The Poetry Course

Susan Lee St John

Submitted to Dr. Bert Kimura
in partial fulfillment of
requirements for ETEC 622
Fall, 2012

Table of Contents
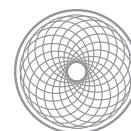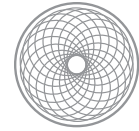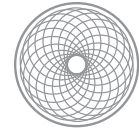
Introduction

My Locus of Control.

I am a co-coordinator of a statewide poetry project that is based at an Oahu, Hawaii Community College. The mission of the project is to promote poetry writing in all Hawaii elementary and secondary schools. We support teachers reading and writing for themselves, and growing their own literacy. In this way, we support the inclusion of poetry writing in language arts curriculum. We have found that teachers who enjoy writing poetry themselves will be more likely to include poetry in their curriculum.

Overall Description of The Poetry Course.

This massive, open, online course (MOOC) is designed to encourage poetry writing among K-12 teachers and high school students. Teachers in both private and public schools must meet standards and objectives, and may not know how creative writing fits into these standards. In order to create curriculum that meets standards as well as makes use of poetry writing, teachers must be comfortable and familiar with the poetic form. This course will help teachers answer: "How can poetry writing meet common core standards, or I.B. standards?"

Required Learner Prior Knowledge.

Learners may be pre-service or in-service K-12 teachers, or high school students. This course is open to teachers in any subject, so they may have had very little exposure to

poetry, or they may be high school English teachers who know a great deal about analyzing poetry. Prior knowledge of poetic conventions and forms is not a requirement; neither is any experience in creative writing.

Participants should have some familiarity with the Internet and basic operations on a computer.

Desired Learner Outcomes.

Our hopes that this MOOC will develop a community of teachers and students who can support each other as they learn and write together. More specifically, learners will:

   *learn to create their own poetry prompts and assignments, based in their readings

   *try out assignments created by their peers

   *be exposed to many different poetic forms, and experiment with writing in different forms

   *experiment with new ways of publishing such as through Twitter, Blogs, animations, audio recordings of songs or readings

   *give meaningful feedback to other learners either synchronously (in Google Hangouts or Blackboard Collaborate), or asynchronously (through Wikis or blogs).

   *if Hawaii DOE teachers want to use this course for PD credit, they create a portfolio that satisfies the criteria of the DOE professional development office.
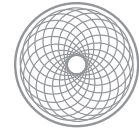
Content

Pre-Course Boot Camp.

In this face to face workshop, teachers will learn basic skills such as collaborating and learning online, constructive discussion of creative work, use of audio-visual tools to create poetry in new media, how to read a poem, and how to analyze a poem to create their own assignments.

General Content in All Units

We'll discuss how to isolate the premise or "concept" of a poem to create our own prompts or lessons; play and create word and poetry games; learn how to talk about a poem; develop our poetic vocabulary and analytical vocabulary; learn to visualize and hear poetry; use new media to experience poetry in different ways.

Unit 1: Metaphors

Metaphors are a basic "building block" of poetic thought. In this unit we'll examine the structure of a metaphor, and read metaphoric poems and construct our own assignments and games to make metaphor.

Unit 2: Family Poems

Everyone has a family—biological or otherwise. Here we'll read and write poems that plumb the deep and complex relationships that make family.
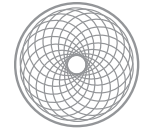
Unit 3: Poems of Argument

Logic exists in poetry, and sonnets are precise and methodical arguments. We'll examine the layout of the argument poem, and then write these kinds of poems ourselves.

Unit 4: The Story Poem

How can a poem tell a story? We'll read narrative poems and prose poems, and then tell our own stories in poetic form.
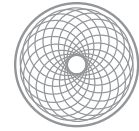
Sample Unit Description

Below is a description of a two-week unit. In general, the first two days of the unit are devoted to reading and analyzing the mentor poems. Mentor poems are poems from published poets or previous students that highlight the focus of the unit.

The synchronous meeting discusses the mentor poems, while looking in particular at their craft. During this time games or writing prompts specific to the unit are introduced, participants are given time to write, participants share their work in a break-out session, and then the meeting wraps up with a summary, and questions and answers.

In the next couple of days, participants should post words to the word wall, and create and post a writing assignment. There are certain things to think about when creating a writing assignment. The learner should think about elements of craft, and how the poet uses a particular element of craft. The learner will post a short discussion of the poem, and then a prompt for others.

Here are the steps to creating an assignment:
1. Find a poem that you absolutely love.

2. Write about this poem: what does the poet do that makes this poem compelling? Some things to think about: word choice, organization, line fluency, imagery and figurative language, voice, and poetic devices such as metaphor, or sound of the words.

3. Figure out something that the poet does that you might try in a poem of your own.

4. Write a prompt for others, which explains the concept you've identified and how they might use it to build their poem.

5. Post the poem, your reflection on the poem, and the prompt on our Assignment Wiki.

On the last day of the cycle, participants post a description of a game, or an animation or audio presentation of a poem. See the short descriptions of these activities under the "Components" tab.

Example Unit

Unit 1: Metaphors   July 15-28, 2013

July 15-16: Read the five mentor poems. What is the metaphor in each poem?

July 16: 6p.m. HST Synchronous Meeting in Blackboard Collaborate
       How to talk about a poem
       Discussion of poems
       Games to create metaphor
       Break-out sessions--sharing of poems written in the game
   How poets make and expand meaning through metaphor
       Questions?

July 18: Look at the vocabulary in our mentor poems. What words really catch your attention? Post your favorite on our wall of words.

July 19: Using a metaphor poem we haven't talked about, create a writing assignment. Post your writing assignment on our Assignment Wiki.

July 23: Try out one of your peer's writing assignments. Post your poem beneath their assignment description. Add some notes: what did you notice about the assignment? Were you confused by anything? How would you adapt this assignment for your own students?
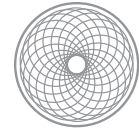
July 28: Post a game, an animation, or an audio presentation of a metaphor poem.
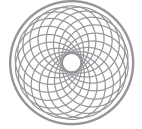
Context

This is a MOOC for Hawaii teachers, K-12, to build community so they become comfortable as poetry creators themselves. Many teachers already know the academic vocabulary to analyze poetry, but lack the confidence to write their own poetry, and are unsure of how poetry writing fits into their curriculum. It will be open to both private and public school teachers.

Given the audience—teachers who lack confidence in their own writing—the facilitator might want to look for an alternative to submitting original work to an open website. For teachers who are taking this course for PD credit, you might consider creating an option where they can submit their work for private reading, either from their peers in the class, or by myself. Perhaps this private sharing could be done through Google drive, or Wikispaces.
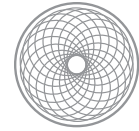
Implementation

Phase 1: Before The Poetry Course Begins.

An optional face-to-face boot camp will be available on Oahu, Hawaii. Teachers meet in the summer for an intensive boot camp (1 week), that will show them some basic skills such as collaborating and learning online, constructive discussion of creative work, use of audio-visual tools to create poetry in new media. Boot camp is not required, even for teachers who plan to take this course for PD credit. It is recommended, however, for teachers who are new to learning online, or would like some extra help before the course begins. The presentations during boot camp will be available on the website.

Phase 2: Synchronous and Asynchronous Meetings Online.

After boot camp and throughout the school year, teachers will use the website to turn in their assignments. At the end of the 10 weeks, teachers will turn in a portfolio, if they want to receive PD credits.

During the ten-week course, there will be synchronous meetings with the facilitator conducted through Collaborate Blackboard. During the CBB meetings, the large group can be broken into smaller group meetings. Small groups of learners can also meet at agreed upon times through Skype or Google Hangouts. These small groups are formed to create a more intimate group to share poems, and offer encouragement and constructive criticism to each other.

In this phase other participants—teachers who are not taking it for PD credit, for example—may join the course. These open participants may want to follow along with the 10-week schedule that the PD teachers are following.

Teachers in the course may also recommend one or more of their high school students for participation in the course. High school students may also "apply" to take the course. The application process will help the facilitator to know the student, and to insure the "safety" of all of the participants. All of the participants should be educated and aware of critiquing etiquette and courtesy. All learners become each other peers and colleagues, and should treat each others work with respect.

Phase 3: Ongoing Community of Teachers, Readers and Writers of Poetry

Once the 10-week course is over, the website and all of the materials that participants have created will remain available in cyberspace. We hope that the facilitator will continue to check the site for posts and questions, and respond as much as possible. Ideally, this community of writers and readers will respond to each other, encourage and inspire each other, make new assignments for each other and their students, and to continually challenge themselves and others in the community.

Assessment

Open participants of The Poetry Course will learn proportionately to the amount they put into it. The facilitator may comment occasionally on their work, but generally they will get more immediate feedback from their peers.

For teachers looking to earn PD credit, there are certain minimum requirements that need to be met. In general, we expect a professional level of commitment and communication with the facilitator and other learners. Here are some examples of professional conduct:
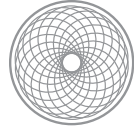
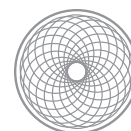1. The learner attends all of the synchronous meetings in BBC, and with their small group. Of course, life sometimes gets in the way and unexpected situations arise. However, learners are expected to contact the facilitator, preferably before the session, and explain what he or she intends to do to make up the missed session.

2. Writing assignments are complete and posted on time.

3. Reflections show depth of thought and engagement.

4. The learner attempts new forms, and is willing to take risks.

5. Interaction with peers shows tact, but also a willingness to give constructive feedback. Feedback and personal reflections makes use of concepts and terms learned in The Poetry Course.

6. The learner identifies him or herself using a real name.

These are some examples, and as we progress through the course. We may add other examples to give a fuller picture of an engaged learner who is aware and considerate of the learning community.
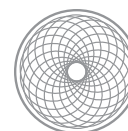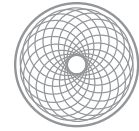
Instructional Technologies

Asset Class	Delivery Method	Description of Use
Web-based content	Weebly Website including: Video and audio files, pdfs and HTML content	Course website that is the central source for information, course materials, video and audio clips, assignments, links to student blogs and contact information
Synchronous	Blackboard Collaborate	Learners can meet with the facilitator during these BCC sessions. During these sessions, the facilitator may create small groups by placing learners in breakout rooms.
Synchronous	Skype, Google Hangouts and Google Drive	These applications allow participants to meet in intimate groups where they can share their work, discuss problems they run into, and get feedback on their poems.
Asynchronous	Email; Google Drive (Docs)	These tools allow the participants to contact the facilitator or other participants privately, individually or in small groups.
Asynchronous	Wiki	Learners will create assignments for each other and post them on a wiki. Poems generated from these assignments can then be posted as a response; learners may also want to try out assignments with their classes and post their experiences and suggestions for alterations to the assignments. A word wall will also be maintained on the Wiki.

|		
Asynchronous	Blogs hosted on student choice such as Weebly, Wordpress, Wix	Learners maintain a personal blog to post their original poems, a process log of how they wrote the poem, reflections on writing. Their blog will be linked to the course website either by posting a link, or through an RSS feed.
Asynchronous	Twitter; socialoomph.com	Questions or comments related to the class can be tweeted with the hashtag #poetrycourse and it will appear in the Twitter Stream on the course website. Twitter can also be integrated into each student's blog, so that when they post a new entry it is announced on the Twitter stream. Learners can use Twitter to publish poems line by line.
Asynchronous	Storify; Glogster; Storybird; Wordle	These various applications can be used to create digital posters, storylines using social media, a digital picture book, or a word graphic to illustrate a poem. They might be particularly amendable in our Story Poem unit.
Asynchronous	Movie making applications such as iMovie; animation applications such as Flash; photographic or graphic creation tools such as Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator. For a more extensive listings see http://ds106.us/handbook/tools/	These applications will be used to create visualizations of poems—either original or by a published poet. Audio tracks may be added (see next item).
Asynchronous	Audio editing applications such as Garageband (Mac) or Audacity	These tools will be used to record songs or readings, or to add sound to movies or animations.

Research

Introduction

This course for in-service and pre-service teachers was designed to take place entirely on the web. According to research on a poetry wiki used to support pre-service English teachers, the multi-modal wiki gave participants a safe and supportive place in which they could call themselves writers and practice writing (Dymoke, 2009). The researchers also felt that future explorations should be conducted; poetry creation could be enhanced and expanded by including film, sound and movement.

Web-based

DS106 (Levine and Burtis, n.d.) provides a vibrant model for The Poetry Course. DS106 is an open, online course that is scheduled at various times through the year at the University of Mary Washington. This course website is the center of the course's online activity. Like DS106, information about the assignments and course activity will be posted on The Poetry Course website. DS106 also maintains two other websites. One is the "daily create", a site which gives participants a short daily assignment. The other is an assignment repository or wiki. An assignment wiki, in which participants create and try out assignments from their peers, is also a central component of The Poetry Course.

The creation of The Poetry Course was designed with the psycho-pedagogical processes (Alonso, Lopez, and Vines, 2005). In addition, according to Floyd and Maydosz
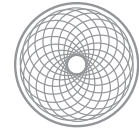
(2011), there are five key tools to establish a successful web-based course. I've attempted to incorporate all five tools into The Poetry Course. First, the facilitator will monitor learners' perceptions and performance through email and chat communication, and through the learners' blogs. Second, social presence will be created through discussion groups in BCC and Google Hangouts or Skype. Third, social presence will be moderated before they are posted to the web. Fourth, creation of poems is problem-based learning, and fifth, learners will get feedback from both the facilitator and their peers.

DS106 has been active on the Web beyond the credit classes, and functions as an ongoing community. The Poetry Course has also been planned to have a presence on the web beyond the PD credits offered; this is described as Phase 3.

Synchronous

The Poetry Course has been designed to have synchronous meetings and chats through Blackboard Collaborate (formerly know as Elluminate Live!), Skype, Google Hangouts, or Google Drive. Stewart, Harlow and DeBacco (2011) found that productive learning takes place when learners and faculty create knowledge together, in real time, but without physically being together in the same place. A feedback survey conducted by Lavolette, Venable and Gose (2010) shows that participants in an synchronous learning environment are open to using online tools because they find them "flexible and interactive". I expect that teachers, who have limited time and who are geographically distant, will appreciate the flexibility that synchronous tools affords them.

A checklist offered by Michels and Ching-Wen (2011) will help the facilitator make best use of a Skype session; many of these tips also apply to other synchronous meeting tools.
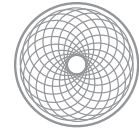
Asynchronous

Given that our audience is busy working teachers, we felt that asynchronous tools would garner flexibility and enable participants to structure the timeline of the course to their own needs. The Poetry Course employs several asynchronous tools such as email, Google Drive, a wiki, blogs, Twitter and socialoomph.com, Storify, Glogster, Storybird and Wordle. It also uses applications for movie making and audio-visual production.
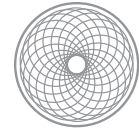
Using research on asynchronous tools, The Poetry Course is designed to enhance quality interactions between students, and between the students and the instructor. Nandi and Harland (2012) suggest that asynchronous discussion forums benefit from both student and instructor-centered discussions. Palsolé and Awalt (2008)

Borup and Graham (2012) conclude that social presence in asynchronous environments could be enhanced with online video for instructor presentations and peer feedback. Godwin-Jones (2003) researched the use of blogs and wikis, and concluded that this type of online collaboration was beneficial for students.
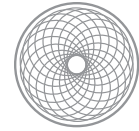
Ajayi (2010) suggests that modern literary includes not only print material, but music, visual images, graphics, audio, sounds, spatiality, movements, gestures, videogames, CD-ROMS, and websites. Conducting a study with 44 teachers, Ajayi found that a threaded discussion—one that can be created on a wiki, for example—was a potentially useful tool for structuring and supporting certain effective learning and teaching practices in asynchronous learning, and supports a social constructivist perspective of learning and teaching.

Conclusion

The Poetry Course was designed as an open, online course, and it uses tools that are readily available on the Internet. Free, open source tools were given first priority, although participants may substitute tools that they have access to. As the course pro-
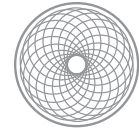
gresses, undoubted new tools will become available, and some previously free tools may begin charging for use. The facilitator has the freedom to integrate new tools, and to retire tools that no longer suit the needs of this MOOC.

Resources

Ajayi, L. (2010). How Asynchronous Discussion Boards Mediate Learning Literacy Methods Courses to Enrich Alternative-Licensed Teachers' Learning Experiences. Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 43(1), 1–28.

Alonso, F., Lopez, G., Manrique, D., & Vines, J. (2005). An instructional model for web-based e-learning education with a blended learning process approach. British Journal of Educational Technology, 36(2), 217-235.

Borup, J., West, R. E., & Graham, C. R. (2012). Improving online social presence through   asynchronous video. Internet And Higher Education, 15(3), 195-203.

Dymoke, S., & Hughes, J. (2009). Using a poetry wiki: How can the medium support pre-service teachers of English in their professional learning about writing poetry and teaching poetry writing in a digital age? English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 8(3), 91–106.

Floyd, K., Hughes, K., & Maydosz, A. (2011). A Toolkit for Web-Based Course Creation and Conversion. Rural Special Education Quarterly, 30(4), 32-39.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2003). Emerging technologies: Blogs and wikis: Environments for online collaboration. Language Learning & Technology, 7(2), 12–16.

Lavolette, E., Venable, M. A., Gose, E., & Huang, E. (2010). Comparing synchronous virtual classrooms: student, instructor and course designer perspectives. TechTrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning, 54(5), 54-61. doi:10.1007/s11528-010-0437-9

Levine, A. and Burtis, M. (n.d.). Digital Storytelling - We jam econo. DS106. Course Website. Retrieved November 26, 2012, from http://ds106.us/

Michels, B. J., & Ching-Wen, C. (2011). Attending a presentation at a distance in real-time via Skype. Techtrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning, 55(1), 23-27.

Nandi, D., Hamilton, M., & Harland, J. (2012). Evaluating the quality of interaction in asynchronous discussion forums in fully online courses. Distance Education, 33(1), 5-30. doi:10.1080/01587919.2012.667957

Palsolé, S., & Awalt, C. (2008). Team-based learning in asynchronous online settings. New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2008(116), 87-95.

Stewart, A. R., Harlow, D. B., & DeBacco, K. (2011). Students' experience of synchronous learning in distributed environments. Distance Education, 32(3), 357-381. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/01587919.2011.610289