery from around the world spanning many decades. The Bubble Project is a project in social activism that encourages anyone to fill out paper thought bubble templates with an expression, free from censorship, as a way to share personal thoughts, reactions, and most importantly, for imagination and fun. The project encourages the user to fill and attach speech bubbles over the top of advertisements all over the world, as a way of taking back public spaces now cluttered with advertisements. When engaging in critical analysis of visual imagery Thoman and Jolls (2005b) outline five key questions that viewers should ask themselves when looking at media imagery.

1. Who created the message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might people understand this message differently from me?
4. Why is this message being sent?
5. What lifestyle, value, and points of view are represented in - or omitted from - this message?

These questions attempt to put all individuals, no matter their background or socioeconomic status, in charge of their learning, asking them to take an active role in accessing answers to personal questions and acquiring new knowledge and skills in doing so. In an article by Cooper Moore and Redmond (2014) they define media literacy “as a series of communication competencies … [that] empowers people to be critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language, and

\(^4\) The Gender Ads Project was created by Scott Lukas, Ph.D. in 2002.

\(^5\) The Bubble Project was created by graphic designer Ji Lee in 2005. It came from his frustration with being confronted with excessive aggressive advertisements all over New York City.
sound” (p. 10). Media literacy skills are becoming more and more important with the proliferation of media technology that youth are being exposed to, regardless of socioeconomic station.

3R’s X 7C’s = 21st Century Learning

With the rapid change in technology and the introduction of online resources, the concept of literacy has been redefined. Consider the 3R’s (reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmatic) as the most basic educational skills needed by students, and multiply them by the 7Cs, which include:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Creativity and innovation
- Collaboration, teamwork, and leadership
- Cross-cultural understanding
- Communications, information and media Literacy
- Computing and ICT literacy
- Career and learning self-reliance

This is a useful formula for successful learning in the 21st century (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, pp. 176-177). The 21st Century Knowledge-and-Skills Rainbow (see Figure 1) shows one third of the framework focuses on information literacy, media literacy, and information technology literacy (ITC). In the 21st Century, the age of information, we are seeing a growing importance for people of all ages to become fluent in media and technology literacies. Whether an adult or student working from home, at a school, or in the community, there is an increase in the need to develop abilities to access information quickly and efficiently, evaluate information and imagery critically and completely, and use information accurately and creatively.
“Students will spend all their adult lives in a multitasking, multifaceted, technology driven, diverse and vibrant world—they must arrive equipped to do so,” notes the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in its report, *Learning for the 21st Century* (2003, p. 4). Schools are beginning to take the challenge of teaching media literacy seriously.

Schools, like the one where I teach, are being transformed into places to acquire knowledge in an environment that fosters exploration, questioning, and experimentation. Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1970), stated that teaching must be different than “banking” (p. 73). No longer is it expected that teachers fill their students’ with information about a specific subject matter. Visual media literacy education and 21st century learning recognizes that teachers do not have to be a “sage on the stage,” but the “guide on the side” (King, 1993, p. 31). Today’s multimedia culture provides students and teachers vast resources for real world learning, and technology driven curriculums attempting to encourage critical, and careful consumption of visual imagery. Changes in teaching style can transform the classroom into a technology-rich learning space in which students and
teachers work together, seeking out information, sharing discussions, and posing questions to one another.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology: Narrative Inquiry Methodology with Action Research

This study uses narrative inquiry and action research to highlight the importance of visual media literacy coupled with technology as a tool for revealing meaning in and from public, and student generated imagery. It is a way of thinking about and studying experience (Clandinin, 2010). Throughout this study, I documented the experiences and learning of the students in my courses as it developed when studying and analyzing visual imagery. I used lived and recorded stories, outlining experiences and interactions from students in Digital Imaging and Film Studies courses through field texts, anecdotal reflections, photography, and student work. I distributed a survey (see Appendix A), consisting of fifteen questions, to the enrolled student population. The purpose of this survey was to collect information from the students about how, where, and when they use technology and tech-based learning tools, and what kind of course work they complete using these too. The survey did not require formal IRB review because the research study met the criteria for exempt research according to policies of the The Pennsylvania State University (see Appendix B).

In order to take part in this research, students had to be enrolled in one of three courses: Digital Imaging, Film Art I or Film Art II and needed parental approval. My role in this study was as researcher and teacher.

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6 View the Google Form at http://tinyurl.com/didiothesissurvey
Delimitations

Throughout this study, I found myself not only examining my students’ work but, also, my teaching practice. Interweaving 21st century learning techniques into digital coursework such as making content available on the course website accessible from home can sometimes pose problems. For example, students who miss class for several days more often than not chose not to access the course material from home or I found, did not have the technology or Internet access to do so, which would affect the pace of the class when the students returned to class. The digital divide due to socio-economic class continues to be an issue when students are expected to work on digital projects outside of class.

I acknowledge the absence of citations and references from published art educators in the literature review portion of this study. Although, there is a lot of research in this area from these authors i’ve chosen to focus on research from authors on the technology side of design and production. This decision is based on how I personally approach the art-making process. I have a background in technology and professional experience as a graphic designer which influences the way I approach teaching these courses, and ultimately collected student data for this study.

I chose to limit the group surveyed for this study to students in my courses because as a group we were using 21st century technologies and discussing visual literacy regu-

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7 Such as incorporating creativity, critical thinking and problem solving strategies, collaboration, and media literacy into my teaching.
larly. I would not have the same amount of face time with students enrolled in other courses.

During the Decoding Advertisements and The Bubble Project unit there was a tendency for students not to take the task seriously, skewing my expectations for the outcomes. Personal bias and assumptions also played a role in how I, as teacher-researcher, interpreted the data and led class discussions. In some cases I assumed participant responses were *silly, childish, or immature*, meant to get a reaction from me and make the rest of the class laugh. I the time of the class discussion I dismissed this student as a class-clown and noted in my field notes of his behavior and lack of interest in the assignment. As a result of this students behavior and lack of effort, their grade dropped below at 65 (F). After consulting with the guidance department, I learned the jokes and disinterest in completing school work had a deeper meaning and was rooted to this students fear of leaving high school. Uncovering this information gave me reason to revisit other students work and responses, allowing me to recognize and see my own bias and assumptions were affecting my data collection. I believe even the most disinterested student can achieve success if the teacher is presenting the content using 21st century learning themes and skills. Art educators can integrate the technology each student brings with them to school to engage them, this can be a strength and a limitation because there are some students who do not own personal devices because they can’t afford them or choose not to own them. The students who make up this group generally feel comfortable using the computers available to them for research and printing.
A limitation for my study may also be its location. The study is being completed in a rural high school that is fiscally limited, making for a limited supply of technology resources. Initiatives like one-to-one programs are only just beginning, and only for select grades. Certain classrooms house projectors, mobile and permanent computer labs, SMART Boards, and various other mobile technology. Every student, and teacher, is required to maintain and operate a Google user account as part of the supervisory domain in order to utilize online tools such as Goggle Docs, Spreadsheets, Doctopus, Flubaroo, Google Classroom, and Gmail to interact with one another, and provide feedback in a timely manner, but in reality many students do not regularly check their school email or remember their password. Not all classrooms at this school utilizes the technology previously listed. Therefore, because of this discrepancy, there is a learning gap between students who have had technology and digital media integration into the curriculum and those who have not. Because the school is beginning to integrate, and mandate the use of these technologies, it is even more important to teach media literacy in the classroom so that students can begin to identify what online sources are reliable, show responsible technology usage, and learn online etiquette. In 2016-2017 academic year, the administration will provide training for faculty to put their course curriculum online using the Schoology website, which provides an online classroom space for students, teachers, and parents to interact, take tests, access course materials and communicate. Providing support and time for teachers to transition their coursework is a smart and important decision by the administration. The support will encourage faculty who do not currently use tech-
nology and media literacy education resources in their classroom to begin doing so.

However, at the time of data collection this was not the case.
CHAPTER 4

Analysis of Becoming Media Literate: Tech-Tuned and Media Fluent

Using 21st century learning skills to construct and deliver visual media literacy education is imperative in Digital Imaging and Film Studies courses. In these courses, students learn to create imagery and construct messages through industry standard digital design and video editing software. In Digital Imaging, students work as a group to create, observe, and analyze digital media texts (i.e, advertisements, logos, commercials, etc.) enabling them to broaden their critical engagements with these media forms. Students respond to imagery by critiquing media texts. Socially-responsible questions about media can be encouraged even at a young age, planting important seeds for cultivating a lifetime of questioning and analyzing the world (Thoman, 2005). Students learn to think critically when asked questions such as: How do the male and female characters act in the film as compared to what we see in reality or even their own behavior? Is the event plausible? What does the imagery have to do with the product it’s selling?. These questions are a way to engage students in their learning. The lessons and assignments highlighted in my analysis provide an example of effective ways to engage all students using remix and through decoding visual texts.

In today’s technology saturated society, to be effective, teachers must find ways to acknowledge and validate the students’ popular culture, fandoms, and interests as topics to be integrated and directly connected to the curriculum (Cooper Moore, 2014). For example, I’ve used the YouTube channel “Epic Rap Battles (ERB) whose video titled
Steven Spielberg vs Alfred Hitchcock takes film directors and their filmmaking identities and pits them against one another in a comedic and engaging video (Shukoff & Ahlquist, 2014). I show this video to my Film Art II class at the beginning of our Directors Project, in which I direct students to research and present a project about a director of their choosing. Using this light-hearted clip lightens the mood and motivates students to conduct research. The video also presents students with a model for creating their presentations.

Videos like these can be used as a hook to engage students in conversations and lead to successful projects or other products. Often media texts involve multiple formats. If students are asked to create a report, they can record audio or video to fulfill the assignment requirements. “A great advantage of audio and video to writing is that anyone can do it, i.e., anyone [assuming their mobility doesn't need modifications or assistance] can stare at a mic or camera and talk” (Prensky, 2010, p. 127). One participant in this study, SC, chose J.J. Abrams as the focus of his research. Instead of using presentation software as static slides, SC chose to create a short film (see Figure 2). The

Figure 2: J.J. Abrams directors project screenshot. Created by SC, semester 2 - 2016.
student found video and audio recordings about and by the director, and created a voiceover script discussing the director’s history, filmography, directing style, themes, and film making techniques. SC even used a lens flare for the transitions, a technique J. J. Abrams uses regularly in his films. The skill of finding high quality useful video is part of the learning. Putting the learning in the hands of students to filter quality information gives them control over their products, which leads to higher quality projects and engaged student learning. Video based learning matches many students’ preferences.

Today, high school aged learners generally choose visual or tactile learning to reading as a preferred way of learning (Prensky, 2010). Figure 3 (below) shows evidence of visual and tactile learning preference from my student survey. Forty percent of the students asked, prefer learning and instruction that includes pictures and diagrams to the method of lecture and note taking. As part of learning 21st century media literacy skills, students should be able to understand and utilize appropriate media creation tools, and be able to use technologies like computers and mobile devices so they can create products using the methods they prefer (Trilling, 2009).

Figure 3: The pie chart presents the survey findings of the learning styles that the 42 students in my courses identified as their preferred mode of study.
By flipping the emphasis from print copies and written papers to visual media, teachers allow students to focus on communicating their ideas and how they are presented to other people throughout the world (Prensky, 2010). Basic educational skills are being replaced by the production of multimedia assignments and documents, which can include, graphics, photographs, animations, and visual displays of data (Collins, 2009). Today, students are encouraged to use the Internet to access and complete research. Teachers use Twitter and hashtags to interact with students beyond scheduled instructional time. I have successfully used this technique several times with students enrolled in my film courses. It is an innovative way to discuss actors, actresses, films and directors that we have learned about in class through Twitter dialogues. The Twitter feed below is a small part of a discussion I had with several students during the 2015 Oscar Award ceremony (see Figure 4). I have put my entire design and film curriculum online for students to access outside of class time and to move at their own pace through content.

Figure 4: Screenshot of Twitter feed class discussion during the 2015 Oscar Awards ceremony.
and assignment completion. The online accessibility can help facilitate collaboration through dialogue, questions, messaging, and shared documents outside of class.

The school in this study offers two film study courses. This year (2016), I created Advanced Film Studies as an independent study course. The course work was created using the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning. According to P21 Life and Career Skills, Learning and Innovation Skills and Information, Media and Technology Skills are the interconnected components that are necessary to ensure 21st century readiness beyond high school. The current and future students who take this course should show a passion for filmmaking or the film industry, and be self-driven in order to complete the course work on their own. The intention of this course is: to prepare students for the creation of a digital portfolio - for the college application process; provide opportunities for developing interpersonal skills by working with professional film makers; and complete a senior project in which students write, produce, and direct their own film—all while meeting benchmarks along the way in order stay on task and continue to develop a filmmaking language.

This year’s participant, SC, deepened his filmmaking content knowledge throughout the year long course by watching documentaries, analyzing films, doing research projects, creating an online portfolio and finally by creating his senior project, Bitter Losses⁸. SC enrolled in this year’s course, we met once a week to discuss his progress and assignments using the Google Classroom. We spent much of the time reviewing and revising his storyboard and script items for his final film. Once the script was completed,

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I sent it along to Eros Hoagland, a well-known and successful documentary photographer and filmmaker, for feedback. Working with a professional such as Hoagland allowed SC to hone life and career skills, like navigating complex work environments, scheduling, collaborating and directing people much older than himself. The pair began working together tightening the script and planning a shooting schedule.

In February shooting spanned a one-week period (see Figure 19).

![Figure 19: Day 1 on the set of Bitter Losses, SC’s senior project.](image)

The energy and sense of ownership this young man displayed for his work inspired everyone in the room. The project-oriented teaching methods used to guide the participant in this project put the learning in the hands of the student (see Figure 20). My role was as advisor and guide, needing only to step in a few times to get SC back on task. At one point the cast was talking too much, and we were loosing a lot of time, I reminded SC of the time table and helped him get his cast and crew back on track. At another point
I reminded him about compositional and framing techniques and warned him of cropping too closely or being too wide.

Directing a group of ten adults isn’t an easy task under the best conditions, let alone when you're a teenager (see Figure 21). Completing this project allowed the
participant to develop and articulate thoughts and ideas clearly, it required them to stay organized and on schedule, utilize multimedia and technologies and demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively with individuals and small groups.

In both Film Studies and Digital Imaging courses part of student grading is based on their use of the media and technology. In Film Art I, we explore the director Alfred Hitchcock. We discuss his background, his directorial style, on/off screen shooting and editing techniques. The class watches *The Birds* film (1963), and reads Daphne Du Maurier’s short story, on which Hitchcock’s, *The Birds* is loosely based. I use the National Core Arts Standard for the Media Arts, MA: Re7.1.I.A - Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and Analyze Artistic Work as a source of evaluation for this assignment by asking students to complete a *Five-Minute Film Analysis* (5MFA) worksheet after watching the film. I ask students questions such as: *How does this film convey meaning and manage audience experience? Do you believe this film is plausible or unrealistic? How does this film require the audience to suspend their disbelief? How does the film use lighting, costumes, and sound to enhance or add to their experience.* By tasking students to become aware of the lighting, costuming, sound, acting, editing, and set design from the film, I initiate visual thinking strategies (VTS) with the intention that students will transfer VTS from lesson to lesson through spoken, written, and visual language, and through collaborative interactions with their peers. The visual thinking strategies method was created by Abigail Housen and Philip Yanewine more than twenty years ago, and continues to be used in museum education programs, schools, colleges, and universities. The VTS method encourages and fosters 21st century critical thinking skills and learning objectives. In VTS
discussions, teachers facilitate discussions with the class, growing their visual language by asking three simple questions:

- What’s going on in the picture/work of art?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Through creating questions for the 5MFA worksheets that reflect this line of questioning students are tasked with looking critically at the film. We discuss what they observe and from what evidence. Through these conversations, the students listen to and consider other views and interpretations of the film or clip (Visual Thinking Strategies, 2016). Below is an example of a 5MFA for The Birds (Hitchcock, 1963) (see Figure 5) completed by a student enrolled in Film Art 1 - Semester 1 (2015). In this analysis, the teacher’s questions are in italics and the student answers below the questions. To highlight the questions that correspond with each open-ended VTS question, I have highlighted them with coordinating colors:

*What’s going on in the picture/work of art?*
*What do you see that makes you say that?*
*What more can we find?*

**Five-Minute Film Analysis**

1. **Movie Title:** The Birds. **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
   Major Actors: Tippi Hedren (Melanie Daniels), Suzanne Pleshette (Annie Hayworth), Rod Taylor (Mitch Brenner), Jessica Tandy (Lydia Brenner), Veronica Cartwright (Cathy Brenner).

2. **Please briefly set up & describe the film.**
   Melanie Daniels after meeting Mitch Brenner at a pet store, travels to Bodega Bay which is near San Francisco to see him and his mother, Lydia, and Cathy, his sister. The birds in that area start acting strange, and one ends up attacking Melanie while on a boat. Lydia then ends up finding her neighbor dead from a bird attack.
Than the birds started to swarm and attacked people injuring and killing people with no explanation of why. Melanie, Mitch, Lydia, and Cathy take shelter in their house, but the birds got through the roof in an upstairs bedroom. Later Melanie walks into that room and gets viciously attacked and injured. They decide they need to leave the town while the birds are at bay for a little bit. Mitch gets the car and everyone makes it into it safely and then they drive off.

3. Tell me what you liked best about this film.
I liked how realistic it was when the birds attacked because most of them were actual birds not fake.

4. What about this movie might be considered unrealistic?
The whole movies kinda unrealistic. The idea that all these birds randomly started to attack with no specific reason is unlikely unless there's some sort of disease going around.

5. How does the director create “suspension of disbelief” despite our critical nature?
The director creates suspension of disbelief by taking something that's unlikely to happen and make it so realistic that people will start to think that, that could happen at any point in time.

COSTUMING/MAKEUP
6. Discuss the choices made surrounding the costuming or makeup and state its effect (sexual tension, boredom, wealth, poverty, conventionality, eccentricity, modesty, etc.) in the film.
They used the same kinda wealthy wardrobe the entire movie. This gives the movie an apocalyptic effect because people are more worried about their surroundings than their looks and that makes it more realistic.

SOUND
7. Describe any sounds, sound effects, or music (i.e., footsteps, rain? Dramatic, suspenseful, somber, upbeat, or lyrical music?):
The movie has a lot of intense bird noises that are piercing to the ear.

What effect does sound have in the film?
The sounds of the birds [are] really loud so it makes people nervous when they watch it. It brings the birds into the audience [and] you feel less like they are on the screen and more like they are actually surrounding you.
ACTING

8. Which actor has a notable performance in this movie?
I think Tippi has a notable performance because she had to be attacked by live starving birds multiple times for a scene and she went through a lot of physically and emotionally exhausting things for this movie. Even through all that she stayed in character and did a really good job pushing it aside.

EDITING

Choose a line of dialogue and/or a gesture or expression, which reflect how this actor interpreted the character.

9. How does editing convey meaning, emotion, or pace in this movie? (Editing is the selection & arrangement of shots, length of shots, slow motion, & the use of effect and transitions like dissolves & fades.)
The scenes were very long, and dragged out not a lot of movement with the camera, because of this it gave the audience no chance to get away from the suspense, you were forced to watch an intense or violent scene for a long amount of time.

MISE-EN-SCENE

Address camera position, lighting, costumes, and set design after looking at a still image from the movie. Do a google search for still images from the movie, download and insert one image below. Use this image for Q10-Q13.

10. Describe what part of the movie the still image is from.
This picture is when Melanie is outside as the birds are attacking and for cover she goes into a telephone booth.
11. Production designers are responsible for the overall look of a film, especially set design, location selection, and set decoration. Is the space realistic or stylized, please describe? This space is realistic. In the background you see the town in chaos and this tight space in the phone booth she can't escape. It is all very realistic for something like this to be taking place.

LIGHTING/CONTRAST/PATTERN/TEXTURE/FILTERS
12. What is the focal point in this still? Melanie is the main focus of the image.

13. How does the director use either light, color, pattern, texture, size or filters to draw the audience’s attention to what’s important? They keep the focus on Melanie, but they also have the abundance of birds in the background with fire and a mess of cars to show the audience that there is no safe place.

SET DESIGN
14. Name three objects visible in this frame that add to the composition of the scene.
   a. The birds.
   b. The buses and cars on fire.
   c. Melanie's scared face.

    Based on these objects, what might a viewer feel more than notice because of the mood, message, or emotion the director is trying to convey? Are any of the objects symbolic, please explain?

    The viewer will be scared for Melanie's life and the town around her. They won't focus so much on individual items they see the image as a whole. The birds bring great fear, they are a symbol of death.

Figure 5: Five-minute Film Analysis completed by a student in Film Art I, semester 1-2015.

When students are able to discuss visual imagery and films though VTS they are communicating literacy by critically analyzing and reflecting on the subject. Familiar popular culture based content, using visual culture examples (e.g., Disney movies, advertisements, and Youtube videos), provides students with the opportunity to develop deep
critical reasoning, provides evidence for their interpretations, and allows them to build upon those interpretations and ideas within a collaborative group setting (Franco & Unrath, 2014).

Today’s student body has changed dramatically from that of prior decades. Students have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, and the Internet. The dissemination of digital technology paired with their lived experiences has revealed a student body that thinks and processes information much differently than their predecessors (Prensky, 2001). Digital media educator Marc Prensky states: “today’s students are challenging us, educators, to engage them at their level. Maybe if our students could be continuously challenged … then maybe we would have less students saying they “power down” when they come to school (Prensky, 2005, p. 64). Although this statement was made ten years ago, through surveying my own students, I have found this to be the way many students still feel (See Figure 6).

![Figure 6](image)

Figure 6. Data from a survey on technology in the classroom given to 42 students in Digital Imaging and Film Studies courses during the 2015-2016 academic year.
Whether intentional or not, imagery is playing a large role in shaping the lives of our students. Schools need to consider incorporating visual thinking strategies and 21st century technologies into day-to-day instruction in order to make it more relevant for students.

**Decoding Advertisements and Visual Imagery**

“Visual Literacy is based on the idea that pictures can be ‘read’ and that meaning can be communicated through a process of reading” (Baker, 2012, p. 42). I first realized there was a need to incorporate digital media literacy into my film and design curriculum when I began teaching the unit *What is design?* to my Digital Imaging class. When I asked the students what designed imagery or objects they saw on their way to school, they could identify the obvious ones: gas and food establishments (e.g., Mobile, Dunkin’ Donuts, McDonalds). These are all businesses. The students had a baseline understanding that logos and billboards have been designed to send a message. What they did not see was the Facebook ads specifically designed to meet the interests outlined in their profile, or the walking billboard for Young and Reckless clothing company, the brand that one of the students was wearing head to toe. The students did not understand that the perfectly framed Instagram picture they posed for, cropped, and filtered was designed and curated by themselves for their viewers.

In Digital Imaging, students were asked to put their critical skills to the work when viewing and decoding advertisements using the three stages of reading an ad as described by Katherine T. Firth (1997). The first stage uncovers the surface meaning. The second
stage asks: What is the advertiser’s intended meaning? The third stage moves to understanding the cultural or ideological meaning of the imagery being viewed (Firth, 1997). Using *The Gender Ads Project* website, students were instructed to browse the site looking for an advertisement that made them react (Lukas, 2002). I ask the students to use the Google Doc provided in the Google Classroom assignment to place their chosen image and *read* it using Firth’s three stages of meaning. What is interesting about this part of the assignment is that although the work is individual, in that each student had their own worksheet to complete, the students share their reactions and interpretations collectively. Allowing for this type of informal collaboration not only cut down on each student needing individualized attention, but it allows some of the students to step into an instructional role to assist their classmates by either explaining the assignment or navigating through the interpretation and reading of the media text. “Uncovering the many levels of meaning in a media message and the multiple answers to basic questions is what makes media education so engaging for young people and so enlightening for adults. There is no doubt that at the heart of media literacy is the principle of inquiry” (Thoman & Jolls, 2005b, p. 10). Once the students submit their assignments digitally, I project each image separately, allowing the rest of the class to comment or analyze the students’ choices. This process reveals new things to the student who chose the ad, or reinforces their original reading of the advertisement giving them a sense of success from the peer comments. When asking students to reflect on their own work and to analyze and comment on visual texts they are presented with, it gives them a vocabulary to keep for future use (see Figure 7).
After the Digital Imaging students are familiar and comfortable reading ads like these, we gather around a table of printed advertisements and imagery from several decades. I ask the students to read, respond to, or remix the intended meaning of the imagery using the paper speech bubbles provided from *The Bubble Project* website (Lee, 2005).
The students were given four speech bubbles each to write, critique, or create any response to the images on the table (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: The Bubble Project - Students working collaboratively to comment on and respond to advertisements from spanning several decades.

The responses and results were varied, some were silly and intended to be funny (see Figure 9) or shocking, while others questioned the intended meaning, validity, or purpose of the advertisement. The 1981 LEGO advertisement, for example, is not simply an image of a young girl who built something using LEGOs. The ad agency accompanies the image with a text box that reads: “Have you ever seen anything like it? Not just what she’s made, but how proud it’s made her. It’s a look you’ll see whenever children build something all by themselves. No matter what they’ve created. … LEGO Universal Building Sets will help your children discover something very, very special: themselves” (Wasserman, 2014, p. 1). One of the students participating in this activity responded with “why can’t we all be this proud of ourselves?”. This comment, when tak-
en out of the context of this assignment, appears simple and commonplace, but when placed alongside the LEGO advertisement and when considering the population commenting on it the significance of [the ad] is apparent. In reviewing and responding to the ad the student who used the pointed speech bubble (see Figure 10) related to the
imagery using personal language, bringing her response to the advertisement close to the intended meaning of the ad agency. The question posed by the student is loaded with assumptions about the female population around her, that the majority of young women can’t find something within themselves to be proud of. The student, bringing her own experiences and interactions into her analysis, allows others to see the ad through the eyes of the young woman commenting. Her comment on the advertisement suggests that imagery and social influences play a large role in how all people see themselves in relation to the ad’s message of social motives.

In the Film Studies courses, students do similar work as they close the first semester of Film Art I with a unit focusing on decoding and analyzing Disney films. At the end of the unit, students are asked to remix a scene from any Disney movie created before the year 2000. Students are given four choices as to how they will respond and remix their chosen scene (see Appendix C). As part of the classroom discussion before the students began, they define visual culture. Knowing that students learn best when they can make connections to their own lives and lived experiences, students took an online survey answering the following pre-viewing questions:

- What are your impressions of Disney films, characters and stories?
- Did you grow up watching Disney movies?
- What sort of values would you say Disney embodies?
- What kind of messages do you think Disney sends to young people?
- What are your memories of Disney as a “kid”?

Once all of the students submit their responses, we view a summary of their data and have a class discussion from their responses. The summary reveals that out of the 34 students surveyed, 94% said they grew up watching Disney movies. The survey responses
also revealed that the students believe Disney movies are: entertaining; creative; where everything turns out perfectly in the end; presents themselves with a happy tone; have very cheery women; knights in shining armor; usually a bad guy [villain]; magical; and teach morals or life lessons. Sensing a pattern, I query: What kind of messages do you think Disney movies send to young people? Most students responded: life is a fairytale, and Disney movies teach right from wrong. I was surprised that several students in this course were able to look beyond the surface message of the movies and evaluated them more deeply. One student responds with, “Some movies make it seem like girls are helpless and need a man in their lives” (personal communication, May, 2014). This student’s response is a perfect example of why visual media literacy should be woven into school curriculum, specifically and most relevant into arts based course work. If young people are using movies, magazines, or other media to help formulate their persona and views of the world around them, then it is important to provide students with the tools needed to decipher the messages and imagery they see. The students usually look at me confused when I convey the idea that we all bring our own biases and prejudice to the conversation when we watch Disney movies. When I challenge them with the statement: Disney movies have racism, stereotypes, and gender inequality woven throughout; I am usually met with outrage. The class erupts into statements such as: How can you say that? Disney is so pure and meant for little kids.

After the room settles down, and I task them with keeping an open mind while viewing the Mickey Mouse Monopoly documentary. Throughout the 45-minute documentary, I pause the film six times for class discussion. In the discussions, I discover that
much of their childhoods focused around Disney products. One of the students was even named after a Disney princess. During discussion breaks from watching the film, some of the students begin to show understanding of the importance of asking critical questions and being analytical in their thought process, while others ridiculed those who analyze Disney films with comments such as: “get a life” and “get something better to do than destroying their childhood”. Through teaching and focusing on visual media literacy, I have found students reluctant to engage in the analysis of images, and often times reply “don’t you think you’re looking a little too much into it, it’s just a picture of _____?” Students and myself as teacher researcher found that not all interpretations and analysis are obvious at first.

Knowing that not all students are comfortable speaking out in front of their classmates during group discussions, I had the students answer questions in the Mickey Mouse Monopoly viewing companion (see Appendix D), a worksheet asking students a series of critical thinking questions based on the information they viewed in the documentary. One student wrote:

Disney films, once read into, are stereotypical and racist. Black people in Disney movies are portrayed as animals, you can tell by the way they act and talk. I think it has changed a little over time, but not by much (personal communication, written assignment response, May, 2015).

I finish the unit with a question that is not about the documentary. Instead, I ask: What steps toward media literacy and media education can you think of that we should teach children to help them critically evaluate Disney and other popular culture products for themselves? Should we be teaching media literacy in schools the same way we analyze
literature or math problems? Why or Why not? The following composite response reflects the majority of students’s views in the class:

Yes, some teachers touch on media literacy and I think all schools and teachers should. The reason why people are racist is because their parents are and they grow up learning from them. If we do what Disney movies do then boys and girls would compare themselves to princes and princesses, and girls would need to rely on boys to save them. (personal communication, May, 2015)

Contemporary art education needs to incorporate visual literacies into the curriculum in order to guide students to investigate complex images and meanings in order to uncover the power that visual culture has in how we view ourselves and others. The process of learning to make and adequately respond to the complexities of the visual arts is unlikely to occur without guidance (Freedman, 2000). This process of learning can happen outside the classroom just as much as inside the classroom. Recognizing the power of visual culture in shaping society is a critical 21st century skill.

Digital Storytelling & Independent Learning

Digital Storytelling (DST) can be a powerful tool for learning 21st century skills. When creating, shooting, revising and evaluating videos and movies students acquire knowledge that is related to film topics, such as editing, framing, and composition. Following Niemi’s (2014) work, as teacher researcher, I encouraged students to become cre-
ators, producers, and collaborators of movies, rather than passive audience members.

Filmmaking has become so important, it provides students with opportunities to develop critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills through using tech tools and communication technologies. Learning is seen as a socially and culturally related process that takes place in the interactions with different kinds of learning tools (i.e., mobile phones, computers, the Internet). Additionally, students “interact with psychological tools when using language, brainstorming or creating stories” (Niemi, 2014, p. 658). Using digital storytelling lessons can provide an avenue of engagements for students, it has motivational qualities, can provoke fun in the classroom and foster enthusiasm for the subject matter, and develop a level of commitment and persistence to the learning task at hand. Technology integrated into the lesson can motivate students and provide the opportunity for students to offer their own contributions (Niemi, 2014). In Film Art II students work on group films in which everyone in the class plays a role, whether the students were an actor with lines, an extra, script supervisor, director or ran the camera everyone is involved (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Students work together to complete their classes short. The script was written and by a student who gave instruction to their classmates acting in the film or doing camera work.
Students working in groups learn collaboration skills, requiring the group to find methods of working effectively. Collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and creativity being one third of the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: The P21 Framework represents both 21st century student outcomes (represented by the arches of the rainbow) and the support systems (represented by the pools at the bottom (Framework for 21st Century Learning - P21 2007))

Digital Storytelling is used in the Film Studies curriculum in several ways: students tell their own Vermont story by creating a documentary film, students create shorts based on a script written by their peers, and students write their own screenplays after learning correct formatting. Students first use their storytelling skills when learning the proper format to write and create a screenplay. This knowledge will be accessed later in
the school year when students create a short video with their classmates and a VT Movie for Freedom and Unity TV, a cohort of Vermont Film Makers.

Students begin by watching Orson Welles’s *Citizen Kane*. The groups then move to the first activity, an analysis of the screenplay. I distribute screenplays from the classic film for the students to use as a guide for critical analysis. In the four times that I have taught this lesson, I have found it is important for students to watch the film before working with the script so they have a frame of reference for setting and actor directions outlined in the screenplay. I direct the students to look for the six keys to screenwriting, as outline by the British Film Academy: scene, slugline, actor direction, scene direction, character cue, and dialogue. Below are the instructions given to my students for this full assignment.

**Activity 1: (see Figure 13)** In groups of 2 – 3, read through the pages from Herman J. Mankiewicz & Orson Welles’s Screenplay from the 1941 film *Citizen Kane*. Using highlighters find as many examples of the six keys to screenwriting (See Appendix E). Make sure you label each example. Be prepared to share with the group.

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9 A documentary series about Vermont. The six-part film is a collaboration of over four dozen Vermont filmmakers.
Activity 2: (see Figure 14) In the same groups, read through the short story provided and use the screenplay google document as your template. Construct a short screenplay based on the story (See Appendix F), making sure to use standard screenplay format: This should include *More than one scene * Screen Directions * Dialogue - add additional lines of dialogue where needed and expand on the details of the story. Divide the parts (including a ‘narrator’ for slugline’s and scene directions) to members of the group and prepare a reading of your script for presentation to the class. I will be recording your productions. The assignment incorporates 21st century skills such as creativity, problem solving, communication and technology.

Learning by Doing

A large part of the Digital Imaging and Film Studies courses centers on the students interacting with professionals in a particular field of study. For example, the digital imaging class takes a field trip each year to the Woodstock Digital Media Festival (WDMF), an annual event devoted to the exploration and promotion of digital media in the public interest.
Each year since 2011 a group of innovators representing a wide range of fields and interests have come to Woodstock, Vermont to share work with each other and the public. The Festival, which usually takes place across two evenings and one full day, is organized around a series of keynote presentations and informal hands-on workshops (About, 2015, para. 1).

Presenters from the 2015 festival came from throughout the United States, representing a diverse range of people who work in the fine arts, natural sciences, or technology, as well as combinations of these three areas. One of the best parts of this conference is seeing the students enter the hotel conference room a little nervous, but by the end of the day leave impressing professionals in creative and tech fields with their knowledge and curiosity (see Figure 15).

![Figure 15: A high school junior (RL), enrolled in the Digital Imaging course and who intends to pursue a degree in digital arts, takes notes at the Fall 2015 Woodstock Digital Media Conference in Woodstock, VT.](image)

It has been long understood that when introducing mass media and popular culture texts into the classroom, students connect fundamental literacy practices with an un-
derstanding of their media experiences outside of the school setting (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999). After attending the 2015 Woodstock Digital Media Conference a student remarked:

The conference was a real eye opener. I remember listening to the radio and … they [were] talking about the podcast Criminal. I had listened to [Phoebe Judge] speak at the conference about how long it took to create this now extremely popular podcast. When I heard the broadcast talking about it I got excited, because I had seen and met its creator” (RL, personal communication, August 2016).

RL took the experience of meeting Phoebe Judge and listening to her keynote lecture at the conference and remembered it. She was able to appreciate the technology and hard work it takes to create and publish a podcast. RL made an even deeper connection with media and saw the need for visual literacy after Suey Park spoke. Park is an activist with a large presence on Twitter. In 2014, after The Colbert Report sent a tweet riffing on the NFL’s Washington Redskins Original Americans Foundation, the tweet: “I am willing to show #Asian community I care by introducing the Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals or whatever,” was meant to “underscore the absurdity of using a racial epithet in the name of an organization” (Watercutter, 2016, p. 1). Park thought the joke went too far, and the use of racially intense language reinforced how minorities are continually stereotyped and ridiculed (Watercutter, 2016).

Park responded with her own tweet, “the Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals has decided to call for #CancelColbert. Trend it.” The interaction went viral, and Colbert fans attacked Park for acknowledging the stereotypes and racism.
the Colbert tweet communicated. She quickly became the subject of many news reports and received death threats. Therefore, she was forced to leave her home in Chicago to find safety. The student referred to as RL, who experienced Parks keynote stated:

She is such a role model … with such an incredible sense of determination. She is definitely not afraid to speak her mind and I admire that her presentation showed just how fast ideas can spread, in five minutes information can be all over the world (RL, personal communication, August 2016).

Bringing the students to this conference exposes the group to a wide range of companies, products, and experiences that challenges them to think creatively and critically. Listening to the presentations from keynote speakers from all over the world exposes the students to processes that communicate new ideas and originality and showed the students how media can communicate ideas and information. Attending this conference with my students not only presents an opportunity for professional development, but allowed me to build a stronger relationship with my students, learning alongside one another. It presented the platform that places the teacher next to the student, in a position of learner with the students rather then top down authority of knowledge as is a typical educational practice.

**StoryHackVT 2014**

The event, StoryHackVT, challenges contestants to create an original story using three different media platforms; use social networking to create buzz surrounding the original story; and give a final presentation of all the components within a limited time.
frame of 24-hours. The premise for the event grew from computer hack-a-thons, where software developers come together for a period of time to collaborate on projects in response to a specific challenge. During the 2014 event, the Vermont Department of Libraries partnered with Nate Herzog (the creator of StoryHackVT) to create the contest's central theme: the challenges faced by the library system in light of the influence of digital media. Teams were required to use three or more digital storytelling categories: their products could be narrative driven, game driven, location driven, smartphone driven or social media driven (VTdigger.org). This was a perfect event to use as a platform for small group learning and collaboration. The contest is collaborative and creative by nature, and encourages new uses of digital media and tools.
My group (see Figure 16) met the day before to discuss types of storytelling devices they were interesting in using. The team decided to write a fictional screenplay, shoot a short movie, create an app, and publish their work online. They challenged themselves to complete the screenplay, movie, app, and online publishing in only 24 hours. The group worked together to come up with their idea for the movie, finally settling on the premise set in a future dystopian society, where Librarians are looked at like pushers, peddling an illegal substance: books. In their story the books are not hardcopies, they are found in a form of what the group called “a biblio-beverage,” a drink like concoction that upon consumption the reader is transported into the world that takes place in the designated piece of literature. There is a twist in the story, when three separate readers cross paths and plot points. The students quickly began to assign roles and feverishly began typing the script on my laptop, by using and sharing technology, each one of the students thrived under the pressure of such a short deadline (see Figure 17).

The group knew that if we were going to shoot an entire movie, they would need to write their script, get costumes together quickly, and have time to edit. StoryHackVT provided the perfect incubator for the students to develop and hone some of their 21st century learning skills. The group worked in their community, beyond the walls of their classroom, and were thriving, using Burlington, Vermont as their stage. I drove the students around town to film their scenes, Edmonds Elementary School, Waterfront Park, and City Hall Park, being sure to keep the students on task and aware of the lighting and shot needs for their film. The students tapped into what they already new and creatively troubleshooted what they didn’t. The group members were able to use skills from several
different subject areas to prepare an engaging project. The students wrote, shot, directed, and edited a short film, called *The Librarian*. The students who had taken Film Art I already knew how to write a screenplay, and taught the formatting to the participants who were not familiar. Several group members had experience acting and coached the others on how to give a convincing performance. When it came time to edit, the students with more experience stepped into a leadership role for that task.

On the second day of the event my group of students were the last group to present their work to a panel of judges made of college professors, an animation designer, a li-

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10 You can view the full film on youtube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWqLQ0wNzUc
library director, and a blogger (see Figure 18). The group impressed the audience with their creativity, masterful use of technology (computers, editing software, and camera equipment) and poise on stage. Several of the judges spoke in response to the groups work, one stating: “this was the project [they] are probably going to steal the most liberally from.” Another stated they appreciated how the group used the technology they had available to them: “years and years ago you couldn’t have done anything like this. You’re utilizing tools that your predecessors didn’t have available and you did a really good job

Figure 18: The team setting up for their presentation on September 28, 2014. After working for 24 hours straight on their project and presentation.

11 You can view the Thunderbirds Team project and the judges awards online at http://storyhack-vt.com/
doing that.” The response from the judges display the group meeting 21st century standards; to “engage students with real world data, tools, and experts they will encounter in college, on the job, and in life — students learn best when actively engaged in solving meaningful problems” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, p. #). In almost a direct reflection of what the judges stated, one of the StoryHackVT team members commented:

It was exciting to stay up until 2:00 a.m. editing video we shot. I loved spending the night in an art gallery. It was hard work, but totally worth it. I learned that sometimes you need to step back and let other people work their magic and in the end working together makes your work richer because of everyone’s individuality. Skills wise I learned that it's much easier to map everything out beforehand especially when we had as much work we had to do. (MG, personal communication, August, 2016)
Chapter 5:

Findings: Incorporating Visual Literacy Education into High School Curriculum

Through completing my research, I was able to uncover deficiencies in my teaching, revealing moments of personal bias and assumptions I held. I found it difficult to approach students whose opinions and ideas were different from my own with an openness to see their perspective. As a result of this study, I was able to develop a better vocabulary and patience when discussing topics, such as racism, sexism, and stereotyping, which can cause friction and discomfort amongst the students. I made a few adjustments to my teaching method throughout this study, specifically during the Gender Ads project. During this lesson I made adjustments surrounding my assumption that high school students would be mature enough to handle some of the explicit imagery available on the website. The first year I taught the lesson the students had a high maturity level and worked well to analyze and evaluate the imagery, the following year the lesson was less successful, I found students couldn’t get passed the surface meaning of some of the imagery because they were distracted by the content or found it uncomfortable, therefore making jokes to alleviate their discomfort. The third year of teaching the assignment, I decided to show a few images to the class as a preliminary assessment, which was used to determine the readiness of the group to see such mature content. I determined that the group needed more parameters. I instructed the students to choose images from a specific category on the website, filtering out most of the very explicit content. Throughout this same assignment, I became more mindful of the vocabulary I was using to explain directions or give
class lectures. When discussing Katherine Firth’s three stages of meaning students would have difficulty understanding what the third stage was asking them to uncover; what is the cultural or ideological meaning. As a result of several students asking these questions, this allowed me to stop their work and have a group discussion based on the vocabulary, and what I meant when I was asking about the cultural and ideological meaning(s) behind their particular imagery. My assumption that high school students would have a basic understanding of this type of vocabulary came from my own personal experiences as a high school student attending a private college predatory school, a school which was very different demographics and academic expectations.

Events like the StoryHackVT, the Woodstock Digital Media Conference, field trips to visit local design firms, bringing in visiting lecturers or video conferencing with professionals in the field of design across the country, gives students, teachers, and professionals opportunities to work together. It allows the students to see and understand how the skills they are learning in school can be applied professionally in the real world. Also, it helps students begin to network and make connections beyond their high school educators, and helps validate the learning that is going on in the design and filmmaking classrooms.

Teaching visual literacy in the 21st century isn’t just giving students hardware or software in order to complete their assignments, or simply embedding technology into the classroom. Teaching visual literacy is a more nuanced and integrated approach to guide students to become 21st century learners. Assimilating 21st century themes such as critical thinking strategies, collaboration and information and media technology skills into
core content areas (i.e., English, World Languages, Arts, Mathematics, Economics, Science, Geography, History, Government, and Civics) helps promote understanding of those areas at a higher level. Weaving innovation and creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication with collaboration skills prepares students to succeed in complex life and work environments (Partnership for 21st Century Skills). Students desire to utilize the technologies made available to them in school, and with its use, youth are becoming more engaged in their learning; allowing them to be better prepared to thrive in today’s world.

Today families and schools share the responsibility for preparing young people for living and learning in a global culture that is increasingly connected through multimedia and influenced by powerful imagery (Center for Media Literacy). “Information about the world around us comes to us not only through words on a piece of paper, but more and more through the powerful images and sounds of our multimedia culture” (Thoman, 2005a, p. 180). Students benefit from understanding both how and why media messages are constructed. Understanding the hows and whys, allow digital arts students to examine how individuals interpret messages differently; how one’s values and points of view can be included or excluded in the message; and how media can influence our beliefs and behaviors (Partnership for 21st Century Skills).

In today’s educational world, students are looking to search engines and the Internet rather than libraries or education professionals to find the answers they need. In the past, people seeking information needed to physically interact with a librarian, search

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12 Core content areas are based on the Common Core State Standards and Common Core Media & Visual Art Standards.
through card catalogues, and read page after page of texts to find the answer they were looking for; but in today’s technological age students can access information any time, from any place, on any one of the school’s and for those with economic means, their own devices. A large amount of information students need to know can be found on the Internet or in some electronic form (Prensky, 2011). Today, informational needs require both content knowledge and informational processing skills — knowing what to learn and how to analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with multimedia information to decipher what information is useful and what is not (Jolls, 2011). Imagery can go by in a flash. We need to teach students to be fluent in reading and writing the language of imagery and sound, similar to the way they have been taught to read and write the language of printed communication (Thoman, 2005a). Knowing how one’s values and point of view can be influenced by a visual message and how that message can contribute to the development of their belief systems and behaviors can open the eyes of high school students uncovering new information through their native language of technology.

Knowing how much the high school students use the Internet, I was particularly curious to know how much time the students in the three courses in this study spent participating in online communities, online entertainment, or social networking. My survey revealed of the 44 responses all had Internet access in their home, 91% participate regularly in an online social community, and about 27% said they use YouTube outside school one to three hours per day (see Figure 22).

I also asked if students thought technology should be integrated into the classroom, 93% of the surveyed students answered Yes. The following is a composite re-
response. Participants stated they would like “more lessons online, because it allows students to be independent, to go at their own pace, and have course work be more accessible in more locations” (personal communication, October 26, 2015). They also stated, they “would like to see technology used so a student out sick can access what they’ve missed” (personal communication, October 26, 2015). Also interestingly students would like to see “assignments available online [so they can be] printed, completed and submitted online, and provide video lectures when [the] teacher or student cannot attend in person” (personal communication, October 26, 2015). Evidence from this study shows an overwhelming percentage of students use technology throughout their day. These students go to Google to find an answer to their questions before they go to the library to take out a book.

Figure 22: Data from a survey on technology in the classroom given to students in Digital Imaging and both Film Studies courses during the 2015-2016 academic year showing internet access and YouTube use outside of school.
Recently, a student expressed his gratitude and willingness to use the online presentation software, Prezi, to complete his assignment for my Film Art II course (see Figure 23). The assignment asks students to research and conduct a presentation on a specific decade in United States film history. His success with the project, and increased knowledge of the content, was a direct result of the flexibility afforded students who chose technology as their mode of presenting their work and being assessed for their learning. He stated he was more invested in this assignment because I was flexible with how the students completed it. His desire to use his understanding of technology to share his knowledge allowed him to find success in creating visual media. Due to the school’s flexible, yet inconsistent policy, he shared with me that “other teachers wouldn’t let us use Prezi, they would make us do it on paper” (personal communication, November, 2015).

Figure 23: Screenshot of a students front page for their Film Art II history timeline and presentation.
Allowing students to complete the assignment using any avenue they feel gives them the best opportunity for success, promotes visual media literacy. This student felt successful with his research. This feeling was partly because he was allowed to present the information using multimedia.

I have used typical teaching methods, such as assigning homework and requiring students to take copious amounts of lecture notes, and converted these tasks into interactive digital presentations and lectures to empower the students through conversation and discovery. I have also begun to “flip” the methods of learning in my classroom, asking students to watch video tutorials at home or during study halls rather than introduce new content during valuable class time. In this way, I can offer more personalized guidance and interaction with each student. The high school students in this study are Internet natives who are digitally savvy. Students watch video tutorials for informal and formal learning tasks. Today, 21st century learning skills can liberate students and teachers from mundane tasks and take learning into high levels of cognition (i.e., analysis, synthesis and evaluation). Students in my Digital Art and Film Studies courses have grown up with technology. Similar to how a baby learns language, they have learned to navigate devices to global data on Internet, and these skills have become part of their lives.

Adults who have not grown up with the Internet and mobile technologies can adapt as they learn, but like many late adopters of these devices and skills, some adults find the

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13 Twenty-first century learning skills reflect the combination of content knowledge with critical thinking, problem solving, communication and working collaboratively in a technology-driven society.
fast pace of technology difficult and approach learning new technological language with
trepidation. The interactions between teachers who were not educated to use digital and
mobile technologies, and millennial students can be compared to 18th century teaching
styles\textsuperscript{14} being used in classrooms with 21st century learners. Students sometimes experi-
ence friction with faculty members who do not use technology for teaching. John Dewey
described \textit{traditional education}\textsuperscript{15} as passive, requiring students to be obedient. The stu-
dents are expected to receive and believe the information presented by their teachers as
truth. There will always be value in learning from experts, but a common scenario in to-
day’s classroom is “a room filled with digitally-literate students, being led by linear-
thinking, technologically stymied, instructors” (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006, p.
13).

Therefore, it is now more important than ever that administrators and teachers ef-
fectively implement technology into classrooms for students to become successful 21st
century media-literate learners. Along with subject content, the National Educational
Technology Standards have shaped state and district standards that require students to
learn technology skills for success for tomorrow’s world.\textsuperscript{16}

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{14} Eighteenth century schools were led mostly by men who taught Latin, religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic. The learning goal and process consisted of mostly memorization.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Traditional education} means to transmit to a next generation skills, facts, and standards of moral and social conduct that adults (teachers) consider to be necessary for the next generation's material and social success.

\textsuperscript{16} National Educational Technology Standards: http://www.k12.wa.us/edtech/standards/
References


APPENDIX A: THESIS QUESTIONNAIRE
Google Form - Filled out by students in Digital Imaging and Film Studies Courses
Made available to students online in the courses Google Classrooms.

TEACHING VISUAL (MEDIA) LITERACY: AN EXAMINATION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL VERMONT - REMIX, VISUAL IMAGERY AND FILM MAKING

This survey is for consented research participants. Participation in this study is voluntary. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and take place in A32, if you would prefer to take the survey in private we can arrange a time to use the high school conference room. You may decline to answer any of the survey questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. Opting out or withdrawing from this research will not negatively effect the subjects course grade. This research is separate from any performance scale or grade that determines final course grade, participation is voluntary. With your permission, the survey will be collected, and later transcribed for analysis. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any document or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for 4 years in a password protected file. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

Your username (ldidio@fhwus.org) will be recorded when you submit this form. Not ldidio? Sign out

1. Describe your LEAST engaging class. What does it look like, how does the teacher present information? (please DO NOT use personal pronouns or the teacher's name(s)

2. Please type your first and last name. This will be used only to assign you a pseudonym for data collection and transcription.

3. Describe your MOST engaging class. What does it look like, how does the teacher present information? (please DO NOT use personal pronouns or the teacher's name(s).
4. How Do you learn or study best?
Auditory: Do you seem to learn best in classes that emphasize teacher lectures and class discussions? Does listening to audio tapes help you learn better? Do you find yourself reading aloud or talking things out to gain better understanding? If YES, you are probably an Auditory Learner. Visual: Written Do you do best in classes in which teachers do a lot of writing at the chalkboard, provide clear handouts, and make extensive use of an overhead projector? Do you take detailed written notes from your textbooks and in class? If YES, you are probably a Visual Learner. Visual: Pictures or Diagrams Do you try to remember information by creating pictures in your mind? Do you watch videos to help you understand concepts? Do you use graphic organizers or diagrams to help organize your thoughts? If YES, you are probably a Visual Learner. Tactile/Kinesthetic: Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners learn best in hands-on learning settings in which they can physically manipulate something in order to learn about it. Do you learn best when you can move about and handle things? Do you do well in classes in which there is a lab component? Do you learn better when you have an actual object in your hands rather than a picture of the object or a verbal or written description of it? If YES, you are probably a Tactile/Kinesthetic Learner.
Mark only one oval.

- Auditory
- Visual: Written
- Visual: Pictures and Diagrams
- Tactile/Kinesthetic

5. Do you have internet access at home?
Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

6. Do you regularly participate in an online community?
For example, gaming communities, Facebook, Twitter, chat rooms, virtual meeting places. Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

7. How often do you access YouTube outside of school?
Mark only one oval.

- 1-3 Hours a Day
- 4-8 Hours a Day
- 10 Hours a Day
- 20 Hours a Week
- Other: __________

8. How do you use YouTube?
For example: Entertainment, Music, Professional, Educational etc.
9. Who/What are some YouTubers/Channels you watch?


10. What type of technology or devices do you use to access the internet or complete homework at home?
Check all that apply.
Check all that apply:
☐ Computer/Laptop
☐ Mobile Phone
☐ Mobile Device: i.e. iPad or Other Tablet
☐ Other:

11. What type of technology or devices do you use to access the internet in or complete work in school?
Check all that apply.
Check all that apply:
☐ Computer/Laptop
☐ Mobile Phone
☐ Mobile Device: i.e. iPad or Other Tablet
☐ Other:

12. Do you think technology should be integrated into the classroom?
Mark only one oval.
☐ Yes
☐ No

13. How would you LIKE technology to be integrated into the classroom more?


69
### APPENDIX B: IRB EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>October 14, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From:</td>
<td>Tracie Kahler, IRB Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To:</td>
<td>Lindsay DiDio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type of Submission:** Initial Study

**Title of Study:** TEACHING VISUAL LITERACY USING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS: AN EXAMINATION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL VERMONT - REMIX, VISUAL IMAGERY & FILM MAKING

**Principal Investigator:** Lindsay DiDio

**Study ID:** STUDY00002173

**Submission ID:** STUDY00002173

**Funding:** Not Applicable

**Documents Approved:**
- HRP-591 - Protocol for Human Subject Research.pdf (3.0), Category: IRB Protocol
- Thesis Questionnaire - Google Form (0.02), Category: Data Collection Instrument

The Office for Research Protections determined that the proposed activity, as described in the above-referenced submission, does not require formal IRB review because the research met the criteria for exempt research according to the policies of this institution and the provisions of applicable federal regulations.

Continuing Progress Reports are **not** required for exempt research. Record of this research determined to be exempt will be maintained for five years from the date of this notification. If your research will continue beyond five years, please contact the Office for Research Protections closer to the determination end date.

Changes to exempt research only need to be submitted to the Office for Research Protections in limited circumstances described in the below-referenced Investigator Manual. If changes are being considered and there are questions about whether IRB review is needed, please contact the Office for Research Protections.

Penn State researchers are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within CATS IRB (http://irb.psu.edu).

This correspondence should be maintained with your records.
APPENDIX C: DISNEY REMIX ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Disney Remix assignment sheet.
Made available to students online in the Film Art Google Classroom.

Disney Scene Remix
Visual Culture lesson - analyzing Disney

1. Choose a film to critique.
2. Choose an aspect of the film to use for this assignment - Watch the Disney Movie and choose what scene you want to recut. Write a short explanation below about what needs to changed and how you plan on changing it.

Analysis Options:
1. Rewrite the screenplay for your scene with scene descriptions and dialogue. rewrite the scene looking through a feminist lens.
2. Draw up a new storyboard with cues and music illustrating the scene you chose. Redraw the scene looking through the feminist lens.
3. Rewrite the Song Lyrics to one of the songs from your chosen movie. Rewrite them to they reflect empowerment, are not racist and or sexism. As if you are looking through a feminist lens.
4. Redraw a Character Chose one of the characters from your chosen film to recreate, it can be a secondary character, main character or a new creation entirely.

Please write your Scene Choice and Explanation below:
Based on the information learned from the documentary Mickey Mouse Monopoly.

40 points (5 points each)

1. Give three examples of how Disney represents gender.

2. Give 3 Examples of how Disney represents race.

3. Give 3 examples of how Disney commercialized childhood culture.

4. What does the film say about how a media company’s status as a corporation can influence how it constructs reality and fantasy? And how these constructions can in turn shape perceptions?

5. Do you think gender portrayal in Disney films have changed over time? If so, How? If not, what’s been most consistent about them?

6. Think about what you learned from the film, and what you know and can draw from about Disney films you’ve watched. Do you find racial/ethnic stereotyping to be more pronounced in the depictions of any particular minority group? --- Do you feel these stereotypes have changed over time? If so, How?

7. Why do you think Disney arouses such passionate reactions, bot pro and con, in people? How do you think the Walt Disney Company would react to this documentary?

8. What steps toward media literacy and media education can you think of that we should teach children to help them critically evaluate Disney and other Popular culture products for themselves? Should we be teaching media literacy in schools the same way we analyze literature or math problems? Why or Why not?
APPENDIX E: SIX KEYS TO SCREENWRITING


Worksheet 1

Screenplay format

Key terms in screenwriting

Scene: screenplays are divided into scenes. (This is a technical definition, rather than the dramatic definition Robert McKee describes in Story which he also calls a “story event”.) A scene can be defined as a unit of dramatic action which takes place in a specific location in continuous time.

Slug line or scene heading, eg EXT. MARTHA’S HOUSE. NIGHT: This tells us whether the scene is inside or outside, where it is and whether it’s day or night. If more information about the location is needed it can go from the general to the specific or vice versa, eg INT. JACK’S CAR. HIGH STREET. DAY.

Scene direction: always written in the present tense, this contains descriptions of the characters’ actions and events relevant to the story. Characters’ names are usually capitalised, eg

JACK notices MARTHA standing at the side of the road. He slams the brakes on and the car screeches to a halt.

Character cue: the name of the character who speaks. Always capitalised and centred above their speech.

Actor direction: in brackets under the character’s name, used to describe the way, or to whom, they speak. Mostly redundant, and disliked by actors, but can be useful if the manner of speaking contradicts what appears to be the meaning or if there is potential uncertainty about who is being addressed.

Dialogue: what the characters say.

Camera shots and angles should not appear in the screenplay (although some writers/directors writing for themselves will include them).
APPENDIX F: SCREENPLAY FORMAT WORKSHEET


worksheet 2  Screenplay format

In small groups:

1. Read the following short story.

A girl and her father were driving along a country road on their way home when they saw a young girl hitchhiking. They stopped and picked her up and she got in the back seat. She told the girl and her father that she lived in a house about five miles up the road. She didn’t say anything after that but just turned to watch out the window. When the father saw the house he drove up to it and turned around to tell the girl they had arrived – but she wasn’t there. Both he and his daughter were really mystified and decided to knock on the door and tell the people what had happened. They told them they had once had a daughter who answered the description of the girl they supposedly had picked up, but she had disappeared some years ago and had last been seen hitchhiking on this very road. Today would have been her birthday.

2. Construct a short screenplay based on the story making sure you use standard screenplay format. This should include:
   - More than one scene;
   - Screen directions;
   - Dialogue.

3. Allocate parts (including a ‘hamator’ for slug lines and directions) to members of the group and prepare a reading of your script for presentation to the class.