



Overcome Resistance to Digital Affordances by Disenfeebling Student Expressive Practices

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Abstract

This presentation will recount the challenges two faculty experienced attempting to get undergraduate students to include images and other digital media into their blog entries in a team-taught Honors course focused upon the politics and literary forms of Digital Postmodernity. Course goals included having students design and produce digital materials illuminating and reflecting upon Global Digital Postmodernity. Students were also required to assess their digital- and multi-literacies at the start of the term, and make substantial progress in one or more areas where growth in competency was desired. Despite the fact that the students were traditional-age “Digital Natives,” several of them were neither able nor initially willing to include anything but words in their blog posts. When prompted, many students responded by integrating images and other digital media in their blogs, but some continued to resist. Meanwhile, some students seemed to relish the opportunity to use a wider spectrum of semiotic resources in their blogs, but questions remain about the degree to which this new communicative practice represented mere compliance with instructor dictates and/or survived beyond this one course. Through interviews that were made in the year following the course, students responded to the experience of broadening their use of images in their writing and commented upon the degree to which they have attempted to extend this expanded practice into other aspects of their academic writing. This experience improved our understanding of what today’s students bring to the prospects of introducing image-rich media into more traditional written communication. Some still bring a strong resistance to the affordances of digital media because of the restrictive conceptions of writing they have learned in school.