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Use of Second Life to Teach Cultural Diversity and Cultural Competency

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Second Life (SL)

SoTL Commons Conference
March 20, 2015

Scott Anstadt
Florida Gulf Coast University
Virtual worlds are computer-simulated environments

- “Multi-User Virtual Environments” (MUVEs)
- was originally used to describe massively multi-players online games (MMOGs) such as *World of Warcraft*

**Distinct features:**

- (1) a 3D illustration space,
- (2) an avatar that visually represents the user,
- (3) interactive tools for communications in text, audio and symbolic formats and
- (4) the “ability for a user to ‘act’ on the world”
VIRTUAL WORLDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Studies of MUVEs show:

- Afford social interactions, access to information, integration of technology, and collaborative learning, group and team building
- Scholars acknowledge that MUVEs support synchronous communication and social interaction and therefore motivate participants to learn
- Major professional organizations in the field of educational technology and media such as the New Media Consortium (NMC), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)
What is SL?

- Developed in 2003 by Linden Labs.
- 15 million users.
- Educational uses of SL have been studied for:
  - Online communities – ‘Sims’ (Enhancing quality and experiences of student learning)
  - Providing collaborative environments
  - Second Life features: compelling visual and immersive components, synchronous interactions in text, symbolic and audio formats.
  - Colleges and universities established a presence in SL offering virtual classes, discussions, presentations, field trips and guest lectures.
SL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

SL can be incorporated to the already established curriculum of a variety of educational courses as demonstrated in several studies:

- Hundreds of groups: gender-bending avatars, artist guilds, university students to vampire cults and warring factions of mystical elves
- Disciplines and Cultures represented:
  + Theater
  + Poetry
  + Discussion Groups
  + Spiritual and Religious Institutions
  + Live Entertainment
  + Self help Groups
  + Whole Communities and Cultures
The relationship between users virtual lives and their real lives. Ability to role play simulations without compromising the identity of the individual

Potential for a range of experiences not as available in real life and that can be produced in a simulated environment

Improvement in interactive exposure to others,

Ability to connect and interact with people across the world, providing pertinent cultural learning experiences that would otherwise be impossible in real life.
Traditional way for students to learn about ethnic and spiritual heritage is to:
- go to the web,
- visit the house of worship,
- speak to a friend or family member

The blended learning approach allows both synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Our approach has additional advantages - interaction of students and
- simulated resource sharing and support.
- multidimensional experiences
- interaction with key informants
EPAS to evaluate competencies across courses helping students integrate course material when there is something in common that addresses the core competencies

*Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment*

a) utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and

b) critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.
Engage diversity and difference in practice

a) recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power;

b) gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups;

c) recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences; and

d) view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.
SL & FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY

- Allows the student to examine more than one spiritual heritage
- Student feels they are actually there, students can visit with congregants
- Receive emails from the portal and ask them to visit, literature (note cards),
- Libraries
- No stress/anxiety regarding visiting
Explored the common ground between the study of ethnic and spiritual heritage HBSE I and the assessment of the ethnic and cultural heritage in Practice I

Practice I & HBSE I

- Once student is assigned a case - should educate themselves to see how the clients spiritually influences social perceptions they have made/decisions
- Social worker visits/attends the clients spiritual place of worship, they know have something to discuss/bond/engage
Common assignment between the courses

Students felt a connection, a flow from HBSE to Practice I

Biopsychosocial Spiritual Assessment-
  + Explore spiritual resource
  + Interview informants
  + Attend services
  + This was a mandatory assignment
Survey was administrated:

- N= 30 (2013)
- N= 36 (2014)

- Completed after assignment graded
- Administered by third party
In the beginning I really hated Second Life! I couldn't figure out how to navigate and it was really frustrating for me. But for our last cultural assignment for your class my opinion changed. I actually enjoyed using it and learned a lot about a culture outside of my own. :) Definitely was a work in progress for me but I think it can be a great tool for students but maybe make it an option and not required.
First of all, I am a people person and that's probably the biggest reason why I have chosen to pursue social work. Therefore, something like Second Life that seemingly takes place in an all digital alternative universe is not going to appeal to me. I don't think Second Life is horrible by any means I was also disappointed because it seemed difficult to navigate, which was expressed by a lot of people in our class. I find that surprising since most of us have probably been using computers since we were young. Finding meeting times to attend some of the services was seemingly difficult, or meetings would be canceled and there was no way to know ahead of time. I also see how it could help someone whose home bound and is looking for human interaction.
If we only do Second Life once or twice for assignments, that's **not enough time to really learn how to use it.** When I was doing my cultural assignment, it took me a week just to find a cultural event to even go to.
ASSIGNMENT -2 – INNER HARMONY GROUP

- Description of Group
- Show short video–show Community Cultural Hub
- Four BSW and 3 MSW Students elected to do this assignment
- Excerpts of Comments:
  - I could see myself being part of a group like this. It is a welcoming environment and I think that it is amazing that no one is judged. I definitely would recommend my clients in the future, to seek Second Life as an outlet to any emotional or social problems. **Second Life is a good resource for individuals who are physically impaired. There may be individuals who need to build their social skills and Second Life is a great tool** because everyone is so friendly.
  - I see this music group discussion strengthening the ties and bonds between the university and the community of Fort Myers. Students will be able to attend and join an activity that involves other FGCU students and staff. That **can connect other FGCU students and staff to come together outside the university.**
Getting the opportunity to go on Second Life to meet up with other individuals to discuss music, and the way it makes us feel was an awesome experience for me. Professor Anstadt offered us an opportunity for us to gather together and discover our inner yearning to follow our daily path to a Spiritual Prosperity and Peace of Mind

Whole Group Discussion is a modified form of classroom lecture where the focus is shared between the instructor and the students for information transfer. **As a professional I would definitely use second life to have mini discussion groups with my clients.**
I was apprehensive about meeting and participating in this group on Second Life. After the first meeting it was easier to share my ideas, and everyone seemed very nice and extremely encouraging. I learned that I like working in a group and hearing everyone’s opinions. I think everyone has different ways of looking at things; so participating in groups can give you different approaches to an idea.
Second Life can give people a place to express themselves without all the social pressures. It is a great resource for a group of people to meet up and discuss ideas and opinions. The university could conduct classes on Second Life to help the people in the community that are unable to drive to campus or physically not able to attend class. Second Life can be used as a great tool to provide information on a topic and make it available to the public.
VIDEO CLIP ILLUSTRATING ASSIGNMENT 1

- Visit to Israel
- Interview with Resident of Germany
- Interview with Buddhist Center
- Video Introducing CCHub
2014 - Lessons Learned and Improvements Made – Survey Comparisons

- Concern 2013 – SL Navigation
  + 2014 Self Guided Basic Skills Resource Tours
  + 2014 Demonstration of the Above
  + 2014 Video by Instructor and Posted

- Concern 2013 – Difficulty Finding Resources
  + 2014 Construction of Community Cultural Hub (CCHub)
  + 2014 Video and Tours of the CCHub

- Concern 2013 – Difficulty Finding Informants
  + 2014 Instructors Located and Vetted Informants

- Concern 2013 – Difficulty Attending Meetings
  + 2014 Presentations and Tours of Spiritual Sims at CCHub

- Concern 2013 – Privacy in Discussions
  + 2014 Constructed Group Interview Clinic – One Way Mirrors
COMMUNITY CULTURAL TELEPORTATION HUB - OUTSIDE
THE COMMUNITY CULTURAL TELEPORTATION HUB - INSIDE
THE GROUP INTERVIEW CLINIC - OUTSIDE
GROUP INTERVIEW CLINIC - INSIDE
Nearby Chat

Click the “Chat” button in the tool menu. Type your message and press “Enter/Return” to send your message.

When you chat, everyone within 20 meters will be able to see what you say.

To see a chat history, use the right scroll bar to scroll up and read.
QUESTION #1 - SECOND LIFE INCREASE LEARNING EXPERIENCE - RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY 2013-2014
QUESTION #2 - SECOND LIFE PORTAL - EASE OF ACCESS AND ABLE TO MANEUVER 2013-2014
QUESTION #3 - BUILDING THE AVATAR WAS STRAIGHTFORWARD 2013-2014
QUESTION #4- CSWE COMPETENCY- DIVERSITY INCLUSIVITY 2014-2013

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QUESTION #5 - CONSIDER TAKING A COURSE IN SL 2014-2013

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QUESTION #6 - INTERACTIVE AND VISUAL FEATURES
2014-2013
QUESTION #7 - INTERVIEWING KEY INFORMANTS ON SL HELPED LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE AND TRADITIONS 2014-2013
QUESTION #8 - PRACTICING RITUALS IN SL HELPFUL IN LEARNING ABOUT SOCIAL WORK ASSESSMENTS 2014-2013
QUESTION #9 - CSWE COMPETENCY IN UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT 2014-2013
QUESTION #10- CSWE COMPETENCY – DISTINGUISHING, APPRAISING, AND INTEGRATING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION INTO INTERVENTIONS 2014
QUESTION #11 - CSWE COMPETENCY - GAINING SELF-AWARENESS TO REDUCE BIAS 2014

VALUE(3%)

[VALUE](6%)

[VALUE](11%)

[VALUE](53%)

[VALUE](25%)

[VALUE](3%)
SUMMARY

- SL Potential to Expand Experiential Learning
- Cultural, Community, Ethnic, Spiritual Religious
- Reduce Student Biases
- Shortfalls Need to be Addressed for SL to be Meaningful to Students

This Can Be Done with:
  - Tools Built in SL (CCHub, Interview Clinic etc)
  - Dedicated Time Spent
  - Ongoing Evaluation of Student Experience
REFERENCES


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REFERENCES

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