

eTools: Using Camtasia Studio 8 in the Classroom

Star A. Muir, George Mason University

Introduction

Student engagement can be particularly challenging for many reasons: some students may not be present in class, those students who are in attendance may become distracted at some point, some learners are bored with long sections of text or lecture, and some instructors are not always consistently clear with either their directions or expectations. Although instructors may change the pace of the classroom experience to increase student engagement, course assignments and other administrative tasks often are conveyed with short announcements that leave students wondering "wait . . . what was that again?" When introducing new technology tools, new critical concepts, or new assignments, it is particularly helpful for instructors to be able to provide students with short, clear illustrations that students can review as many times as they deem necessary and at any point in the instructional process. Camtasia Studio 8 is one tool that enables instructors to provide students with these illustrations.

What is Camtasia Studio?

Camtasia Studio is software (Mac or PC) that records computer screen activity with narration, which then allows instructors to use call outs, labels, visual mouse markers, arrows, interactive buttons, and other features to edit, revise, and publish videos. It can be used to create PowerPoint presentations with narration as videos,

which can be uploaded to either a course Learning Management Systems (e.g., Blackboard) or an online repository such as Youtube; it also can be used to create interactive learning modules by building quiz questions into the video, with the capability to require students to supply correct responses before they can advance further into the video. Additionally, with hefty editing tools, Camtasia can be used to create step-by-step tutorials of how to use instructional resources typically conveyed through a screen (e.g., visit websites, tour online resources, access/extract information from a database, load Excel, or insert data and run formulas or test statistics). Media can be recorded as you go (e.g. narrating PowerPoint), or can be imported and edited before it is exported via a variety of formats.

How can I get Camtasia Studio 8 for use in the classroom?

Produced by TechSmith products (techsmith.com), Camtasia Studio 8 is available at educational discounts for \$179 per copy for Windows and \$75 per copy for Mac computers. Discounts are available when purchasing multiple licenses; faculty or student support centers may be interested in purchasing a 10-pack. Camtasia Studio also offers tutorials, which are available at <http://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-camtasia-8.html>.

How can I use Camtasia Studio 8 in the classroom?

Camtasia can be used for either face-to-face courses or for online instruction. Before using it, there are three issues to consider. First, because "chunk and stitch" is the preferred approach to avoid any visual or verbal disjunction, plan to break down your

video by creating short pieces first and then editing them together. Second, when using Camtasia to narrate PowerPoint slides, be sure to test any animations before a final recording is made and refrain from talking over slide transitions as the diverted processing power for transitions can cause the sound track to fade briefly. Third, when demonstrating navigation or task processes with screen capture movies, consider using a visual mouse-click (red target circles), button shapes (yellow outlines), or callout boxes for emphasis and quick explanations. Because color differences can be an issue for students with visual impairments, multiple approaches to emphasis can be helpful for their accessibility.

More specifically, Camtasia Studio 8 can be used to:

1. *record and post short lectures or information "chunks."* Using PowerPoint with the built-in Camtasia options installed into the "Add-Ins" menu can make accessing screen recording quick and easy. (Although recording and posting longer lectures are possible, longer lectures make it more difficult to sustain learner attention.) While PowerPoint is an excellent visual medium, remember that long sections of text or extended narration of bulleted points can approach "Death by PowerPoint," but without the richer nonverbal cues. Export to Youtube is a built-in setting for ease of upload.

2. *create online course orientations.* Recording a short narrated tour of your online course interface or Learning Management System is a way to make students feel more welcome, clarify any unusual assignments or expectations, and begin to create a sense

of community.

3. *provide project or paper feedback to your students.* After inserting comments into a paper or reviewing a digital project, you can provide rich feedback that is continuously available by activating screen capture, scrolling and narrating your comments, and posting your feedback video either on a private Youtube channel or in Blackboard.

4. *create "how to" student guides for using technology tools.* If you are planning for students to use technology tools as part of their assignments or course participation, a short recorded module on how to log on, post a comment, and log off can be exceptionally useful. Student technology savvy is often focused on entertainment and social media; even with simple tools, there are apt to be "digital strangers" in your classroom who are not quick to learn and need clear repeatable visual or textual instructions.

5. *provide lab licenses for your students to record projects.* Licenses for Camtasia are inexpensive compared to many other applications, and convincing student support labs to install some copies can provide students with an easy and relatively intuitive interface they can use to create and upload their projects. Whether it is a web tour or a narrated presentation, student projects and presentations can be uploaded easily to Youtube or your Course Management System.

6. *offer peer review and mentoring comments.* For faculty or graduate teaching

mentoring relationships, or for providing feedback to newer faculty or faculty trying different innovations, recording a brief narrated tour of their Blackboard or web site can be invaluable for faculty development and growth.

7. provide ancillary skill development. If you are expecting students to build skills outside of class time or to enhance the skills necessary for successful course completion, even if the skills are not directly related to course content (e.g., writing effectively), Camtasia modules can provide additional support and instruction.

Conclusion

Camtasia Studio is an excellent resource for providing short, readily available content modules, skill-building units, or course assignment explanations with a modest learning curve and time investment. It can be used extensively to convey content in online courses (often through narrated PowerPoint videos), and can provide a level of interactivity by building quiz questions into exported videos. While it is wise to avoid long video lectures, when used effectively, Camtasia can provide your students with engaging, accessible, and rich learning experiences.