

PROF. STEPHEN FRANTZICH
Dept. of Political Science
U.S. Naval Academy

courses using C-SPAN programming:
American Government (sophomore level)
Legislative Process (junior level)

This piece takes the potential for educational uses of C-SPAN one step beyond live "pick-up" viewing into the realm of producing original tapes. Before you turn the page and say "that is just beyond my capabilities," stay tuned for a minute longer. Part of the hesitancy in producing new material stems from the slick and polished look of what is currently available. While it is probably beyond most of our capabilities to compete with the major networks and audio-visual producers, some good arguments remain for developing materials uniquely suited to our individual needs.

Before going on, a bit of educational philosophy must be stated. One school of thought argues that since we are teaching the "Sesame Street" generation which was weaned on sophisticated audio-visual pyrotechnics, they will reject out of hand our unpolished home movies. The implicit assumption being that if the form fails to meet expected standards, the substance must also be faulty. The other school, to which I subscribe, argues that the visual component of some material is so important that substance can override form. While it would be so nice to produce sophisticated materials from C-SPAN, less than perfect productions are better than none.

The tapes I propose serve as supplements to traditional classroom materials, which forcefully highlight the material you already discuss. Experience leads me to suggest that tapes work best when they are short, narrowly focused, and to the point. The shortness criteria allows the tapes to serve as discussion stimulators, rather than "time fillers." All my tapes are under 20 minutes, and I will often stop them during play to discuss a specific point. When I use any form of audio-visuals, I tend to watch my students more than the program. If the class becomes a sea of confused expressions, I make no apology of stopping the program, discussing the points being made, and even replaying specific segments. Unlike some educators, I have no fear of technology taking over my job, since I like to use audio-visuals in an interactive way where I play an important part in pacing and embellishing the delivery.

Procedurally, I began developing tapes by taping ten hours of House proceedings randomly over a one week period. Then, with some general topics in mind, I carefully watched the raw tapes for good examples and watched their counter number location... It then becomes a case of choosing the best examples for inclusion in particular tapes.

While the possibilities for programs are endless, the following suggestions might spur your creative mind:

1. A Typical Day in Congress: By outlining the various activities in a typical day, students would develop a feel for how the House works. The ensuing discussion could cover such topics as the reason for each activity and its impact on the political process.
2. What is "Our" Congressman Up To?: For constituencies represented by active members, showing a medley of the Member's speeches and comments during a particular week or month could lead to interesting discussions as to why he takes an interest in particular topics and the positions he chooses.
3. Congressional Norms: Congress is a social institution in which norms of behavior such as courtesy and adherence to formal rules make action possible. A concept such as the courtesy norm could be forcefully driven home with examples of Members during heated debate reducing the personality factor by referring to their adversaries as the "junior member

Prof. Steve Frantzich (cont)

member from XXX."

4. Policy Debates: The major purpose of Congress is to make decisions on issues with few right or wrong answers. While a two-hour debate on a key issue might be too much for the classroom, that same debate excerpted into a twenty-minute interchange could serve as the basis for discussing the pros and cons of the issue, the nature of the supporters, and the techniques of debate. As with all the above examples, the videotaped segments could be used in conjunction with other assignments. Students might be asked to develop a position paper on the topic before seeing the tape, or the tape might follow or proceed an in-class debate on the topic.

I hesitate to lengthen the list of ideas, since the longer the list, the more it implies inclusiveness. In reality, the resources on C-SPAN are so extensive that possibilities are only limited by energy and creativity. The main message of this essay is "put on your creative thinking cap and try developing programs."

###

Prof. Steve Frantzich (cont)

member from XXX."

4. Policy Debates: The major purpose of Congress is to make decisions on issues with few right or wrong answers. While a two-hour debate on a key issue might be too much for the classroom, that same debate excerpted into a twenty-minute interchange could serve as the basis for discussing the pros and cons of the issue, the nature of the supporters, and the techniques of debate. As with all the above examples, the videotaped segments could be used in conjunction with other assignments. Students might be asked to develop a position paper on the topic before seeing the tape, or the tape might follow or proceed an in-class debate on the topic.

I hesitate to lengthen the list of ideas, since the longer the list, the more it implies inclusiveness. In reality, the resources on C-SPAN are so extensive that possibilities are only limited by energy and creativity. The main message of this essay is "put on your creative thinking cap and try developing programs."

###

Prof. Steve Frantzich (cont)

member from XXX."

4. Policy Debates: The major purpose of Congress is to make decisions on issues with few right or wrong answers. While a two-hour debate on a key issue might be too much for the classroom, that same debate excerpted into a twenty-minute interchange could serve as the basis for discussing the pros and cons of the issue, the nature of the supporters, and the techniques of debate. As with all the above examples, the videotaped segments could be used in conjunction with other assignments. Students might be asked to develop a position paper on the topic before seeing the tape, or the tape might follow or proceed an in-class debate on the topic.

I hesitate to lengthen the list of ideas, since the longer the list, the more it implies inclusiveness. In reality, the resources on C-SPAN are so extensive that possibilities are only limited by energy and creativity. The main message of this essay is "put on your creative thinking cap and try developing programs."

###



Suite 412
400 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
202/737-3220

June 12, 1986

You may be aware that C-SPAN has inaugurated a "C-SPAN in the Classroom" effort that is intended to encourage college professors -- especially those in the areas of political science and journalism -- to use C-SPAN clips in their coursework. Our goal is to introduce young people to C-SPAN with the hope of further developing their interest in politics and national affairs.

I am writing to enlist your aid for one part of this project: writing a short essay detailing how you currently use C-SPAN in your classroom environment. Your essay would be published along with about a dozen others in a sort of "Educators' Guide" to using C-SPAN in the classroom.

If you are willing to participate, let me suggest the following guidelines for your essay:

- 1) Length of 500 to 750 words.
- 2) Include description of course(s) in which C-SPAN programming is used.
- 3) Describe the grade level/field of concentration of your students.
- 4) Describe the manner in which C-SPAN programming is incorporated into your curriculum.
- 5) Detail the method through which you bring C-SPAN programming into your classroom: cable vs. satellite dish; personal taping vs. a school media center; live vs. tape, etc.
- 6) Outline any special efforts you make to modify C-SPAN programming for classroom use.
- 7) Do you use additional materials to enhance the students' understanding of what they are watching? If so, please explain.
- 8) Gauge student reaction to the C-SPAN material. How has it changed your approach to explaining the subject matter and the students' understanding of it?

I have enclosed a sample essay written by Prof. Steve Frantzich, a political science instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy. Should you be willing to participate in the project, let me suggest a July 15 deadline for submission. We hope to publish the book by August 1. Shortly after we receive your essay, a small honorarium of \$25 will be mailed to you.

Certainly this is a busy time of year for everyone, but I hope that you may be interested in helping us "spread the word" about C-SPAN to other educators. Please don't hesitate to telephone me if you have any questions about the project. My telephone number is (202) 737-3220. I will telephone your office during the last week of June to confirm your participation.

Best regards,

Susan Swain
Director, Public Relations

enclosure

PROF. STEPHEN FRANTZICH
Dept. of Political Science
U.S. Naval Academy

courses using C-SPAN programming:

American Government (sophomore level)
Legislative Process (junior level)

This piece takes the potential for educational uses of C-SPAN one step beyond live "pick-up" viewing into the realm of producing original tapes. Before you turn the page and say "that is just beyond my capabilities," stay tuned for a minute longer. Part of the hesitancy in producing new material stems from the slick and polished look of what is currently available. While it is probably beyond most of our capabilities to compete with the major networks and audio-visual producers, some good arguments remain for developing materials uniquely suited to our individual needs.

Before going on, a bit of educational philosophy must be stated. One school of thought argues that since we are teaching the "Sesame Street" generation which was weaned on sophisticated audio-visual pyrotechnics, they will reject out of hand our unpolished home movies. The implicit assumption being that if the form fails to meet expected standards, the substance must also be faulty. The other school, to which I subscribe, argues that the visual component of some material is so important that substance can override form. While it would be so nice to produce sophisticated materials from C-SPAN, less than perfect productions are better than none.

The tapes I propose serve as supplements to traditional classroom materials, which forcefully highlight the material you already discuss. Experience leads me to suggest that tapes work best when they are short, narrowly focused, and to the point. The shortness criteria allows the tapes to serve as discussion stimulators, rather than "time fillers." All my tapes are under 20 minutes, and I will often stop them during play to discuss a specific point. When I use any form of audio-visuals, I tend to watch my students more than the program. If the class becomes a sea of confused expressions, I make no apology of stopping the program, discussing the points being made, and even replaying specific segments. Unlike some educators, I have no fear of technology taking over my job, since I like to use audio-visuals in an interactive way where I play an important part in pacing and embellishing the delivery.

Procedurally, I began developing tapes by taping ten hours of House proceedings randomly over a one week period. Then, with some general topics in mind, I carefully watched the raw tapes for good examples and watched their counter number location... It then becomes a case of choosing the best examples for inclusion in particular tapes.

While the possibilities for programs are endless, the following suggestions might spur your creative mind:

1. A Typical Day in Congress: By outlining the various activities in a typical day, students would develop a feel for how the House works. The ensuing discussion could cover such topics as the reason for each activity and its impact on the political process.

2. What is "Our" Congressman Up To?: For constituencies represented by active members, showing a medley of the Member's speeches and comments during a particular week or month could lead to interesting discussions as to why he takes an interest in particular topics and the positions he chooses.

3. Congressional Norms: Congress is a social institution in which norms of behavior such as courtesy and adherence to formal rules make action possible. A concept such as the courtesy norm could be forcefully driven home with examples of Members during heated debate reducing the personality factor by referring to their adversaries as the "junior member

Prof. Steve Frantzich (cont)

member from XXX."

4. Policy Debates: The major purpose of Congress is to make decisions on issues with few right or wrong answers. While a two-hour debate on a key issue might be too much for the classroom, that same debate excerpted into a twenty-minute interchange could serve as the basis for discussing the pros and cons of the issue, the nature of the supporters, and the techniques of debate. As with all the above examples, the videotaped segments could be used in conjunction with other assignments. Students might be asked to develop a position paper on the topic before seeing the tape, or the tape might follow or proceed an in-class debate on the topic.

I hesitate to lengthen the list of ideas, since the longer the list, the more it implies inclusiveness. In reality, the resources on C-SPAN are so extensive that possibilities are only limited by energy and creativity. The main message of this essay is "put on your creative thinking cap and try developing programs."

###