

Faculty Showcase '05: Partners in Learning

Sponsored by Academic Technology at Simmons College



Learning Communities - Blogs



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Goals

- Approach content from two diverse perspectives:
 - empirical scientific inquiry;
 - critical aesthetic analysis;
- Support time on task with ubiquitous community involvement;
- Encourage active and engaged learning;
- Provide mechanism for (trans)formative assessment; and
- Increase professor synergy and time on task for faculty.

Overview

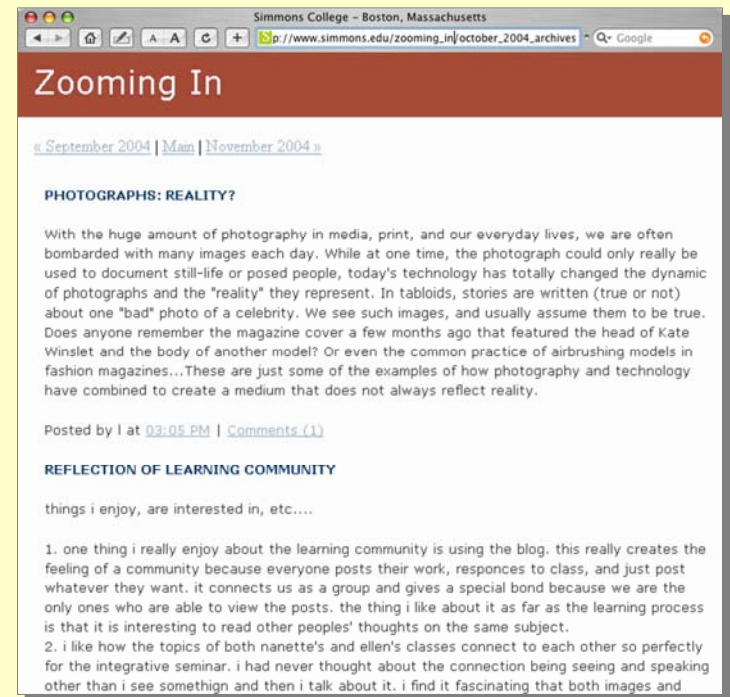
As part of the CAS Learning Communities initiative, the Visual Communications and Computational Linguistics classes each met separately once a week and then combined for a weekly, integrative seminar.

Ellen Grabiner and Nanette Veilleux needed a way to foster involvement and extend learning and engagement beyond the classroom. In addition to building a community of students, they were looking for some way to foster intentionally reflective thinking and writing.

For Grabiner and Veilleux, creating a 'blog' (online journal) was the answer. A single blog was created and all fifteen students were provided with authoring privileges.

Students were required to post three writing assignments per week ranging from traditional essays to a semiotic discussion of a movie and the analysis of a local dialect. They were also expected to comment on each other's work. Grabiner and Veilleux hoped the blog would provide an opportunity for students to make connections and extend their learning beyond the classroom. Results far exceeded their hopes.

Participation levels surpassed the minimum requirements. In addition to required postings, students used it as a vehicle to approach writing as a process and as a method that facilitates thinking. Furthermore, students actively read and responded to each other's postings – offering diverse perspectives and feedback.



Application Beyond Honors MCC

The potential for community building and extending learning and engagement outside of the classroom can be applied across the curriculum.