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# Feature Films for Communication Courses: A Bibliography

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## Teaching Resources

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The Teaching Resources section is devoted to innovative instructional activities and a list of instructional materials available through STAM. The information selected for inclusion is applicable to "Monday's Classroom." We encourage readers to offer ideas for the development of this section and to submit their own materials for consideration in future issues.

### Feature Films for Communication Courses: A Bibliography

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Over the last several years, we have taken part in numerous discussions about feature films as instructional resources. The discussions have been held in a variety of contexts, including convention panels, journal pages, and coffee shops. A question we frequently hear is, "What film(s) would you use if you wanted to teach \_\_\_\_\_?" The blank has been filled with topics such as interpersonal, group, gender, organizational, conflict, power, self-concept, ethics, or other issues related to communication education. It would seem that many of us are looking for new and meaningful ways to use feature films as illustrative case studies in our classrooms.

Once upon a time, the only way to answer the question was informally; that is, by offering an opinion or directing the inquirer to someone who had experience in the area. Recently, however, the process has been formalized and expanded through various written materials. Rather than keeping lists of films in our heads, we can now refer people to articles, textbooks, and documents. The new trick is remembering the references for these works in circulation. This article is an attempt to remedy that problem. We offer here a list of resources for those who want ideas for using feature films in their communication courses.

A few words of explanation. We have annotated some, but not all, of the references. The annotations are not statements of stronger recommendation; we simply chose to describe the contents of sources whose titles are not self-explanatory, or those with which we are particularly familiar. While the lists are intended to be comprehensive, they are not exhaustive. We welcome you to acquaint us with references we have omitted. We are encouraged by the number of people who are using feature films in their classes, and we urge you to enter the ongoing discussions of these valuable instructional resources.

**Journal Articles**

- Bourhis, J. (1992). Video groups. *Speech Communication Teacher*, 6, 12.  
Describes the value of feature films (rather than "fishbowl" exercises) for teaching small group communication.
- Foss, K.A. (1983). Celluloid rhetoric: The use of documentary film to teach rhetorical theory. *Communication Education*, 32, 51-61.
- Hall, D. (1991). Join *The Breakfast Club*. *Speech Communication Teacher*, 5, 3.
- Harrington, K.V., & Griffin, R.W. (1989). Ripley, Burke, Gorman and friends: Using the film *Aliens* to teach leadership and power. *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review*, 14, 79-86.
- Langworthy, H. (1937). Motion pictures as a teaching device. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 23, 299-303.  
A chestnut. Take your classes to the theater to see "recent" films such as *Treasure Island* and *David Copperfield*.
- McGowan, L. (1993). *St. Elmo's Fire* as a tool for discussing conflict management. *Speech Communication Teacher*, 7, 12-13.  
Contains a helpful chart of characters, concepts, scenes, and examples.
- McKinney, B.C. (1990). The group process and *12 Angry Men*. *Speech Communication Teacher*, 4, 1-2.
- Proctor, R.F. (1993). Using feature films to teach critical thinking: Multiplemorals to the stories. *Speech Communication Teacher*, 7, 11-12.
- Proctor R.F. (1992a). *Roger and Me*: A critique for the classroom. *Journal of the Oklahoma Speech Theatre Communication Association*, 14, 75-78.  
Describes the use of *Roger and Me* for teaching a college course in interviewing.
- Proctor, R.F. (1992b). Teaching small group communication with feature films. *Journal of the Illinois Speech Theatre Association*, 43, 28-37.  
Lists 15 group films (see also Proctor, 1991a) and describes non-traditional approaches for using *The Breakfast Club* and *Twelve Angry Men* (see also Proctor 1993a, 1991b, 1990b).

- Proctor, R.F., & Adler, R.B. (1991). Teaching interpersonal communication with feature films. *Communication Education, 40*, 393-400.  
Offers a rationale, 70 titles, and strategies for teaching with feature films. Also provides references from other disciplines and information about a database available from the second author. A good "starter" article.
- Proctor, R.F. (1990a). Feature films and interpersonal communication: A marriage worthy of a course. *Michigan Association of Speech Communication Journal, 25*, 1-12.
- Proctor, R.F. (1990b). Thinking critically about *Twelve Angry Men*. *Speech Association of Minnesota Journal, 17*, 77-81.
- Remender, P.A. (1992). Using feature films to encourage critical thinking. *Southern Social Studies Journal, 17*, 33-44.
- Serey, T.T. (1992). Carpe Diem: Lessons about life and management from *Dead Poets Society*. *Journal of Management Education, 16*, 374-381.
- Shields, D.C., & Kidd, V.V. (1973). Teaching through popular film: A small group analysis of *The Poseidon Adventure*. *Speech Teacher, 22*, 201-207.  
One of the first film/pedagogy articles. Declares "a mandate for using art forms to explicate communication theory" (p. 201).
- Siddens, P.J. (1992). Literary texts, films, and solo performances. *Speech Communication Teacher, 6*, 7-8.
- Winegarden, A.D., Fuss-Reineck, M., & Charron, L.J. (1993). Using *Star Trek: The Next Generation* to teach persuasion, family communication, and communication ethics. *Communication Education, 42*, 179-188.  
While this deals with a TV series, *Star Trek* episodes are available on videotape. Recommended article.
- Zorn, T.E. (1991). Willy Loman's lesson: Teaching identity management with *Death of a Salesman*. *Communication Education, 40*, 219-224.

### Textbooks/Instructor's Manuals

- Adler, R.B., & Rodman, G. (1994). *Understanding Human Communication* (5th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.  
Each chapter of this hybrid text ends with a list/description of relevant films.

- Adler, R.B., Rosenfeld, L.B., & Towne, N. (1995). *Interplay: The Process of Interpersonal Communication* (6th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace. Each chapter of this interpersonal text has three "Film Clip" sidebars related to the chapter's concepts. The *Instructor's Manual* also includes information on using feature films.
- Canary, D.J., & Cody, M.J. (1994). *Interpersonal Communication: A Goals-based Approach*. New York: St. Martin's.  
Illustrates several concepts/theories with sidebar excerpts from feature films.
- Griffin, E. (1994). *A First Look at Communication Theory* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.  
Appendix lists films for various theories/concepts; text uses extended illustrations from feature films.
- Proctor, R.F. (1993b). Teaching the hybrid course with feature films. In R.W. Martin & R. Verderber, *Instructor's Resource Manual to accompany Communicate!* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.  
Lists/describes eight movies for interpersonal/group concepts.
- Rothwell, J.D. (1992). *Instructor's Manual to accompany In Mixed Company: Small Group Communication*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace.  
Describes uses for five feature films.
- Stewart, J. & Logan, C. (1993). *Together: Communicating Interpersonally* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.  
Several chapters in this interpersonal text include films in their resources list.

### ERIC Documents

ERIC Documents are available for copying (from microfiche) in most academic libraries. Many of these documents were originally convention papers; check ERIC listings for updates.

- Aiex, N.K. (1988). Using film, video, and TV in the classroom. (ERIC Document ED 300 848).
- Jensen, M.D. (1981). Teaching interpersonal communication through novels, plays, and films. (ERIC Document ED 213 055).
- O'Mara, J. (1991). Teaching intercultural communication through Hollywood film: An analysis of *Witness*. (ERIC Document ED 336 765).

Proctor, R.F. (1991a). Teaching group communication with feature film. (ERIC Document ED 343 175).

Proctor, R.F. (1991b). Do the ends justify the means? Thinking critically about *Twelve Angry Men*. (ERIC Document ED 336 784).

### A Practical Postscript

Knowing that many readers of this journal are secondary education teachers, and realizing they may not have access to (or time to consult) the listed references, the editors have wisely requested a few words about the "nuts and bolts" of using feature films as instructional resources. What follows is an adapted excerpt from an article by Proctor and Adler (1991), published in *Communication Education*.

One challenge facing instructors who use film is finding the class time to incorporate new media into the course. There are two options available: in-class and out-of-class viewing. As time permits, films can be shown during class to illustrate one or more concepts. Although this approach can be time-consuming, the value gained by having control over viewing is considerable. The film can be stopped at key moments for discussion and questions, and the instructor can highlight important points.

If time does not permit accompanying every class unit with a film, a smaller number of titles can be used to illustrate a variety of concepts. For example, works like *Ordinary People* or *Children of a Lesser God* provide a virtual survey of topics covered in most interpersonal communication classes. These movies can be shown at the beginning of a course to preview these topics, at key points during the course, or near the end of the term as a review. If time is still a problem, relevant excerpts can be used rather than showing the entire film.

Impact on instructional time can also be minimized by having students watch selected films outside of class meetings. In settings where rental facilities are plentiful and students have access to home video recorders, movie viewing can be assigned as homework. Whenever possible, however, it is wise to have a copy of the movie available at the school's media center, where students can watch the videotape by appointment. Written assignments and/or in-class discussions can then be used to process the movie's communication concepts.

Here are two final instructional suggestions:

1. Films should be screened in advance to determine their appropriateness for the classroom. Even with the most careful editing, some students are likely to find certain scenes objectionable or offensive. It is wise to warn them of this risk at the outset of the course, thus providing a clear disclaimer and an opportunity for sensitive students to enroll in classes that do not use films. Additionally, movies with difficult content may be best suited for out-of-class viewings, where students are less likely to feel uncomfortable.

2. Because feature films are entertaining, students may at times lose sight of the educational agenda. It is the responsibility of the instructor to guard the integrity of the theoretical concept. One method for accomplishing this is to stop the film occasionally and discuss correlations between the movie and the concepts it is intended to illustrate. On the other hand, there is value in asking the students to make these connections for themselves. This can be done by having them develop discussion questions (and answers) that link the film with course concepts.