DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND CULTURES

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Abstract: As part of our Liberal Studies Program at Millsaps College, which serves our entering students, I have designed and implemented a “Thematic” LS Section entitled “Digital Technologies and Cultures”. This session describes the planning, implementation, and evaluation of this course.

Introduction

LS1000 employs a variety of analytical styles to examine the disciplines that comprise a liberal arts education at Millsaps. The shared experience of being introduced to the humanities, the sciences, and business leadership provides Millsaps students with both a unifying theme in their crucial first year and with the special skills they will need during their college years and beyond. The goals of the course are to teach particular competencies in critical thinking and communication and to instill an appreciation for an interdisciplinary view of lifelong learning and development.

The Course

The four units of LS1000 introduce you to several primary aspects of a liberal arts education:

Unit I: Growing in self-knowledge (Identity).
Unit II: Becoming aware of how you think when searching for the truth about something and learning to think more powerfully (Cognition).
Unit III: Learning to identify and weigh the factors involved in reaching a responsible decision in the most aware and informed way (Responsibility).
Unit IV: Presenting your work in the public community of thought and learning to assess your own thinking according to appropriate standards (Assessment).

Within the course, students write 3 Formal Essays and 2 Informal Essays (in-class).

This thematic version of LS1000 focuses on the impact of digital computing technology upon the humanities, the sciences, and business. Issues addressed will include creativity and technology (“CyberTheater”, “IATH”), the effect of computers on society (“CyberCulture”, the “Visual Culture”, “The Technological Underclass”, “Ivan Illich”), Privacy and Censorship on the Internet (“Digital Privacy”, the “Electronic Frontier Foundation”), moral implications of copyright laws (“The Digital Millennium Copyright Act”), ethical uses of Internet resources (“CyberEthics” and the “Hacker Ethic”), progress in medicine with computers (“TeleMedicine”, “CyberMedicine”), impact of computing technology on the global economy (“TeleCommunications”, “E-Commerce”), and addictive behaviors fostered by computer technology (“Internet Addiction Disorder”).

Materials

The reading materials for the course are taken exclusively from the Worldwide Web. The class meetings consist of discussions on the readings, as well as “training sessions” with technology. For more information, see the web page for the course at: http://www.millsaps.edu/~pursejm/ls18.htm

Conclusions

Student evaluations of the course have been very positive. The course has helped to spawn a project within the
Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) entitled "Digital Technologies and Cultures". For more information see: http://www.colleges.org/~dtc/