Use Of Hypertext Collaboration Software
For Cooperative Learning, Case Studies, Special Projects

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In this presentation, the author describes how he uses Internet communication to support cooperative learning, case studies, and special projects. Over four years of testing have been completed on an on-line environment (FORUM) that goes beyond simple e-mail messaging to allow student-generated deliverable assignments and products, either as individuals or groups.

Demonstrated here are illustrations of the author’s experience with FORUM in several undergraduate courses at Texas A&M. The software has been used to complement instruction in on-site classes as well a course taught via two-way digital televideo. Examples are provided for three kinds of activities: 1) small group discussions and “insight” exercises, 2) scientific journal articles as case studies, and 3) supervision of individual student research projects.

These activities are easier to achieve in FORUM than in browser-based environments because FORUM:

- does not need a Web site or Web-site manager
- does not use third-party Web software such as FrontPage
- is easier to administer than a Web site
- gives better access control and privacy (database cannot be found by browsers)
- lets everybody, not just the Web page creator, create, edit, and link documents