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Digital Video in the Classroom: Communication Skills for Future Natural Resource Professionals

Bruce A. Shindler¹ and Jeffrey C. Hino²

The Natural Resource Communications course in Oregon State University's College of Forestry is designed to provide students with the skills to be effective members of a resource organization and techniques for working in the public arena. The course focuses on teamwork and group dynamics, meeting management skills, public relations, interpretation, and public education and outreach. The course has been incorporating student digital video production as a capstone experience synthesizing these skills into a tangible product. After receiving a brief introduction to digital video production—from camera operation to non-linear video editing—each two-person student team produces a short (4-5 minute) video on a natural resource topic of their choice.

The video project provides students with an abundance of new skills; chief among these is an increased understanding of how to be an effective communicator and an improved confidence in their ability to work with others in the resource professions. Initially, students must identify the audience for their production and articulate how they intend to convey their proposed message. The process of preparing a written design plan, collecting necessary information (video footage), distilling the information into a succinct message (editing the footage) that includes a suitable narrative, and standing up in front of their peers to deliver the product is the take-home treasure for students in the course. In 2003, the International Association for Communication Excellence gave this course their highest award for instructional design.

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