



## Film Learning in the Classroom

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Is a picture worth a thousand words? That is a bit of a trick question. We process films and photographs very differently from the way we wrestle with words. They literally work on a different part of our brain, and their testimony is typically weighed differently as well, both in terms of emotional and evidentiary value. Film rhetoric does not quite play with the same deck of cards as classical rhetoric: it shuffles in some jokers and wild cards. To effectively use film in the classroom, faculty need to understand that these visual texts resemble but at the same time differ from written texts.

By training faculty in various disciplines in the social and natural sciences to become more aware of not just what a film they are showing in a course says, but how it says it, the faculty can help frame their discussions in a dramatic new way, underlining the crucial connections between content and form that are essential to all critical thinking. There is a real urgency to this task in a world where more and more of the information that students receive is transmitted through visual means from sources of varying degrees of integrity and objectivity. Although this is a life skill that needs to be developed at any age, it most definitely is required at the university level. Recognizing this need, we will share our experience using film in a constructive way for teaching students social and natural sciences at colleges and universities in New York City.