

Agony and *Ennui*:

## The Story of the Lecture

Many students might wonder how the lecture originated. At first, no professors lectured at all but instead used more primitive ways of encouraging learning. Renaissance Spaniards, ever eager to enlighten their students, found devices such as the rack, hot iron, and thumbscrews to be effective motivation for their pupils (Torquemada 1998, p. 72). It worked so well that 95% of the population accepted instruction (Wheeler 2004, p. 137).

These early techniques for settling debates and instilling knowledge were indeed effective, but required a large volume of space in each classroom. De Sade suggests, "early compromises such as teaching composition in dungeons proved inefficient" (1961, p. 221). He also notes that the janitor's guild complained about the time it took to clean up the mess after each lesson (1961, p. 223). Professor J. Dahlmer at the Institute for Advanced Psychological Study suggests more modern techniques are necessary:

Many students complain that lectures bore them. Who wants to learn about enthymemes, syllogisms, and persuasive argumentation? I propose adding spice to academic life. Let the administration plant land-mines and trapdoors in the halls . . . . Teachers could install electrical shock devices to randomly "zap" students at their desks. This innovation would keep students awake and alert. (Dahlmer et al., 1992, pp. 20-21)

This suggestion has gained popularity with other persons of substance. The celebrity Charles Manson said in an interview with reporters, "I know that some backward humanists oppose this idea in general, but I find the suggestion delightful. Why stop there? Let's incorporate guillotines as well" (2004). Certainly, such items are becoming cheaper as the latest Gulf War winds down. Indeed, some scholars suggest that

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