New Tools and Old Ideas:

Applying Education Theory to Construct context and meaning with

Geocaching, Wikis, Blogs, Collaboration and the Cloud

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Abstract

Web 2.0 and 3.0 technology tools have had and increasing impact on global society. Sites
and tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Google and Amazon are part and parcel of
common parlance and productivity and influence all aspects of culture, business and
education. But the increasingly rapid changes of technologies often make it difficult to
fully inetegrate content with technology in meaningful, substantial and relevant ways in
education. One of the primary reasons for this is the increased rapidity of echnology
developmemt (Moore's Law), which make it very difficult for educators to learn and
integrate technology into educational environments. Technology is often assigned or used
for learning in a random ways, with no context to the actual content. This is especially
true with using geo-caching, an engaging technology is used to create scavenger hunts
on a global scale. Revisiting several classic learning theories provide both inspiration
and practial solutions to how technology can provide content for the context for learning
with an approach that is appropriate and aunthentic. To paraphrase Marshall MacLuhan,
this connection allows for the medium to be the message in a truly authentic voice.

In the Spring of 2010, a professor at Loyola Marymount University (LMU), a private Jesuit university and professor at California State University at Northridge (CSUN), a public institution partnered together teach an innovative, collaborative and multi-modal and two semester course called "The Holocaust in Poland". Although eparated by a distance of about 25 miles, students met weekly in their separate schools, connected via a web-bridge for lectures,, films, guest speakers, class discussions and collaborative assignments. The instructors also extensibvely used Blackboard LMS as well as blogs to distribute shared texts abd to facilitate personal refections and dialogues between the students and themselves.

During the second semester, students travel to Poland for two weeks to vistit the loacvtions discussed in class as well as to meet and speak with Polish students as well as Jewish and non-Jewish survivors of the atrocities of World War II.

Background

LMU and CSUN students are both Jewish and non-Jewish and come from a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse, true cross-cultural demographic. The course is taught by Jewish Studies/English faculty who bring diverse and interdisciplinary perspectives to the material. Using a web-based video bridge, students and teachers at the two campuses meet weekly for lectures, discussions and to view media. Blackboard and a Facebook group are also employed as digital destinations that allow students to reflect, blog and post assignments. Students are also given the opportunity to meet with survivors on a regular basis to interview and learn from.

Although this is a one-semester course, an additional section will be offered in the summer providing students will the opportunity to travel to Poland for two weeks to meet with Polish students and educators for classes and visits to the locations studied in class. During this visit, students will be assigned to groups and will be given media kids that contain a digital still camera and HD-DV camera with eye-fii cards that will upload images and videos directly to the web. Students will be encourages to record and reflect their experiences as blogs, vlogs and podcasts to, dedicated ning and twitter sites. .

The goal of using this mixed environment is create a broad community of learners to explore the Holocaust actively interviewing surviving witnesses to create rich media compositions on the history and literature studied. The result of this blended course is a set of diverse learning goals that include:

- Students to acquire a greater understanding of the holocaust and it's human legacies
- Learning to use a variety of digital tools to create rich media
- Promote digital collaboration using a selection of web-based learning and communications tools to create online communities and social-networks

I propose to give a paper that will review:

- The initial proposal for the course
- Instructor preparation of curriculum
- Identifying and integrating technologies used in the course (web-based video, hardware, software and social networking sites, etc)
- Classroom choreography of instructor and students
- Assessment of success of the learning goals
- Application of process to other subjects and topics
- Analysis of course in terms of specific learning theories and theorists such as S. Papert's community of learners, R. Schenk's narrative as intelligence, as well as ideas of community and meaning of Bruner, Vygotsky and Dewey.