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## Teaching TV Production in a Digital World (book review)

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**Kenny, Robert. (2001). *Teaching TV Production in a Digital World: Integrating Media Literacy*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited. ISBN 1-56308-727-8. \$38.00**

This course guide illustrates the multi-disciplinary nature of broadcast instruction, combining a basic introduction to several different aspects of broadcast studies into one work aimed at teachers of introductory high school television production classes as well as other media-literate instructors.

In the introduction, the author observes how technological changes have impacted broadcasting since the advent of the World Wide Web and the widespread use of personal computers. He discusses the impact of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and argues that the current less restrictive regulatory environment makes the development of more media-literate citizens a particularly timely, important goal.

The book is divided into seven chapters and several supporting sections. The first chapter, "Class Administration", covers the general structure of the lessons and offers suggestions for class activities. Chapters 2 through 7 all include lessons and activities designed to take no more than 40 minutes each so that they will fit into a single class period. Chapter 2 covers literacy and critical thinking issues, such as "Deconstructing Commercials". Chapter 3 introduces equipment and technical terminology, while Chapter 4 concerns writing. Concepts discussed include scriptwriting, storyboarding, active vs. passive voice, how to write a good lead, and how to write interview questions. Chapter 5 describes visual design principles and performers' body language. Chapter 6 offers a concise history of broadcasting while Chapter 7 deals with production and post-production processes. A long list of appendices includes activity sheets, equipment checklists, storyboard worksheets, and other useful documents. The book includes references and an index.

Lessons combine classroom instruction, group work, independent study, and written exercises. The author's focus on short exercises that can be completed in a single class period shows that he understands and is sympathetic to the time pressure classroom teachers must deal with. The unique features of this book are the "stand-alone" chapters that can be used individually or in sequence and the accompanying website. Kenny suggests starting off with extremely simple production projects so instructors can balance their desire to provide students with adequate preparation for using the equipment with students' desire to begin using the equipment as soon as possible. He also recommends a two-to-one ratio of hands-on production and group work versus the traditional lecture presentation.

The book is designed to be used in conjunction with a website, which contains timely supplementary materials for teachers and students; this approach an excellent one for a rapidly changing field like broadcasting. However, the links across the top that appear to lead to actual chapters of the book did not work for this reviewer. The optional student workbook is similar to the teachers' edition but includes glossaries that define the terms used in each chapter and fill-in-the-blank exercises. It may also be used in conjunction with an interactive CD-ROM, Videolab 2.1, developed by San Francisco State University broadcast professor Herb Zettl.

Overall, the book is well laid out and well written. Blocks of text are frequently broken up by "activities," some pre-class and some in-class. Examples and exercises are timely and interesting. Unlike many basic TV production handbooks, the book encourages students to think critically about media, particularly in Chapter 2.

***Teaching TV Production in a Digital World: Integrating Media Literacy*** combines too many aspects of broadcast studies to be useful at larger universities with substantial broadcast programs, where the various concepts covered - media literacy and criticism, TV production, broadcast history, broadcast writing, and visual design - usually exist as stand-alone courses. However, it is an excellent textbook, or "course guide," as the author prefers, for a basic introductory television class at the high school or perhaps even community college level.

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