

FA18-217: Phone Camera Enhancements to Class Grading, Interactions, and Learning

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In the workshop we will interactively demonstrate using your cell phone camera to improve your own learning of student's names, provide one on one interactions that build their confidence, easily collect coursework without taking it home, provide students with free "portfolio" shots of their work, and make grading simpler and more accurate.

Reasons photographing student's projects is helpful to you:

- **Aid to Memory:** Photographing students with their work helps you better remember the connections between their faces, names and projects. If your brain has problems with this, this artificially "fixes" the problem.
- **Recording Info for Future:** If a student wants a reference years later, you can look up their past work to refresh your recollection of what they did.
- **Easy Grading at Home:** You can do grading at home from photos instead of:
 - Doing this in haste with ephemeral projects
 - Spare yourself from dragging awkward items home
 - Avoid losing or damaging them
 - Students can bring their class work home asap
- **Guards against Error or Loss:** If you somehow still "lose" a grade number for a project, you have a record you can check back on to be sure when a student says, "But I did that project!" (to see if they are correct) or just *think they did it* but never turned it in.

- **Short Required Interactions:** It gives you short bursts of time to interact with students individually.
- **Questions Answered:** You can ask questions about the project before you grade it.
- **Praise to Students:** You can complement things that are worthy of praise to build their confidence.
- **Timely Feedback:** You can also offer suggestions for improvement right away instead of a week later in a note.
- **Authority Building:** Gently assert authority by telling them where to stand, how to pose, etc.
- **Mirroring:** If you make facial expressions at them that will look good in the photo, you can get them to consciously or unconsciously mirror your facial expression, which not only improves photos, but is a common acting class method of trust building.
- **Short:** When you want to end the interaction, you have a line of people who need to come next, so it isn't awkward.
- **Canvas:** If students opt into sharing the photos, you have great images for future Canvas class sites, teaching portfolio, etc.
- **Advertising:** Students sharing photos online advertises the class to their friends and relatives.
- **Improves Skills:** The longer you do it, the better you get at taking flattering photos of people and their work. Which can improve your own home and work photography.
- **Fun:** It is fun!

Reasons students find it useful:

- They too have a time where they can get your attention in a way that does not require "speaking up" or interrupting. It is an easy time for the shy to ask questions and bring up issues.
- The process gives them direct individual attention, so they don't go through a class never sure if the teacher knows they exist.

- If you share your photos with the students they get portfolio shots of their work, and fun shots to share on social media.
- They get timely suggestions and praise, if there is a problem with an in-class project, there often is time to tweak it before it is turned in for a grade.
- They can often take projects home right away. Projects do not get lost or damaged in transit.
- If they lose or break the project later, they still have a record of it.
- You can subtly “train” them to pose better for pictures over time. You also can gradually educate them about how to take better photos of others and/or objects in your discipline.
- Students rarely get photos posed with things they make, or in groups with their fellow students, yet years later these sorts of photos are greatly valued memories.
- It is fun!

Ingredients:

- Cell phone camera
- Location(s) in or near classroom with diffused light
- Organized file sorting method of your choice
- (Optional) Online host for uploading photos to share with students
- (Optional) Folding photo box or cloth for detail photos of small objects

Camera: Nearly anything better than an old flip-phone will do. Samsung Galaxy S Plus, Huawei P20 Pro, iPhone X or 8, Google Pixel 2 XL, and 2, are all the very top of the line, but a working iPhone from 2011 is still brilliant for this type of work. You don’t need to buy something newer or fancy.

Location: Diffused light is your #1 need. Look in and around your classroom to find a spot with diffused and/or indirect light. A boring hallway with fluorescent tubes will usually work better than outdoors or near a window. If outdoors must be used, try to get the photo in a spot with full shade, and not much back-light.

Organized File Sorting: I'm partial to sorting them myself in PC file folders, but there are lots of programs that can help you do this by automatically sorting by date or other criteria.

Online Hosts: I'm most partial to **Shutterfly** because it is free, uploads unlimited large size files well, and lets you sort your photos with your own chosen file names. I'm also partial to their photo products like magnets, books and cheap prints. You can see my Shutterfly site at <http://taramaginnisclasses.shutterfly.com> for an example of how this works. Other places you can upload files include: **Flickr**, **Instagram/Facebook**, **Google Photos**, and others listed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_image-sharing_websites

Folding Photo Box or Cloth: If you will be photographing small detailed projects like jewelry, (especially if they have reflective surfaces on it) you may also need a photo light box to diffuse the light and show details. You can buy these readymade VERY cheaply on eBay, make one with a sheet of foam core and piece of white cloth, or even repurpose a white nylon-sided laundry hamper in a pinch. If you already have a space with very diffused light, you can just use a background cloth, or any contrasting, bland background that happens to exist in the space.

How to Do It

- **Mugshots:** Take smiling "Mugshots" of your class on the first day and make a cheat sheet connecting faces to names. Use the cheat sheet to identify who is turning in an assignment simply by photographing the assignment with the person who made it.
- **Get Closer:** Get in close to the person or object so it fills most or all of the frame.
- **The Beginning:** If students turn home work in at the beginning of class, take photos of the items while they work in the studio, then have them come by before exiting to be photographed with the item before they leave with it.

- **The End:** If students are turning in work as they finish it in the studio, arrange for students to come and line up with their work to be photographed as they finish it.
- **Cull the Blinkies:** Show them the photos so they can reject photos they may object to (blinkies, mouth open, etc.) which also builds trust.
- **In the Office:** If you can't take photos within class time, you can collect it, but still photograph it in your office/studio before you leave so it need not endure transport, and you don't lose or break anything.
- **"The Face is Nature's Name Tag":** When photographing work with the student in the photo, concentrate primarily on **getting a good photo of the student**. The student-with-assignment photo is primarily a "name tag" for the other photos, and having a flattering face photo:
 - Relaxes the student and builds trust
 - Is more likely to be shared via social media, advertising your class
 - Makes better photos for Canvas

Getting Flattering Photos of Faces

- Cell phone cameras are actually fish eye lens cameras if you get very close. A fish eye camera enlarges whatever is closest to the lens. This lets you emphasize whatever features flatter the student.
- Down angles in $\frac{3}{4}$ profile nearest one eye tend to flatter most people and feminize faces. Getting in close to the face, from above, also helps make the face thinner looking.
- Up angles make jaws look bigger and more masculine, so they tend to be good angles for men with smaller jaws and chins, as it gives them more.
- To make thin faced people with beaky noses and/or acne look good, stand further away and zoom in to widen & flatten the face and "airbrush" out minor imperfections.
- If you have a person with both a heavy jaw or double chin AND a large forehead, you can take the photo at a down angle to minimize the jaw and enlarge the eyes, but have the frame cut off the forehead just above the

eyebrows, so the down angle won't make a "Space Alien" head. This is the "Cat Trick" I use to make faces more triangular for cat makeup.

Software:

- **moreBeaute2** The iPhone app you want for making your photo shy relatives happy to see your pictures of them. It automatically blurs away zits, and lightens mid-tones to fix bad lighting, so you look like a cover photo. It costs \$2 and makes any photo portrait be more flattering and better lit.
- **PhotoLabPro** Is just a fun app specifically for messing with portraits, it is not necessary, but it again can make portraits that students are more likely to share. I've messed about with about 2-3 dozen photo FX filters and frame programs over the years, and this one makes some really eye-popping portraits out of fairly ordinary images, again for less than the cost of coffee.