Capturing Experience: Using Experiential Learning to Teach Photography

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About the Course: Digital Photography in Agriculture

• Offered twice a year in two different formats:
  • Traditional 17-week spring semester
  • Two-week “intersession” semester

• Same instructor, concepts, assignment structure, and grading rubric
One Course, Two Formats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Spring Semester</th>
<th>Experiential Intersession Semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 17 weeks</td>
<td>• 12 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 1 hour 20-min class periods, 2x weekly</td>
<td>• 4-hour to full day class periods</td>
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<td>• In-class lecture</td>
<td>• Brief lectures, more in-field instruction</td>
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<td>• Students experiment with cameras and shoot assignments on their own time</td>
<td>• Use class time to travel to farms, ranches, and outdoor locations to photography agricultural subjects</td>
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Seven Assignments. One Rubric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Light</td>
<td>• Clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Depth of field</td>
<td>• Composition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Action</td>
<td>• Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Color</td>
<td>• Artistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Black and white</td>
<td>• Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Editorial</td>
<td>• Assignment requirements</td>
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<td>• Portrait</td>
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Comparing Student Performance

• Kolb’s (1984) Theory of Experiential Learning

• “The study of photography can clearly be understood as stages of an experiential learning process” (Horner, 2016, p. 81).

• “…photographing in unfamiliar surroundings offers a high degree of potential for experiential learning” (Horner, 2016, p. 82).
Comparing Student Performance

• Data was collected from consenting students’ graded assignment rubrics
  • *traditional semester* (n=27)
  • *experiential intersession* (n=13)

• Independent-samples t-tests compared instruction format by students’:
  • *cumulative mean assignment scores*
  • *individual assignment mean scores*
  • *rubric criteria mean scores*
Results: Cumulative Scores

• Students in the experiential intersession course had statistically significantly higher mean cumulative assignment scores compared to students in the traditional course.

  • Experiential (M=183.00, SD=7.33)
  • Traditional (M=170.70, SD=12.03)
  • t(38)=−3.38, p<.01
  • Cohen’s effect size (d = 1.17) suggested a very large practical significance.
Results: Assignments

• Of the seven assignments, the Depth of Field assignment was the only individual assignment found to have significantly different mean scores from students.

  • \( t(38) = -3.38, \ p < .01 \)
  • The effect size for this analysis \( (d = .79) \) was found to show a large effect.
Results: Rubric Criteria

• Students in the traditional format course scored significantly lower than students in the experiential intersession on specific rubric criteria in four of the seven assignments.
  • Black and White-Composition was the only rubric criterion with a higher mean score during the traditional format than for the experiential intersession.
Significant Comparisons of Students’ Rubric Criteria Scores by Instruction Method

Experiential Intersession  n=13

Traditional Semester  n=27

Composition  Clarity  Creativity  Composition  Creativity  Artistic  Requirement  Requirement  ACTION

LIGHT  B&W  DEPTH OF FIELD
Spring Semester: Shooting on their own
Intersession: Shooting with field instruction
Intersession: Shooting with field instruction
Intersession: Shooting with field instruction
Conclusions

• Instruction method does have an effect on student performance in ACOM digital photography courses.

• Students’ mean assignment scores increase when participating in an experiential learning course format.

• Students’ understanding of specific photography skills (rubric criteria) was higher when in the experiential intersession format.
  • Individual assignment performance less affected by instruction format
Conclusions

- These findings support Horner’s (2016) suggestion that an experiential approach to photography instruction is beneficial to students’ understanding of basic photography skills.
Implications

• Use experiential learning activities to improve student performance and enhance their understanding of photography principles in ACOM photography courses.

• Experiential activities have been implemented in the traditional semester format of the course.

• Experiential teaching strategies will continue to be evaluated in both formats to examine the effect on student performance.
Questions?

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