

**A PHILOSOPHY for FILM EDUCATION: CREATIVITY,
LIBERATION and AUTHENTICITY in the KNOWLEDGE
CULTURE.**

by

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ABSTRACT

Although the technology of cinema has been in a constant state of change through the last century, we are now in a hurricane of innovation and technological convergence. For the first time in human history, millions of people can communicate using a moving visual medium. Visual literacy using moving images, has the potential to transform our society from passively entertained to participatory and interactive. But, advances in technology also contain many caveats. In a moment of human history, of such an intense concentration of wealth- what will happen to those who do not have access? What is the role, obligation and responsibility of education and educators in relation to these significant changes that are taking place in filmmaking and in our society?

A philosophy of curriculum is necessary so that film educators ask students the right questions. These questions will support students developing their own creativity and their authentic selves.

Keywords: visual literacy; digital citizenship; creativity; liberation; authenticity; aesthetic knowledge; being human; digital divide

Subject Terms: Motion pictures – Philosophy; Film education; Philosophy of curriculum; Collaboration

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CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE

1.1 Introduction

The beginning of my filmmaking career, my film education, my first independent choice as an adult, my first move away from my family home, and my “coming out” all happened on the same day twenty- two years ago. I landed on the tarmac at the Vancouver airport and took a cab directly to my first class in film school. I had never been to Vancouver before. I didn’t know a soul. I didn’t know myself. A small voice somewhere inside had been urging me to take all of the risks that led me to that day, and I listened. After film school I worked in the film industry as an assistant director, applied for funding, wrote, directed and produced my own work, volunteered, worked on boards, programmed for festivals and worked with friends on all kinds of projects. Some of my films went to festivals. Some of my films found audiences through broadcast and educational distribution. Some turned out quite differently than I had expected, in both the process and the results, while others remain unfinished. After a decade of working this way, I had an opportunity to go to the Canadian Film Centre for a year of study. Choices and opportunities some painstaking, some careless and whimsical, coupled with all of the people and experiences that I have encountered, have somehow brought me to a place of reflection and activity that focuses on the question of a philosophy of film education.

Coincident with the birth of my son was the opportunity for me to begin teaching film at a University. I started my Masters degree in Art Education, on the same day that I started teaching. I felt unsure of myself on all of three journeys; parenting, teaching and being a student again, were all new beginnings. I discovered my passion for parenting, teaching and being a student again. I have found some interesting similarities between being a student a teacher and a parent. Since then these threads have intertwined and become significantly more meaningful and complex. After I completed my course work for my Master's degree, I began to write this thesis. My vociferous interest for my thesis topic spilled out. At the same time, my enthusiasm for the film program, my students and film education segued into three new paths: I was asked to develop a degree program from the existing three year diploma program; I was invited to become a part of the schools subcommittee for developing degrees; and I was also asked to run the existing program as I would be leading the redesign of the curriculum for the degree proposal. In these roles, the constant process of reading, writing, reflecting, and teaching, forces me to wonder about the purpose of film education. Every interaction seems to call the question of how it is connected to the over all context and continuum of human existence, the measure in the end of meaning and purpose of existence that must be lived in order to be understood. This paper is based on my reading and my experience as a graduate student, a film educator, filmmaker, program coordinator and curriculum and degree developer. Although many of the judgments are base on lived experience, some judgments are made on a hunch, guided by feeling. This

feeling is the thing that tells me what the story beat should be, how the ending should work, what composition might work , how curriculum might help keep the student engaged, how to evaluate creative work and how to stay open to your child in the storm of their emotions. Nearing the completion on this paper, the development of the degree, and the redesign of the program, feels similar to the end of making a film.

My son is now almost five and has just started kindergarten, I worry about violence in all media, and wonder about the impact it will have on him.

What personal meaning will he construct? My job is to provide some context for him to understand it all; his job is to construct meaning from his experience.

Parenting is my longest term teaching engagement, and I see how it informs my own learning. I see my art and my child as my messages to a future I will never see. While I am here, I must try to make the world a better place. As an educator, artist and parent, I find truth, beauty and goodness through love. No other word but love describes what the feeling is all about. Love is the zone one must enter to make a film. Filmmaking is a full-blown commitment to the unknown. It requires the filmmaker to throw their passion and intellect, and all of their resources into an idea, and to love the idea into a completed project.

In the process of making creative work, we will inevitably find ourselves in the middle of the awful details and the struggle to find some coherence. This is where learning and understanding all takes place.

Understanding is circuitous, and personal. It is more about integrating and feeling, rather than something that can be written about, read about or evaluated.

It is individual, personal and necessary. Getting used to struggling through something complex where no clear outcome exists is the process through which we get from here to there in art making and in filmmaking. We need teachers and parents who are willing to love their children and their students unconditionally in this process. We must invest in them with heart and soul, and resist attachment to any outcome.

The opportunity to do this work, write this paper, do this reading, and develop this degree has allowed me to deeply focus on something that I have been thinking about for decades. I have drawn deeply from both heart and mind. This has culminated in a profound sense of purpose and a deep connection to the possibilities for film education. I hope I have created some tangible outcomes that will be useful for film students in the future.

1.2 The Possibilities for Film Education

Aristotelian ethics asks, “How should a human being live?” and replies: “In accordance with all the forms of good functioning that make up a complete human life (Nussbaum ,1990, p.96).” I don’t think that collectively humans have come to a consensus about what “ all forms of good functioning” actually means. Set adrift from the dictates of custom and tradition we must each define this for ourselves as individuals. I would like to suggest that unconditional love, compassion and generosity of spirit are the forms of good functioning that have the potential to transcend *the* individual and transform our collective human experience. We must ask, what does it mean to be human? How are we going to live? What matters to us? Is it possible to find a common good? What purpose do we have here? For education to be of real value, the curriculum must have these underlying questions at its heart. Students can practice, learn the craft, acquire skills, gain knowledge and experience. Most important though, is that students have opportunities to make films that have personal relevance and resonance. Their filmmaking must be a venue for them to explore their own interests and to develop their individual sensibilities. Film education must transcend technique and conventions in order to allow students to ask questions and develop individual identities as to address those questions through their own artistic process. The questions in the curriculum must allow students to wonder about the nature of their existence, death, love and purpose.

The purpose of developing a philosophy of curriculum for film education is rooted in the need for philosophy of education. The literal translation of the word

philosophy is the *love of wisdom*. Love and wisdom are the core of this philosophy of film education. The hegemony of mass and electronic media has intersected with all of our daily lives and forms a powerful influence filter for our social interactions. Film education must take into account the influence of media, and teachers must design and deliver curriculum that will empower students to define their own unique ways of being.

Teachers must also be willing to honestly engage in a supportive and respectful relationship with each student. Students need to see teachers modeling moral, responsible and respectful behaviour in the world. Teachers need to be there every step of the way in order to create context and a place of safety, so that students can learn, understand and take chances. Through love and shared humanity, education can be of true value and meaning.

Filmmaking has emerged recently as an art form. Formal film education is even more recent. In 1950's, André Bazin wrote an article in *Cahier du Cinéma* , later published in a book *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? What is Cinema?* In his article Bazin developed the idea of *auteur* theory and objectivism. Bazin suggested that the spectator was responsible for his own reactions to a film and that each filmmaker must develop a personal vision. Bazin and other French film theorists of the time simultaneously distinguished the work of *auteur* filmmaking from American Hollywood production (Bazin, 1967-1971). The publication of this article and the book of the same title coincided with televisions' emergence in the 1950's. Television assumed the position of the lowest common denominator of culture, while cinema was elevated to an art form. *Auteur* theory and

subsequently film theory became legitimized as a theoretical approach to filmmaking. *Auteur Theory* became the pedagogical cornerstone of film education. The oldest and perhaps the most prestigious film school in the world is the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow. This state school was founded in 1919. Graduates include Eisentstien, Pudovkin, and Tarkovsky. The oldest and most prestigious film program in North America resides at the University of Southern California. The program was founded in 1929 by industry professionals in an effort to formalize the learning process of filmmaking. University film programs in North America and Europe began to offer film studies courses in earnest in the 1960's and 1970's in response to cinema's elevated status as art form and the emergence of *auteur* theory, and film theory. *Auteur* theory and film theory, however, have little to offer in the practical matters of filmmaking. Film programs with production courses at the tertiary level were typically somewhere between academic programs and art schools. In the few film programs that offered production courses, few students were admitted due to the expense of the process. Even after completing film school, it was difficult for independent filmmakers to find funding, international distribution, and theatrical release.

Independent Cinema emerged as a legitimate option for emerging filmmakers in 1978, after the first Sundance film festival successfully brought independent filmmakers together with distributors and sales agents. Subsequently, Sundance and other international film festivals became a market place for independent filmmakers. Distributors were able to screen and acquire

unique and interesting art house films. These films were made outside of the constraints of the studio system and had the possibility of garnering theatrical and critical success; moreover filmmakers found a way into the distribution system. Independent cinema thus became a possibility for aspiring filmmakers. Demand for film education increased accordingly. Formal film education at the tertiary level expanded to meet this need. *Auteur* theory, psychoanalytic film theory, semiotics, and film history became a part of the academic curriculum of film programs throughout Europe and North America. Film History became the most prevalent of the film curricula in tertiary film education. Film History offers instructors a useful visual tool to look at the construction of history and particular political, economic and philosophical perspectives that reflect relevant historical themes. Film has evolved with the century, and has become a part of both formal and informal education and is now used in Humanities and Social Science as rich visual text. Film has become a significant part of our collective culture and is embedded in tertiary curriculum.

Although film is clearly established in tertiary education, there is a distinct absence of philosophy of curriculum for film education. All art educators have a wealth of scholarly work to both draw from and contribute to in the co-creation of philosophies of education. Although there are books and scholarly journals on the many topics that encompass the art and theory of filmmaking, and though these are useful for developing course material, there is however no scholarly work yet devoted to the topic of the philosophy of film education.

In the absence of scholarly work in the field of the philosophy of film education, I have drawn on the philosophy of music education for ideas and inspiration. In contrast to film, music has deep pedagogical roots. I have drawn on music education because of the interesting parallels between the two art forms both in the way that the audience responds and in the way that the filmmaker and the musicians create their art.

We respond to films emotionally in ways that are similar to the way that we respond to music. Both are temporal experiences. The personal response that music illicit can happen individually, but is often intensified in a group. The bigger the group, the more intense the response, even though it continues to be a personal experience. This also happens when an audiences view films.

Filmmakers and musicians also work in similar ways to develop structure. They also must like musicians, be aware of genres, and must be in touch with their authentic selves in order to create original work. Film educators and music educators will benefit students if they have a depth of experience in their own creative work. Reimer's discussion in the *Philosophy of Music Education*, of the purpose of a philosophy of music education aligns with my thoughts on a philosophy for film education:

This philosophy must be grounded in reality and must tap into the imaginations of both teachers and students. The inherent value of teaching and of passing knowledge on to students must be valued and methods of philosophical work including critical analysis, synthesis of ideas, personal experience and speculation will be employed to try to come to some understanding and provide clues about how education can help us to lead better lives (Reimer, 1989, p. 2).

This philosophy of film education is personal. I am not a philosopher teaching philosophy, I am an artist teaching artists. My experience as a filmmaker, former film student, current grad student and now film educator have informed me about the possibilities and indeed the necessity for philosophy in education and particularly in art education. My concern is that without a philosophy, film education tends towards the extremes of technical or the theoretical. However the true value of film education is in tapping into our student's imaginations, staying grounded in reality, passing on valued methods and knowledge, and encouraging them to weave in their personal experience and speculation about how to lead better lives. My original reasons for wanting to make films now resonate in my need to develop a philosophy of film education. I have always experienced filmmaking and art making as important ways of finding beauty, connecting to the world, finding and expressing my own authentic truth, and exploring my own personal interests. The focus of this philosophy is on the questions inherent in the filmmaking process and how those questions can be incorporated into a curriculum for film education. Filmmaking has the potential to engage filmmakers as global citizens, as artists and as humans in ways that are unique to each filmmaker. I have structured this paper to attempt to address the need for the curriculum to address three core philosophical questions. What is the global context for film education, film educators and film students? What is the value in developing film students' creativity and authenticity through film education? How can visual literacy lead to liberation, and leading better lives?

The rest of this chapter is in two parts. The first part explains how I have applied what I have learned developing this philosophy into the curriculum for a degree. The last part of this chapter investigates the current context for teaching in the wake of emergent technologies. Millennials, those born after 1978, have had a different experience with visual images than any other generation; understanding how they learn and experience the world is essential to this philosophy. *Chapter Two* focuses on creating context for the philosophy of the curriculum. I investigate some of the historical factors that have led to the hegemony of mass media and the responsibility that film educators have in bridging the gap between historical modernist notions of cinema with current postmodern notions of proximity and connectivity. In *Chapter Three*, I explore the centrality of aesthetic knowledge and the authentic voice in film education. The last part of this chapter deals with narrative storytelling as a conventional cinematic language and the reasons for including this language in the curriculum. To allow students to fully explore their creativity, they must have an opportunity to deconstruct decode and understand the language, as dominant conventions in order to liberate them and allow them to explore and develop their own unique voices. In *Chapter Four* I explore the relationship between art education and academic education at the tertiary level. Objectivity is the cornerstone of academic education; subjectivity is the cornerstone of art education. In *Chapter Five*, I explore the process and experience of film education for film students in the context of this philosophy.

1.1.1 Film: A Definition

In order to proceed, a definition of film is necessary. The terms film, cinema and movies are used interchangeably in contemporary culture to describe moving images. Film is the only word that actually describes the medium, which is celluloid. Sixteen millimeter and thirty-five millimeter are the most common production formats; thirty-five millimeter is still the only format used for theatrical exhibition. Movie is the term used to describe film as entertainment, while cinema is the term used to describe film as an art form. Traditional formats are prohibitively expensive, therefore both emerging and seasoned independent filmmakers are using classical methods of filmmaking process, while taking advantage of digital video and hi- definition as production formats. It is essential for filmmakers to understand how to prepare for thirty-five millimeter theatrical distribution, for both sound and picture, even when using digital video production formats. For the purpose of this paper therefore, and in the context of film education as it is relevant to current film students of today, film in relation to film education is defined as a process as well as a medium.

Film education is peripheral to art education and peripheral to academic culture. The process of film education , however has the possibility to offer students the best of both worlds. Film, as an art form, has the ability to engage us at the deepest level of our humanity. Sharing the experience of screening a film, can remind us of our human condition, and our deep close kinship with all humans. Film students are part of global culture as artists, humans, citizens and consumers. Their emotional and intellectual intelligence as well as their awareness and their compassion must be woven into their film education.

Howard Gardner describes this values based approach in *The Disciplined Mind*: “An education for all human beings, needs to explore in some depth a set of key human achievements captured in the venerable phrase, the true, the beautiful and the good (Gardner, 2000, p.19)”. Instructors, therefore, must choose content to address questions of truth, beauty and the goodness and nurture students to explore what truth, beauty and goodness means to them. They can do so by presenting the antithesis, exploring themes, and allowing students to develop content that deepens their own personal ideas about these questions.

It is critical that film programs at the tertiary level take a leadership role in developing curriculum which emphasizes filmmaking as an art form; the courses must include aesthetics, philosophy and ethics. In the last century film education was designed for and delivered to a few at the tertiary level; in this century film education will be integrated into all levels of education. In post secondary film education, educators must be willing to allow students to look deeply into who they are, to look at the world as it is, and to engage students’ imaginations, ideas and compassion. Film students must be encouraged to integrate the hand, the eye, and the heart. I have created a curriculum for a degree in film education which incorporates the above philosophy.

The aim of this curriculum and of this philosophy is to support students in exploring their creativity as they develop their authentic voices. It is essential to inspire students’ interest in their own education. Teaching the arts has the potential to inspire confidence, stimulate creative thinking and motivate learning. As film educators, it is important to engage students through the curriculum.

Liberation and social responsibility are the context for the curriculum and are intended to allow students to use filmmaking as a tool rather than as an end; students must be given opportunities to understand their privilege as North Americans and their responsibility as global citizens. The aims, of creativity, liberation, and authenticity are woven into every chapter of this paper, and are the foundation of the curriculum.

As part of this philosophy, the curriculum must be designed to give students the experience of working through valued methodologies. Students must practice on a variety of projects with increasing complexity throughout the four years of their studies.

The curriculum I developed drew from two years of research of all of the film programs in North America and the United Kingdom, industry, students, alumni surveys, discussion and consultation with our advisory committee and consultation with faculty. Although there are several limiting factors that affected the development of the curriculum, the final program profile addresses all of the intended goals. The concept of the curriculum in the degree proposal is to introduce the technical information in the first two years of the program. The core discipline courses are film courses: Film History, screenwriting, directing, cinematography, producing, and post-production, and are in all four years of the degree curriculum in forms appropriate to the level.

Academic breadth courses ensure that students have writing, communication and research skills. In the lower levels, students are required to take English and Art History. Through these courses, in the lower levels of the

degree, students will be introduced to Mythology, Archetypes, the canon of Art History and aesthetics. In the upper levels, there are eight interdisciplinary academic courses. For this degree, courses were developed with the faculties of Arts and Sciences. Courses were designed to specifically consider the construction of knowledge and culture through history to present day as an overall theme. These courses are intended to provide students with a global context and understanding of theories of knowledge. The breadth courses are also intended to provide students with disciplinary language in Sociology, Geography, Anthropology, History Psychology and Philosophy. Research, writing and critical skills will be evaluated through term papers and seminar presentations.

The core film courses are thematically integrated into the academic breadth courses. Students will be encouraged to consider questions in their academic research as topics for their film projects. Students in the upper levels produce a great deal of work. They are encouraged through the curriculum to develop individual sensibilities, an authentic voice and to transcend technique.

In the degree proposal, the approaches to teaching are traditional, constructivist and conceptual. Technical information is conveyed through team teaching and through practical and hands on small group activities. Survey courses introduce students to the content and to conceptual frameworks and language of the field. Technical courses and survey courses use both traditional and constructivist approaches. Small group and individual projects in the fall of each semester in each year of the program are intended to provide students with

an opportunity to apply their knowledge, explore ideas, work collaboratively and integrate their knowledge. Larger group and individual projects continue in the spring semester of each year. In upper levels, team teaching continues in both the core and the academic breadth courses. The intention in this approach is to provide students with a range of perspectives and approaches, and to encourage students to develop and trust their own perspectives and unique sensibilities. In the upper levels, students are expected to have absorbed technical information and be developing their own interests, voice, authenticity and identity. Students are expected to be self-motivated, and to be able to set and meet high standards for themselves. Through the curriculum, students are given opportunities to develop their own ideas, and to distinguish what is individually of value to them.

Constructivist theory is the main approach to teaching in upper levels and applies to all of courses in the core discipline. The intention of this theory is that learners actively construct knowledge rather than passively receiving it. This notion contends that reality is not found outside of us, but rather is constructed within us. Learning is also believed to be a social construction influenced by our interactions with our environment and with other people. According to Von Glasersfeld, in his article *Cognition, Construction of Knowledge and Teaching*, the shift in this theory is away from conventional teaching and epistemological notions of Truth, and absolute forms of knowledge and towards each student and their own individual construction of knowledge (Von Glasersfeld, 1989). This emphasis on the construction of each individual students understanding is an appropriate modality for film education, particularly on project work in all years of

the degree program and a particularly important approach in the upper levels of any program.

In designing curriculum and in developing approaches to teaching, we must ask, what is valued as knowledge? Who decides what is valued as knowledge and who is valued as authority? In this philosophy of curriculum for film education, teachers must be aware of their own limitations, their subjectivity and the aims of the curriculum, which must be to support their students in leading better lives. In order for film education to be of real value to students, teachers themselves must be filmmakers and artists. Filmmakers understand the creative struggle involved in making films and can support students in developing their own creative process.

Film students today are coming straight from high school. Ten years ago, when there were fewer film programs, and acceptance was much more competitive, students were typically in their mid twenties. Filmmaking is a harrowing interpersonal endeavour and most young people find the drama of working creatively and collaboratively, the greatest challenge. The other factor is that film students arrive with multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999). Film students tend to be spatial, kinesthetic, musical and visual. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, drama, music, media studies, creative writing, and photography. Many have worked and traveled, some have undergraduate degrees. A wide range of people with different abilities and learning styles needs a wide variety of approaches to teaching.

The challenge in developing an evaluation process that will benefit students, is to find a balance between process and outcomes. The students' value the outcome as they embark on their projects but carry with them the lessons learned from the experience.

In the lower levels, evaluation is commensurate with the approach to teaching. Students are expected to learn how to work hard and persist through a challenging schedule. Students need to understand terms, the major theories and have a conceptual understanding of the entire process. Midterm, final exams and term papers ensure that students comprehend, synthesize and explain the significance of all they have learned. Lower level projects receive group marks for content and technical proficiency. Individuals receive marks for professionalism.

Evaluation of academic courses and core courses such as Film History and Visual Theory will be based on research papers and seminar presentations. Graduates of the program may go on to graduate programs within the field or work professionally within the field, so research, essays and critical analysis must be at the level of the degree standard.

Upper level evaluation on projects is aligned to the constructivist approach to teaching. Students will work on the criterion with a faculty supervisor. The idea of the evaluation in upper levels is that students are actively setting the standard. General terms for evaluation will be set for all students, but specific criteria within those terms will be negotiated, and discussed. All students receive interim written feedback from the faculty. In the upper levels, we accept that teaching art is

difficult and that risk taking is necessary. The goal in the upper levels is for students to push themselves to see things in their own way.

1.3 A Context for Teaching the Knowledge Culture

The most profound effect film education can have on students and teachers is the human, social and moral value that is transmitted through curriculum. One hundred years ago, educational philosopher, John Dewey wrote in *Democracy and Education*:

Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life. Everyone of the constituent elements of a social group, is born immature, helpless, without language, beliefs, ideas, or social standards. Each individual, each unit who is the carrier of the life-experience of his group, in time passes away. Yet the life of the group goes on. The primary ineluctable facts of the birth and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group determine the necessity of education. On one hand, there is the contrast between the immaturity of the new-born members of the group - its future sole representatives - and the maturity of the adult members who possess the knowledge and customs of the group. On the other hand, there is the necessity that these immature members be not merely physically preserved in adequate numbers, but that they be initiated into the interests, purposes, information, skill, and practices of the mature members: otherwise the group will cease its characteristic life (Dewey, 1997, p. 3).

The primary purpose of education, as Dewey describes it, remains the same today. Our responsibility, as teachers, is to pass on the “interests, purposes, information, skill and practices” to our students. In film education, there is a great deal of technical information; passing on of information may be confused with the broader purpose of education. The purpose, values and wisdom that we pass on as educators must be at least equal to skills, knowledge and practice. In the past decade, access to information has shifted so dramatically that millennial children are known as the knowledge culture. Our

students and our children are the first generation to have been raised on the internet, ipods, video games, cell phones and cable television. Young people assume interconnectivity and proximity. Information, including thousands of academic journals, electronic books, encyclopedias, movies, music and social networks are only a click away. While the virtual expands, life on the planet is very real. The polar ice caps are splitting due to global climate change, North America continues to occupy the Middle East to maintain an oil supply for a relatively small population who are consuming without constraint. Oil from the Alberta tar-sands, once described as too dirty to use, is now being exported to the United States. Today, Canada is the number one exporter of oil to the United States. Corporations continue to lack any real sense of accountability, as we attempt to identify alternative fuel in an oil addicted culture. Our collective intelligence has surged since we have begun to google or check wikipedia to find alternative or multiple perspectives, build blog's and vlogs, sign petitions that have circled the globe and witness images of corruption, exploitation and government brutality because someone captured the event on a digital video camera and uploaded the images on to youtube.com. Relevance, in the knowledge culture is based on a range of perspectives, without authority. Increasingly, the authorities' version of the truth, is suspect and perceived to be steeped in *spin*. In the knowledge culture, if enough people agree on some *truth*, then it's seen as true enough. The knowledge culture is driven by digital media, public channels, and multiplicity. One of the ways to describe the emergent media of the knowledge culture is the term social media. Social media is text,

audio files and video files that are on the internet as blogs, vlogs, podcasts and video streams. There are literally millions of global contributions to the social media fabric on the internet. The social media moves much more quickly than dominant corporately owned media, and openly questions the objectivity of authorities, governments and corporations. Wikipedia is an excellent example of social media, and although it is text based and not a visual media, it's growth and increasing relevance suggests a shift in the way that people are acknowledging sources of information and valuing knowledge. In *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins claims:

Wikipedia as a knowledge community has 1.6 million articles, sixty million hits per day. It is a grass roots multi national effort to build a free encyclopedia on the internet. Written collaboratively from an army of volunteers working in six hundred different languages. The most interesting and controversial aspect of wikipedia project has been the ways it shifts what counts as expertise from recognized academic authority to a collective intelligence. Some are concerned that wikipedia will contain inaccurate information but the wikipedia community functions as a self correcting adhococracy. Knowledge that gets posted will be revised and corrected by readers (Jenkins, 2006, p.255).

For film educators, the expansion in opportunity through the portal of the internet, is an invitation to allow students to develop skills, and master technique in a way that filmmakers have never done before. Students can take risks and make mistakes without being concerned about the expense. Teachers have an opportunity to let go of a top-down model and embrace a truly democratic, inclusive and supportive alternative. If we want society to progress, to become more inclusive, compassionate, responsible, and respectful, we need to model these values in the class room and build such values into the curriculum. In the context of the knowledge culture, film educators can assume that students are

checking references during the lecture, researching the scholarly and artistic work of their instructors and checking the validity of top down knowledge they receive. Instead of reacting defensively, film educators could see this as a valuable opportunity to create a learning environment that is safe and open ended. The notion that knowledge is constructed rather than absorbed is central to the pedagogical philosophy of this paper and the core idea of a learning theory that is appropriate for film education and particularly in teaching film in the knowledge culture. As students have access to unlimited information in the knowledge culture, they need to rely on the maturity and wisdom of their instructors rather than relying on them to convey facts and technical knowledge. In this way, students can value their own knowledge and sensibilities as well as those of the instructors.

Film education by definition offers teachers infinite ways of allowing students opportunities to be human. The experience of making a film can allow a student to create personal meaning and an authentic voice. Filmmaking in both the process and the outcome allows students to develop a visual language that may rely on conventions, but is always in some way unique and personal. Through images, a conceptual language begins to develop. Individual senses of meaning are conveyed through something felt, human, and remembered. Films convey meaning in a way that is unsayable, and subjective. Stuart Richmond explores the unsayable and how we can convey a personal sense of meaning through art, in his article *Notes on saying and showing beauty*. In this article,

Richmond also describes how memory, feeling and imagination can be revealed in film and photography (Richmond, 2008, p. 3).

The notion of developing a sense of personal meaning, as a filmmaker, this work leads to the search for the authentic self. Authenticity and personal meaning are themes throughout this philosophy of curricula. In Chapter 3, I explore this theme in greater depth.

Students learn by developing projects, working collaboratively, problem solving and following their interests. Mistakes are an inevitable part of the learning process, in fact learning could be described as making more and more sophisticated mistakes. In place of superficial facts, we can emphasize deep understanding. When teachers work with students to help them see the connection between a given task and their wider interests, questions that they brought into the classroom become connected to larger patterns and the entire process becomes more engaging. According to Alfie Kohn, in *The Schools our Children Deserve*: social constructivism, as an approach to teaching, shifts the center of gravity away from the teacher and back to the student and this approach is central to this philosophy of film education because filmmaking and developing a sense of one's own meaning and engagement with the world is something that must be personally constructed (Kohn 1999). As artists and as filmmakers, we value the creative process of assimilating knowledge and creating original and unique ways of knowing and communicating that are personal and connected to our individual identities. It is necessary therefore, to have a learning methodology of social constructivism that allows students to

incorporate new frameworks of understanding into existing frameworks of understanding through experience. In this way, understanding and learning are akin to the creative process of art making and filmmaking.

Our work as film educators must be to instill hope and optimism and expand horizons of understanding. This requires that faculty take an interest in students, listen to what they have to say and encourage them to follow a path that will, as Peters describes it in *Ethics and Education*, “lead them out”. This translation “to lead out” is a derivative of “education,” from the other Latin root: “educere” and is a useful way of understanding what our role must be as educators; it is much more appropriate than referring to the Latin root: “educare” which means “to bring up or rear (Peters, 1966, p. 36)”. The work of our students must be to make personal connections to universal concepts and develop their filmmaking craft in order to express themselves. Our work as teachers must be to support students in tuning into themselves, so that they can recognize their own authentic feelings and have the confidence to express themselves. We must provide film students with opportunities to explore and investigate personal meaning and foster an interest in understanding other ways of being. This requires developing a sense of identity. Charles Taylor, in *Sources of the Self*, gives us some interesting clues about how we must embrace individualism but find some moral space in which to exist, what he refers to as “horizons of significance (Taylor, 1989, p. 60)”. Taylor suggests that we are constantly developing a sense of who we are, that this is an ongoing process throughout life and that to find meaning we must do this in relation to what we value. Taylor’s

thoughts on identity, individualism and our relationship to “the good” provide an essential foundation for a useful approach to film education:

The issue of our existence can never be exhausted because we are always changing and becoming. It is only slowly that we grow through infancy and childhood to be autonomous agents. We are under constant revision as we experience more and mature. The issue is not only where we are ... but where we are going. (Taylor, 1989, p. 47).

To be of use to students, and to be a worthwhile educational endeavour, film education is in need of a philosophy which is grounded in moral and metaphysical philosophy. Filmmaking itself is a relatively new art form. Other art forms have much more established pedagogical roots and philosophical traditions. Therefore it is important that we borrow, build, explore, define and apply pedagogical philosophical theory that effectively supports learning.

Our identity as learning institutions and learning communities is also evolving as we create our relationship to the medium. As the story of the medium unfolds, so does our meaning as teachers, as artists, and as humans. Defining a philosophy of curriculum is similar to a director defining their vision. Just as a director must always be concerned with meaning and remain flexible to the changing conditions, a philosophy of curriculum must find it's relationship to meaning through teaching and learning. Our industry is also rediscovering itself amidst the changes that the internet offers users and the impact that it has had on content, broadcast and distribution. As filmmakers and as educators, we have a unique opportunity to choose values that transcend the business of filmmaking and emphasize the art of filmmaking.

It is necessary to keep this higher mind and great vision in focus while developing a philosophy of curriculum for film education while maintaining that vision in the design and implementation of curriculum. Instead of focusing on the emphasis in the past for the film industry, film educators must consider a higher set of values than their own personal success, the success of their students or the success of their program. Charles Taylor claims that we must live for something of higher value than our individual selves, our *narcissistic* needs (Taylor, 1991, p. 55). If we model and value individualism our students will value that as well, and if we as educators can imagine a higher purpose and a cultural framework that can shift the foundation of our industry and our culture, then our students can imagine it as well. As Taylor remarks:

The aspirations to fullness can be met by building something into one's own life, some pattern of higher action, or some meaning, or it can be met by connecting one's life up with some greater reality or story (Taylor, 1991, p. 43).

This is a way for film educators to consider being and it requires imagination and creativity on the part of the teacher but could be the seeds for transformation for our students.

1.4 Education for the Knowledge Culture

For young people crossing the threshold between adolescence and adulthood, filmmaking and art making not only provide opportunities to develop a sense of identity and authentic voice, to learn a language and rules of engagement but also to develop a sense of their own purpose, sensibilities and confidence. Engagement in filmmaking gives students an opportunity to

personally engage with images, themes and ideas that are relevant in their lives and to use the language of film to communicate in complex and affecting ways with others. Students need to be given ample opportunity at every stage of the curriculum to define and develop their individual sensibilities. Projects and assignments need to be constructed with the objective of allowing students to explore, investigate and research ideas. Risk taking and experimental approaches in terms of both form and content must be encouraged. Students must be allowed to see their way into the medium rather than generating convincing versions of genre or a technically proficient homage. The language of cinema has a technical rigour that must be understood in order to be coherent, but students must work at their own technical level of competence in order to place the appropriate emphasis on exploration of their identity and expression of their aesthetic sensibilities. For millennials, social networking, knowledge communities and knowledge culture have boomed with an aggregate explosion in their collective intelligence. Students are doing more than learning on a new tool, the context for learning has shifted towards a more horizontal plane in which no one person is perceived of as an authority.

Technical and systemic thinking is the kind of thinking that young people are now informally trained in through the use and mastery of software and video games. We should pay attention to the fact that young people can stay glued to video games for 15 hours and explore what they are learning, because they are definitely learning. Navigating a system and trouble shooting are the primary technical skills required for mastering any video game. In *Everything Bad Is*

Good For You, Steven Johnson describes these skills as telescoping and probing, a learned ability to discover the objective of a game, determine the immediate tasks, and then figure out horizontally what the tasks actually are and to multi task while trouble shooting through a system. This process is a type of systems analysis. Youth are being informally educated by technology to analyze and master these systems. Typically video games use archetypal characters and binary systems of *good and evil* for content. For the literate culture, parents and teachers, video games do not fit into literary conventions, develop characters, use metaphor, or have content that it is generally accepted as a form of literature and is therefore cultural garbage. But if our kids are interested we need to know why and we need to listen. In fact, some of the answers are kindred to the evolution of the knowledge culture and part of an emerging mass visual literacy. Systems analysis, telescoping and probing are sophisticated and horizontal ways of doing research. Unlike other games, when you play a video game, you don't know the rules when you begin, you may not even know the objective of the game. You figure out the rules as you go along, for example if you get killed don't go to the same place twice, you live when land on x number of toad stools. You have to define the problem as you move through the problem. Video games are designed to be difficult to figure out or master, but that's what a whole generation of kids have been doing and continue to do and what if we actually looked closely at this interest and stripped away the commercialism and the violence and just looked at the emergent methodology, and the notion that seven year olds master these complex problems, then perhaps we could value it.

(Johnson, 2005) Probing and telescoping are excellent training for the emergent research process known to all engaged in the knowledge culture, and as yet this process is not valued by academic culture.

Again this kind of probing and telescoping using the internet and all kinds of sources as reference material calls the question: What is valued as knowledge? McLuhan scholar, Mark Federman in his article *Why Johnny And Janey Can't Read, And Why Mr. And Ms. Smith Can't Teach* suggests

The implications of this massive reversal in our conception of what is valued as knowledge and who decides creates an equally massive problem for our culture and society. Research can no longer be a deterministic, linear process, akin to that delineated by the so-called scientific method. The research method of the knowledge culture is concurrent, continuous, cumulative and looped. It is based on three contextual frames and three core processes, the processes being opening, orientation and consolidation. Opening involves seeking breadth of scope, exploring for eclectic and diverse information sources to deliberately expand the "information horizon". Orientation is the process that is closely tied to conventional literate practices. It involves both the classical form problem definition, that is, defining boundaries, and also building a picture of the topic overall, from the contributions of the multiple disciplines. This also involves identifying key articles, contributors, and latest opinions, as well as gaps in the overall picture. Consolidation is a continual process of assimilation and integration of information that intertwines with opening and orientation. A key concept that "knowing enough" in a particular aspect of the topic, and is closely linked with refining information and knowledge (Federman, 2005, p. 10).

Understanding how our students are learning can help educators define how we can best deliver the curriculum and allow educators to value students' way of understanding. In designing and delivering curriculum for film education, it seems that the knowledge culture is already a concurrent, continuous and looped approach to learning and already questions the validity of any authority.

Constructivism continues to be an apt way to describe the way that young people

are already engaged with learning about their world and making sense of their experience. If the goal of education is deep understanding, then a horizontal research methodology allows students to truthfully follow their interest and this makes their learning relevant to their experience.

The dotcom bust in the late 90s gave us the term convergence. And subsequently the dotcom bust, gave the term convergence a bad name. Convergence in the 1990's was the seemingly farfetched idea, that all media platforms would converge on one platform. In addition to *convergence*, a number of other projections about the future were espoused all of them related to the notion of convergence. Convergence included the possibility that people would watch movies on their computers, television would cease to exist, satellites would simultaneously broadcast a digital release to theatres around the globe in real time, and that digital video would replace film. The notion that people would buy all sorts of products from websites around the world drove the venture capitalists and the over saturation of the dotcom market was the beginning of the dotcom bust and the end of the term convergence. The dotcom bust indicated to industry that the internet was treacherous territory, no one could make money from the internet, and if no one could make money, then the purpose of the internet was dubious.

Although the sources of income for internet distribution continues to confound the film industry, high speed access across multiple platforms, huge data bases on portable hard drives and user generated content all over the web has made convergence a reality. Internet content is not considered to be in

competition with the quality of television or film. Meanwhile, youtube has become a mecca for popular culture and a model for connectivity and interaction.

According to an online *Fortune* article:

Few statistics are publicly available regarding the number of videos on YouTube. However, in July 2006, the company revealed that more than 100 million videos were being watched every day, and 2.5 billion videos were watched in June 2006. July. In January 2008 alone, nearly 79 million users had made over 3 billion video view (Yi-Wyn, 2008, p. 1).

As if prescient about things to come, *Wired* magazines Editor in Chief, Chris Anderson wrote an article in *Wired* in 2005 and subsequently published a book called *The Long Tail*, which pre-dates the youtube phenomenon. Although Chris Anderson was not necessarily referring to visual content but was referring to content in general, the *Long Tail* is an important theory in relationship to the possibilities for film education and shift in our cultures relationship to visual content. Anderson claims that content will be with us forever, small niches will develop and consume content and those niches will shift and ebb and flow, but never really disappear. In the old culture, hits had to have huge audiences in order to be financially viable, in the culture of the *Long Tail*, content will be available for ever (Anderson, 2006). In the recent past, emerging independent filmmakers made a few short films, which they would use to showcase their work to funding agencies, producers, distributors and broadcasters. The strategy was to win awards at festivals. If the filmmaker had a feature script that the funders were interested in, their past work in short filmmaking proved that they had the ability to develop a story and deliver a film. The ideal length for short films before the internet was under fifteen minutes. The logic to this length was that the film

could be programmed before a feature or with other short projects, with similar themes to create a program for a festival. Short films received very little in terms of broadcast and distribution. In the late nineties, Atom Films arrived on line. They were the first distributor for short films in North America. Traditional platforms continue to demand twenty-two minutes for a half hour of television, forty-five minutes for one hour and one hundred minutes for a feature. The web has emerged as a powerful and accessible distribution and broadcast medium. Internet channels are linked with cable channels, filmmakers can promote their work on their own channels or link it to a social networking sites. Film festivals continue to be the venue for short films to garner critical acclaim and awards, but the change in the broadcast and distribution medium is changing the ideal length for short films. On the web, the ideal length is two minutes and forty-seven seconds, and the new maximum length for short films is seven minutes. The requirements are still the same, a good story well told. So, our students have begun their film education at the perfect time. They have access to the visual medium, but success in articulating visual language in this medium will be consistent with antiquities time tested abilities to tell a story worth telling, develop character, express an authentic voice and deal with complex themes. Access for film students is half the battle, and a accident of history. The depth of the storytelling, the relevance of the theme, the complexity of the narrative and the emotional connection of the work will drive the work to the head of the *Long Tail*, and allow the work to be a part of a larger cultural dialogue.

Developing the degree, writing this paper and teaching have given me an opportunity to look deeply into my own sense of meaning. Initially the degree proposal seemed distant from the philosophical perspective of this paper and my own personal vision of a philosophy of film education. Through the development of degree proposal, my graduate studies and my own evolution as an educator, I began to develop confidence in my perspective. With consultation from external academic advisers, students, industry filmmakers, senior administrators and other faculty I began to develop a sense of what the program would need to be in order to be successful. Success has been defined, by the Ministry, as something that the industry needs and students demand. The recent invention of “film schools” and the place that film education is taking within academic institutions and the question about “how we teach film?” and “how will they learn”, and “how will we teach this?” have been curricular questions for us as we develop the degree program, and practical moment by moment questions that are addressed every time teachers work with students. Initially, the program was designed to mirror the industry as a self described “studio model”. As filmmakers, instructors feel comfortable in the producing role, the key decision making role. When I was given the opportunity to lead the program and to develop the degree, I started to implement a more grass roots, student focused approach to the projects which gives students a chance to make and take responsibility for practical, creative and technical decisions with faculty mentorship. I recommended that we align the program as it evolves into the

degree with a perspective that is grounded in a student centered constructivist educational philosophy.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL/CULTURAL CONTEXT

2.1 Film and the Hegemony of Mass Media

Arrival of a Train at a Station (Lumiere Brothers 1895) was the first public cinematic event of the century. The clip was literally, a train arriving at a station, projected on a screen in a theater, the audience was overwhelmed with this simulation of reality and the possibility of dislocating time and space. The public screening, and the clip itself, exemplify cinema of the 20th Century. The first film audience witnessed film as a spectacle, rather than as art. This spectacle was clearly a mechanical innovation of the industrialized economy. The irony of the first moving image is the connection between the moving horse, and the moving train. The transition during the industrial revolutions of the nineteenth century from horse and buggy to the marvel of train travel marks the major psychological shift to modernity and perception of the collapse of time and space.

The factory, the photograph, the moving image and train travel were the emergent technologies of the twentieth century. Leo Charney and Vanessa Swartz, in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* describe the emergent technologies and the effect that these new ways of seeing and being had on the psychological framework of the time.

Photography operates as one of the most ambiguous emblems of modern experience. Modernity and particularly modern capitalism contains a tension between forces which undo older forms of stability in order to increase the ease and rapidity of circulation of those forces which seek to control and make circulation predictable and therefore profitable. [The

apparent collapse of time and space in cinema and photography was then reiterated in the] circulatory logic of the factory itself, the new arrangement of production seemed able to make anything without the laborious effort of skilled craft (Charney, Swartz, 1999, p. 18, 19).

The hero's journey, the three act structure, the rigidity of narrative, and cinematic language are all emblematic of cinema as the high concept symbol of modernism through the last century. Richard Rorty in his book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, "the meta-narrative of modernity, is the Hegelian idea that the human spirit itself progresses over the course of history, and that the expansion of knowledge is one of the most vital tokens of this progress (Rorty, 1979, p.148)". Postmodernism evolved as a useful theoretical tool enabling us to understand multiple views, pluralist knowledge and began our culture's questioning of universal claims of authority in all institutions, including government, academia and media. The notion that all forms of knowledge are socially constructed and none of them can claim superior cognitive validity, is an apt description of the way that we are witnessing post modernism in multiple media platforms for both consumers and producers in the knowledge culture. More than just the collapse of time and space, Jean Baudrillard suggests in *The Ecstasy of Communication*, "that we are in an era of connections, contact, contiguity, feedback, and generalized interface that goes with the universe of communication (Baudrillard, 1988, p.127)". That feedback has disrupted and fragmented our collective sense of meaning so that it has become difficult for us to have any sense of what is actually going on. The effect of this fragmentation is that we have lost our sense of the real, the copy can seem as real to us as the reality. Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulcrum* uses the example of Disneyland

the corporation's reconstruction of reality and our acceptance of this high concept copy as a cultural mecca, allows our experience of reality, that is mediated urban, suburban life, to seem real, but suggests that this version of reality is just a copy of what we have seen projected to us through the media and is also therefore a copy (Baudrillard, 1994). Postmodernist concepts have drifted into the mainstream and were of course translated back into in films, such as: *The Truman Show* (Rudin & Weir 1998), *Being John Malkovich* (Stipe & Jonze, 1999), and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Hope & Gondry, 2004). These films were all made at end of the 20th century, and give us a sense of what is to come. Like *Arrival of a Train at a Station* (Lumiere Brothers, 1895), these films delighted audiences as they translate our post modern disorientation into cinematic language and narrative structure.

Also released, at the beginning of the new century, the *Matrix Trilogy* (Silver & Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999) is a hybrid genre blending action, science fiction romance and philosophy. The film is about reality being a copy and awaking to find that another reality really exists. In the first film, Neo is reading *Simulacra and Simulacrum*. The *Matrix* (Silver & Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999) is a gateway between the old media and new media, between high concept narrative and multi platform open-ended, user-generated interactive content media. My students were nine or ten when these films were released. They grew up at the time that bandwidth got broad enough to carry visual information at high speed. They have built web sites and blogs and played all of the games. Their parents have always owned a video camera. They grew up watching themselves.

Current film students, and this generation millennials are the first people to know postmodernism as their only lived experience, just as audience of a hundred years ago, who witnessed the first screening of the *Arrival of a Train at a Station* (Lumiere Brothers, 1895), were witnessing an iconic moment of modernism. They were transformed by the illusion of the moving image. We are now, as educators standing on the virtual train platform, witnessing the full fragmentation of collective meaning, and common knowledge in all areas of human interaction and communication. The post modern experience, by design is fragmented, disorienting, and surreal to a global audience of voyeurs and participants. In the lived experience of postmodernism, we are watching different channels and on different platforms. Our access appears to be equal, we have multiple portals into the virtual world and have to consciously remove ourselves from participating. There is no common place to meet or screen or exist together as a community, except online. The persistence of post-modern culture is a challenge for our traditional communities and for real human connection. However the level of access to advanced tools of communication is unprecedented and provides opportunities for creativity, proximity and connectivity that may not be based on local or physical proximity, but is making the world into a global village. For film education, student access to the quality of tools for production and for distribution make the difference between visual literacy as a vision and visual literacy as a reality.

The emergence and proliferation of digital filmmaking tools has democratized access to desktop filmmaking. Bandwidth has opened up the

possibility of the distribution of these projects on the web. For the first time in human history, we have the opportunity to use a visual medium to exchange our stories, experiences and perspectives instantly and globally. These moving images are the stories of diverse communities and experiences. For the first time it is possible to massively broadcast and distribute these visual messages for no more than the cost of a computer, a camera and a high speed account. Libraries, elementary schools, high schools and community centres are procuring the tools necessary to allow anyone who is interested access to production and post production facilities that ten years ago would have been accessible only to filmmakers and media artists. Those that are really participating in the exchange and creation of personal media are the primary constituents of the knowledge culture. This demographic is thirteen to twenty four years old, they were born in the late 1980s, or early 1990s, they are middle class North Americans, Europeans and Asians and they grew up using the internet. Their first act of piracy may have been downloading music through *Napster* in the 1990's. This act of piracy was also a move toward developing their own sense of identity and constructing their own culture and community. For millennials, popular culture is folk culture. They hack, burn and share media on all formats. Millennials are savvy media consumers. Although consumers of culture, their defining feature is that they are also participants. Far from driven by production executives and powerhouses of media conglomerates, millennials are engaged in the activity of filmmaking and posting clips on their blogs and websites because it is engaging,

or because they have something to say, or because they are constantly barraged with images from the mainstream and yearn to create and tell their own story.

Addressing content, seems to be particularly relevant as we move into a relative warp speed of production and exhibition of moving images on the behemoth of cable television and on the web. Once again, youtube offers us an example of user generated internet content that delivers enormous volume and many would argue minimal quality, but has had a significant impact on popular culture and the prospects for building niche audiences and a free venue for exhibition for millennials.

Few statistics are publicly available regarding the number of videos on YouTube. However, in July 2006, the company revealed that more than 100 million videos were being watched every day, and 2.5 billion videos were watched in June 2006. 50,000 videos were being added per day in May 2006, and this increased to 65,000 by July. In January 2008 alone, nearly 79 million users had made over 3 billion video views (USA Today, 2007, p. 1).

Although these numbers and the rate of change are staggering, the internet is also now home to many open source channels similar to youtube, online short film festivals, short film distributors buying content, thousands of independent features and shorts have their own film websites and quicktime clips available for screening or downloading. For the first time in human history we are able to produce and broadcast our projects to an international community, to create audiences and dialogue using these images. The virtual explosion in content available for anyone with access to a browser and a high speed connection allows users access to both broadcasting and the receiving of millions of channels. Building an audience only demands that you have a file that can be

opened by users and that you send the link out to people whom you think might watch it. In this realm of self-promotion/exhibition, there is no editorial system. It is currently an open system. Previous notions of popular culture were driven by large corporate media organizations creating media using an industrial model to make episodic television, films, music videos, commercials and video games.

Despite a massive shift in access to the technology, networks, broadcasters and distributors continue to dominate the interactive screen. The notion of popular refers to its appeal to mass audiences and therefore is considered by academic and art culture to be meaningful only as a point of political interest, for critique and discussion. Our notion of popular culture is shifting under the current of home made content. With minimal expertise, resources and experience young people are able to reach into this rich meaning making environment, develop a language using images and communicate with one another. On the web, corporations are competing with users for space and audience. Several new discernable content providers have emerged based on the volume of what has been uploaded. The two types of content are User generated (UGS) and Semiprofessional User Generated (SPUG) content. The term used to be: emerging filmmakers, now the term is, users.

Filmmaking requires that people use valuable skills, work together, communicate a vision, take risks, see what happens, reach out and build community, and now virtual communities. But the knowledge culture is unsure of how to link it's experience with the real world, typically feel marginalized, and wonder how it's passion could possibly grow to be a path. The real world is

predominantly still perceived to be one dominated by corporations. The creators and constituents of the knowledge culture come of age and find themselves in film programs like the one I am developing. They have frequently taken high school media courses, they are creative thinkers with short attention spans and wild imaginations. For the most part, their virtual existence is the one that drives their passion, that makes them feel powerful and connected. Their social network, their community and their creative energy is digital and on line. Our role as educators must be to bridge the path, and allow them to see the connections between what they are already doing and unlike linear models of the past, allow them to plug it into their own existing construction of meaning.

To be of value, film education must allow students to reach beyond the limitation that dominates the consumer driven commercial model typical in the business context of film. By the time students embark on their tertiary education they will have been bombarded with commercial, corporate content. The challenge for film educators is to conceive of film pedagogy as transcendent of existing conventional devices meant to perpetuate visual media as solely a venue for entertainment for capital. Although visual media can be entertaining, the emphasis on entertainment for capital as the only value is driven by public relations and mass media to distract the public from reality.

According to Chomsky, the hegemony of mass media is a consciously constructed public relations tool, intended to subdue the masses and control the public mind. In *Chomsky on Democracy and Education*, Chomsky suggests:

One of the major issues of the twentieth century is corporate propaganda. It's a huge industry. It extends over, the commercial media, but includes the

whole range of systems that reach the public: the entertainment industry, television, a good bit of what appears in schools, a lot of what happens in the newspaper. Its goal from the beginning, perfectly openly and consciously has been to control the public mind. The public mind was seen to be the greatest threat to corporations, from early in the century (Chomsky, 2003, p. 226, 227).

Consumption of mass media subdues the culture. Instead of asking questions about why we are not seeing the real images of the Iraqi occupation, or getting any sense of context regarding the Oil companies and their consolidation of power and control of fossil fuels in the Middle East, 90 million North Americans are glued to blatantly corporately sponsored reality television: *American Idol*, *America's Next Top Model* and *Survivor*, all wondering about the very important question...who will go home tonight.

The phenomenon of reality television has captured unprecedented audiences in North America, at the same historical moment that the *Patriot Act* in the United States allows the state the Orwellian right to arrest and detain people without reason. Suspending human rights for war measures in order to assure that powerful and well connected oil companies and their executives maintain power and affluence will surely be what this period of history will be remembered for, not the results of game shows. Our common will, to be deceived and to ignore what is really going on in our world is met by a conscious and successful attempt by commercial media and corporate public relations' concerted effort to distract us from reality.

Until now, the business of film and media has succeeded in being the overwhelmingly dominant force, while art making in cinema has been relegated to the periphery. The ubiquitous Hollywood model is the primary example. As a

result of globalization, America's aggressive foreign policy, so called Free Trade Agreements, American cultural production dominates and infiltrates every domestic cultural market. Film and television are the mainstays of mass media. Corporate and mass media are driven by the bottom line. Bankers, lawyers and agents drive the business. According to Wheeler Dixon in the *Transparency of Spectacle: Meditations on the Moving Image*, Ted Hope, the president of the New York Production Company Good Machine, whose independent film credits include *The Brothers McMullen* (Hope & Burns, 1995), *The Wedding Banquet* (Hope & Lee, 1993) and *Flirt* (Hope & Hartley,1995) , in *Filmmaker Magazine* claimed:

The marketplace is nasty and brutal, remembering only the latest success and never forgetting it's failures. It allows no room for taste beyond the mainstream. Truly unique films cannot get screens, let alone hold them for more than a week or two. There is virtually no American audience for art films, political films, or non narrative films. The specialized distributors have morphed into mass marketers, not niche suppliers. Monopolistic business practices drive most corporate strategies (Dixon, 1998, p. 4).

The strong connection between the commercial and business aspect of film and mass media is countered by the obscurity of media art, installations, experimental films and short films. Target audiences for the Hollywood Studios feature films are increasingly younger. Viewers may perceive the experience of seeing a film as an escape from the mundanity of their pre packaged existence (Dixon, 1998). Lowest common denominator films often have huge box office success, focus on high concepts and the bottom line; the *Transformers* (Spielberg & Bay, 2007), received 270 million dollars, in week four at the box office. The value of their success is measured by the per screen average on

opening weekend and opening week. Thousands of prints are released on screens all over America after a massive marketing and advertising campaign and followed by a media tour and DVD release. Typically, as much is spent on publicity and advertising, as is spent on production and post-production. Within the studio system, the distributors, agents, production executives, and lawyers wield all of the power. Solely trained, educated and interested in business, these folks are unable and ill equipped to make creative decisions. The results from conception to delivery are disappointing expenditures of wealth, devoid of meaning, resonance or significance. The *B movie* genre from the fifties has now become the driving force behind the forgettable box office hits and sequels of Hollywood's genre driven action, suspense, thrillers and their sequels. Studio production in Hollywood, both the model of production, domination of global markets, co-opting unionized labour into the mainstream and highly concentrated conglomerates of capital are highly stylized symbols of late capitalism and decrepit examples of the end of an imperial age.

As film educators, it is essential to provide a context for both the culture and context for these mediums. We are living in a time of unprecedented ability to communicate with one another using technology. Technological developments over the past one hundred and fifty years have transformed the wealthiest nations and its citizens into a virtual global village.

2.2 The Global Context and the Digital Divide

Although the emergence of digital technology appears to be a ubiquitous phenomenon, it actually only affects three percent of the world's population.

Writer, activist, artist Arundhati Roy, in *Power Politics*, illustrates through metaphor the contradiction of access to technology that exists in India. The metaphor resonates contradictions and the disparity that we face as citizens both globally and locally. She notes:

We subsist on a regular diet of caste massacres and nuclear tests, mosque breakings and fashion shows, church burnings and expanding cell phone networks, bonded labour and the digital revolution, female infanticide and the Nasdaq crash, husbands who continue to burn their wives for dowry and our delectable stockpiles of Miss Worlds. Every night I walk past road gangs of emaciated labourers digging a trench to lay fibre-optic cables to speed up our digital revolution. In the bitter winter cold, they work by the light of a few candles. It's as though the people of India have been rounded up and loaded onto two convoys of trucks, a huge big one and a tiny little one, that have set off resolutely in opposite directions. The tiny convoy is on its way to a glittering destination somewhere near the top of the world. The other convoy just melts into the darkness and disappears (Roy, 2001, p. 2, 3).

This observation about India and the rapidly increasing disparity between rich and poor is analogous to the economic divide that now defines the planet. The constantly increasing digital divide includes the internet, cell phones, handheld devices and game boxes. To the richest few, car and air travel, high speed connections, computers at home and at work, wireless connections and constant upgrading both hardware and software are expectations. While the majority of the Earth's population is concerned with the very basics of what the United Nations refers to as the Human Development Index and includes literacy, life expectancy, standard of living. The measurement takes into account access to clean drinking water, access to food and basic health care.

In the wake of increased globalization and concentration of wealth, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have grown to become

powerful voices for the world's wealthiest countries. According to the *World Bank Key Development Data and Statistics*, “The Gross Domestic Product of the forty one Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, 567 million people, is less than the wealth of the world’s seven richest people combined (World Bank Data and Statistics, 2008)

Until the recent release of *The Intergovernmental Report on Climate Change* and the simultaneous release of Al Gore’s political, biopic *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim& Gore 2007), there was still debate about the truth regarding scientific claims of global warming. In response to the scientific community’s report and to this groundbreaking documentary, governments , corporations and mainstream media have been doing everything to put Global Climate Change at the top of the political agenda.

Debate continues regarding the complexity of solving these global issues, but the facts indicate that the perpetual war that the military industrial complex is waging on the rest of the planet is in support of the affluence and wastefulness of ten percent of population is at the expense of the majority of the worlds’ population. This is the context in which we live, teach and learn. Our students, our colleagues and almost everyone with whom we are acquainted and related belong to this affluent ten percent. To be “in accordance with all the forms of good functioning that make up a complete human life (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 96)”, we have a responsibility, as educators, as artists and as citizens, to acknowledge the privilege and responsibility that goes with having unprecedented access to our relative affluence and unprecedented personal access to the most powerful

communication tools of all time. We have a moral responsibility to our fellow citizens, to audiences and to students to acknowledge the context of the human and global crisis that exists on our planet and to use the technology appropriately. As educators, we have an obligation to our students to present them with these complex issues and to challenge them to find some personal connection to reality. As educators in a field in which we are giving students knowledge and access to these powerful communications tools, we have a responsibility to reflect on what it means to be human and to allow every opportunity to allow our students to reflect upon and express their own humanity.

2.3 Visual Literacy and Liberation

In recognizing that we are not all blank slates, but have different ways of experiencing the world, Howard Gardner, in *The Disciplined Mind*, posits that the way that we understand differs, and the outcome must be a sense of responsibility rather than a set of skills.

I want my children to understand the world, but not just because the world is fascinating and the human mind is curious. I want them to understand it so that they will be positioned to make it a better place. Knowledge is not the same as morality, but we need to understand if we are to avoid past mistakes and move in productive directions. An important part of that understanding is knowing who we are and what we can do. Ultimately, we must synthesize our understandings for ourselves (Gardner, 2000, p.180).

This quote encapsulates this philosophy of curriculum for film education. Our responsibility as educators is to create a curriculum for students to construct their understanding and knowledge of the world, and to encourage them to conceive of ways of leading better lives. Trying to lead a better life, and actively

making the world a better place leads to personal liberation from the limited and indentured identities of consumer and worker.

Human connection, literacy and liberation are the fundamental subjects of Paulo Freire's seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire refers to teaching literacy in South America in the 1970's, but the underlying educational philosophy can be applied to formal or informal educational environments.

Freire suggests that dialogue must happen between teacher and student and this must be a free exchange. He describes the domination and destructive nature traditionally inherent in the teacher and student model. Freire contends that in this model, teachers see themselves as an elite presence in relation to the student and argues this destroys much of the creative power of the student. Ultimately, Freire describes education as an encounter, as a dialogue, that must be founded on love and connection in order to be transformative.

Authentic liberation, the process of humanization, is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of [a hu]man upon their world in order to transform it (Freire, 1970, p. 66).

Literacy was the core interest for Freire and he saw oppressed populations as needing this core knowledge in order to break out of domination, silence and oppression. However, Freire's attention to the process of that learning and the humanizing of education through love and a commitment to the encounter in education presents profound resonance and possibilities for teaching visual literacy.

Literacy, is the ability to read the coded symbols of language and to put them into context. Written literacy is the ability to use the coded symbols of the

language in order to create meaning that could be understood by other literate members of the society. According to the United Nations, literacy is a measure of development of a society. Literacy indicates that individuals have access to education and that they are capable of creatively participating in society using a complex symbolic system. Visual literacy is the ability to read and write, using visual language, which requires an ability to understand and use the coded symbols of the language.

Thirty years ago, there were three channels, no personal computers at home at work, and approximately nine theatrical releases a year. Twenty years ago, the PC arrived at home, at work and at school, we threw out cassettes and vinyl and bought VHS tapes and CDs ; ten years ago we all got wired to the web. Five years ago we bought DVD players, recycled our VHS tapes and bought DVDs and began authoring. We continue to live amongst a complex stream of images and sounds mostly dominated by corporations, for the first time in human history have a chance to contribute, by making our own media, creating our own meaning, projecting the truth of own lives, telling stories about our own communities that can literally be seen around the world. Film schools are booming in response to the proliferation of digital filmmaking tools. Like the impact of Gutenberg's press on 15th Century print making, we are witnessing a profound shift in the production of images through digital technology. The question that I would like to address is how do we prepare students to communicate authentically and meaningfully in the world? Visual literacy is shifting the paradigm just as literacy did 500 years ago.

CHAPTER 3: AESTHETICS

3.1 Aesthetic Knowledge and Context

When you read a novel the voice is telling you a story; when you read a poem it's usually talking about what its owner is feeling; but neither the medium or the message is the point. The point is that the voice is unlike any other voice that you have ever heard and is speaking directly to you, communing with you in private, right in your ear and in its own distinctive way. It may be talking to you from across the room. The historical details are secondary; all that matters is that you hear it, an undeniable presence in your head and still very much alive, no longer how long ago the words were spoken (Alvarez, 2005, p. 17).

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, two dimensions of knowledge have been known to exist. One, identified by Plato as *episteme* focuses on knowledge as being capable of expression by propositions such as verbal language and numbers. This is a conceptual way of knowing. The power of this knowledge is in its ability to explain theories and principles. Another dimension of knowledge, Aristotle described as *practical wisdom* or *phronesis*, grounded in understanding of specific, concrete human experiences in all of their complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty. This way of knowing is subtle, flexible and particular to the individual. This way of knowing is based on our perceptions, and is what Aristotle referred to as *aesthesis* (Reimer, 2003, p. 161). *Aesthesis*, or aesthetics, is a personal kind of knowledge and way of understanding. It is based on our perception of the world, our personal and cultural sensibilities. In philosophical terms aesthetics refers literally to truth, beauty and the good, which reminds us about the personal and subjective nature of our aesthetic sensibilities. How we choose to get at

meaning is connected to our own sensibilities. Meaning is connected to aesthetics, because it connected to something that we can feel. Conceptual knowledge can help us to make sense of it all, but our aesthetic knowledge is the way that we connect with the world. That moment of connection is the fertile ground of meaning. There is a strong subjective component to meaning. Our sensibilities influence our perceptual responses. When you are operating as an artist, you are using general concepts. Experience working as an artist or a filmmaker gives you a chance to flow, to improvise, to collaborate, take risks, learn and to develop a process. The experience of the process is exhilarating. There is a possibility for a wonderful feeling of being. In this process there is a resonance and in making work there is an engagement with a broader dialogue. This is a communal activity and a way of developing community. Parts of us that are unsaid, have the potential, through art making or filmmaking to be heard or to be understood. This is what I find compelling about being a filmmaker and equally compelling about teaching film.

Aesthetic judgment exists outside of capitalism and the marketplace. Making an aesthetic judgment in art making is a way of knowing and of being human, of expressing ourselves and of understanding. Our culture has come to understand value only in terms of currency and art that has no currency has no meaning. In these conditions, art has become a product and culture has become an industry. In *Working Outside the Institutional Framework: Art and Oppositions*, Shabaka claims:

Under capitalist conditions, according to Marx, art has become a form of alienated labour through its near reduction to commodity status in the

marketplace, thus the romantic mystification of art has been replaced by commodity fetishism (Shabaka, 1992, p. 4).

Art and aesthetics offer important opportunities for us to explore and express our humanity and these ways of knowing and ways of being must be valued for their own sake. A value system rooted entirely in capitalism, and its goods and services is devoid of any true human meaning. Art and aesthetics require that we be concerned with the moral aspects of our nature, provoking us to engage our imaginations. Meaning, knowledge and understanding have shifted in the social and cultural landscape of postmodernism. In the realm of postmodernism, all forms of knowledge are socially constructed and none of them can claim superiority. According to Tarkovsky, in *Sculpting in Time*, the pilgrimage for a filmmaker finding a subject is akin to a spiritual quest:

It is a mistake to talk about the artist 'looking for his subject' in fact the subject grows within him like a fruit and begins to demand expression, it is like childbirth. Moments of inspiration are momentarily felt truth. A masterpiece is a judgment of reality, complete and finished its value lies in giving full expression to human personality in interaction with the spirit (Tarkovsky, 1986, p. 43).

Tarkovsky's aspiration to truth, claims of inspiration and the spirit may be an anathema to postmodernist and secular sensibilities, but when we speak of an individual finding their own sense of meaning and reflecting that meaning in art or in film, epistemological knowledge has very little to offer us. We must be open to the aesthetic and we must allow our students every opportunity to open themselves up to alternate ways of knowing. Finding our own individual sense of meaning as artists and supporting that quest in our students can indeed be conceived as a narrative in its own right. Aesthetics can put us in touch with

ourselves. We have to practice looking at things for their aesthetic value and making things with our unique sensibilities in mind. Loss, grief, love, compassion, and fear are subjective feelings which can be expressed using our individual and personal language that may transcend words.

3.2 Aesthetics for Film Education: Developing Curriculum

In film education, are we trying to support a state of authenticity in our students. What canons or sets of rules are necessary for them to know, in order for them to engage with their own authenticity? What do we understand when we understand meaning? How do we understand? We understand when we see patterns, relationships, when we see things link up. We understand a part, when we see a relationship to a whole. When we understand the whole, we see a connection to the parts. Understanding is contextual. Teaching, writing this paper, parenting, making films is a philosophical and poetic undertaking, it all requires judgment and we navigate using our sense of meaning. We have to give our students opportunities to make aesthetic judgments not just managerial decisions. The curriculum must be centered around opportunities to make meaning. Authentic selves will emerge as identities evolve and aesthetic judgments are made. Their filmmaking and their thinking must be supported in an environment that allows them to find a point of view, make connections and make their work relevant to their own personal sense of meaning.

As teachers, we have an opportunity to authentically connect with our students. In our curriculum we must value aesthetic judgment and subjective sensibilities. *Teaching Meaning in Art Making* (Walker , 2001) has been an

excellent resource to design curriculum for all four years of our film degree program. Art Making can become an exercise in problem solving if students are not personally connected to the ideas. Walker suggests:

There is a difference between the subject and the concept of an art project. The subject matter is the topic, whereas the ideas are the artists concept. To personalize big ideas for art making, students may do what professional artists do, link art making with big ideas to individual interests, background and experience. Development of a knowledge base for art making includes research about ideas subject matter, art making techniques, and related artists works which results in a rich art making experience for students, rather than those that illuminate those steps (Walker, 2001, p. 7, 20, 46).

My students have a hunch about their own aesthetic knowledge when they start the program. They refer to it as *this feeling*. On the first day, I ask them “why they want to study film?” and “why do they want to become filmmakers?” Typically *they have had this feeling* as either an audience or working on a creative project. Students want to get at that feeling and they want to know how to make it happen. The first year of our program is designed to allow students to explore and develop their personal and collective sense of the aesthetic. A series of aesthetics assignments, allows each student to explore and develop a personal visual language. Making the work alone and looking at the work together gives students a chance to allow their own identities and interests to emerge and to connect personal meaning to something they can express and understand visually and theoretically. A series of self-portraits are required to *convey a feeling*. Self portraits include a portrait of self, family and community. In the Big Idea project, content is integrated into aesthetic assignments through discussion, personal, conceptual and historical research. In this assignment, students are also asked to research an artist who has examined a related theme

and to look at how they have worked these themes into the final work. The assignment is to make a one minute slide show using stills that conveys a feeling about one big idea. Examples of the Big Idea discussion topics are: self, family, community, death, love, peace and power. I was inspired to develop this curriculum from research I was doing while writing this paper. I was able to transpose a lot of those ideas into practical curriculum. In the first year course I started used the *big ideas* and conceptual framework of discussion and research to allow students to develop an aesthetic sensibility.

Whether stated as single terms, phrases or complete statements, big ideas do not completely explicate an idea but represent a host of concepts that form the idea. If student art making is to be a meaning making endeavour rather than simply crafting a product. Big Ideas are what can expand student art making concerns beyond technical skills, formal choices and media manipulation to human issues and conceptual ideas. Big Ideas can engage students in deeper levels of thinking (Walker, 2001, p.1).

I have learned from the *aesthetics* assignments, from my own experience in graduate studies and from research in teaching aesthetics and art making that we can teach and learn aesthetics. Although sensibilities are unique, subjective and personal, the more we explore and develop our personal aesthetic sense, the more we can develop confidence in this way of knowing and understanding and the closer we can get to our own personal meaning. Working alone or in groups of two seems to allow students a chance to take risks, experiment, examine complexity, leave things open-ended. Giving students aesthetic assignments with simple technical requirements means that they can all be successful and not get hung up on technical problems or technical achievement. Having fairly rigid guidelines, like time frame, format and deadlines means that

the work can include rigour, discipline and methodology. Assignments are designed to provide students with some skills and confidence to work through aesthetic problems, allow them to feel more confident to work creatively in bigger groups on their film projects. Group film projects in the first semester of first year are more about communication and collaboration, and less effective aesthetically than individual aesthetic assignments. But I can see how the connections are being made by the time they start working on their major projects in first year.

Developing the degree required a fundamental shift from the existing three year curriculum which was a technical program. In addition to adding required academic courses, the program needs to shift in the upper levels to focus on the aesthetic. So I suggested that we collapse three courses, directing, screenwriting and cinematography into one course called *the Aesthetics of Filmmaking*. The idea is that students get to make a lot of work in the nine-credit course, but that the emphasis is on students' individual construction of meaning and evolution of their own authentic voice. The course is team taught by three instructors, students have twelve hours a week of seminars, discussion and studio work and in addition each student will write and direct three projects. The intention is that the faculty will support students' individual aesthetic sensibilities, and allow them to construct knowledge and develop an authentic voice and cinematic fluency through the assignments.

3.3 Learning Aesthetics in Film Education

The emotional truth of the work is what we must nurture and support in film education. Knowing our students, listening to them and staying open to who

they are and what they are interested in learning can help create an environment that can allow them to work honestly. We can show students examples of work in mediums that express a particular feeling and encourage our students to find their own examples. We can expose them to poetry through spoken word, slam, rap and lyrics. We can listen to music, show artwork and screen examples of films that are successful in expressing an authentic voice. We can ask our students to think about why they are responding to the work in a particular way and encourage them to hold onto that feeling and to write about it and express it in their own way. Screenplays are the driving creative force behind most film projects and the creative centre of film education. Like writing prose, writing screenplays can be taught. There are exercises and story notes regarding the narrative arc and advice for creating more sympathetic characters. Narrative conventions regarding screenplay fit neatly into curriculum and at the end, students can feel a sense of completion and accomplishment with a well formatted, structurally sound screenplay in hand. It is possible that students may find a deep sense of meaning when they are writing screenplays but authentic connection to the work is often sacrificed for story structure and genre conventions. This authentic voice is the essence of a philosophy of film education. We must allow our students to cultivate intimacy with the stream of their own thinking (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p. 196). Artists and filmmakers can become connected to their own feelings and thoughts when they are working from a place of personal connection to their work. Themes can emerge that resonate in terms of both form and content when are deeply immersed in the work. Film students

must be encouraged to take on an approach to filmmaking that allows them to work deeply and on work inside that has personal relevance.

Poetry is a way of deeply apprehending the feelings attached to the narrative of experience, while story and story structure are only the architecture. Filmmakers use archetypes to create recognizable stories and characters for which it is possible to predict how the audience will react. Story structure and character are the foundations of narrative filmmaking; dialogue, theme and tone are the more sophisticated elements of cinematic language.

Learning the language of cinematic and visual literacy is analogous language acquisition. My son is putting this massive puzzle of meaning together one word at a time and then every few weeks the puzzle shifts into place as new and more profound meaning comes to him through language and play. Although my students seem more guarded in the expression of their imaginations, they are emerging into the world of visual literacy with astonishing speed and developing a profound sense of what the process requires in order to be effective storytellers. When I visit them on set they are like actors playing roles and rehearsing what it is like to play that role. Their imaginations are completely absorbed by the task of making the film. Although much older and at different stage in their development, they too are absorbed in imaginative play. My son and my students are in a cultural immersion where they are learning and applying the technical and emotional language appropriate to each situation, testing the boundaries and using the language. After these projects, my students will have an opportunity to step out of their roles to reflect on what happened and

what each of them was able to learn through the process. They are on the way to developing identities as filmmakers. Still they can step in and out of these roles, try on what it feels like to be in that role, decide based on experience, how they would approach it another time. Projects have a distinct resonance for film students. They have the feeling of reality. Some eagerly accept the challenge of making the best possible project and exceed all expectations and win awards at festivals, while others move happily through the process knowing they are simply making a school project. I now realize my role as an instructor also involves playing a role. Our imaginations, experience and identities are completely active in the playing and perceiving as we are acting, doing, saying and responding at each moment.

My son is immersed in the process of language acquisition at all times and has little time or interest or ability to reflect on the feelings. At this early stage of development he is not conscious of himself as actually in a process and is completely connected to his aesthetic and authentic self. He has had no reason to suppress his emotional reactions and so explores the world with his heart. Howard Gardner claims that the child's imagination is innate and is like a seed programmed to unfold " Like the seed with its own plan for development the child is following the inner logic dictated by his own sensory motor development and the nature of the particular symbols with which he is working (Gardner, 2000, p. 212)."

This is precisely what I have observed in the evolution of my son's experience with language and with imaginative play. Slowly his play becomes

more and more story based as he engages and experiments with narrative. The most meaningful symbol laden tool and method of expression in our culture. As

Gardner notes,

By the age of seven or eight and sometimes earlier the child has achieved an initial grasp on major symbolic media of his culture. In our society for example, a child of this age understands what makes a story (and what does not) and he can produce literary work that at least in broad lines, conforms to the general cultural model (Gardner, 2000, p. 212).

Through learning the basic structure of story and narrative and applying those ideas through language enacted by his own imagination, my son develops his own sense of the world. Through this play he comes to understand all of the codes and major symbols in our culture and learning the values and context related to those symbols. Although I appreciate the breadth of his creative spirit, I accept that this elaborate and imaginative process of learning through play is typical of childhood development. It is inspiring and miraculous to watch. The great Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky claims:

There are some aspects of human life that can only be faithfully represented through poetry but this is where directors very often try to use clumsy, conventional gimmickry instead of poetic logic (Tarkovsky, 1986, p. 30).

An authentic voice is easily recognized and difficult to teach, just as poetry is difficult to teach but essential to film education

CHAPTER 4: SOCIAL CONTEXT

The canons of the humanities and social sciences have been challenged for constructing a version of reality that claims objectivity through language and point of view. Universities throughout Europe and North America have been influenced, challenged, and changed by postmodernist and feminist theory.

Together, these theories favour subjectivity and deconstruct objective view points as constructions of language. It is difficult to put feelings into words. Often words are not adequate and yet the dialogical nature of language means that even an attempt to describe feelings through language is often inadequate. Postmodernism suggests that each event that takes place in our lives is richly unique and our experience of those events is filtered through our individual perspective and through our cultural frameworks.

In *The Malaise of Modernity*, Charles Taylor claims that each of us has an original way of being human; by living our lives authentically we develop rich ways of knowing and meaning. Our gestures, love, words, communicating and art making develop our ways of knowing and dialogical interplay. According to Taylor, the arts constitute subtler languages and so create meaning that cannot be expressed any other way (Taylor, 1991, p.1). Taylor acknowledges that the problem with the authentic self is the narcissistic tendency that pervades our culture. By and large we express our individuality through our insatiable consumer habits. Beauty is expressed by visiting the plastic surgeon as opposed

to expressing our own being through aesthetic contemplation. In one sense the freedom that secularism has given us has been squandered by our greed.

In addition to our narcissistic individualism, the other major concern regarding subjectivity is the loss of any universal meaning or any common ground. If we are all speaking different languages based on our own unique experiences and cultural frameworks, then how can we understand one another, how can we move forward? How can we know anything except what we know from our own experience? How can we engage with others? Terry Eagleton caustically attacks postmodernism and poststructuralism in *After Theory*. He expresses concern that we have lost a sense of meaning, virtue and truth: “truth has been identified with dogmatism in some postmodern circles, holding a position with conviction is seen as unpleasantly authoritarian (Eagleton, 2003, p. 103)”. Therefore, just as objectivity and its canon of overarching grand narratives meant to explain reality, so too subjectivity is flawed by its lack of universality, emphasis on the individual and potential for lack of meaning.

4.1 Art Making and Education

Regardless of the problems of postmodernism and subjectivity, it is possible that subjectivity, aesthetic knowledge and art making could bring rich meaning and new possibilities to all academic curricula. I only suggest this radical notion because instrumental thinking continues to dominate every aspect of our culture and our educational institutions. Look at the state of the world! I recommend a change and one with heart!

Contemporary art is an excellent example of what is possible for art making while maintaining a connection to academic culture. Currently, contemporary art is typically high concept, low technique and improvisational; theoretical aspects of the work are critically important to the work itself. Subjectivity and authenticity of postmodern theory translate very well into contemporary art.

There are several concerns regarding contemporary art from artists, critics and the public. Traditional artists are concerned with the lack of technique being taught and the emphasis on theory rather than craft. Critics of contemporary art maintain that it requires special knowledge to understand, is therapy and therefore not art, and is self-indulgent. By special knowledge, they refer to postmodern theory or the notion of subjectivity. This may indicate that many people are more comfortable with grand narratives and prescribed authoritative views than with authentic and unique individual voices. Perhaps, as we become more comfortable with subjectivity, the more we will be open to listening and understanding. That is the nature of learning new languages.

Contemporary art is a dialogue of subjectivities and requires cultural understanding. Often the language of the piece is embedded in the specific language of a culture. This language may be invented for the piece itself or may rely on codes and symbols that have specific meaning to a culture or subculture. The formal aspects of the piece may bring specific meaning to the work, may reflect back on stereotypes of that culture made by dominant culture and may be difficult for people who do not understand the codes and symbols of that culture

to understand or relate to. This is how subjectivity works through contemporary art, as it brings authentic and individual voices into the great dialogical discussion of meaning. Therefore contemporary art is a marvelous tool for learning about cultures and subcultures.

It is challenging to attempt to incorporate postmodernism, subjectivity, authenticity and contemporary art into my own teaching practice. Filmmaking is a complex technical language. It is a challenge not to focus solely on logistics, technique and craft. Students are anxious to learn the craft so that they can get out into the field and make their own work. Learning the technical skills is laborious and detailed, but essential to developing *métier*, technique and precision. The collaborative skills that are required also take time, patience and maturity. Learning the work of the masters, understanding the canon of art history and aesthetics, and the conventions of visual language is essential for film students to be visually articulate. I don't expect all of our students to be filmmakers, but the skills and confidence that they are learning in film school will be useful in what ever they do. This includes writing, engagement with the body, critical thinking, some technical skills, focus and appreciation of historical work. Filmmaking is dialogical, meaning that it can speak across language and differences; the art itself becomes a unique form of language as it is a unique expression. Filmmaking and art making can be collaborative and process driven, but there is also work that must be done independently. Each individual in the group must attend to details; a specific plan must be designed and redesigned as things change. Each work that is attempted will have a unique process and

outcome. My contention is that if it is worth making and worth watching then its meaning should resonate with the artist and may therefore resonate with an audience. Our emphasis as artists and as teachers must be on meaning and purpose for the work. The more authentic and subjective the voice the more potential the work has to be a work of art.

Students too afraid to speak their own truth even in film school or art school may never have the chance again to express their authentic selves, and yet what else should education be, but a chance to explore our true selves and to express our true natures. How else can we possibly learn? How else can we possibly understand one another? In art making , craft and technique can both be learned and taught but art making itself and the development of an aesthetic sensibility are the invention of a unique and authentic language developed by each individual. Aesthetic knowledge has the potential to be an important ways of knowing for all human beings and is necessary for artists and for art making.

4.2 Objectivity and the Academy

The primary reason that art making is given a low status in the academic environment is because of the dominant and traditional bias towards objective knowledge within academic culture. Objective knowledge was refined as scientific methodology during The Enlightenment. Objectivity and in particular scientific knowledge are reality systems that claim to be neutral. The prevailing belief in the deterministic and absolute truth of God shifted at this time to the

deterministic and absolute truth of science and a theory of knowledge called epistemology, which dominated scientific inquiry and subsequently became the dominant belief system to which we still ascribe to this today. This period is characterized by general concepts such as Newton's' Universal Laws of Physics and Kant's notion of the phenomenon. These general concepts became explanations that European intellectuals relied on to understand the appearance of reality. The fundamental aspects of classical epistemology and physics are that reality is describable in terms of motion and matter and that the position of material particles and their momentum is the basic reality of their phenomenal world (Berman 1981, p.143). Objective knowledge continues to be imbedded into contemporary assumptions about the nature of reality and continues to construct our cultural bias towards an objective and absolute notion of truth. Since the scientific revolution, knowledge, empiricism, rationalism and objectivity have been the cornerstones of dominant academic culture. Often the Enlightenment is referred to as the mechanical view of the world as this period does mark a shift in human relationships to everything, at this point the subject and the object became separate. Modern science and technology are still based on a split between subject and object. Through the lens of the mechanical view, everything became objectified, open to dissection and investigation, including the earth, our bodies and our consciousness. Due to enormous wealth plundered through European Imperialism and laissez faire capitalism, this mode of investigation became dominant and pervasive. Scientific inquiry and objective knowledge

became the foundation of academic institutions. Universities devoted to this new form of knowledge flourished throughout Europe and the Americas.

Scientific methodology, however, and the notion of objectivity are now coming under scrutiny as a valid system of inquiry by way of quantum physics. Current theories in quantum mechanics question our ability to measure either motion or matter without affecting outcome. The question of the subjectivity of the scientist has entered the equation. Therefore, two implications have surfaced which fundamentally question any possibility of an objective view: first, the scientist is looking for outcomes and therefore affects outcomes and secondly, any observation requires instruments and those instruments themselves affect the outcome (Eisenberg, 1992). In this case the question of the validity of objective knowledge has been raised by theoretical physics using scientific methodology from within the Academy.

Traditionally dismissed from academic culture, art making and aesthetic judgment are subjective forms of knowledge and have continued to thrive in the margins as ways of understanding the particulars of one's perceived reality. We can understand general concepts through objectivity, but it is through subjectivity that we actually have experience and our own authentic knowledge of the world. Philosophers and artists have been concerned about the loss of the aesthetic as a form of knowledge since The Enlightenment. Aesthetics never made its way formally into the academy but became an academic pursuit of philosophy. According to Roger Scruton in his article *The Quest for Aesthetic Value*, "we find philosophers, for whom aesthetics provides a central subject matter- Schiller,

Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche. Their thoughts arose out of art and the thought of art; it involved an effort to see the world through aesthetic value. To find a way of life that would raise nobility, glory, tragic beauty that had been occupied by moral goodness and faith (Scruton, 1989, p. 26).”

Despite the best efforts of these great philosophers, aesthetics, art, morality and philosophy have all been pulled apart and placed in appropriate categories of the academy to be investigated by objective knowledge. Art making, however, must always be by necessity, subjective. To make art requires as David Hockney says “the hand, the heart and the eye (Joyce, 1999, p. 68).” The only way to connect with what you are doing in art making is through oneself and therefore it has always been a poor fit for the Academy. It takes practice and courage to find the thread of one’s own subjectivity and if one could generalize, this is the unique process of the artist. In Van Gogh’s many paintings of fields and sky we no longer see the differentiation between earth and heaven as it merges and becomes one: “currents of energy come from his hand and his body...every stroke is explicit and unambiguous (Berger, 2001, p. 89)”, and “...he was able to be extremely open, permeated by what he was looking at... (Berger, 2001, p. 91).” These are apt and possible descriptions of Van Gogh’s aesthetic experience and of the artist’s process. Of course, Van Gogh was a great painter, but it is the emotional quality of the work that is unique and profound. If we look at the paintings of Van Gogh, we can see the authentic voice of the artist and the emergent qualities of the work itself. Our aesthetic response is similar to the art making process; it is both personal and subjective. When we hear music or

watch a film that touches us in an emotional way we are affected viscerally. It may even change the way we see the world. The language of art is dialogical and as infinite as every possible world, as authentic as each human voice, and as unique as every word or sound ever made. Imagine if we valued subjectivity and art making as much as we value objectivity in both the classroom and in the culture. Our world would be changed.

CHAPTER 5: EXPERIENCE AND PROCESS

5.1 Collaboration: The Context

Love every leaf, every ray of light. Love the plants, love the animals, love everything. If you love everything then you will sense the divine mystery in things. Once you sense it, you will begin to understand it better everyday and you will come at last to love the whole world (Dostoevsky, 1992, p. 389).

The purpose of making films is to express something uniquely meaningful that can only be understood in this medium. It is a complex process. The something or the something else, is an expression of the heart and the mind and must have filtered through a stream of filters of understanding and sensibilities and finally emerge on the screen. Students at the beginning of their film education are drawn initially to the role of the author, *the auteur*. As they become more experienced, they begin to understand and integrate their sense of collaboration and appropriate problem solving. Once they build confidence and have some technique they make personal connections to their big ideas, take risks with their skills, flow, improvise, and are inspired or find mastery.

From the moment that they decide to collaborate on the project, the filmmakers must constantly communicate what they sees in their mind's eye. But this *vision* is more imperfect than memory and as malleable as the ceaselessly ending variables that evolve into the finished project. Although destined to change, the screenplay is the initial map that the filmmakers will follow through production. Once the story development stage is over, the thinking and planning

regarding preproduction and production begins. An endless negotiation between the director and producer is underway as they collectively decide on the details that will prove to be the central creative decisions that will tell the story. The decision-making includes determining who will be the creative keys: production designer, director of photography and costume designer. The collaborative team expands daily during preproduction as casting begins. Casting will determine the caliber of the project because so much of the outcome will rely on the performances. The creative team begins scouting locations and attempts to determine the merits of building a particular set or finding an actual location.

Once locations are chosen, and sets are being built, the director has to build a shot list that tells the story and that works within the schedule. During production there may be as few as five but as many as hundreds of people involved carrying out intricate tasks, every one of them a collaborator on the project offering skills and knowledge in their craft. They are all under the direction of the producer and the director, even though they may only meet briefly. The information has to be filtered through the mechanism of production, everyone simultaneously conceptualizing the outcome of the project. Post production engages a new team of collaborators: editors, composer, colourist, sound designer, and sound editors. Again the producer and director have to convey the vision for the piece and share what it has actually become through the process of production. They may spend a year or more putting the puzzle together.

Once on the screen, you the audience are watching it while eating buttered popcorn, immersed in the darkness, watching the flickering images. You

share the experience of being transported into a collective imagination projected on to the screen. As audience, you are the witness to the work of many people over a period of years. Even in the case of the most banal film, it is the result of careful planning and thinking. Each decision that was made was a conscious one. All of these decisions are disguised in the final product as one cohesive whole. Attention is given to every detail to re-create the reality of the fiction as the craft is ruled by the continuity of the story. No one could possibly imagine all of the problems that would arise and all of the creative opportunities that would transpire to create the outcome of the project. The director must look at every frame and fully accept that this frame will tell the story. Effective thinking on the part of the story is the director's craft. Perhaps the director is the only one with enough energy to look at every frame and notice on behalf of the future audience that this element or that performance is not seamlessly telling the story. That is the director's vision. Therefore, for a director to be able to hold onto their *creativity* is an appropriate temperament. A director must be able to continue to hold onto the meaning of the story throughout the arduous period of production.

All manner of disasters may visit the production and still the director must hold on throughout the ride and check every frame in its rendering of the truth of that particular story. The seamlessness of the story and all of the elements is the jurisdiction of the director. Therefore beyond skill and craft, the director must be highly motivated to perform this harrowing task. Filmmaking buys right back into its own mythology of the hero. The director sees the project as a call to action, production as the conflict and the delivery of the film as his resurrection. The

culture enjoys the auteur filmmaker myth as it is easier to ascribe great works to one individual. Ultimately the collaborative process of filmmaking is a maturing process, people of diverse backgrounds and skill sets are forced to come together in a time-sensitive and highly conceptual manner. Everyone is trying to see the story the same way in order to make their contribution to the film. One of the skills of collaboration is to speak a shared language. A director must be able to speak to an actor, a director of photography and an editor about precisely the same thing, in completely different ways. Each member of the collaborative team must bring this fluency to each interaction in the daily flurry of every stage of production. Filmmaking creates community every time production begins. People swarm around a common cause, attending to every detail with urgent attention. Collaboration is the very nature of the filmmaking process. Yet how have we been trained to be effective collaborators? Cultural notions of individuality have been taught to us at every turn, we can learn skills and craft, but how have we learned how to collaborate?

Developmental theorists believe that this information is preprogrammed into our nature. Western culture has been dominated by a model for development which is distinctly individualistic. Lev Vygotsky had an alternative view of development. He claimed that the fundamental commitment to relationship is the central ingredient to human development. The Vygotskian concept is that “working together productively toward shared goals is a human activity unique and valuable in its contributions to individual and social well being (John Steiner, 2000, p.6)” , and that the unmistakable signs of collaboration are also called

continuity of thinking, joint effort and social support and that these are necessary to worthwhile human endeavour. Collaboration thrives on diversity of perspectives and on constructive dialogues between individuals negotiating their differences while creating their shared voices and visions. Generative ideas emerge from joint thinking, from significant conversations and from sustained shared struggles to achieve new insights (John Steiner, 2000, p. 3) Filmmaking is a collaborative model. Both Vygotsky and John Steiner's views accurately describe the best case scenarios that filmmaking has to offer. The filmmaking process may be a great tool for teaching creative thinking, collaboration and for building opportunities for exercising our storytelling abilities and communicating with our imaginations. Unfortunately the filmmaking process requires a high degree of technical skill, craft and demands practice to achieve proficiency. When Lars Von Trier made *Breaking The Waves* (Windelov & Von Trier, 1997) and Thomas Wittenberg made *Celebration* (Hald & Vinterberg, 1998) they signed the Vow of Chastity in the The Dogme 1995 Manifesto. In signing this, they had the central idea in mind to simplify the filmmaking process and remove the pretention of the artist's vision from the process, and to lead the way in a grass roots movement towards story driven, performance driven filmmaking. The emergence of digital filmmaking provides this revolutionary potential. Digital filmmaking can be considered to be an improvement upon the laborious and expensive analogue process. One physical process has been replaced by another, more accessible less expensive and a fundamentally more unified process. In traditional film capture filmmaking culture, access to cameras, gear,

film stock, processing and editing equipment continues to be extremely expensive. The elite skill set and knowledge required to write screenplay and get it to production has traditionally been limited to the wealthy and to the elite. In the last ten years, due to the emergence of accessible technology we have gone from having five film schools, in this country to almost one hundred. Film, television, media programs and courses have flooded high schools, community colleges and universities as everyone has access to the means of production. At whatever calibre filmmakers are making films, the creative process is at play. Even if these school projects or first films are never to be seen twice, there is a great opportunity for people to join into the great dialogue of story, to discover narrative structure, to explore the thinking and planning process integral to filmmaking, to learn some of the skills and craft necessary for visual storytelling and to be a part of the great joint effort that makes filmmaking an extraordinary experience no matter what the outcome. At worst, many bad films will be made and not seen. At best, students will have access to the creative thinking process that goes into filmmaking and the illusion of the divinely inspired artist will be subdued and replaced by the reality of collaboration, shared vision, ordinary thinking and planning and an understanding of filmmaking craft.

Filmmakers must understand the theory of filmmaking, have many skills and be ready to apply that skill, know the genres and forms and be prepared to be flexible in the process. Filmmaking, can rarely be done alone; it is predominantly a collaborative process. It is possible for filmmakers to stay true to some literal interpretation of the screenplay, but given that they may know the

forms, which in the case of filmmaking is genre, they are free to interpret and create a new meaning as they go. This level of improvisation in filmmaking requires skill and communication on the part of all of the collaborators, very good preparation and a flexible approach throughout the process.

5.2 Flow: Learning and Teaching

The purpose of education is to enable an empowerment and a way of helping people understand themselves and the world at large. Allowing students to improvise on projects will give students a sense of themselves in the process. Confidence develops when they feel that their projects and their process have been successful. If they feel that they can trust themselves to take some risks, employ some technical skills and improvise when necessary, then every project can seem successful, even if it is only because they are learning what all artists must learn and that is that the process is often confusing and unclear but that perseverance is essential. I have enjoyed devoting myself to writing and developing the curriculum and the program, because I feel that I am just one step ahead of the students who are hungry for opportunities to work. The work itself, of filmmaking and thinking about filmmaking, is an absorbing and all encompassing activity. When students are working collaboratively on complex projects, I see them working in the flow. They are in the labs editing, sound designing, meeting about production, addressing story, logistic problems, working with actors, setting up shots, solving technical problems, and staying on top of their academic work, with relatively minimal resources. Regardless of the complexity, they move through the problems and seem prepared. Flow is an

important part of the work. In the flow even problems begin to work themselves through. Perseverance and some mastery of technique seem to be the key to falling into the flow. Flow, is when things are moving, there is something in human nature that loves complexity and searches it out. We are only satisfied when we are stretching our own potential. An enjoyment comes from surpassing ourselves and from mastering new obstacles. Flow may be a moment or series of moments that include: absorption, concentration, deep involvement, joy, a sense of accomplishment. True flow requires skill and training. You can develop and enjoy a kind of second nature in doing the work. The flow depends on a set of clear goals and an opportunity to achieve those goals. The flow is about making things happen and progressing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 197). In the collaborative process of filmmaking, flow can be difficult, because individual ego is involved, personal styles clash, technical proficiency and communication skills vary. To work effectively, people have to rely on each other to complete tasks under difficult conditions. Tasks may be creative or technical or may have some combination of both technical and creative decision-making involved. The time line becomes a critical part of the project and the pressure to work within the timeframe pushes people to the limit and working effectively toward one common vision is difficult.

When a group of student filmmakers is in the flow, it is magical and transformative. Everyday, students come to my office with tears in their eyes, to tell me about their experience in the flow. In our program we give our students lots of opportunities to work. The ethos of the program is to give them a lot of

hands- on practical experience and guidance in the lower levels, and then to give them access to the academic courses, the breadth in the upper levels. I like to say, first you learn about F stops, then you learn about Freud. Students come into the program from digital media and theatre programs in high schools. Some of our students have a background in writing or creative writing, many of them are mature students who have worked some of them just have an interest in the field.

5.3 Liberation

Love is the thread that holds all meaning and meaningful relationships together. Film Education and filmmaking require passion, inspiration and commitment. As filmmakers we must love the work. To be successful filmmakers and to be film educators we must love the curriculum, teaching and convey that love to our students. Of course we must love our students, by this I mean that we must value and respect them, we must make a commitment to their education to their humanity and to their dignity. We cannot commit to anything or anyone authentically without love. If we can feel passionately about the process of filmmaking and film education in general, we can translate that passion to real love of the curriculum and of our students. Through love, we can build connections. As educators, the curriculum can become dry and technical unless we can commit to a higher purpose. Education must have the intention to transform and inspire those that inhabit the process. As teachers we are weaving the values, purpose and meaning. As we are conveying details, teaching theory,

evaluating work or listening, we can model respect, humility, honesty and integrity.

Film students value the curriculum not only for the content, but for the quality through which it is imparted. This quality of the relationship between teacher and student must be forgiving and unconditional. If achievement or success is a condition of the relationship, then the learning environment will be unsafe for the student. Film students must be able to take personal and aesthetic risks. They must know that the container that the curriculum and the film teacher holds is vast and forgiving. For film education to be successful, the world of teaching and learning must feel safe. Listening to students is the sacred key and wisdom of the philosophy of the curriculum. Through love, film teachers can mentor students and show their own vulnerability, fearlessness and sense of adventure. Filmmaking is an adventure for the soul. By nature, the activity of making a film is a series of difficult circumstances. Finding a concept, committing to the concept, writing an outline, a draft, getting the funding, pre production, casting, post production, delivery and exhibition are all terrifying and exhilarating collaborative activities.

Recently, one of our first year students recounted a profound experience, during production on a project. As a director, she told me about a moment where she had given direction to an actor, to destroy the room in an act of rage. Great collaborative work had gone into preparing for this shot. The art department had procured books and papers to make the destruction really visual, papers and cardboard covered a huge plate glass window. They scheduled the shot so that it

would be the last shot of the day and the last shot in that location. The crew had carefully blocked and lit the shot although they could not properly rehearse, because of the nature of the action. To prepare, the crew rolled camera, sound and slated and waited for the director to call action, to support the integrity of the performance and because they could only shoot it once, the director told the actor to go whenever he was ready. The entire crew sat silently waiting for the moment that he would begin. In this moment, she realized that the whole crew understood what she wanted, they were all waiting for the same thing, they had all heard her intention and knew that it was aligned with a higher meaning, the story beat, the story itself, her vision, their collective vision, their commitment and desire to take the work seriously and their commitment and desire to make good work collectively. In that silent moment, this first time director felt the love. The love translated into an excellent first take, an excellent shot, an excellent performance then on that happy note, they wrapped and went home. On set, we literally say did you feel the love? The love refers to the quality of the performance, the magic, the truth or the resonance of the work and the possibility that the shot will actually work in the edit. In filmmaking, if there is no love, there is no point. In filmmaking, *the love* is something that you can make happen by paying attention to everything, and knowing what matters in the end. In education, it is the same. I know when my students are getting it, I know when they are feeling it, because I am feeling it too. In order for education to be transformational, it must transcend knowledge. In this transcendence, it becomes personal and profoundly meaningful, and through this meaning, education can be

liberating. Paulo Freire sheds light on the profound connections between education, liberation and love in his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which translate literally to the connections between film education, visual literacy, liberation and love. With regard to education and love, Freire claimed,

Love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to other men. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. Dialogue as the encounter of [men] addressed to the common task of learning and acting is broken if the parties lack humility. How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance on to others and never perceive my own? How can I dialogue if I regard myself a case apart from other men? How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in group of pure men, the owners of truth and knowledge. How can I dialogue if I start from the premise that naming the world is the task of the elite (Freire, 1970, p.78).

And so our task in making film education relevant and inspiring for our students is to get out of their way and allow our students to engage in a dialogue with the world. The philosophy of film education is a lived experience, something that is fluid and real, it is about human connection, human potential and engagement. We have as much to learn about all of this as our students do and our role as educators is to support them, inspire them and respect them.

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