

Ideas for Incorporating Podcasting into Your Pedagogy

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The time is right to begin incorporating podcasts into your courses, but before we dig into why and how, I'd like to share a brief story of my own experience teaching with podcasts at the American University in Cairo (AUC).

My podcast journey began at AUC the day I arrived on the New Cairo campus in fall 2009. That's when I learned that my Radio Production course would be held in a room with only a white board. The class was eventually moved to a computer lab, but I still had some decisions to make about the production process, like what audio editing software to use (Audacity), how would students post their content online (Blogger) and where the audio files would be stored (Internet Archive-IA). It was patchwork, and not true podcasting, but those audio files are still available on IA. Subsequently, one student from that first semester, [Jasmin Bauomy](#), not only won an international student audio competition for her audio documentary, [AUC in the 70s](#), but she's working in audio and podcasting to this day.

Fast forward to now, more than 10 years later, though we changed the name of the course to Audio Production, [my students are still winning international audio awards](#). But what else has changed? Technology is much more sleek and savvy. My students are using Zoom H5 audio recorders as well as their smartphones, we have a semi-soundproof radio studio in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication and we mostly use Adobe Audition for audio editing, which is widely used in Cairo. And, frankly speaking, audio has made a comeback. Some attribute this resurgence to the smartphone and availability of podcasts via apps (Sibietseva, 2020).

Podcasting Across the Disciplines

Another thing that's changed is the use of podcasts as a part of pedagogy. There are many ways to incorporate podcasting into your course design such as "learning through listening" which was highlighted by Turkish researchers in 2006 (Cebeci & Tekdal, 2006) and Jessie Lovett Allen demonstrated that educators had some success using podcasts "as prompts for student responses" among other methodologies (2019). Finally, techniques for motivating student learning via podcasts can be executed whereby "instructors can answer questions asked by previous students and incorporate these concepts into the podcasts to make students think outside the box" (Lewis & Francis, 2020).

Because I teach Audio Production, audio and podcasts are a natural part of my teaching material, but it has been documented that there can be "a deep and reflective approach to learning" in radio production (Rudd, 2003). I'll focus on three methods where how I use podcasts could also be useful in other disciplines such as podcasts for supplementary reading material, which was also mentioned by Lewis & Francis (2020); podcasts discussions or chat fests; and research papers as podcasts.

Assign listening to podcasts as supplementary course material

Like radio, podcast's predecessor, podcasts have a uniqueness in that they can be consumed while doing other things like driving to/from work, chores around the house, working out and more. This dual functionality makes them ideal to incorporate into courses as supplementary reading material. The number of podcasts in the ecosystem is hard to keep up with, but is increasing daily (Whitner, 2020), meaning that there's a podcast for nearly every topic imaginable. That brings us to using **podcasts as supplementary course material**: have students listen to a podcast on a specific course related theme. Then provide the students with prompts to write a short reflection. Of course, you could also have the student provide brief audio responses. Another idea is to have students search for podcasts or podcast episodes under a certain theme and create a bit of an annotated bibliography using podcasts. This sort of podcast discovery will be a valuable resource that can be used for future courses.

Group assignment: discussion podcast

One way for students to actively get to know one another is to take a group of three students, give them a topic and put them in a room to talk for 10-15 minutes, hence the birth of the **discussion podcast** also known as the chat fest. This approach has been used extensively in language learning (Hasan & Hoon, 2013) and not surprisingly, with some success, but is useful in nearly every discipline. Students in my Audio Production class produce weekly episodes of [The Rundown Podcast](#) where they discuss arts and entertainment, science and technology and education and sports. In Fall

2019, one student positively reflected on producing the podcast by saying, “I feel like this last episode was what made us feel sure that we are not done with podcasting yet.” This semester students are even able to produce this project remotely using Zoom. There are a lot of moving parts for my version, but it can have a simple structure just as it would if it was a reflection paper by providing a few prompts.

Remote recording has become a popular phrase during the coronavirus pandemic and there are many guides and tools to help improve the audio quality of non-face-to-face interviews including [this one from the International Journalists’ Network](#). In terms of recording space, over the past few months, we’ve seen some of the best in the radio and audio business, like [NPR reporters](#), recording from inside of their closets, which dampens the sound and usually keeps it from sounding hollow. [My students usually build a fort](#).

Research paper as podcast

The last method of podcast pedagogy is a bit more advanced, but has many of the elements of a research paper, so I’ll call it **research papers as podcasts**. It really is an audio documentary when you think about it with the layers of research and expert opinions. Globally, some academic programs are accepting podcast versions of theses and dissertations (McMenemy, n.d.) (Shelly, 2017). In 2017, as a part of the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project, my students produced some [deeply researched audio features](#) on topics like AIDS, obesity and smoking, along with students at SUNY New Paltz in the US. So starting undergraduate students off with this creative academic output could set them up for non-traditional post-grad life. Additionally, students can dig into the [university’s digital archive](#) for interviews or perhaps identify other archival audio from various sources like the Library of Congress and the public domain and incorporate these into their audio documentaries.

How to assess podcasts?

There has been some research about podcasts as a tool for assessment (Wheeler, 2007), but perhaps you’re wondering how to assess creative works? The process of designing a rubric would be similar to other assignments or projects. If the focus is on the writing and/or research, then that is prioritized. The point is, if it’s not a media production course, then you probably don’t want to assess their audio editing skills or their abilities as narrators. Peer assessment is a tool that fits in well with podcasting. By setting up parameters, students can develop the critical skills to provide feedback in a constructive manner as they listen to each other's podcasts.

Storing audio files on AUC DAR

Where will the audio be hosted is an uncomplicated part of this process and wasn’t initially available when I first arrived at AUC, but the [AUC Digital Archive and Research Repository \(DAR\)](#) is easy to use and students who deposit their raw audio files there are leaving a part of their legacy with the university and a gift for future researchers and historians. This is also another teachable moment to inform students about the process of gaining permission to record interviews that will be posted online.

It’s satisfying to see podcasting make this leap into the mainstream and with it to see so many of my former students find success in the field. Perhaps I’ll do a podcast about that one day.

*If you're interested in learning more about podcasts and using them in your teaching, you can join us November 24th 11-12.30 am for a session entitled **Podcasting Pedagogy Conversation** ([register here](#)). And if you are already interested in using podcasting in your classes, check out this resource created by CLT, and supported by AMICAL, including templates and rubrics for you to adapt: <https://sites.google.com/ancegypt.edu/aucdiaries/about>*

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