

Exquisite Value

A Critical Collaborative Video Project

Lesson Plan

By David A.M. Goldberg

Summary

This project is an effort to encourage a video-based dialog around the ideas discussed in the book “The Value of Hawai‘i.” It is intended to be a less production-intensive alternative to the “Seeing the Value of Hawai‘i” image-making project.

The essays in “The Value of Hawai‘i” need the voices of the community to go with them. This lesson plan guides you through a strategy for documenting those voices in a way that explores how one idea builds upon or reacts to another. We encourage you to upload your finished pieces to the Value of Hawai‘i Website [<http://thevalueofhawaii.com/stepup/videoquestions/>], and we will be displaying your compelling examples during our September 25, 2010 event at Fresh Café. We will still accept and showcase submissions on the website after this date.

With a video camera, a concept from the book and a group of people willing to listen to each other, we can build chains of ideas that illustrate and actively discuss the concepts in the book.

Think of the way that a user can “respond” to a video on YouTube, but in a way that encourages civility and thoughtfulness, and you get an idea of the goal of Exquisite Value.

Here are the essay titles:

“The Economy”

“Tourism”

“Agriculture”

“The Military”

“Race/Ethnicity”

“Labor”

“Transportation”

“Government”

“Law and the Courts”

“Public Education”

“University of Hawai‘i”

“Prisons”

“Social Services”

“Homelessness”

“Domestic Violence”

“Health and Healthcare”

“Arts”

“Journalism”

“Terrestrial Ecosystems”
“Climate Change”
“Energy”
“Water”
“Sovereign Ground”
“Historic Preservation”
“Hawaiian Sustainability”

Obviously some of these essay topics are easier to visualize than others, but it is indeed possible in each case. Sometimes a raw statistic – for example land use or graduation rates or prison population changes – needs a concrete image to drive its point home. Other abstract ideas like climate change or sovereignty need a portrait to “bring them down to earth.” Some of the topics are so painful to consider that providing images might even be a risk. In some cases, a symbol might be enough. Handle these ideas with sensitivity and care!

If you are working with a teacher, or *are* a teacher, you may be focusing on just one essay in this list as it is appropriate for your class. You will be given or provide additional information to provide direction for the selection and/or production of your images.

What follows are guidelines for completing and sharing the project: **Materials, Key Concepts (General and Artistic), Steps to Completion** and some **Suggested Evaluation** methods.

Materials Needed

- Digital Video Camera. This project does not require video editing skills or resources. We encourage simply keeping the “best take.”
- Internet connection to upload videos
- Paper and pencil, or notebook, for outlining or summarizing participant responses.

Key Concepts

- What is free speech in the 21st Century?
We live in a time when opinions are thrown about freely. Check the comment thread trailing below any piece of Internet content to see how cheap opinions are, and how readily they are thrown away when someone thinks they have a better idea – or a better joke, or more cruel thing to say. How is this constructive? How is this meaningful? And in a situation where everyone knows that an arguments on the Internet are unwinnable, who ultimately benefits from all the fighting and trolling? Do we really feel better for having contributed our two cents? Have we actually solved a problem?

- Effectively speaking one's mind?

At the same time that the “democracy” of Internet comments has produced much more noise than signal, there is power in an unrestrained collective coming together around an idea. What could happen if everyone did their conscious best to make a series of responses increase the value of the topic or idea under consideration?

This doesn't mean that everyone has to agree! But it does mean that everyone has to take the time to think through the responses that have come before them, not just to shoot an answer to @*whoever* in the list, but to maintain focus on the *seed idea* and the response you are working with.

At its best, a series of responses to a given idea in an essay should create a multifaceted response to that idea – a prism or a kaleidoscope, and not an endless back-and-forth battle.

Responses should be personal, respectful and always leave an opening for the next response – don't shut down the chain of ideas!

Steps to Completion

- 1) Decide which essay you will be working with and pick a topic, idea, or passage from the text to respond to.
- 2) *If you are the first person in the chain you will fill in the blanks of this statement: “Aloha, my name is _____, and I am responding to <insert your summary of the idea> from the essay: _____.”*
If you are not the first person in the chain, respond to the recording just before the one you are about to make and say: “Aloha, my name is _____, and I am responding to <insert your summary of the previous idea>.”
- 3) Give yourself exactly thirty (30) seconds to record your response with the video camera. You can freestyle it, read a written statement, or follow an outline. The idea is to project your personality into your response while taking the subject seriously. This is a careful balancing act.
- 4) Pass the video camera to the next participant, go to step 2. Do this until all participants are done, or the chain runs out of energy. Then go to step 1. If done making chains, got to 5.
- 5) Once all chains are completed, register them [<http://thevalueofhawaii.com/stepup/videoquestions/>] at the Value of Hawai'i website where you can either upload the completed video or provide a link to a completed video that has already been uploaded to Vimeo or YouTube.

Suggested Evaluation

A successful chain will illustrate the agreements, disagreements and refinements invoked by the essays in the book.

Responses can be written down and evaluated by peers or teachers before being recorded.

Completed chains can be viewed and “inspected for strength.” The strength of the chain is not determined by unanimous opinion. Rather, it is determined by the stability of each link, whether it is in agreement or dispute with those on either side. A coherent statement of agreement is just as strong as a coherent statement of negations.

This project attempts to create dialogue that is between the free-form of the net and the discipline of the best independent commentary. It will be clear by the quality of the statements whether this goal has been reached.