Collaborating with the Past in a Digital Age

Use of Greenwich Connect technology to improve student engagement and disseminate field work experience

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5 x Nikon Coolpix 320 cameras

1 x laptop with Editing programmes

Tripod

Gorilla
Naval and Maritime Power in Two World Wars: Contemporary Relevance and Historical Importance

11-12 April 2019
This presentation is primarily based on the experiences of taking a group of students studying current maritime security and strategy to France in October 2013 with a teaching team to explore the 1944 Normandy landings and the lessons for power projection from the sea.

Still work in progress!
Normandy Field Study Trip: MSc Maritime Security (compulsory). Also students from MA International Maritime Policy, MA Maritime History

• Instil abiding lifelong impression of the potential of the sea as a platform for projecting power ashore;

• Instil understanding of the complexity of a Joint, Combined and Inter-Agency operation;

• Inspire original thought and expression through assessment by means of a Diary (‘reflective log’);

• Use Greenwich Collect technology to record visit for possible use in:

  ➢ Publicity and Recruiting
  ➢ Distance Learning
  ➢ Still photographs available to all students for their diaries (above)
Aim: to create a rich interdisciplinary environment for students which would encourage collaborative and participatory learning.

- Social media (primarily through blog entries)

- Group project to video activities with the aim to both record events and to use as a promotional film for future students on the course. The latter was made possible through the video and still cameras and editing suite provided by Greenwich Connect.

- Students could gain new media skills

- Creation of a cohesive departmental group which could maximise the benefits and effectiveness of student led learning. Brown: a ‘social framework that fosters learning’ could be very effective (Brown, J S, 2001).

The size of the group – eleven – also reflected Light’s conclusion that that one of the strongest determinants of students’ success was the ability to form or participate in small study groups’ (Light 2001).
Students: 8 MSc Maritime Security, 3 MA International Maritime Policy

- Very wide demographic with an age range between those in their early twenties up to retirement.

- Students from across four continents with at least one third working in a second language.

- Combined those with academic backgrounds and those who had significant industry or military backgrounds. This level of diversity is potentially a huge resource for both the students and teachers in the group. To maximise collaboration between them it was decided to bring them together through engagement with history (creating a level playing field where none of the students had a significant background) and in producing the footage which again was a new experience for the majority of participants. Having the group interact on the terrain where the events being studied had taken place added a further, very important additional dimension.

- “Student-led learning, user-generated content and the challenges of remixing, reusing and curating in a digital age”

Staff: 3. Programme Leader (Prof Chris Bellamy), Visiting Lecturer (Dr Caddick-Adams – principal tour guide); Visiting Lecturer (Dr Victoria Carolan with expertise in film history. Not an expert film-maker, but knows something about the subject).
Southwick House – Eisenhower’s Headquarters
This is raw footage – not edited!
Outcomes

How did the students react to the change? What value did it add to their learning from their point of view?

Was not really a ‘change’, as only one of them had been on a staff ride before. However, they reacted enthusiastically and took every opportunity to film and photograph. It certainly enriched their assessed diaries.

What value did the change add to the students’ learning from the staff point of view? How successful was the change according to other staff members? What has the experience exposed about approaches to learning and/or teaching?

The ‘making’ of a film further enhanced what we already know to be the only effective way of studying warfare and that is to visit the ground where the operations took place.
What value did the change add to the staff team’s conception of their teaching practice?
What have the staff team learnt in terms of pragmatic issues?

Planning and preparation. There was a clash between the need to move quickly, to cover the necessary ground, and to pause in order to get good film footage. With hindsight, knowing the ‘stands’ intimately, we should have pre-planned key excerpts which we definitely wanted filmed and set up cameras on tripods. We should also have earmarked one student to film the ‘lecturer’, another to film the landscape, and so on. As it was the same student was trying to capture what the lecturer was saying and to pan off when he referred to the landscape.

Also, as a cultural issue, overseas students, in particular, tried to capture everything the lecturer was saying, rather than imposing their own ideas and imagination.
What plans are there to continue, develop or adapt this work within the course, programme, department and/or faculty?
How can this innovation be scaled up to be applied at departmental, faculty or institutional level?
How else do the staff team see this or similar changes being applied in education?

Presentation skills are already an important part of teaching and learning at Masters’ level. We already assess presentations. Making good films is another skill that need not be confined to students of media specifically. Defence, Security and Strategic Studies, being such a visual discipline, is an ideal area where such a broadening of methods of assessment could take place. We assess powerpoint presentations. Why not assess films that students have made?

If that is to happen, however, there needs to be more media support. The lesson of this not entirely successful experience is that students and staff need to be trained in using the equipment before the exercise is undertaken... 4 x AA batteries < 1 hour of film!
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