PechaKucha (PK) is a presentation method that has been around for a little over a decade, and it has been making steady inroads into classrooms from the K–12 to graduate levels, and across the curriculum. The concept and design are simple. But PK can be modified and structured in various ways to encourage particular outcomes. Because visual and graphic creativity are prominent components of the PK method, it can be an effective learning and teaching tool for almost any topic, especially so for Asian studies. The process of selecting and incorporating visual images and cues in the presentation augments the delivery and understanding of culturally and linguistically unfamiliar concepts that are always a part of any course on Asia. For example, concepts such as guangxi in Chinese society or nemawashi in Japan have complex meanings that do not map entirely onto Western translations such as “connections” or “groundwork.” Visual aids selected by students can be a valuable starting point for both checking their “gut-level” understanding, as well as provoking discussion about their definitions, roles, and effects.

PK encourages students to grab images from the web to incorporate into their presentations and to consider how these images convey their information in meaningful and relevant ways. In addition, PK can help eliminate the worst elements and tendencies of student presentations, such as poor organization, preparation, and lengthiness. It is useful both for streamlining and adding necessary structure to class presentations. The PK structure also makes it easier to construct fair and meaningful grading rubrics, which can be much more difficult with unstructured presentations. Finally, the preparation of PK presentations can be very useful for helping students organize research papers. This teaching article covers the basics of PK and offers suggestions for how to incorporate it into the classroom.

PK Origins

PechaKucha 20x20, its official title, is a presentation method developed in 2003 by two Tokyo architects, Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham, according to its website (www.pecha-kucha.org). “Pecha-kucha” is onomatopoeic Japanese meaning “chit-chat.” The method was developed as a way for designers to network and present their ideas to each other, but it soon took off as a socializing event. In Tokyo and now in many metropolitan areas, PK events are widely advertised, with clubs, theaters, universities, and private homes serving as venues that host PK “salons” or parties with various themes.

PK Format and Settings

Strictly speaking, the PK 20x20 format is quite straightforward: Presenters must prepare an electronic slideshow consisting of twenty slides that each appear for twenty seconds, for a total time of six minutes, forty seconds. The art (and the work) lies in communicating one’s ideas within this strict format, which imposes discipline in terms of the amount of material presented, as well as encourages clarity and organization.

In order to stay within the PK parameters, presenters should set their slideshows to automatically transition slides every twenty seconds. Because Microsoft PowerPoint and Apple Keynote are the two most commonly used slideshow programs, I will give the settings for them. On PowerPoint 2008 or 2011 for Mac OS X, go to the dropdown “Slideshow” menu and select “Transitions.” This will bring up a bar at the top of the slideshow and an “Options” button in the upper left-hand corner. Press the button, and under the “Advance Slide” category, choose “Automatically after _ seconds.” Enter twenty seconds. In the Windows version, go to the “Slideshow” menu and look for “Slide Transition.” Choose the “Automatically” option there, and enter twenty seconds. For Keynote, choose “Slide Inspector” within
**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

More on PechaKucha 20x20 can be found at their official site: http://www.pecha-kucha.org/.

There are many examples on YouTube if you do a search for “PechaKucha.” This one is a good training video: Pecha Kucha Training Bite, http://tinyurl.com/5w3v28.


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