AT&T FACULTY-STAFF AWARDS IN INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY
2011-2012 Faculty-Staff Competition

Course Identifier: ANP 464
Course Name: Archaeology Field School
Department: Anthropology        College: Social Science

Primary contact name, phone number, and email (normally this will be the lead instructor)
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Faculty and Staff Involved in Developing and Offering the Course please list full name, position at MSU, email address, and project role for each person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>MSU Affiliation</th>
<th>PROJECT ROLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lynne Goldstein</td>
<td>Faculty, Anthropology</td>
<td>Co-Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Brock</td>
<td>Graduate Student, Anthropology</td>
<td>Co-Director</td>
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Which Competition Are You Entering (select one):
___ FULLY ONLINE COURSE (no required face to face component)
X  BLENDED/HYBRID COURSE (some face to face learning is replaced by online learning)
___ TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING INNOVATION (one specific technology innovation in a face-to-face or online course)

Semester(s) offered in 2011-2012 and number of students enrolled:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMESTER</th>
<th># STUDENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer Semester 2011</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Semester 2010</td>
<td>14</td>
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Campus Archaeology
Course Description

Anthropology 464 is offered annually as a summer Archaeological Field School, where students are instructed in archaeological field methods. Such courses are offered throughout the world, and regularly serve as the first archaeological experience for professional archaeologists. Field schools provide basic, hands-on instruction in archaeological field, survey, and lab methods, in addition to instruction and experience in public archaeology. Field schools are experiential: students work for at least five weeks, for forty hours a week, on actual archaeological sites conducting research that will be used by researchers to learn about human culture in the past.

During the summers of 2010 and 2011, the Michigan State University Campus Archaeology Program (CAP) held two summer field schools on the West Circle portion of Michigan State's campus. CAP has served as MSU's primary source for mitigating cultural resources that may be in the way of MSU expansion and construction projects, but also as a leader in researching the material remains of higher education, educating undergraduate and graduate students, and the use of digital social media to communicate discoveries, archaeological methods, and the importance of archaeology to the public.

Student assessment was largely determined through participation, effort, and quality of understanding. The former were determined through instructor observation, while quality of understanding was determined through student notebooks, interaction with the public, and posts written on the excavation blog.

Because of CAP’s use of digital social media for public engagement, and the hands-on nature of the course, co-directors Lynne Goldstein and Terry Brock developed a blog for the field school that would serve as a tool for engaging the broad community who were interested in the results of the excavations. Students were expected to contribute posts to the blog discussing their experiences: what they were learning, how they learned it, a snippet on an artifact they found, or a method they were learning. Such a project was unique for field schools: most field schools that use blogs only include contributions from the director or perhaps graduate student supervisors. By
having our posts student-generated, we were able to give this tool an additional
dimension as one for teaching our students, not just our public, while also beginning to
teach future generations of archaeologists about the benefits and importance of digital
public engagement.

**Learning and Interaction Goals of the Course**

The purpose of any archaeological field school is to provide students with the skills
necessary to conduct archaeological excavations and research. This is done through
allowing them to participate in an actual archaeological site. Our use of digital media
and blogs, therefore, was couched within this framework: the blog was used as a
hands-on way of teaching archaeological methods, and it did so in a way that was
"real". Therefore, we had four goals that we hoped to achieve through the use of a blog
during the field school:

1. To teach students the importance of public archaeology and how it intersects with
digital social media.

   Archaeological field schools are increasingly encouraging the instruction of
students in community engagement techniques. Public Archaeology, as it is often called,
typically takes place through events where the public visits archaeological sites to
interact with the archaeologists and view the excavations in process. On the field
school, students learned about more traditional forms of engagement by acting as tour
guides for visitors. Each day, a different student was chosen to be the guide, and would
first give the directors a mock tour, receiving comments and coaching in how to provide
better tours.

   At CAP, we have been using digital social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and a
blog to replicate the experience of a site visit online. This allows us to engage a wider
public, making archaeology more accessible. We believe that this is the future of Public
Archaeology, and because of that, have incorporated training in digital public
archaeology into the field school. The blog is integral in providing a hands-on, real world
opportunity for students to learn through doing. Students were required to write two blog
posts over the five week field season. Each post was read and discussed with the field
director before it was posted. By making this blog open to the public, as opposed to closed like most classroom blogs, students are able to learn these skills in the same way that they learn the other components taught in the field school: by participating with an actual, live public.

2. To enhance student understanding of concepts practiced in the field through teaching and explaining them to others.

Students were encouraged to develop their own topic ideas for their blog posts, with help from their instructors. These topics were supposed to be related to their experience at the field school, and ranged from talking about archaeological methods, artifacts they were finding, or other interesting elements of their experience that they were receiving from the field school. By writing about these topics for the public (not for their instructors), students were expected to "teach" the public about archaeology through their eyes.

The intention was to reinforce what the students were learning by teaching it to others. Allowing students to pick the topics ensured that they were writing about the elements of the field school that they enjoyed, and felt comfortable explaining. It also made writing more enjoyable for the students: instead of the posts being assignments written for the instructor, they became important and meaningful contributions to teaching the public about archaeology. This added responsibility made the exercise more meaningful for the students. Additionally, this type of reflection allowed students to think critically about what they were doing in the field. Reflecting and teaching others about their experience allowed them to think about why they were doing certain things, not just how.

A valuable side effect of this process was as an assessment tool for the instructors. We were able to determine, based on what they were writing about and how they wrote about it, whether or not students were understanding the concepts correctly. If not, we were able to correct them. This can be difficult to assess in the field: just because a student can perform an excavation technique appropriately doesn't mean that they know why they are doing it that way. This allowed us to assess student understanding in a more accurate way.
3. To improve students' ability to effectively communicate with the public about scientific and archaeological content.

   Communication with the public is the most important part of public archaeology, although it is rarely taught in any way besides speaking. The blog allowed students to work on writing in the public sphere: one-on-one work with the students on their blog posts by instructors was conducted in order to ensure that students were writing in ways that were accessible and clear.

4. To help students develop skills in digital literacy that they will be able to transfer to pursuits other than archaeology.

   A large lecture at the beginning of the field school was dedicated to teaching the students about the importance of digital literacy, and how to use the tools for blog writing. By the end of the lecture, students had created introductory posts on the blog. This served as not only a good tool for teaching students how to use the software, but also served as an "ice-breaker", and gave further insight for the instructors as to why the students had decided to take a field school.

   The hope of the lecture and the process of writing the blog was to impress upon the students that these skills were transferable, and could be used in fields other than archaeology. Whether or not this sunk in, exposing them to the technology, and the process of engaging with people online, will make this technology more familiar to them if encountered later on. At a minimum, the hope was to demonstrate the value of digital social media in more productive avenues than typically thought.

   These goals were part of a number of larger goals, and they are what makes the project an innovative use of technology in teaching, particularly within the field of archaeology and cultural heritage preservation. The first goal was to broaden the type of education that field schools provide about public archaeology and archaeological methods. The first three objectives listed speak to the importance of the digital world as a new frontier for engagement with communities. While increasing numbers of field schools are using blogs as a means to engage the public, the posts are typically written
by the field directors or supervisors: not by students. The innovative component of this project is that students are being taught how to use these technologies to interact with the public, and are given the opportunity to do it with an actual public. This makes the digital interaction with the public a pedagogical tool, not just an exercise in public engagement.

This approach not only educates students for a potential future in public archaeology, but also teaches them how to be better and more effective stewards of cultural heritage in a digital age. A primary objective of most field schools and archaeology courses is to give students the knowledge and the tools to make more informed decisions as citizens about the value of the past. By improving their digital literacy, this project also readies them for the new frontier of archaeological misinformation: the Internet. Separating the signal from the noise on the internet is daunting, but by educating more individuals about the tools available to them, and providing them with the proper education about the value of cultural heritage and our shared past, this project can help contribute to a better, more valuable online discourse. It was our hope that this project would instill this understanding in our students.

Points of Interest

The major component of this project was the use of a blog as a tool for teaching students about archaeology and public engagement, while also educating the public about archaeology and the site being excavated. Some of the posts written by students highlight the ways in which this innovative combination allowed the students to examine and reflect on their experience in ways that would have not traditionally been a part of the class.

In his post "The Problem with the Past" (http://bit.ly/ywn4as), one student attempts to identify a unique artifact that was found during excavations. Typically, this type of analysis would have waited until after the excavations, but he decided to use the artifact as one of his blog post entries. The post itself describes the amount of work he put into finding out what the artifact was, only to come up empty handed: "After downloading a program from a government website (harder than it sounds) and going through 438 different patents (twice), I return empty-handed. Two and a half weeks ago, I set out to
discover the true heritage of the knob which reads June 11, 1889 and am no closer than when I started" (Vaughn 2010). While he is visibly frustrated, he takes it as an opportunity to teach the public about the "fickleness of the past", and discovered that, for himself, this exercise "reignites his interest in the field" (Vaughn 2010). This post demonstrates the ability of this project to take the instruction of a field school into multiple levels of understanding and learning.

In their post "No Artifacts? No Problem" (http://bit.ly/xx5uby), a group of students discussed their distress with a unit in which they found very few artifacts. However, using archaeological concepts, they explained how their excavation unit was still valuable to understanding the past, by exploring stratigraphy and context. These are
One of the many comment threads showing the public interaction with posts written by students. In this instance, the commenters work at Michigan State University.
important concepts that do two things: first, demonstrate the students' understanding of archaeology as more than just "things" and second, explains this idea to the public.

Some posts dealt with the issue of how we draw conclusions in archaeology. One student examined how conclusions are drawn through creating hypotheses, gathering evidence, and connecting the dots: an advanced understanding of the social sciences that is even more difficult to explain to the public (http://bit.ly/AeYVjb).

Another post (http://bit.ly/AqOukN) highlights "imagination" as a critical tool: "we have to place ourselves in the past, see how the land was, see the people’s thoughts, and see the material they used. This is why imagination is just as important in an archeologist’s toolkit as a trowel. Our imagination helps us draw conclusions, helps decide our next steps, and help bridge the path between past and present" (Holt 2010). The understanding that archaeologists must use their imagination to place themselves in the past is a critical part of archaeological investigation, one that archaeologists often employ to critical understand the past. Although we typically don't use the word "imagination", the student used it as a way to make a complex concept accessible to himself and to the public.

One particular post covers an integral part of being on a field school. Entitled "Team Work" (http://bit.ly/z4Rz8x), this student stresses a component of the archaeological field school that is not explicitly discussed while in the field. This student was able to use the blog as a means of identifying a transferrable skill, that he will be able to use in any field or career. Without a reflective venue such as the blog, students would not have the opportunity to draw these connections. Similarly, we as instructors would not be able to comment, reflect, or build on their observations. This allows us the opportunity to make the class more effective for future students.

Some screenshots demonstrate the visual component of the blog. You can visit the blog in its entirety at http://campusarch.msu.edu/ANP464.

Evidence of Effectiveness with Students

The blog posts themselves, as articulated above, indicate the level of effectiveness of the project among the students. In many instances, these posts directly reflected our
objectives, particularly when demonstrating the connection between what they were learning in the field and why they were doing it. Additionally, after the 2010 field season, a survey was sent to students enquiring about their experience with the blogging project, inquiring about the four stated learning goals above.

On the importance of public archaeology and its intersections with digital social media, five of the nine respondents said blogging increased their understanding of public archaeology "significantly", while the rest said, "a lot". In their written responses, many of them drew connections between public archaeology and blog, suggesting that students understood both the value of public archaeology, in addition to the potential of the online space as a tool for engagement.

Regarding our objective to enhance student understanding of concepts practiced in the field through teaching and explaining them to others, five out of nine responded that the blog helped them "somewhat" in understanding field methods, one "a lot", and three "significantly". Those who identified it as being a positive articulated this in their short answers: "I think [blogging] was extremely important to making us get a full understanding of what we were doing. We took very detailed notes about what we saw, but not necessarily about what that meant. The blogs made us put on our thinking caps and come up with possible theories of what everything meant and how the puzzle could be put together." This type of answer reflects our hope that students would think about the why instead of the how in archaeological excavations.

Seven out of nine students stated that, after this project, they felt "Confident" communicating with the public about archaeology, and six out of nine said they were "Confident" writing about archaeology. Their comments articulated that blogging played a role in making this process easier: "writing the first blog was slightly difficult in the sense that I wasn't sure what sort of tone to use. But I can confidently say that I learned how to address the public in a way that they can understand what we were doing without belittling them by dumbing down the material."

The topic of improving digital literacy received mixed results. Students did not grasp the value of blogging outside of its use for public archaeology, meaning that the skills were not considered transferrable to the students.
In relationship to our larger goals, however, of increasing digital literacy to create better stewards of the past, these responses are still encouraging. When asked about how blogging increased their understanding of writing in the digital world, two said "somewhat", two said, "a lot", and five said, "Significantly". Additionally, their confidence levels in using the software and writing blog posts received "somewhat confident" and "confident" responses. When taken within the context of understanding blogging as a means for engaging the public about archaeology, and their confidence in communicating with the public about archaeology, this points to the creation of citizens able to discuss archaeological topics in an online forum.

**Plans for Sustainability**

The Campus Archaeology Program will continue the use of the blog through a variety of means:

First, the activity of blogging and using social media is built into the engagement program within CAP, meaning that blogs are used regularly (by student workers and project directors) during non-field school excavations to discuss and teach about archaeology. Doing so allows blogging to be a continuous part of the CAP philosophy, ensuring that it will continue as part of future field schools.

Second, CAP has already used the blog as a tool for instruction during two field schools, and will continue to use it in future field schools. The blog format and page are the same for each year, with past year's posts being available to view. This will aid future students in learning how to write blogs, or to find potential topics.

Third, CAP has actively pursued opportunities to engage the professional archaeology community about the use of the blog as a tool for teaching about digital public archaeology. Continuing to engage with other professional archaeologists at conferences, in journals, and through other venues will continue to broaden the application of this tool to other field schools throughout the world. Our hope is that archaeological field schools will begin to regularly incorporate this type of training in their archaeological field schools.