

Reality TV in the Classroom: Calling All Movers, Shakers & Trendsetters

Session Format: Roundtable Discussion

Abstract

Technology has brought reality to traditional television. Many reality TV shows are set in contexts that have managerial and organizational behavior dilemmas. For students, these shows can offer insight through observation, analysis or inspiration. A new series, *The Social Movement*, brings together entrepreneurs, innovators and thought leaders to create socially viable businesses designed to solve the world's most pressing problems. The purpose of this roundtable is to foster innovation using reality television in the classroom, share new shows airing in the Fall of 2021, and to identify shared teaching interests on the topic.

Keywords (3): Reality Television, Experiential Learning, Collaboration

Introduction

Feature films and television shows have long been a source of engagement in the classroom (Roth, 2001; Smith, 2009). As a form of storytelling (Champoux, 1999), students can be engaged in the shared experience of viewing the acting from an onscreen performance. As the television industry advances into new and varied forms of content, reality television has become a staple among the regular season lineup on many networks and streaming channels. Reality television affords viewers the observation of seemingly unscripted natural behaviors and interpersonal encounters along with strategic editing. While many reality TV shows emphasize the interpersonal drama and relationship aspects, several also include elements of the characters'

work such as those focused on venture operations, specific aspects of a venture's life cycle, or a combination of these and/or a competition.

Of the many shows on television, several address aspects of business activities, operations, and interactions that can be used as learning opportunities in the classroom. This roundtable is designed to engage participants in a conversation about generating ideas around reality television in general, and one specific show in particular, *The Social Movement*, and how shows like these can be used to increase engagement in our classes.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications

Use of media clips (Gioia & Brass, 1986) has been a common supplement to traditional course instruction enabling educators to teach their students about complex situations, stakeholders (Roth, 2001), and the diverse perspectives of the characters in a story (Gallos, 1993).

Film-based resources can be presented to students as sources of cases, metaphors, satires, or as a means of demonstrating symbolism and meaning, to relate experience, or help them understand time (Champoux, 2009). These may be presented as clips for review, or shown as full-length films (i.e. Harrington, 1990; Serey, 1992; Taylor & Provitera, 2011).

Golden-Biddle (1993) argued for the ability of video based media to facilitate vicarious learning (Bandura, 1986). A special case of film that can be used in the classroom for this purpose is reality television. Reality television shows bring less scripted stories than feature films, making them highly appropriate for case and experience-based learning. Depending on the context of the show, they may also serve as a means to gain perspective for undergraduate students via social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994).

In a world where current events prohibit some traditional career exploration and vicarious learning activities, such as a job shadows and realistic job previews, technology can bridge tradition. Reality television may in some situations offer a close proxy depending on the content presented. For example, in a research study of adolescents by Van Den Bulck and Beullens (2007), they found that after watching reality television (docu soaps), students reported an increase in positive perceptions about the career options presented in the series. In addition, the odds of a student pursuing a presented vocation from the show increased by up to 15%.

Session Description

This is a roundtable submission and we understand that roundtables are commonly scheduled for 60 minutes.

In this roundtable we will introduce the topic of reality television in the classroom and encourage sharing from the participants about what they have done in the past. We acknowledge that not all reality television shows are good candidates for increasing vocational interests or are appropriate for business students. Therefore a few aims for the discussion is to increase the range of possible shows available to educators and to begin to build a network based on commonly shared interests. Opening questions include: 1) Introduce yourself to the group and share how you have used reality television in your courses to date; 2) Which shows do you think of when you think of the following management courses (Principles of Management, Organizational Behavior, Strategic Management, Human Resources (general and specific)? 3) What aspects have we not seen yet in reality television? Where are the gaps and opportunities?

Next, we will view the trailer for a groundbreaking new series from Red Knight Studios and H2H Television titled The Social Movement (TSM). It is scheduled to premier Labor Day 2021 and brings together entrepreneurs, innovators, and thought leaders and challenge them to

attack one of the United Nations' top world problems by engineering a social business over a four day period. The show promotes the taglines, "Four Days to Change the World" and "Be Generous with your Genius." After viewing the trailer and hearing from a participant who will have recently returned from filming, attendees will be encouraged to act entrepreneurially to brainstorm ways that this series could be used in the classroom. Priming questions may include:

- 1) How could you use The Social Movement series to engage, inspire or encourage students in making positive change and impact in their communities and on their campuses?
- 2) Specifically, what constructs or learning objectives would you consider?
- 3) Additionally, how might this show in particular help students build their own efficacy in their ability to change their world? and
- 4) How can we help educators be prepared to align teaching activities with the launch of the show if desired?

In closing, and to facilitate network building and collaboration, a scribe will capture participant contact information and compile shared ideas and follow up with attendees about collaboration opportunities.

References

- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Champoux, J.E. (1999). Film as a teaching resource. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8(2), 206-217.
- Gallos, J. V. (1993). Teaching about reframing with films and videos. *Journal of Management Education*, 17, 127-132.

- Gioia, D. A. & Brass, D. T. (1986). Teaching the TV generation: The case for observational learning. *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review*, 10, 11-18.
- Golden-Biddle, K. (1993). Organizational dramas and dramatic stagings about them. *Journal of Management Education*, 17, 39-49.
- Harrington, K. V. (1990). Ripley, Burke, Gorman, and friends: Using the film *Aliens* to teach leadership and power. *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review*, 14, 79-86.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D. & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45, 79-122.
- Roth, L. (2001). Introducing students to "The Big-Picture." *Journal of Management Education*, 25(21), 21-31.
- Smith, G. (2009). Using feature film as the primary instructional medium to teach organizational behavior. *Journal of Management Education*, 33(4), 462-289.
- Serey, T. T. (1992). Carpe diem: Lessons about life and management from *Dead Poets Society*. *Journal of Management Education*, 16, 374-381.
- Taylor, V. F. & Provitera, M. J. (2011). Teaching labor relations with *Norma Rae*. *Journal of Management Education*, 35(5), 749-766.
- Van Den Bulck, J. & Beullens, K. (2007). The relationship between docu soap exposure and adolescents' career aspirations. *European Journal of Communications*, 22(3), 355-366.