Bridging Theory and Practice in Media Technology

Best practise
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Context

• Basic level course in the study program *Digital Visual Production*

• Focus on visual storytelling

• Course content is explored through an inquiry-process that consists of creating digital productions (such as short movies and animations) and writing a scientific text discussing the process
Challenges

• Balancing theory and practice

• Course should both provide an aesthetic & technological foundation for further courses as well as encouraging students to explore the course content by undertaking inquiries and writing their own research questions

• Issue in first iteration: Lack of alignment between examination activity (seminar) and course activities (projects & presentations)
Three iterations: 2017, 2018, 2019

The activities of the course have been systematically adjusted in order to aid students in developing understanding about the interrelations between theory and practice as well as to provide opportunities to practice the activity that forms the basis for examination.
Course iteration 1 (2017)

- There were no seminars: no incentives for reading literature and no activities helping students to practice for examination.
- Presentations solely focused on showing the productions.
- *Course evaluation of 3,18 out of 4.*
Course iteration 2 (2018)

• Seminars were added to provide opportunities to discuss the course literature and to practice for examination activity.
• Presentations still mainly focused on showing the productions.
• Course evaluation: 3.43 out of 4.
Course iteration 3 (2019)

• Seminars were adjusted to include more discussions on students’ own ideas and how they would like to apply and explore the knowledge in their own inquiries.

• Students were asked to present their research question when they showed their production to express how both the theory and practice were applied in their inquiry.

• Course evaluation: 3,5 out of 4.
Results

• Seminars seemed to be appreciated by the students as they provided a meeting place for discussion on course content and sharing ideas with each other.

• The students’ inquiries were also more grounded in the course literature when students had opportunities to discuss the texts in connection to their own ideas on how to apply knowledge in their projects.

• In addition to demonstrate what they had learned about the creation of digital media, the presentations more often also contained remarks on the projects as a means for exploring and sharing knowledge.
Reflections

• The number of students per seminar should be quite small (max. 6-8 students) to preserve the quality of the discussions. For larger groups, other types of seminars such as “Open Space” might work better.

• Pedagogical choices affect the way the course is experienced by students but it is impossible to control all aspects

• Always a balancing act
Questions

• What experiences do you have of conducting/ taking part in seminars?
• What kind of a role should the instructor take?
• What effect does the discipline have on the pedagogical choices?
• Your questions