

# Student Perspectives on Writing in Asynchronous Learning Environments

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- Dan Driscoll,  
*English and Philosophy*
- Dustin Ingram,  
*Computer Science/  
Mathematics*
- Elizabeth Schol,  
*Psychology*
- Heather Schwartz,  
*Psychology*
- Gillian Skorka,  
*Teacher Education*
- Scott Warnock,  
*English and  
Philosophy*





# Asynchronous tools in online writing environments

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- Tools for students who don't all have to be in one "place" at the same time
  - Blogs
  - Wikis
  - Shared document spaces (Google Docs)
  - Email
  - Message boards—our focus



# Message boards

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- Internet discussion forums
- Students post on their own time
- *Threads*
  - Subject
  - Time of post
  - Poster

# Message boards and learning

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- Message boards can help teachers “clarify and extend the thinking” of students (Collison et al. 104-5)
- Social learning: Instead of “Cartesian premise of ‘*I think, therefore I am*’ ... ‘*We participate, therefore we are*’” (Seely Brown and Adler)
- Students can take risks through smaller assignments that serve as the foundation for formal projects



# Message board pedagogy

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- Instructor creates several open-ended prompts each week
- Students choose among these prompts
  - Posting deadlines: two or more “layers”
- Conversation is a primary goal
- Clear guidelines help tremendously: length, use of evidence, etc.

**Course Tools**

- Course Content
- Announcements
- Assessments
- Assignments
- Chat
- Discussions
- Web Links

(H) = Hidden

**Instructor Tools**

- Manage Course
- Assessment Manager
- Assignment Dropbox
- Grade Book
- Grading Forms
- Group Manager
- Tracking
- Selective Release

**Week 6**

- Logical fallacies (25 Messages)
- My favorite post (7 Messages)
- More on cloning and genetics (23 Messages)
- Digital divide? (19 Messages)
- Too many choices? (19 Messages)

**Week 5**

Don't forget that you are required to include material from the Discussions as sources for Project 2.

- Your tech use (33 Messages)
- Toulmin and Super Bowl ads (9 Messages)
- Chimeras and hybrids (29 Messages)
- Proof for the stem cell argument (9 Messages)
- Project 2 drafts (37 Messages)

# Thread starters: Keep it simple

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- Thoughts and conversations about readings

- *Hi everyone,  
Timpane makes the argument that we massively  
downplay the effects of depression on our society. He  
describes the results by using a slew of statistics.*

*Do you agree that mental health disorders are an out-of-  
bounds topic in many aspects of our culture? Why?  
Be good to yourselves,  
Prof. Warnock*

- *Folks,  
Simple question: What did you think of Kennedy's  
address?  
Let us know,  
Prof. Warnock*



# Example of a thread

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# Student panelists

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- Dustin Ingram,  
*Computer Science/  
Mathematics*
- Elizabeth Schol,  
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- Gillian Skorka,  
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# Potential of message boards: Thoughts from those in the know

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- How did you feel about conducting conversations in a written environment? What were the conversations like?
- Did the time to reflect and revise affect your contribution to the class dialogue? Were the opportunities for practice helpful?
- How did you feel about being in a “constant feedback loop” with your colleagues and the instructor?
- What was the quality of the class community?
- How would you compare conversations among online, hybrid, and onsite courses?



# And some challenges

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- Did you feel your colleagues read the posts? How could the class insure that students stay on top of the conversation?
- What was the workload like? What amount of time did you invest?
- How were you graded? Was this a good way to be assessed for this work?
- Were the rules of the message board clear?
- Did you have any technology issues? How could the Discussion application be better?



# Contacts

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