

# Using Popular Media and Digital Narratives for Active Learning

Teaching English 101 and 102 at  
Queensborough Community College

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# Compelled to Learn

- Queens, New York is the most diverse county in the U.S. Often the number of nationalities represented in my classes is equal to the number of students in the class.
- There is a heavy concentration of newly arrived Hispanic students.
- For many of my students English is not their first language.

English 101 and 102 are compulsory subjects for all students at QCC.



# Embracing Reluctance

- Many of my students don't want to be in my class
- Engaging these students is challenging.
- Students read continually: they text and surf the internet, check their Facebook and listen to music through classes BUT WON'T READ TEXT BOOKS.
- So I try to meet them halfway.

# Student Wiki Interdisciplinary Group

- Much of the teaching I'm talking about today takes place in my SWIG classes.
- SWIG is a high Impact strategy that uses ePortfolio to help move students from prior knowledge, through disciplinary knowledge to understanding.
- My SWIG classes culminate in the creation of a digital story

# Music: The Universal Language



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Gale Document Number:CT4099923537

# Listen To Me

- In my EN102 classes war and violence is one of three themes.
- We study texts such as:
- “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien
- “The Destructors” by Graham Greene
- The poetry of Thomas Hardy and Carolyn Forché
- And I ask them to pick a song that they like, that deals with the theme of war and violence.

# Social Listening

In my SWIG classes I ask students to create an Epsilen wiki in their group and post their song. I ask them to comment on each other's song. This is one of the few times my students voluntarily sort out each other's wikis.

War What is it good for:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01-2pNCZiNk>





# Social Watching

- Students are asked to read drafts of each other's papers. They are then asked to give gifts to their fellow students. These gifts must reflect the paper they have read. Within the epsilen environment they can post links to articles, images or movies, for example:
- Lord of War starring Nicolas Cage

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4jMzKxYB74>

# OWNERSHIP

- Because students choose these texts themselves they became interested
- They seem more willing to write about the music, films, TV shows and compare and contrast.
- They can choose movies in Spanish, for example in En 101 we study:
- The Secret in Their Eyes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2cLIFjbQ8g>

# Their Turn

- Once a final paper has been assessed, students can turn their paper into a digital story:

<http://media.acc.qcc.cuny.edu:8088/faculty/abbott/digitalStory/digitalStory.html>

- My students digital story: Luis Hernandez *Immigration*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2shPNoPF8Y>

- Here's Edwardo Hernandez's "Migration"

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmIYyQZUwzs&context=C282ddADOEgsToPDskLORF6AqrYltNVETR\\_u3q8t](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmIYyQZUwzs&context=C282ddADOEgsToPDskLORF6AqrYltNVETR_u3q8t)

# Another Strategy to Engage

- With easy access to the internet, it's possible to spice up traditional teaching.



# Shakespeare: Pulling teeth

- Many of my students, especially Hispanics and other non English speakers, often have trouble with Shakespeare.
- Teaching Much Ado About Nothing met with enormous resistance, until . . .
- **Much Ado About Nothing ~ Hip-Hop Animation by Flocabulary ~ Presented by READ magazine**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YriXsbSVaAU>
- My students, especially urban Hispanic student's, really enjoy this clip because it's Hip Hop.

# But What's It Got to Do With Me?

- I ask my students to find a pop culture text, be it book, film, TV show or song that has something in common with *Much Ado About Nothing*

# Jersey Shore and other ados about nothing:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf7g0QJsyTk&feature=related>

Taylor Swift, “Love Story:”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qw8g1HKjS0>

# More of the same

- Much Ado About Nothing's Hero and Claudio.
- Taylor Swift "Love Story" "We were both young when I first saw you"
- "And I was crying on the staircase/ Begging you, "Please don't go."
- Hero: O, God defend me! How am I beset!



# Seeing is Loving

- Not Ready to Read Yet? Once I showed them the film they were all fans.

Much Ado About Nothing

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIACPr5>

[XEQM](#)

# Wrapping Up

- I hope that these simple (and not so simple) strategies will be provide inspiration for drawing on technology and media to engage your students.

# Migrations

- David Cobra “Migration:”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7fB52e1Ydg><<http://us.mg5.mail.yahoo.com/neo/redirect.aspx?C=c0c5f3ac04bf41feadefb5959235d00e&URL=https%3a%2f%2fmail.qcc.cuny.edu%2fowa%2fUrlBlockedError.aspx>>

- Liang Lin (student who won the Manhattan Borough President’s Fellowship)

<http://youtu.be/ZCW884e6ggw>

- Shari Stuart:

[http://media.acc.qcc.cuny.edu:8088/faculty/abbott/FA11/migration\\_digital\\_story\\_shari/migration\\_digital\\_story\\_shari.html](http://media.acc.qcc.cuny.edu:8088/faculty/abbott/FA11/migration_digital_story_shari/migration_digital_story_shari.html)

- Susan Stuart:

<http://media.acc.qcc.cuny.edu:8088/faculty/abbott/FA11/Stuart-Migration/Stuart-Migration.html>