

The Lectern

# Courses Must Be Altered For Effective TV Presentation

Dr. R. Hadly Waters, professor of transportation, was one of eight professors cited for "excellence in teaching" at commencement exercises last June. Having taught several courses by TV, his observations are especially appropriate at this time when the University is trying to extend the opportunity for students to learn from superior teachers through television courses.

Waters received his Bachelor of Science in economics, his Masters of Arts degree and Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School.

By DR. R. HADLY WATERS

Since Penn State is the only institution in the country where a course in transportation is being taught by television, at professional meetings my colleagues frequently ask my opinion of this new teaching medium. I must admit that I began using closed-circuit TV with some skepticism, but now with three semesters behind me, I can say that I have been generally pleased with the results and think that it can be quite effective. There are, however, some limitations or qualifications which must be made.

First of all, I would not claim that TV is superior to the small personally taught class, but it may be better than the large lecture class, or small sections taught by graduate assistants. Strangely enough, TV does not destroy the personal element in a class as might be expected, since the viewer feels that the professor is speaking directly to him—a relationship which does not exist in a large lecture room.

The beginning course in any subject matter deserves the best possible instruction, and in transportation, where it is difficult to obtain quality instructors for multiple sections, TV seems to be the answer. In addition, by economizing on faculty time, it insures the continuance of small classes for the advanced courses in the field.

Second, I would not like to give a class entirely on TV. However, by presenting two TV lectures each week and then meeting in conventional small groups for the third class period, it is possible for the professor to become personally acquainted with his students, and to discuss with them the material presented in the TV lectures.

Although we have available the "talk-back" system, I have found that it has been used

rather infrequently in my class, probably because the TV lectures are devoted primarily to informational material, and controversial issues can be reserved for thorough discussion in the weekly face-to-face meeting.

Third, I do not think that TV instruction is suitable for all kinds of courses; instead, it should be used only where the screen affords new possibilities



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in the presentation of material. For example, it would not seem very effective for a course in business law, where nothing can be done on TV that could not be done equally well in a lecture hall.

The effectiveness of TV in the basic course in transportation is due primarily to the fact that much of the work consists in getting the student acquainted with the available facilities and their role in a modern economy. Since it has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, it is possible to present visually more information and to do it more effectively.

A few pictures or a movie can describe vividly the operations of a trailership or of the piggyback system; while a map or sketch can portray clearly the economic implications of the St. Lawrence Seaway. A pie chart shows the division of traffic among the various modes in a manner which will be remembered, and an interview with an industrial traffic manager brings home effectively the importance of transport to a shipper.

Finally, TV can be most effective only if the course procedures are completely revised to make the best use of the new facilities. Definitely, a

course should not be transferred from conventional teaching to TV without change. The material must be rearranged so as to present via TV those data and facts which lend themselves best to visual presentation, and to reserve for the non-TV meeting the issues which require thoughtful analysis and give-and-take discussion.

In some cases, it appears that the re-thinking involved in preparing the course for television has had the effect of greatly improving the vitality and interest in the course.

Now, what do the students think of TV instruction? Probably a majority of them begin the course with some prejudice against the system, and a few retain this attitude. However, an unsigned questionnaire at the end of the course has revealed that about 85% judge the use of TV as either "very good" or "fairly good."

A comparison of exam grades before and after the introduction of TV shows no observable difference in results. In short, while television does not provide a cure-all for all the instructional problems growing out of increased enrollments, it can if used judiciously alleviate some of our difficulties, and it may in some courses actually result in raising the level of instruction.

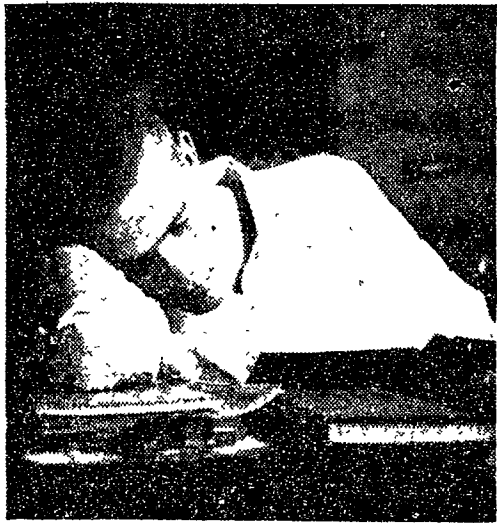
## Blackboard--

(Continued from page four) the existing society, but an integration into the workings of this society without the paternal pat on the head or the sympathetic smile. They want acceptance as full-statured beings, capable of making a worthwhile contribution to society.

The students are naturally the most discerning and most sensitive of this emerging element in society. They are the ones who would look past the humanitarian ventures of Schweitzer and criticize him on more ideological grounds.

A recent best-seller, *The Ugly American*, poignantly illustrates through the character of Ambassador Sears what is all too common among officials dealing with these people today. Sears is an ambassador only by virtue of his partisan political prominence and not because of an understanding of and concern for the people.

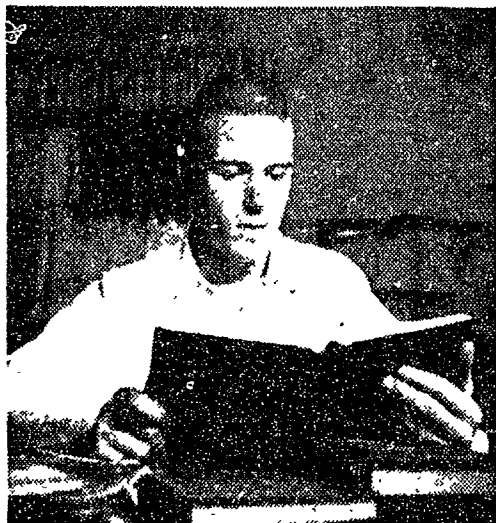
The motives of Ambassador Sears certainly cannot be considered in the same category as Schweitzer's motives. But Sears' refusal to learn the (Continued on page seven)



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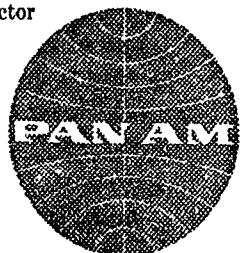
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