



TED Talks: Worth a Listen

Since 1984, many of the brightest lights in technology, entertainment and design have convened annually in Monterey for the TED Conference. Over the years, TED has widened its scope to “bring together the world’s most fascinating thinkers and doers” (as TED’s website claims), and now some of the

presentations that wowed audiences in Monterey are available on the web (www.ted.com).

One of the beauties of the conference format is that presenters are limited to just 18 minutes. So if you visit TED’s site, not only can you spend time with



such luminaries as Al Gore, Jane Goodall, Sergey Brin, Stewart Brand, et. al., you can see for yourself how less is often more when it comes to the art of presenting.

(And be sure to check out Hans Rosling’s presentation, pictured here, on how developing countries are pulling themselves out of poverty.) ■

Fall 2007 Storytelling iSchool – A Few Seats Left!

The next online session of Storytelling iSchool begins September 21st, and there are just a few seats still available in the Fall class. To learn more and register online, visit www.agoodmanonline.com.




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Free-range thinking™ is a monthly newsletter for public interest groups, foundations, and progressive businesses that want to reach more people more effectively. For a free subscription, send your request to: andy@agoodmanonline.com or call 323.464.3956. Back issues are available on the web at www.agoodmanonline.com.

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The Netflix School of Public Affairs

Ready to learn the finer points of leadership, advocacy, and strategic communications? Fire up the DVD player and grab some popcorn—class is now in session.

In the movie, *Thank You for Smoking*, Nick Naylor, a tobacco lobbyist, shows his son how to win an argument:

Nick: Okay, let’s say that you’re defending chocolate, and I’m defending vanilla. Now, if I were to say to you, “Vanilla is the best flavor ice cream,” you’d say...

Joey: No, chocolate is.

Nick: Exactly, but you can’t win that argument. So, I’ll ask you: So, you think chocolate is the end-all and be-all of ice cream, do you?

Joey: It’s the best ice cream! I wouldn’t order any other!

Nick: Oh? So, it’s all chocolate for you, is it?

Joey: Yes, chocolate is all I need.

Nick: Well, I need more than chocolate. And for that matter, I need more than vanilla. I believe that we need *freedom* and *choice* when it comes to our ice cream, and that, Joey Naylor, that is the definition of *liberty*.

If you want to learn about *framing*, you could do worse than watch this movie. In fact, there are many films and TV shows that are equally instructive for public interest communicators looking to further their own education. So if Harvard’s Kennedy School is just a bit out of reach, check out the course listings inside for the grad school for the rest of us.



► Introduction to Framing

Required viewing: *Thank You for Smoking*

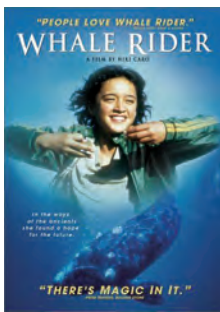


Whether debating ice cream flavors with his son or defending cigarettes before a Senate committee, Nick Naylor knows how to win an argument. Since Naylor defends Big Tobacco for a living,

you may reflexively loathe him, but don't toss out the methods with the man. Naylor knows how to reframe issues to his advantage, and that's a vitally important skill in the public arena. Too often, even when our cause is just (e.g., "The death penalty is immoral") the issue may already be framed against us (e.g., "Murderers deserve to die"). Knowing how to change the frame (e.g., "DNA evidence proves the death penalty is killing innocent people") can often produce better results. For all progressive advocates who still believe "being right" is enough, consider this course mandatory.

Leadership 101

Required viewing: *Whale Rider*



The courage to break with tradition. Persistence in the face of doubt. The ability to inspire others. Just about every quality inherent in great leaders is on display in the story of Paekea, a young Maori girl

who overcomes the opposition of many – including, most notably, her grandfather – to become the new leader of her tribe. Because this is a "family movie" that enjoyed commercial success, serious scholars tend to overlook it. But any nonprofit leaders wondering where their successors will come from should watch *Whale Rider*. Paekea's story stands as a potent reminder that leadership is where you find it, and not necessarily where you look.

Advocacy through Storytelling

Required viewing: *Sicko*



Without question, there are plenty of numbers in Michael Moore's new film – quantifying those in America who cannot afford health insurance, infant mortality rates, expected life spans domestically and abroad, etc. But it's not the numbers you'll remember after the credits roll. The stories of a few brave souls who worked in the wreckage of the Twin Towers after 9/11, who suffer physically and mentally as a result, and whose health insurance won't cover these problems – *that's* what you'll remember. Some have already criticized Moore's "blinkers-on" view of universal health care (which appears to function flawlessly in Canada, England, France and Cuba), but the personal stories in this documentary will stay with you long after the criticisms have faded away.

Advanced Multimedia Communications

Required viewing: *An Inconvenient Truth*



When a movie that is essentially a slide show wins two Oscars and probably does more to galvanize public action on global warming than anything else, you have to admit: that's one hell of a slide show. Al Gore will pointedly tell anyone who asks that his presentation was created in Keynote, an Apple program, as opposed to Microsoft's ubiquitous PowerPoint, but that's splitting hairs. It's a slide show, and if it's not the best one ever, it remains an excellent model for public interest communicators everywhere who want visual support when they speak. (Students who read *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes* as part of this course will receive extra credit.)

Principles of Rhetoric

Required viewing: *The West Wing (Season 7)*



While students are encouraged to view the entire season, this class will focus primarily on episode #7, "The Debate." Written by former Washington insider Lawrence O'Donnell (now a political analyst for MSNBC), the episode was originally broadcast live and was devoted entirely to a debate between the Democratic candidate for president, Matt Santos, and his Republican

adversary, Arnold Vinick. In one hour (less time for commercials), the two candidates sparred over immigration, trade, the federal deficit, tax cuts, education, health care, foreign debt, outsourcing jobs, the death penalty, gun control, energy independence, the environment – even what the word "liberal" really means. Although *The West Wing* usually leaned to the left, both candidates spoke eloquently and convincingly on issues that remain central in American affairs today. If one of the issues listed above happens to be yours, watching this episode can help you plan a more convincing response the next time you find yourself in a debate.

American Politics 201

Required viewing: *The War Room*



To prepare for this class, students may also screen fictionalized treatments (e.g., *The Candidate*, *Tanner '88*, *Wag the Dog*, *Bulworth*) but for a genuine insider's perspective on contemporary campaigning at the national level, *The War Room* remains the best material available. The documentary chronicles Bill Clinton's successful run for the presidency in 1992, and early scenes in New Hampshire (when the Gennifer Flowers scandal was at its height) comprise a classic case study in real-time crisis management. (Students wishing to understand how someone like George W. Bush can be elected President should watch *Being There*.) ■

The Netflix School of Public Affairs is neither affiliated with nor endorsed by Netflix, Inc., the online movie rental service, for the sole reason that it does not exist (much as we may wish otherwise.)