

Structuring, moderating & evaluating online discussions in undergraduate & graduate courses



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T ECHNOLOGY



T EACHING

T OOLS



Role of discussion



Online vs. F-2-F



Structuring



Moderating



Evaluating



SiteScape



WebCT



Usenet

Role of discussion

- ✍ student-to-student interaction
- ✍ peer vs. expert communication
 - ✍ knowledge sharing
 - ✍ engagement
- ✍ meaningful learning
 - ✍ clarification
- ✍ challenging prior conceptions
 - ✍ deep understanding
 - ✍ critical thinking
- ✍ collaborative problem-solving

Face-2-Face

- ? Equality of participation
 - ? Moderating
 - ? Class time
 - ? Evaluation
- ? Quality of discussion

Online discussion

Asynchronicity provides opportunity for:

- ✍ extension of class time
- ✍ critical reflection
- ✍ articulation
- ✍ in-depth analysis
- ✍ discussion of sensitive issues

Online discussion

The written trace of communication
means the discussion can be:

 analyzed

 evaluated

 monitored

 oriented

Online discussion



*“On the Internet,
no one knows
you’re a dog.”*

Equality of participation

Structuring

? **Goals**

? **Activities**

? **Groups**

Goals

- ⚙️? **Online tutoring**
- ⚙️ **Sharing information**
- ⚙️ **Building community**
- ⚙️ **Critical thinking & reflection
analysis, deep understanding**

Activities

⊗ Question & answer

⊗ Café

⊗ Critical exchanges

⊗ Socratic dialogue

⊗ Role play

⊗ Debates

⊗ Guest discussants

⊗ Case studies

Case studies

- ☯ Provide opportunities for decision making
- ☯ Replicate real-world situations
- ☯ Can be simple questions/statements or an elaborate story
- ☯ Characterised by absence/excess of information, conflict of objectives, ambiguity

Groups

⚙️ **Whole group**

⚙️ **Self chosen**

⚙️ **Ability**

⚙️ **Random**

⚙️ **Interest/task**

Moderating

Pedagogical

Setting goals, topics, ensuring knowledge construction and sharing

Social

Promoting group collaboration, participation, community, cohesiveness & collegiality

Managerial

Setting up groups, time for discussion

Technical

Making the technology transparent, troubleshooting

Moderating

- ✍ opening & closing
- ✍ revoicing & summarizing
- ✍ boosting signal-to-noise ratio
- ✍ modeling behaviour
- ✍ contributing expert knowledge
- ✍ focusing on particular issues
- ✍ promoting higher-order thinking
- ✍ promoting critical analysis
- ✍ facilitating deep understanding

Evaluating

- ☯ Portfolio of best postings
- ☯ Final assignment re discussion
- ☯ Class discussion as exam precursor
- ☯ Evaluation of case decisions
- ☯ Peer assessment

Evaluating

- **9-10** Most often or always offers a critical analysis of existing posted ideas and introduces a different interpretation to an existing idea. Asks provocative questions or makes insightful, critical, evaluative comments. Contributes new information. Expresses ideas very clearly and coherently.
- **7-8** Agrees or disagrees with existing discussion and provides some justification/explanation but not a critical analysis. Exhibits some good insights and understanding. Expresses ideas clearly and coherently for the most part.

Evaluating

- **5-6** Agrees or disagrees with existing discussion but provides a limited justification/explanation and no critical analysis. Reveals an adequate understanding of the topic. Asks points of information but does not add new information. Ideas not always expressed clearly and coherently.
- **3-4** Agrees or disagrees with existing discussion but provides no justification/explanation. Reveals a restricted understanding of the topic. Ideas not expressed clearly and coherently.
- **0-2** Provides no evidence of agreement or disagreement with existing discussion. Postings are unrelated to discussion.



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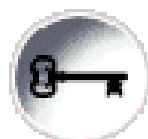


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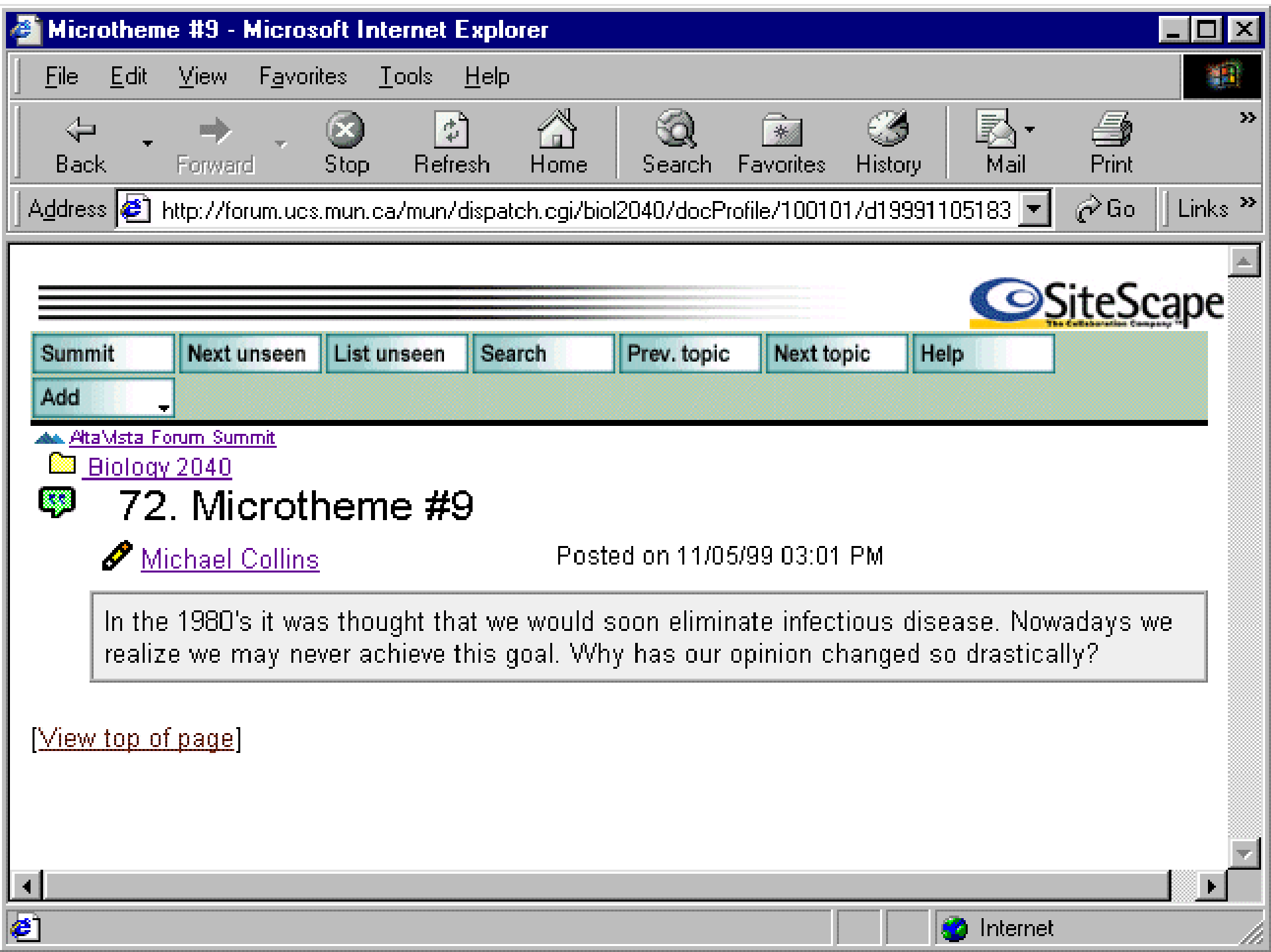


AltaVista Forum Summit

Biology 2040

Michael Collins Biology 2040 Discussion Group

Number	Title	Replies	Author	Activity Date
74.	An example immunity problem - blood transfusions	(1)	Michael Collins	11/16/99 05:14 PM
73.	Other interesting books to read		drhollett	11/08/99 10:22 PM
72.	Microtheme #9		Michael Collins	11/05/99 03:01 PM
71.	Microtheme #8		Michael Collins	10/31/99 04:22 PM
70.	Microtheme #5 - feedback		Michael Collins	10/20/99 08:26 PM
69.	Microtheme #6		Michael Collins	10/15/99 03:34 PM
68.	Microtheme #4 - feedback		Michael Collins	10/13/99 10:11 AM
67.	Microtheme #5		Michael Collins	10/11/99 11:16 AM
66.	What is microtheme #5???		Quinton	10/08/99 08:37 PM
65.	eating disorders & BMI	(2)	mfagan	10/13/99 10:15 AM



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72. Microtheme #9

[Michael Collins](#)

Posted on 11/05/99 03:01 PM

In the 1980's it was thought that we would soon eliminate infectious disease. Nowadays we realize we may never achieve this goal. Why has our opinion changed so drastically?

[\[View top of page\]](#)


Welcome to the discussion portion of this course.

There are two main discussion topics.

1. Approaches to second-language teaching
2. Challenges in the teaching of Core French

Guidelines for participation:

- Post your discussion item only after having selected and entered into the specific discussion area.
- To post, go to the top left-hand corner of your screen.
- Select "ADD" from the menu
- Select "REPLY"
- Enter the title
- Enter the body of your text
- Select ok
- Check to see if you posted successfully.

<u>Number</u> ▲	<u>Title</u>	<u>Replies</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Activity Date</u>
1.	 Approaches in the teaching of Core French	(40)	Elizabeth Murphy	12/12/01 10:42 PM
2.	 Challenges in the teaching of Core French	(44)	Elizabeth Murphy	12/12/01 11:53 PM

Education 6665s00: Second Language Curriculum

Welcome from your instructor
[Elizabeth Murphy](#)
to the virtual environment of this course.

THERE ARE 4 "AREAS" IN THIS VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT.

1. **Course documents:**

In this area, you will find a selection of documents prepared by the instructor which you can open and view on the web. These documents relate to aspects such as the course evaluation, schedule etc.

2. **Reflections' Folder:**

This is an area where you will complete part of the requirements for the course. You will be required to post 3 reflections in this area for a total of 30% of course requirements.

3. **Café:**

This area is provided to facilitate discussion and interaction among course participants.

4. **Participants' papers/sites:**

This is an area where you will add your own documents. At least one week before the end of the course, you are expected to place your paper or site in this folder so that it can be shared, not only with your instructor, but also with other participants in the course.

You are encouraged to keep this environment tidy by posting, replying, adding documents or discussion topics in the appropriate areas. For example, if you want to ask a question about the course, you should go to the café and post it there. You can also post your question or comment directly in the pertinent area.

5. TOPIC 1: You and technology

 [Elizabeth Murphy](#)

Chapter 1 of Instructional media and technologies for learning develops the theme of the pervasiveness of instructional media. On page 2, the authors note how: "Media and technology have transformed not only the worlds of work and leisure but the the world of education as well."

How have you and the settings(s) in which you work (ed) been affected by instructional technology? How common is technology in your work environment? Do you make use of technology in your personal and/or professional life.

Please share this information with us.

Replies:

 5.4. [Topic 1: You and Technology - Revised](#)

Q. How have you and the settings(s) in which you work (ed) been affected by instructional technology? How common is technology in your work environment? Do you make use of technology in your personal and/or professional life.



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Evaluation of exchanges	0	1	public, unlocked
Introduce yourself to the group	9	16	public, unlocked
Module 1 exchanges	5	42	public, unlocked
Module 2 exchanges	4	32	public, unlocked
Module 3 exchanges	1	25	public, unlocked
Module 4 exchanges	1	25	public, unlocked
Module 5 exchanges	3	28	public, unlocked
Module 6 exchanges	1	24	public, unlocked
Questions about the course	0	0	public, unlocked

Subject: Module 5, Level 3

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Message no. 162:

posted by [jwb](#)

Mon Aug 06, 2001 01:43

Module 5, Level 3 -

Although we have read that there are two opposing viewpoints in the 'grammar wars' and the supporters are ardent on each side, it seems like there is a consensus among the course participants that a middle ground not only is possible, but preferable.

I was very interested to read Lana's Level 2 response, since I had made some assumptions about early French Immersion in my Level 2 posting. My understanding was that grammar was implicitly taught in EFI, while my experience with the first years of LFI included some explicit grammar instruction, since students were expected to have a good grasp of grammar in their first language. Lana's post did back up my understanding in terms of the early grades, but I was surprised to learn of the extent of the focus on explicit grammar in high school. Perhaps the teacher/curriculum developer believed, as Pienemann (1988) found, that formal

Module 5 exchanges: View Designer Options

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mun.comp.sun	Discussion and announcements for Sun users at MUN
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mun.cs.4751	Computer Science 4751
mun.cs.4761	Computer Science 4761
mun.cs.club	Computer Science Club
mun.cs.general	C.S. Dept. general discussion
mun.cs.messages	C.S. Dept. messages of the day
mun.cwis	Discussion of the MUN Campus Wide Information System
mun.engr.announce	Faculty of Engineering announcements
mun.engr.general	Faculty of Engineering general topics group
mun.events	Event and seminar announcements
mun.firstyear	Discussion relevant to first year MUN students
mun.french.1011-1	French 1011 section 1
mun.french.4700-1	French 4700 section 1



Thank you

👤 **For follow-up comments/questions:**

Elizabeth Murphy: emurphy@mun.ca

👤 **To set up a SiteScape forum or WebCT:**

Randy Dodge: randy@mun.ca

👤 **To set up a USENET group:**

**Andrew Draskoy andrew@bransle.ucs.mun.ca or
usenet@news.ucs.mun.ca**