

Using discussion forums effectively in Hybrid courses

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Asynchronous Discussion Forums

- Most common online activity in hybrid courses
- Stable technology that is easy to use
- Permanent threaded record of submissions and interaction
- Removes or reduces problems with group work
- Reduces many social and cultural factors that inhibit face-to-face discussion

Hybrid Course Assignment

Anthropology of Religion

- Senior-level course
- 20-25 students
- 1/3 Online
- 2/3 face-to-face

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Address <http://d2l.uwm.edu/d2l/orgTools/ouHome/ouHome.asp?ou=33520> Go Links

My Home || Course Home || My Page || Email || Classlist Welcome, Alan || Monday November 8, 2004

Cross-Cultural Study of Religion (FA 04)

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Role Switch

To simulate the view of another Role, select a Role from the list.

--- My Default Role ---

Bookmark

No bookmark added.

Search Announcements Change Order Add

Links to the digitized videos Edit

Here are the links to the digitized video files mentioned in the announcement just below this one.

These files are Windows Media Files. When you click on them, you will most likely get an error message, but then the Windows Media Player will actually play them anyway! You could probably view these files at home if you have broadband access through RoadRunner or SBC.

[In Whose Honor: Indian Mascots](#) (Windows Media File)

[White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men](#) (Windows Media File)

These files below are Flash files, identical versions of the digitized videos in Windows Media format above. You would almost certainly have to view these files from a campus computer lab, since they are *huge* and would take a very long time to download at home, even with broadband access!

[In Whose Honor: American Indian Mascots](#) (Flash File)

[White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men](#) (Flash File)

Class activities for the next couple of weeks Edit

Ok, folks, here's the plan for the next couple of weeks:

On Tuesday, 2 November, you will see two videos in our regular classroom. I won't be there, but I've asked a colleague to show the videos. You will take notes during these videos and *keep* them (i.e., do not hand them in or throw them away afterwards), because you will need them for your online assignment. They will also count 2 points toward your exit assignment credit when you do hand them in later on.

On Thursday, 4 November, you will be in online mode, and we will not meet in our face-to-face classroom. Your online assignment will be given you at our Tuesday class meeting.

By midnight on Saturday, 6 November, you will have your initial posting due for this online assignment.

By midnight on Tuesday, 9 November, you will have your response posting (plus any extra credit postings) due for this online assignment.

Our next face-to-face meeting will be on Thursday, 11 November, when we will have our

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Microsoft Internet Explorer window titled "Milwaukee - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://d2l.uwm.edu/d2l/orgTools/ouHome/ouHome.asp?ou=33520". The page title is "Cross-Cultural Study of Religion (FA 04)". The navigation bar includes "My Home", "Course Home", "My Page", "Email", "Classlist", "Welcome, Alan", and "Monday November 8, 2004". The main content area is titled "Third Major Online Assignment (4 November – 11 November)".

Please review your notes on *In Whose Honor* and on *White Shamans and Medicine Men*, the two videos you saw on Tuesday, 2 November. Remember that there are links to the videos so that you can view them again from the Content area of our course site! And make sure that you read Pike, Chapter 4 carefully. [Technical note: you may have to view the videos in a campus computer lab – and don't forget to bring headphones – or from a computer with high-speed access, such as the dorms, a cable modem like RoadRunner, or a DSL like SBC.]

Unlike other religions, where people typically believe in an established set of doctrines, neoPagans tend to *assemble* their own religious ideas and practices as they go along, borrowing heavily from other religions and cultural traditions. In this way, neoPagans are doing what millions of people in the modern world do: they seek a religion that grounds their identities in deeply authentic experience directly linked with what Geertz has called the "really real," the Truth about Everything.

1. Give some examples drawn from the videos you've seen *and* from Pike's Chapter 4 of the case against this neoPagan practice, sometimes referred to as "cultural strip-mining." How did the videos, especially, make their case persuasive?
2. Give some examples drawn from the videos you've seen *and* from Pike's Chapter 4 of those who justify this neoPagan practice. How do the proponents of New Age or neoPagan ideas make their case persuasive?
3. Which position do you find the more persuasive? Why?

First, please post 300-350 words answering these question to the discussion forum on our course Web site no later than midnight, Saturday 6 November. Your response should refer both to theoretical and ethnographic issues that are relevant and persuasive. Remember that a key purpose of this online assignment is to bring together what we are doing in class (in this case, the videos) with the ethnography that you are reading outside of class (Pike's work on neoPaganism), so your online posting should refer clearly to both. **[This part of your assignment is worth 4 points.]**

Second, please respond to at least one posting other than your own no later than midnight on Tuesday, 9 November. You should respond to one posting with which you do not fully agree. Explain the scope and basis of your disagreement, and give one or more examples to support your position. Your purpose is not only to criticize, but also to *add* something to the online conversation. You should write approximately 150-200 words. **[This part of your assignment is worth 3 points.]**

Third, come to class on Thursday 11 November prepared to discuss your own posting as described in #3 above, all responses to your own posting, and your own posted response as described in #4 above. **[This part of your assignment is worth 1 points.]**

Finally, you may get **EXTRA CREDIT** on this assignment by engaging in more than the absolutely required number of responses, to enrich the online class conversation. You may respond

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☐	Subject	Authored By	Date
☐	▶ Here's one more question (not from Arizona)	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 9:29 PM
☐	▶ Cultural Strip mining	Rebecca Weber-Treul	Nov 7, 2004 9:15 PM
☐	▶ Re: Cultural Strip mining	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 9:35 PM
☐	▶ who owns beliefs	Ryan Kacala	Nov 7, 2004 11:42 AM
☐	▶ Re: who owns beliefs	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 9:24 PM
☐	▶ undermining other peoples culture and religion	Adam Abdi	Nov 7, 2004 12:20 AM
☐	▶ Re: undermining other peoples culture and religion	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 5:25 PM
☐	▶ From Religious Diversity to Cultural Homogeneity	Julian Chang	Nov 7, 2004 12:19 AM
☐	▶ Re: From Religious Diversity to Cultural Homogeneity	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 4:47 PM
☐	▶ Mascots	Collisa Love	Nov 6, 2004 11:44 PM
☐	▶ Re: Mascots	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 2:24 PM
☐	▶ Two Sides To Every Tradition	Erin Schroeder	Nov 6, 2004 11:34 PM
☐	▶ Re: Two Sides To Every Tradition	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 2:13 PM
☐	▶ <No Topic>	Homa Azargoshasb	Nov 6, 2004 11:30 PM
☐	▶ Re:	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 9:21 AM
☐	▶ Re:	Joy Steinhauer	Nov 7, 2004 12:33 PM
☐	▶ Re:	Alan Aycock	Nov 8, 2004 5:40 AM
☐	▶ <No Topic>	Courtney Young	Nov 6, 2004 11:07 PM
☐	▶ Re:	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 9:35 AM
☐	▶ Borrowing or Stealing?	Joy Steinhauer	Nov 6, 2004 10:32 PM
☐	▶ Re: Borrowing or Stealing?	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 6:47 AM
☐	▶ NeoPgans using colonialism???	Randall Chiappetti	Nov 6, 2004 9:52 PM
☐	▶ Re: NeoPgans using colonialism???	Alan Aycock	Nov 7, 2004 12:00 PM
☐	▶ Iron-Eyes Cody: cultural strip-mining?	Alan Aycock	Nov 6, 2004 9:50 PM
☐	▶ Lack of Authenticity	Reanna Shellman	Nov 6, 2004 7:00 PM
☐	▶ Re: Lack of Authenticity	Alan Aycock	Nov 6, 2004 7:52 PM
☐	▶ cultural strip mining	Jenna Valoe	Nov 6, 2004 4:37 PM

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1 - Paradoxes of the "Really Real" - Matthew Tobiasz (Nov 4, 2004 1:17 PM)

Observing the battles that take place between these various groups, particularly the New-Agers and the Neopagans, reminds me of listening to white rappers fight for legitimacy according to how ruff their background is or where they were raised. Can they really respect what rapping is and do it correctly, or are they invariably just posers? In the end perhaps rapping is about something more complex than proximity to an African American upbringing, but I wouldn't know, would I? Rappers of the same race have been fighting and ridiculing one another since the beginning. So too Indian tribes were fighting one another and appropriating each other's customs long before the white man arrived, but these are far from grounds on which to justify intervention or appropriation. As someone who once self prescribed myself a nickname I understand that the process of change on a self-redefining level can easily be misunderstood from the outside. Still, the tension that arises from this should humble one to know that A: You can't expect everyone to start calling you by your new name, (perhaps you shouldn't even make this request to begin with) and B: The prevailing or failing logic of your spiritual/intellectual battle with those who disagree might well determine for you how rightfully serious or ridiculously silly your name change really is. What may not change is that in the end, only you will know (or think you know) if your rhymes are really real, and your prayers sincere.

Pike describes Neopagans in such a way that their healing seems more like a stubborn resistance to Christian/modern life in temporal spaces that allow it than a true spiritual/intellectual negation of what they label a falsity(Christianity). They require a model but in choosing that model they reach out with historically tainted fingers, inevitably viewing nature with postcolonial eyes. This "post" does not mean 'after' and therefore 'separate' from colonialism but rather implies an historically established paradigm that describes their idealized views of nature. These views are deeply imbedded with preconceptions of nature as a sacred place. The ideas of nature as "Sacred" and all the ideas that come with it are imposed upon nature. This is logically in line with Neopagan's habitual dichotomization of their lives in the woods vs. their lives in the city, and also seems to indicate that this very possibly is "the last reflex of European colonialism"(Pike, 125).

"In Whose Honor" stars Charlene as the defender of Native American Pride. Although the effect of music and slow motion increase her status as a heroine, I believe her case is still justified. Her own blood testifies to her beliefs, and when her children are taught Native American ways it becomes contradictory for them to see some white kid dancing around with sacred costume performing a ridiculous dance. Officials at the school justify this practice, saying they are actually paying respect to the tribe, but the costume doesn't match; it's from a different tribe than they propose. Charlene sees it as "We hold it, we own you" (video) when a student holds up the head dress proclaiming school pride. Why not take an all African American or all Indian school and create a white mascot who represents all that they believe the white race to be? The issue of New Age religious groups and Neopagans appropriating Native beliefs seems a little more difficult to choose sides on. In the first case, either it's a desecration or it's not. In the second it appears as if we have to determine such subtle things as whether or not the appropriators have true appreciation and respect.(see 'white rappers'). Or maybe it's a matter of how the appropriators can explain away the paradox they create. After all, Native Americans describe their religious views as being collective throughout history in their reception and practice of them. Neopagans self position themselves to practice borrowed "Truth". This means at the root these beliefs are acquired by individual means and mixed with other disembodied spiritual pieces of belief. (Is is relevant at any time during this debate to ask whether the Merry Pranksters could reach Nirvana by taking acid?!) Either the achieving of equal spiritual grounds with the Indians(collective) by the whites(individual) must present a contradiction, or it creates a paradox, in which case there is more here that needs to be explained. A tool is a tool is a tool, but a 486 PC is far from equivalent to my soul (Pike, 140).

1.1 - Re: Paradoxes of the "Really Real" - Alan Aycock (Nov 5, 2004 6:09 AM)

As Philip Jenkins pointed out in his recently published book on New Agers and Native American culture, Dreamcatchers, in some ways it's possible to argue that no one necessarily "owns" spirituality, or even particular expressions of it. After all, Native American religions have changed in historical times, and even borrowed from Anglo culture. What is certainly problematic is a claim to be fairly representing what Indians "do," since even the drumming may fail to follow traditional patterns, let alone naming or the use of key symbols such as sweetgrass.

The argument from "blood" is also ambiguous, I think, since actual genealogical descent is often mixed for whites, blacks, AND Indians. Affiliation with a specific Indian nation does have legal standing, but it also has a moral implication of sharing someone's life world and life chances (same for whites who wannabe black). If whites don't want to do the latter, perhaps they shouldn't claim religious identities that go along with living like an Indian.

But a final complication: the commodification of Indian religion -- gear, weekend seminars, books, movies -- has actually benefitted at least some Indians, and increased tourism greatly. What should we think about that?

regards, Alan Aycock

Matthew Tobiasz wrote:

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Hybrid Assignment Design

“Closing the loop”

- Rehearsal
- Reflection
- Sharing
- Responding
- Debriefing

Pedagogical Advantages

- ☞ Students *must* participate
- ☞ Students address one another directly
- ☞ Threads allow complex issues to be systematically discussed and reviewed
- ☞ Time for students to reflect
- ☞ Stimulates in-class discussion

Hybrid Courses & Community

Asynchronous discussion forums

- Lessons learned
 - Frame the discussion
 - Identify the instructor's voice
 - Keep the conversation going
 - Assess learning outcomes *and* learning process
 - Integrate with face-to-face component

Online resources on managing virtual discussions

-  Online discussions (Dartmouth)
 - <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~webteach/articles/discussion.html>

-  Moderating and Facilitating Online Discussions (Sonoma State)
 - http://www.sonoma.edu/users/n/nolan/501/powerpoint/moderating_facilitating/

-  Tips & Strategies for Facilitating Online Discussions
 - <http://members.shaw.ca/mdde615/howcommunicate.htm>

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