



## iTunes U evolving into resource for instructors

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iTunes University's role in higher education has changed from a platform for lecture videos to a source for homework, quiz, and lesson ideas for professors in search of new ways to teach old subjects, its users say.

Since its launch in 2007, universities and colleges of all sizes have uploaded audio and video content to iTunes U, which now boasts more than 200,000 educational files. Students at some schools use iTunes daily to watch and review faculty lectures, but professors say the site also has become a critical source for lesson planning.

"It's a perfect way to look for and find ideas [for lectures]," said Janet Hinz, an adjunct professor at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, where she teaches writing and communications courses. "There's a lot to search from, and a lot of it helps."

Perusing through iTunes U lectures, Hinz said, helped her formulate a new homework assignment for a lesson on the history of radio this year. With a little prompting from video lectures, Hinz created an assignment that had students listen to a radio program for 30 minutes and document how the station promoted itself and attracted listeners, how many commercials were broadcast, and what those commercials were advertising.

"You can see how others are teaching the topic" without copying exact lesson plans posted to iTunes, she said. "It can be a fantastic tool."

While iTunes U has become a cache for professors looking for fresh lecture and homework ideas, experts have seen another way universities have used the site in the past year: as an advertisement for what kind of research is being conducted.

"[University officials] are not so much interested in connecting with a student, but a wider community to let people know what's going on at a university," said Tim Lorang, an executive partner for Seattle-based Image Media Partners, a company that consults digital developers.

Lorang, who worked as a production manager at the University of Washington's UWTV for 24 years, said posting online content tout-ing the latest in campus research—especially for projects that use hundreds of thousands or millions in taxpayer money—has become a common practice for major research universities.

"It gives educators and academics an opportunity to share their knowledge outside of the academy," Lorang said. "Especially those academics and researchers whose work depends upon public and government grants owe this information to the general public. It is an opportunity to share with their funders."

Colleges have begun using iTunes U as an advertising platform largely because officials were finding that lecture videos weren't getting the tens or hundreds of thousands of hits a YouTube video might receive, Lorang said. And even when users clicked on lecture videos, they only watched for a few minutes before scrolling to the next audio or video file.

"It takes dedication to watch an hour-long lecture online," he said, adding that despite growing faculty use of iTunes U, some educators hesitate to recommend video and audio files because vetting can be a timely process.

"Most teachers do not have the time to search, watch, and evaluate the video content on their own, so they do not recommend videos to their students," Lorang said

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—Janet Hinz, an adjunct professor at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee



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