Teaching the Whedonverses: James Zborowski and Matthew Pateman

What is the place and purpose, within a film/television/media studies curriculum, of the study of Whedon's work, and how should we teach it? This roundtable is designed for teachers in higher education who teach the works of Joss Whedon as part of their curriculum.

Thanks to the nature of humanities research in general, and the work of the Whedon Studies Association in particular, it is possible for research into Whedon's work to be pluralist, and to spread out to fill a range of small niches. However, when one takes responsibility for designing a unit of work that uses Whedon's work to form part of the education of young undergraduates, one is forced to exclude most of Whedon's canon and most of the work written about him. In short, one is forced to make choices. On what grounds are these choices made?

This roundtable is intended as a forum in which those who teach Whedon can share ideas and perspectives, with the hope that we will all be encouraged to continue to reflect upon the methods and choices that inform our Whedon pedagogy.

Two sets of questions are proposed:

FIRST SET OF QUESTIONS—Curriculum design and delivery: Pragmatic questions (nuts and bolts)
1. What texts from Whedon's output have roundtable members chosen to focus on in past teaching? How effective has this been?
2. What are the ingredients of a typical week's teaching? (A screening? A lecture? A seminar? Required reading?)
3. What topics are explored?
4. How is students' learning assessed?

SECOND SET OF QUESTIONS—Curriculum rationale: Metadisciplinary justification (philosophy)
1. What is the relationship between text and context in your teaching? (e.g. Are Whedon's texts used as a way of exploring theoretical issues of representation and identity politics? Are theoretical approaches used as hermeneutic keys to deepen appreciation of the core texts?)
2. What 'ways of seeing' are you trying to cultivate in your teaching?
3. If someone were to ask you whether the things you are trying to get at could not be gotten at equally well, or better, using texts other than Whedon's, what would your response be?