

**Science, Technology and Society, University of Wollongong**  
**STS288/388, Science and the media, 2004**  
**Recommendations for future classes**

Thanks to everyone who participated in the week 13 feedback exercise and who offered comments throughout the session and afterwards. For your information, here is my summary of the student recommendations for future classes, along with my ideas for what I might try in future. If you have any further comments or suggestions, I'd be pleased to hear them.

Best wishes,  
Brian

### **Designing the subject**

In week 1, students helped design the subject using a guided process of discussing personal interests, desired topics to study, desired skills to learn, and desired assessment. What worked well about this? What changes would you recommend in this process for future classes?

Most students were favourable towards this approach, and some were enthusiastic.

Some ideas:

- \* Have a sample subject outline for students to inspect.
- \* Have a list of ideas for the subject.

### **Class participation**

On designated weeks, beginning with week 2, you were expected to bring to class relevant items from the media — articles, video or audio clips, emails, etc. — and introduce them to the class in a few sentences. What worked well about this? What changes would you recommend in this process for future classes?

Most students were favourable towards this approach.

Some ideas for improvement:

- \* Pick a theme or topic each week.
- \* Require different source types (besides newspapers and magazines).
- \* Keep reportback short, perhaps with a time limit.
- \* Concentrate on critical analysis, not the topic.

[I like all these ideas and will try one or more in future.]

## **Media reviews**

On two occasions, you brought an item from the media to class and analysed it. What worked well about this? What changes would you recommend in this process for future classes?

Students were generally favourable towards media reviews.

Some ideas:

- \* Have a time limit.
- \* Encourage use of aids such as powerpoint.
- \* Have different expectations for the second review.
- \* Promote clarity on the conceptual framework.

[I like all these ideas and will try one or more in future.]

## **Presentation/activity**

Students either made a formal presentation to the class or designed an activity to help others understand the topic in its social context. What worked well about this? What changes would you recommend in this process for future classes? Do you prefer presentations or activities?

Students were nearly all favourable. More preferred activities but some preferred presentations.

Comments:

- \* Group work is good for learning.
- \* Theory is easier to present than to cover in an activity.

[My thought: perhaps require one presentation and one activity?]

## **Theories**

The following theories were suggested for use in the presentation/activity and the research project:

- \* political economy of the media;
- \* social construction of scientific knowledge;
- \* participatory democracy;
- \* semiotics.

Which of these theories is top priority for future classes?

Strongest support was for political economy of the media and social construction of scientific knowledge.

What other theories would you recommend for future classes?

Suggestions: feminism, technological determinism, Marxism, consumerism, globalisation.

Would you like more or less guidance on the theories?

Most students wanted more guidance; some were happy with what was provided.

[My thought: I can invite students in a future class to find or recommend good references on particular theories, so that others can benefit from everyone's investigations.]

### **Research project**

Is there any aspect of the research project that you would suggest changing?

(Freedom of choosing topic; word length; assessment criteria; due date; use of theories; collecting first hand and secondary information; preparation in class; etc.)

Many students hadn't started/finished the project, so comments were preliminary.

Suggestions:

\* Give more guidance on topics.

\* Have some sample topics or a list of topics.

### **Assessment**

The following were the agreed components of assessment:

Attendance

Class participation, 10%

Presentation/activity, 25%

Two media reviews, 20%

Research project, 45%

5 students liked the weightings that we used.

1 student wanted class participation weighted more heavily.

5 students wanted the presentation/activity weighted more heavily.

1 student wanted the media reviews weighted more heavily.

8 students wanted the research project weighted less, either 40% or 35%.

### **Activities in classes**

Which activities do you recommend for future years?

[Numbers of students ticking each item are given.]

- Exercises to learn other students' names; introductions, 13
- Exercises working in small groups (run by Brian in early weeks), 11
- Reports on media items (by students), 13
- Media reviews (by students), 12
- Presentations/activities (by students), 14
- Snack breaks, 13
- Excursion, 5
- Guest speakers, 10
- An in-class simulation (for example of a press conference), 5
- Other: semi-formal debate, 1

### **Miscellaneous**

Would you welcome use of peer assessment (assessment by other students)?

Yes, 3; partially, 2; no, 6.

Other comments:

- \* Explore non-print media more.
- \* Liked friendly class.
- \* Liked flexible format without being "directed" in attitude to subject.
- \* Compile an ongoing set of useful references.