

Narelle Bedford

Reinvigorating Lectures with the Experience of Legal Professionals

Engaging students in a lecture environment is always a challenge. During Semester 152 Narelle Bedford presented a video series during lectures, featuring the Honourable Michel Bastarache, to students studying Canadian Administrative Law.

Michel Bastarache is a former Canadian Supreme Court judge who presided over one of the most seminal cases in Canadian law.

Tell us what happened?

Narelle: I realised that Bastarache was closely involved in one of the cases my students would be studying this year.

Through a partner of a law firm I was able to contact him and he agreed to record an interview that explained the Supreme Court's decisions regarding the case.

With some help from the Office of Learning and Teaching I was able to present the video in an engaging manner to my students during lectures.

What technologies were involved?

The video was recorded as a High definition 60fps video file in Canada and arrived via a USB drive. The original 40 minute video was edited and chunked into 4 parts using Adobe Premiere and exported as files that could be played during lectures. In the future the videos will be hosted securely so that Bond students can access them online.

What did you hope to achieve by developing this video for your students?

The video brings the subject to life, because it provides a direct window into Bastarache's thought process from his point of view.

It makes the case more real for the students, and provides direct input from the legal profession involved in the case I was teaching.

Why did you choose this particular approach?

The interview video style is practical and engaging for students. My main aim was to increase student engagement in the case and make it more tangible and relevant. I was hoping that providing a video which featured Bastarache would contextualise and engage students in the case, and motivate students to read the Supreme Court's decision in full.

What were some of the benefits of this approach?

The videos revitalised the lecture format for me. Students loved the videos and looked forward to each episode.

What seemed to work well?

Breaking/chunking the video in a series of episodes worked really well.

What challenges did you face?

Due to the large and high quality of the video I had difficulty playing it on my laptop computer. Editing the file was a challenge and I did have to ask for support with that task.

Playback of the final video in a lecture theatre required the use of VLC media player and I had to check that speakers and audio were working. Hosting the videos online is a challenge I'm still looking into as there are several different options each with their own drawbacks.

What obstacles did you encounter and how did you handle them?

Students still need to read about the cases in detail. Towards the end of semester it became clear that a few students were relying on Bastarache's video alone for their understanding of the case and some were even quoting the video interview in their responses to assessment, instead of the referring to the Supreme Court's decision.

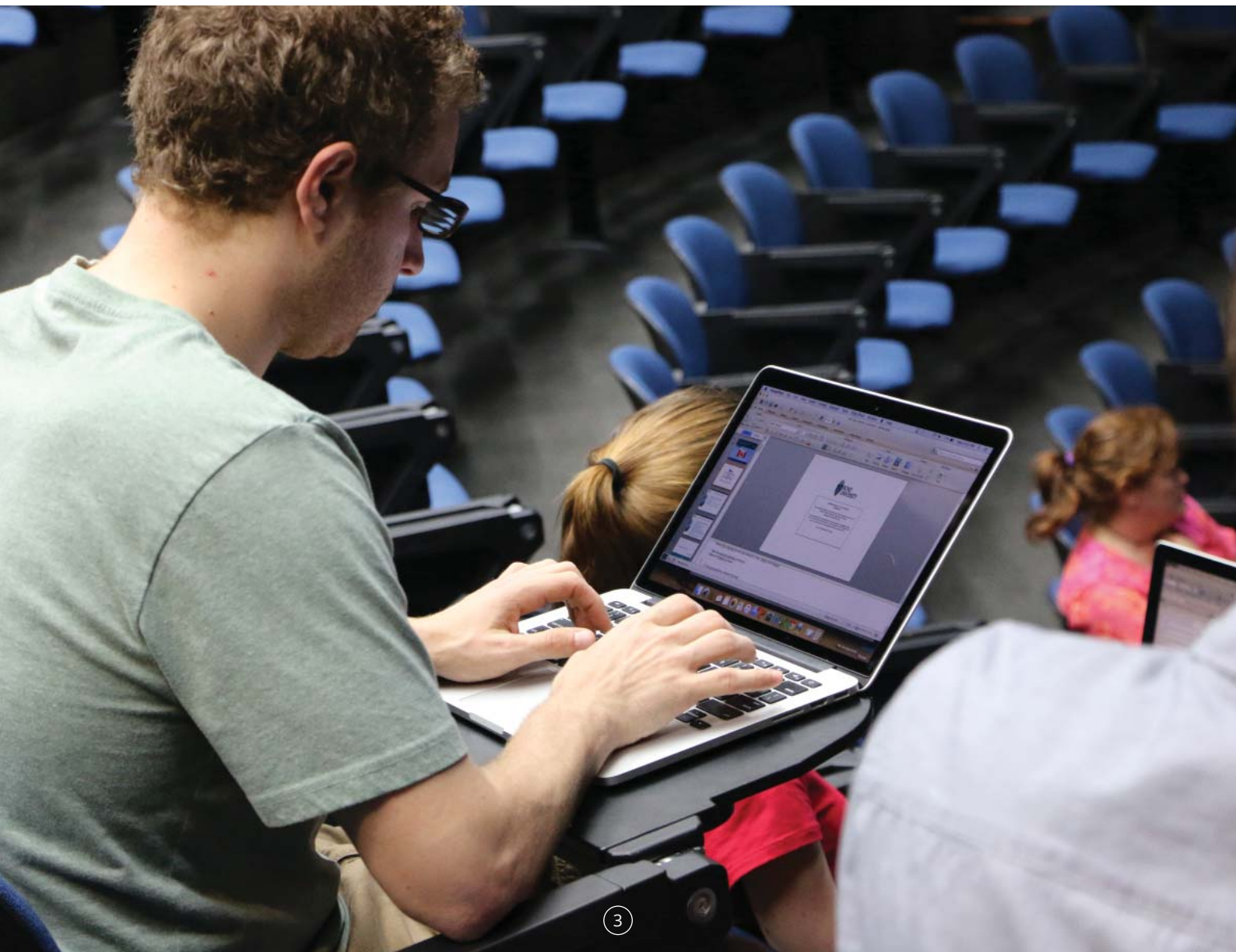
In the future I will need to establish a clearer set of guidelines regarding the use of the videos.

What feedback have you received from students or your peers?

Students loved the video series. There is a buzz in the class and next year's students are already excited as they have heard all about it. Some of the comments from students were very positive: "I appreciated the effort that went into obtaining these comments from the author of the judicial decision himself."

The videos provided an invaluable supplementary perspective" and "I found the videos showed a more humanised and personal look at the work of the court, illustrating that its decisions and the their effects are carefully considered beforehand".

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A video interview with the honorable Michel Bastarache, played during a Canadian Law lecture

What did you learn from this experience?

The importance for asking for help! Without the co-operation of Michel Bastarache, the partner and the Office of Learning and Teaching this video would not have been possible. And make sure you always backup your files.

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Do you have any future plans for the use of videos?

I have already arranged a video interview for another guest speaker: Geoff Plant Q.C. who was an Attorney General of British Columbia and responsible for the introduction of a key piece of legislation.

What advice would you give someone wanting to try something similar?

Do it absolutely. Make sure you allow time to organise everything and get the support and help you need.

Any final thoughts or comments?

I would highly recommend others contacting the experts in their field and creating video interviews. It really does bring the professional real world experience into the classroom. The response from my students has been overwhelmingly positive. ■

Narelle teaches Administrative Law and Canadian Administrative Law at Bond University.

Prior to teaching she was employed by the Australian Attorney-General's Department in the Administrative Law Branch and in the secretariat of the Administrative Law Review Council.

Narelle was also an Executive Officer for the Migration and Refugee Review Tribunals and an Australian Diplomat.

Narelle is currently enrolled in a PhD at the University of New South Wales and her thesis topic is centred on State level mixed jurisdiction tribunals.