

# **COURSE GUIDE:**

**E-learning and digital cultures**

**Session 2009/10**



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## Welcome

Welcome to *E-learning and digital cultures*.

This course is about some of the ways in which digital cultures intersect with learning cultures online. Alongside a broad understanding of some of the most engaging perspectives on cyberculture in its popular and academic forms, we'll be considering how our practices as teachers and learners are informed by the *difference* of the digital.

The course is unlike many of the others on the MSc in E-learning programme, in that we make no use of WebCT – apart from for assignment submission – or of private wiki spaces. All course content – apart from copyright-protected readings and some of the course discussion spaces – is publicly available on the web. Similarly, we ask you as course participants to conduct much of the business of the course in public, including some of the assessed elements. The most significant element of the assessment in this regard is the 'lifestream'. There's more on this below, but in short it is an attempt to 'capture' something of the process and path of your learning, in all its variety and complexity.

Because the technological environments we are using are a bit different, you'll find there's quite a lot more technical information in this guide than in other course handbooks. So please read it through thoroughly and get back to us if you have any questions.

We want participation in this course to be a collective experiment in being part of the wider social web. We expect that some or even most course participants will have active personal or professional presences on the web already, and so for you this course will be about translating some of those experiences to a formal learning context. For those whose presences on the web have been less public, it is perhaps a chance to understand and reflect on what difference this makes to you as a learner, to what you do and don't wish to share and say, and how that changes for you over the period of the course.

We are also exploring alternative ways for presenting academic knowledge, encouraging you to think about visual methods for conveying understanding, and to use digital spaces in new ways to present your work for assessment.

The course is therefore experimental in several ways, and as this is its first 'run' there may well be some growing pains – we hope you will tolerate these, and embrace and enjoy the general ethos!

Best of luck over the coming semester....



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## Course learning outcomes

The outcomes for this course are as follows. On its completion you will:

- have a critical awareness of the key concepts emerging from the study of digital culture
- be able to assess the implications of this thought for the history, development and deployment of online education
- be able to synthesise these ideas in order to develop critically aware, media-specific pedagogies for online learning
- have developed practical skills in the use of social media and the presentation of academic discourse online

## Delivery mode and participation etiquette

The course is delivered – entirely online – through a combination of environments. Its core is built on the Wordpress blogging platform, and is available at <http://digitalculture-ed.net/>. This is where you will find the course activities, your own blogging and livestreaming space, and links to the discussion board and the readings. We will also be conducting tutorials in Twitter and on Skype (text chat), more on which you'll find below.

As with other MSc courses, participation is flexible within certain bounds. You will need to keep up with the week by week structure, and to plan your time for the 'Twittorial' weeks and the synchronous discussions, particularly.

As we said in the introduction, the ethos of the course is one of (public) commentary on each other's work, and of public sharing of your own thoughts. Your immediate public is of course your own peers and your tutors, but given that much of the course process and content is open, there is potential for a global audience. It's not necessary that you actively solicit this audience for your work on this course, though if you choose to do so you may find that provides some interesting material for your reflections. We do however strongly encourage you to engage with the work of your peers on the course, through commenting on and referencing their work, and being open to their comments on your work.

## Equipment you will need

You will need a computer with a broadband connection. As part of Block 1, we will be viewing and discussing videos and video clips. Most of these clips are found on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/>). Please ensure that you have access to a computer which meets the requirements to view YouTube videos, and that you have speakers or headphones so that you can hear sound.

YouTube minimum requirements are:

1. Macromedia Flash Player 7.0+ plug-in
2. Windows 2000 or higher with latest updates installed
3. Mac OS X 10.3 or higher
4. Firefox 1.1+, Internet Explorer 5.0+, or Safari 1.0+

## 5. Broadband connection with 500+ Kbps

You do not need a YouTube account to participate in Block 1 activities. However, if you wish to upload content to YouTube as part of an assignment or activity, you will need an account for that.

We are not planning to use Second Life in this course, unless there is popular demand for it, in which case we can be flexible!

## Course structure and format

The course will be organised in three blocks. Learning activities throughout will focus on maintenance of an online 'commonplace book' using lifestreaming technology (see assessment), on asynchronous discussion, twitter tutorials and text chat. You will develop one online visual artefact (block 1) and one ethnographic 'story' using an online application of your choice (block 2) which will feed into your assessed lifestream. You will also produce a final assignment.

### **Block 1: Popular cyberculture and representations of learning**

This first block will consider the over-arching narratives which have driven our understanding of digital culture and its relation to learning. It will begin with a course 'cyberculture film festival' and accompanying tutorials in Twitter, connecting these with readings which familiarise you with some orienting theories of cyberculture. It will then link these to notions of visuality and media literacy in education, considering how learning and literacy are represented in popular cyberculture texts, and how such representation continues to inform our understanding of the nature of e-learning.

At the end of this block, you will produce an online representation of the themes covered, using visual methods only. This might be in the form of a composite image, a YouTube video, a Flickr photostream or some other medium of your own invention. This artefact should ideally be reviewable by peers and must feed into your assessed lifestream 'commonplace book' (more about this below, in 'Assessment').

### **Block 2: Virtual communities and online identities**

This second block will consider the concept of virtual community and will look at virtual ethnography as a research method. Readings will be provided on both. The main work of this block will involve you in working alone to conduct a micro virtual ethnography of an online community of your choice.

You will end your work on the block by creating an ethnographic snapshot of this community using an online medium of your choice. This must also feed into the assessed lifestream.

### **Block 3: Cyborg learners – critical perspectives on digital culture**

In the final block we turn to work which considers how our understanding of gender, race, power and subjectivity is affected by our engagement with the digital domain. We approach this first of all through the figure of the cyborg, considering the idea that human subjectivity is altered through our relationship to, or 'fusion' with, technology and considering the substantial body of work on the implications of this idea for gender and power relations. In particular, we spend time considering the concept of the 'cyborg learner' and how we might develop pedagogies appropriate to the altered modes of selfhood we can experience online.

Work during this block of study will feed into the final assignment.

## Assessment

The course is assessed in two ways:

1. a public lifestream and written summary (50%)
2. a digital essay (50%)

### 1. The lifestream

The course adapts the 17th century practice of ‘commonplacing’ (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonplace\\_book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonplace_book)), in which individuals collated sayings, quotes, proverbs, images and thoughts in a single scrapbook-like collection. For the purposes of this course, the digital equivalent is the ‘lifestream’ (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lifestreaming>). This is a means whereby an individual’s twitter tweets, blog postings, del.icio.us bookmarks and other feeds can be pulled together into a single stream. For this course, you will be supported in setting up and maintaining a lifestream which brings together all the digital fragments of knowledge generated by your studies over the 12 weeks of semester. The visual artefact (block 1) and virtual ethnography (block 2) will feed into this, as will any blog postings or other fragments you choose.

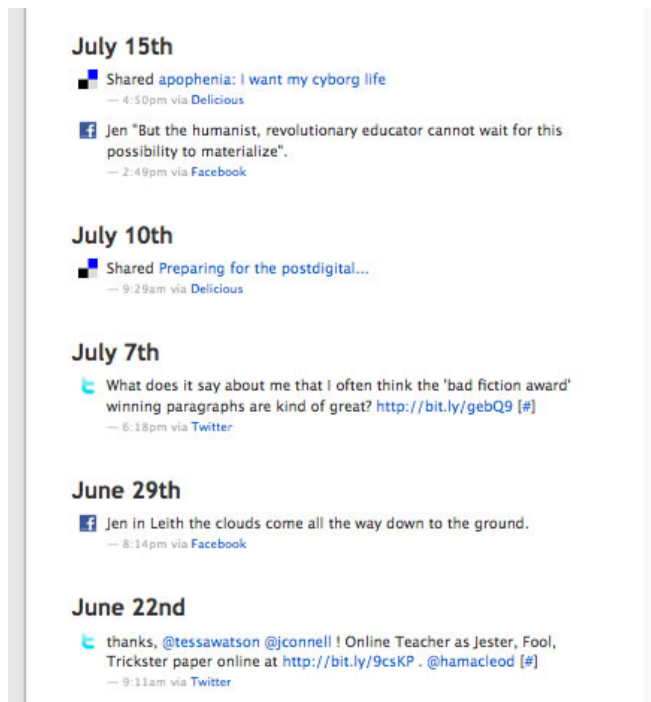
**The lifestream is designed to demonstrate your engagement with the academic themes and content of the course – you are not expected to include personal and social feeds.** If you wish to include a feed which is both social *and* course-related (a Facebook status update, for example), you will be able to edit the purely social ‘events’ out of the lifestream as you go along. The detail of how to do this is given below, in the ‘Technologies’ section.

You will be required to write a 500-word statement about your lifestream on submission, and you will be able to edit the content of the stream before you submit it for assessment. You will be expected to maintain the lifestream from week one to week twelve of the course.

#### What is a lifestream?

A lifestream (or ‘presence stream’) is an aggregation of user-created or collected content from various web services and tools, organised chronologically like a weblog. The web site at <http://lifestreamblog.com/> provides an excellent resource for understanding more about lifestreaming – start with <http://lifestreamblog.com/about/>.

As you’ll see from that site, there are many lifestreaming services freely available on the web. However, because we are using our lifestream for assessment purposes on this course, we have chosen for security reasons to set up our own self-hosted lifestream tool within Wordpress. It has some limitations, but you should find it relatively easy to set up and maintain. Full technical guidance is given on this below. For those to whom lifestreaming is new, you might find it a bit of a fiddle at first, but you will soon be able to make sense of it, and we will give you all the support you need.



A lifestream screenshot

### Why are we doing this?

There are several reasons why we are using lifestreaming to assess this course, rather than just a blog for example:

- to encourage you to create and collect content in a variety of media and styles
- to emphasise visuality, multimodality and digital volatility
- to give you the experience of using a range of services and environments for learning and reflection
- to challenge you to create and manage a coherent presence from a 'mashup' of sources.

### What is expected

There is more on this in the assessment criteria but, in brief, your lifestream is expected to have three broad elements:

1. It should demonstrate regular feeding of content – evidence of new material every day or so – links, blog postings, tweets etc. This will happen automatically once the lifestream is set up, but the amount of content will reflect your level of activity on the wider internet (though we should stress again that you will be able to edit the lifestream as you go along – it is *not* intended to include all your personal and social uses of the web).
2. In addition, we ask you to make a blog posting at the end of every week which makes a statement about the lifestream content for that week. This does not have to be long – it can just be a sentence or two – but it should itself feed into the lifestream. It will be easiest to do any course-related blogging within your 'Digital cultures' Wordpress blog, though you can use Holyrood Park if you wish (more on this below, in the 'Technologies: what you need to know' section).

3. Finally, at the end of the course, you must submit a 500-word summary of the lifestream, also in the form of a blog posting. This should be the last piece of content in your lifestream, and it should make a reflective statement about what the lifestream demonstrates of your digital activities, and your learning process. Your lifestream should end on 13 December 2009.

**Important tip:** You will want your lifestream content to be as demonstrative of your engagement with the course as it possibly can be. For this reason, try always to get in the habit of adding metadata wherever possible to del.icio.us links, photos and so on, in the form of commentary, description or whatever is available. These will be drawn into the lifestream and will enrich it.

### **Being public**

By this point on the programme you will all have experienced blogging for assessment in 'An introduction to digital environments' and possibly other courses. The lifestream is similar in many ways. One of the key differences is that, unlike the default in 'An introduction to digital environments', anything in your lifestream (and your lifestream itself) is publicly viewable on the web. In practice your audience is likely primarily to be your tutors and the other students on the course, but you may find your work gets attention from a wider group at some point during the course. We encourage you to be reflective about how you create your public presence, and we recognise that this will be different for everyone. We invite both your caution and your creativity as you approach what may feel like quite a different sort of learning experience. And please talk to your tutor about any concerns or questions you have.

### **Assessment criteria**

The following criteria apply. While institutional frameworks for assessment do not tend to take account of digital methods like lifestreaming, the criteria given here are consistent with our Postgraduate Common Marking Scheme as far as is possible.

#### **Activity**

Is the lifestream well-maintained? Does it demonstrate regular and reasonably varied activity across a range of internet spaces, services and applications?

#### **Reflection**

Are the end-of-week summaries, and the final 500-word summary in place? Do they demonstrate an appropriate level of insight into the process and content of the course?

#### **Knowledge and understanding**

Is the lifestream content indicative of a good level of engagement with the course themes and curriculum? Are the end-of-block artefacts (the visual representation and the virtual ethnography) in place and are they of high quality in terms of analysis and creativity? Do the lifestream summaries provided give further evidence of depth of engagement?

For example, a lifestream graded at 70% or above (an A), would meet the criteria in the following way:

#### **Activity**

Content is being fed into the lifestream regularly – nearly every day – and this is demonstrated across the whole period of the course. The content in the lifestream is drawn from a range of appropriate feeds and sources, and is consistently appropriate to the course content.

**Reflection**

The lifestream includes 12 end-of-week summaries, each of which are well-written, appropriately reflective and help build a genuine sense of engagement with the course process. The final 500-word summary synthesises the content of the lifestream effectively and insightfully.

**Knowledge and understanding**

All lifestream content is demonstrative of a very high level of engagement with the course themes. End of block activities – the visual artefact and the virtual ethnography – are complete and are both scholarly and imaginatively presented. The lifestream summaries are consistent with a high level of scholarly engagement with the course curriculum.

**2. The digital essay (50%)**

You are required to submit an assignment on an aspect of the course content defined by yourself. You must present this digitally. Similar to the opportunities for assignment submission for 'An introduction to digital environments for learning', this might be a web essay, a video, a build in Second Life, and so on. The idea is that you explore the possibilities presented by digital, networked media for representing formal academic knowledge. You should agree the topic and medium for your essay with your course tutor before embarking on it.

You should choose a technology which is most suitable to your own levels of technical ability. For example, if you are not able to, or have no interest in, authoring a web essay or making a video, you might build a simple hypertext essay using a free wiki like PBworks. Technical prowess is not formally assessed – we are rather looking for imaginative and rigorous ways of presenting your academic work online.

Please note that, while we welcome assignments which reflect the instability of digital texts and ways of working, assessment regulations require that at least a version of the assignment is stable enough to be preserved for several months beyond the end of the course. Please speak to your tutors about this if you have any doubts.

As with 'An introduction to digital environments for learning', you are asked to submit up to three of your own assessment criteria to complement the core criteria given below.

**Assessment criteria**

The core criteria for assessment are as follows.

**Knowledge and understanding of concepts**

Does the assignment show a critical engagement with the content of the course? Does it demonstrate breadth of understanding of the concepts and theories covered?

**Knowledge and use of the literature**

Have the relevant key references been used? Have other relevant sources been drawn on and coherently integrated into the analysis? Is a critical and creative stance taken toward the new kinds of literatures which exist on the web?

**Constructing academic discourse**

Is the assignment produced with careful attention to the quality of the writing and the skilful expression of ideas? Does it use digital modes in an effective and appropriate way? Is it scholarly in its approach to topic and form?

We also ask you to nominate your own criteria in addition to these, which should be appropriate to the particular medium and topic you have chosen. You should discuss these with your course tutor before embarking on the assignment.

## Submission dates

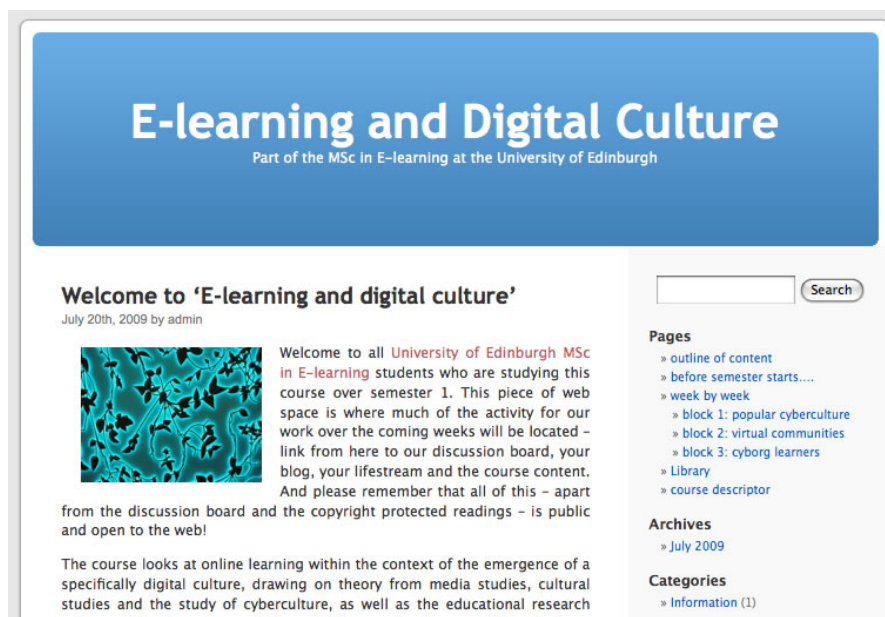
Your lifestream should end by the end of week 12 of the course, **Sunday 13 December 2009**. The final posting should be the blogged lifestream summary (see 'Assessment' above). See the 'Technologies' section below for detail on how to set the start and end dates for the lifestream.

Your assignment should be submitted by **Sunday 3 January 2010**. You should submit it by venturing into WebCT and posting instructions as to how to access it using the assignments dropbox. We are using WebCT to do this so that we have a clear record of the assignment submission which is accessible by our external examiner.

# Technologies: what you need to know

## Introduction

E-learning and Digital Culture works differently from other courses on the MSc in E-learning. The reason for this is that we are committed on this course to maintaining a public presence on the web. Virtual Learning Environments like WebCT, and our programme discussion, blog and wiki spaces have all been designed to provide safe and private spaces for course participants and course content. This course, because it is exploring the nature of digital culture and more open modes of production and exchange, has a different ethos. Course materials (with the exception of e-reserve materials, for copyright reasons) are publicly available on the course web site at <http://digitalculture-ed.net/>.



This is the main course space. It is built on the Wordpress blogging platform, and contains:

- all course materials, announcements, and links to readings, discussion spaces and other environments
- a blog space for each course participant
- a lifestream plug-in and page for each course participant, the content of which will account for 50% of the final mark for the course.

You can access all course materials on the site without logging in. To work with your blog and lifestream, however, you will need a Wordpress account. At the very start of the course, you'll receive an email with details of your Wordpress account. When you log in, you'll have access to your blog and lifestream page, which you can customise as you wish. There is more information about how to do this below.

Other core tools and environments we will use on the course include:

- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/>
- Discussion boards: <http://holyroodpark.net/phpbb/viewforum.php?f=9>
- Skype: <http://www.skype.com>

Please read the sections below for detailed information about the technical landscape of the course. This is broken down by activity. There may be some additional activities and technologies used later on the course, and full information will be given about these beforehand.

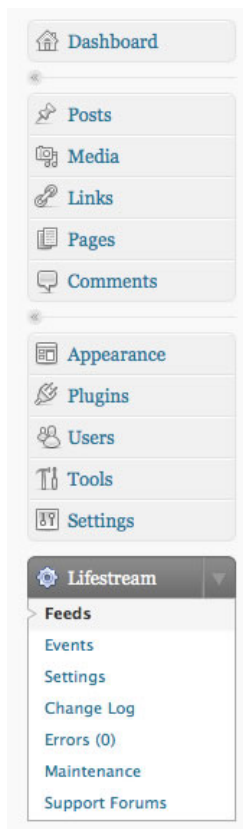
Some of the technologies on this course may be new to you, so if you have questions at any time, please get in touch with your tutor.

## Setting up the lifestream in WordPress

You will receive two emails at the beginning of the semester with your Wordpress account and blog details for the E-learning and Digital Culture site at <http://digitalculture-ed.net/>. The emails will tell you your username, your blog name, and your password.

Here's how to set up your lifestream.

1. Follow the link in your email which will take you to your blog administration control panel. The address will be something like: <http://digitalculture-ed.net/username/wp-login.php> . Log in with the username and password you were sent, and keep these details safe, as you will need them throughout the semester.
2. Once logged in, go to the "Lifestream" link in your left-hand column – click this to expand all its options.



3. Start by adding a feed for the blog(s) you want to use for this course (see blogging info, below). By default, any blog posts you create within your Wordpress blog will be included in the stream.

**Add a Feed** ([Back to Lifestream Feeds](#))

**Blog Feed Settings**

Feed URL:

Website URL:

Feed Label:   
(Optional) A label to use for this feed instead of the default.

Use websites default favicon.

Icon URL:   
(Optional) An icon to use for this feed instead of the default.

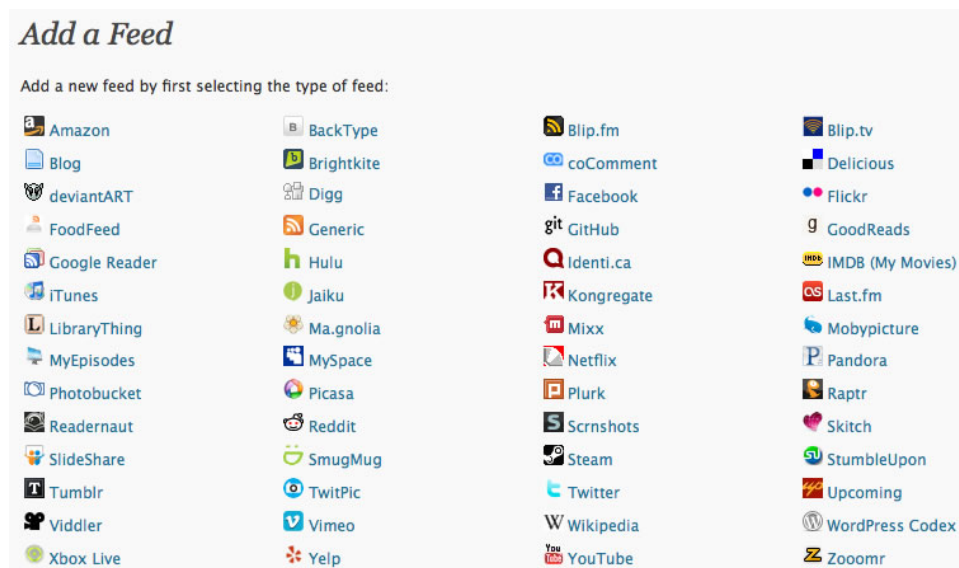
Group events from the same day together.

Excerpts:   
This feed can show a more detailed description of the event.

Owner:

[Add Feed](#)

4. Add any other feeds you want to include in your assessed lifestream, e.g.: delicious, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube. Some popular sites have a custom Lifestream feed option, but any site that has **RSS feeds** can be added to the lifestream (see the “recommended feeds” and “other possibilities” sections below).



5. Once you've added your feeds, go to the 'Settings' link in the Lifestream menu and set up how many items you want to show (we recommend a high number to ensure that all of your course stream is visible – you can always increase this later, but you may wish to start with something like 150), and what the start and end dates for your lifestream should be. As you want your lifestream to cover the period of the course, make sure to start around about 10 September 2009 (10-Sep-09), and make the end date around 10 December 2009 (10-Dec-09).
6. Navigate to your lifestream by clicking “visit site” at the top of the admin screen. In the “Pages” list in your right-hand column, you will see a Lifestream link. Click here and check that your lifestream looks as you want it to.

- You can delete individual items from your lifestream at any time using the “events” link in your Lifestream menu (on the administrative side of your blog). **Please note though that once an item has been deleted, it cannot be reinstated without resetting the entire feed it came from, so proceed with caution.**

*Lifestream Events*

Delete 1 2 3 ... 5 Next >

ID	Feed	Event	Date	Owner
97	5	Rabbit Heart (Raise It Up) – Florence + The Machine <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Florence%26amp;TheMachin.../Rabbit+Heart+Raise+It+Up%2F</small>	July 21st @ 6:47pm	jen
98	5	I Hate Camera – The Bird and the Bee <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/The+Bird+and+the+Bee/_/I+Hate+Camera</small>	July 21st @ 6:46pm	jen
101	5	Annie, Let's Not Wait – Guillemots <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Guillemots/_/Annie%2C+Let%27s+Not+Wait</small>	July 21st @ 5:57pm	jen
99	5	Look at Miss Ohio – Gillian Welch <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Gillian+Welch/_/Look+at+Miss+Ohio</small>	July 21st @ 5:57pm	jen
100	5	Put A Penny In The Slot – Fionn Regan <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Fionn+Regan/_/Put+A+Penny+In+The+Slot</small>	July 21st @ 5:57pm	jen
102	5	Amelia – Joni Mitchell <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Joni+Mitchell/_/Amelia</small>	July 21st @ 5:54pm	jen
103	5	Dance, Dance, Dance – Lykke Li <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Lykke+Li/_/Dance%2C+Dance%2C+Dance</small>	July 21st @ 5:54pm	jen
104	5	Sour Cherry – The Kills <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/The+Kills/_/Sour+Cherry</small>	July 21st @ 5:54pm	jen
105	5	Ghosts – Laura Marling <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Laura+Marling/_/Ghosts</small>	July 21st @ 5:53pm	jen
106	5	Gimme Sympathy – Metric <small>Last.fm - http://www.last.fm/music/Metric/_/Gimme+Sympathy</small>	July 21st @ 5:52pm	jen
1	1	Hello-world! <small>Digital Culture Blog - http://digitalculture-ed.net/jen/2009/07/20/hello-world/</small>	July 20th @ 3:01pm	jen
12	3	National Portrait Gallery – Wikimedia Commons – Bleak House 2.0 – Museum 3.0 <small>Delicious - http://museum30.rmg.com/profiles/blogs/national-portrait-gallery-3</small>	July 20th @ 9:08am	jen
13	3	Cultural Interpretation & Creative Education <small>Delicious - http://bringmeckenzie.blogspot.com/</small>	July 20th @ 9:08am	jen

## Recommended lifestream feeds: blog, Twitter, Flickr, delicious

Now that you know how the lifestream works, here is some guidance about which sites we recommend you bring content in from. You may choose to add as many other sites as you wish, and play around with your own ideas about how to use these recommended sites, but this will help you to get started.

### Blog

Having a blog as part of your lifestream will be important not only for those times when you want to write a longer or more narrative piece than Twitter or other media will allow, but also if you need to bring in content not otherwise available to your lifestream – you could do this by copying and pasting text, uploading images or screenshots and so on.

We strongly urge you to use one of the two programme-provided blogs – either your E-learning and Digital Culture blog in Wordpress, or your holyroodpark blog. If you want to use your holyroodpark blog, you can add its RSS feed to your lifestream (i.e.: <http://holyroodpark.net/username/weblog/rss>) - but remember that only posts you make 'public' in holyroodpark will be visible in your lifestream, so you need to make any posts for this course public. You'll be able to tell whether your permissions are set correctly by checking your lifestream page – if you can see your blog posts there, then the settings are correct.

There is nothing to stop you importing posts from other blogs in to your lifestream as well, if they are relevant to the course, but the bulk of your blogging for this course should be done in one of these two blogs.

**Twitter**

We will be using Twitter quite a lot in Block 1 as we explore representations of digital culture and participate in 'twittorials', so you will almost certainly want to feed your contributions to these into your lifestream. You may also wish to use Twitter apart from this to post brief thoughts, links or other material. If you are already a regular Twitter user, you may need or want to periodically delete non-relevant material from your lifestream, or create a second account for use on the course.

To add your Twitter account to your lifestream, just select Twitter in the 'add a feed' section of the Lifestream → Feeds menu in Wordpress, and add your Twitter username. You only need to enter your password if your Twitter feeds are usually protected (not recommended for this course). There is more about setting up Twitter in the Tutorial section, below, and in the technologies handbook.

**Flickr**

Flickr is a popular photo sharing web site, and might be useful if you want to create a visual component to your lifestream. If you don't have a Flickr account, you can set one up at <http://www.flickr.com/>.

For the purposes of your lifestream, your Flickr ID is not the same as your Flickr username, so you need to use IDgettr at <http://idgettr.com/> to find your ID. Type in your photostream address and click 'find'. Use this ID (which will be a string of numbers and some letters) in your Lifestream feed.

As noted in the assessment section above, it is worthwhile annotating your Flickr images to explain why it is that you are adding them to your lifestream, and how they connect with the subject matter of the course.

**Delicious**

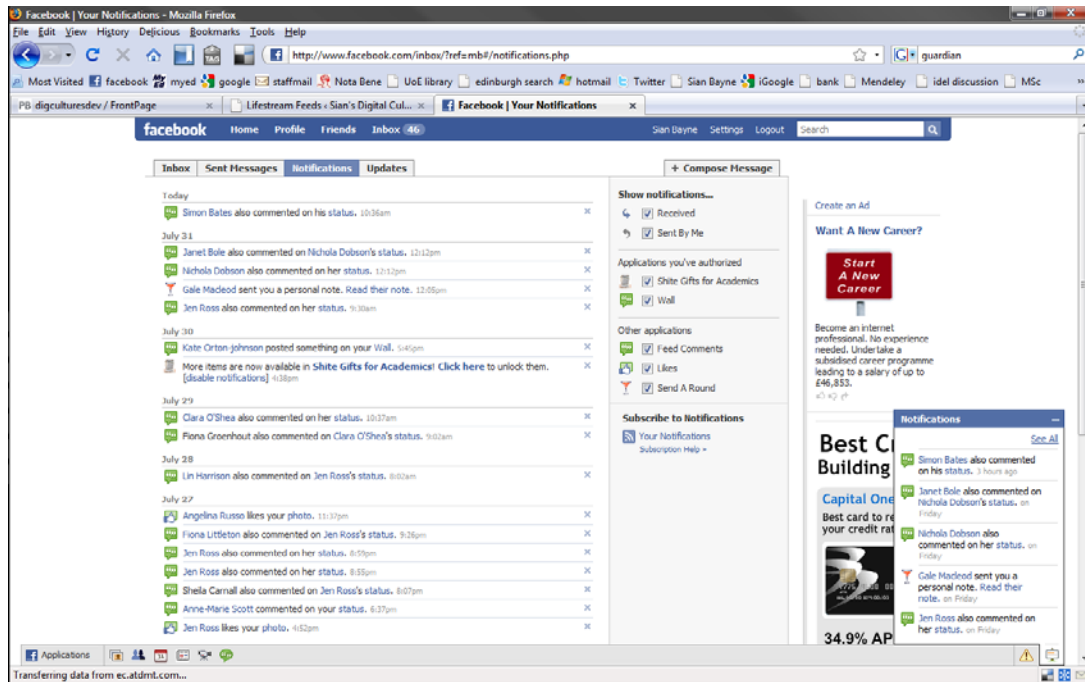
Many of you will have used delicious (<http://delicious.com/>) already in one or more of your courses on the MSc. It is a social bookmarking tool which gives you a way to capture, tag and annotate links to sites of interest or relevance. Unlike many of the other services you can feed in to your lifestream, with delicious you can specify a tag you want to use, and only links using that tag will be added to your lifestream. This means you could devise a tag specifically for the E-learning and Digital Culture course, and keep your lifestream links separate from your other bookmarks.

Remember to use the Notes feature in Delicious for links you intend to have as part of your lifestream, to reflect briefly on their relevance and why you have chosen to bookmark them.

**Facebook**

You may wish to include your Facebook status update feeds. The link for this is quite difficult to get hold of. For most people, the following will work:

In Facebook, go to your Inbox > Notifications page by clicking on the 'Notifications' icon in the bottom right hand corner of the screen, and selecting 'See all':



At the bottom of the right column, there's a link for the Notifications feed... copy the link.

Paste the link into a text editor, and change ONLY the portion that says "notifications.php" to "status.php".

Paste your edited URL in to your Facebook lifestream feed.

### Other possibilities

You may well have other web content you wish to feed in to your lifestream, and we encourage you to do so. The lifestream feeds page will give you some suggestions, but you are not restricted to these. The key requirement for web content you can use in your lifestream is that it has an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed. You have probably seen the RSS feed symbol in a number of places on the web – it usually looks like this:



When you see this, or a link which invites you to 'subscribe' via RSS, on one of your web services, it means you can probably add it to your lifestream. Right click on the RSS subscription link or image and copy the link to a new lifestream feed.

Remember that the lifestream is meant to be a collection of content that *you* have created or collected, so don't add subscriptions to just anything – only to sites and tools you have an account with and are creating content for. Other, external content should generally be brought in as a link via Delicious.

You can learn more about RSS from the RSS in Plain English video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KlGLsSxGsU>

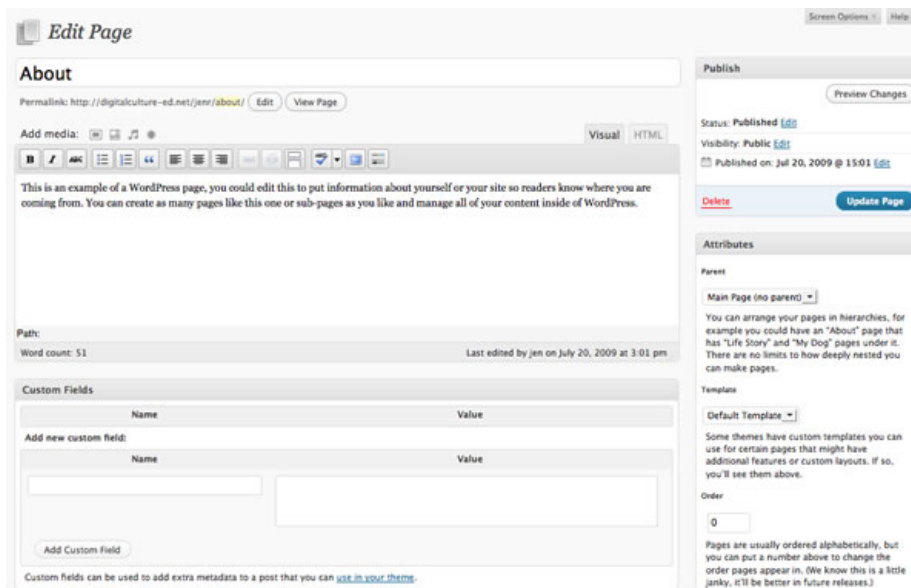
If you have web content that you can't feed in directly to the lifestream via an RSS feed, you can blog it, take screenshots and put it in Flickr, or both. Be creative! And remember – if it's not in your lifestream, it can't be assessed.

Finally, if you choose to add content which is normally kept private or restricted to friends only (such as Facebook status updates), do remember that this will be publicly visible in your lifestream unless you delete individual 'events' as you go along.

## Creating a profile in WordPress

Along with using WordPress to create your lifestream and blog and access course materials, you should also create an 'about me' page at the start of the course which contains a personal profile. A blank 'About' page should already exist when you visit your blog for the first time, and you can click Pages → Edit in your Administration dashboard to add information and links here. When you are done, click the blue "Update Page" button in the right-hand column.

A paragraph or two describing yourself, as well as an image (either a photograph of yourself or an image which represents you), will suffice. Again, remember that your Wordpress profile page is publicly available online, so we recommend only adding contact details (email addresses, etc) which you are happy to share in this way.

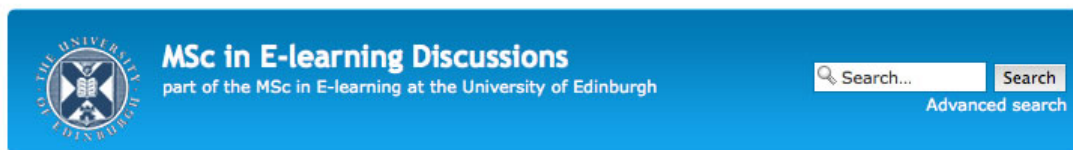


## Discussion in phpBB

At specific times in the course we will engage in asynchronous online discussion in our discussion boards at <http://discussion.holyroodpark.net>. You should also use this space at any time at which you would like to discuss something 'privately' with the course group.

You can find out about using these discussion boards in the latest Technologies Handbook.

The discussion boards will be private and accessible only by students on the course.



**MSc in E-learning Discussions**  
part of the MSc in E-learning at the University of Edinburgh

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## E-learning and digital culture

Mark forums read

FORUM	TOPICS	POSTS	LAST POST
 <b>Block 1</b> Moderators: sbayne, jenross	0	0	No posts
 <b>Block 2</b> Moderators: sbayne, jenross	0	0	No posts
 <b>Block 3</b> Moderators: sbayne, jenross	0	0	No posts

Jump to:

## Tutorials in Skype and Twitter

Starting in Block 1, we will conduct a series of synchronous and asynchronous tutorials.

### Skype

Our synchronous (real-time) tutorials will happen via Skype text chat (otherwise known as ‘instant messaging’). Skype (<http://skype.com>) is best known as a VoIP (Voice over IP) application, so in addition to using it for text chatting on previous courses such as ‘Digital environments’, you may also be familiar with its voice or video chat capabilities. Its text chat functionality is reliable, fairly simple to use, and allows a group of people to chat together, which is why we use it on the programme.

Setting up Skype is fully explained in the Technologies Handbook, so please work through the Skype section there if you are new to the software.

Because course participants come from different time zones and have different schedules, each synchronous Skype tutorial will be held twice, to let you choose the time that is most convenient for you.

*It is important that you create a Skype account, set up and test Skype on your computer, and contact your tutor with your Skype username well before the first tutorial in week 3.*

### Twitter

Using Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>), we will experiment with asynchronous tutorials (or “twittutorials”) in Block 1. Twitter is sometimes called a ‘microblogging’ platform, but for our purposes it may be more useful to think of it as a ‘microdiscussion’ – because each message is limited to 140 characters, the emphasis is on exchange of short thoughts and ideas, rather than the more lengthy and considered posts you may be accustomed to making in a discussion board (or in your blog).

So, for these activities you will need a Twitter account. The Technologies Handbook explains how to create one.

To collect all the messages (tweets) from our twittorials, we will use what's known as a hashtag – a word or phrase preceded by a # symbol, which is sometimes used to organise content in Twitter. The course materials for Block 1 will note which hashtags we will use for our film festival twittorials.

The Twitter site itself is not very good at helping to keep track of hashtags, so we recommend you install a program like Tweetdeck (<http://tweetdeck.com/beta/>), which has a more sophisticated interface and lets you sort tweets into columns according to their hashtags. There is guidance in the Technologies Handbook about setting up Tweetdeck, and subscribing to hashtags.

Once you're set up, and when the twittorials begin, simply post each thought to Twitter (making sure your tweets are public) and include the appropriate hashtag somewhere in each tweet. For example:

*#mscworlds I would have taken the blue pill!*

Because a tweet is limited in length it can be tempting to see it as a shallow medium – try to resist this impulse and instead view it as an ongoing conversation. Ask questions, post provocative thoughts, break up complex ideas into smaller pieces. Come back frequently to respond and be part of the evolving conversation. (Of course it's also fine to make jokes in Twitter as elsewhere!)

### **Suggested resources for creating Block 1 and 2 artefacts**

In blocks 1 and 2 you will be working independently to create artefacts which will be fed in to your assessed lifestream. In block 1, this will be a visual representation of a chosen theme from the material covered, and in block 2 it will be an ethnographic snapshot of a virtual community. You will have considerable freedom in both of these activities to use the methods and tools which suit you best, so the following are suggestions only, intended to help you get started and find what you need.

For example, in completing these activities you might choose to do any of the following:

- create a composite digital image (block 1) (mount it in Flickr for commentary/lifestreaming)
- make a Flickr photostream with comments/description
- make a YouTube video or response video
- curate a web gallery using Flickr or Creative Spaces (<http://vna.nmolp.org/creativespaces/>)
- create a slide show on Slideshare (<http://www.slideshare.net/>)
- create a 'twibe' - <http://www.twibes.com/>
- blog it (block 2), photoblog or videoblog it (block 1)
- storytell it (see resources below)

You will have other ideas and favoured applications of your own – use whatever works best, just bear in mind that the artefact you create should feed in to your lifestream in some way. In terms of actual applications, the following list of suggestions may be useful:

### **Image editing and creation software**

*Online (browser-based):*

Pixlr: <http://www.pixlr.com/>

Picnik: <http://www.picnik.com/>

Scrapblog: <http://www.scrapblog.com/>

Fotoflexer: <http://fotoflexer.com>

*Mac:*

ArtRage: <http://www.ambientdesign.com/> (scroll down for free 'starter' version)

Paintbrush: <http://paintbrush.sourceforge.net/>

Image Tricks: <http://www.belightsoft.com/products/imagetricks/overview.php>

Seashore: <http://seashore.sourceforge.net/index.php> (based on GIMP)

Beautiful Dorena: <http://www.pixelpoppin.com/dorena/index.html>

Pixen: <http://opensword.org/Pixen/>

*Windows:*

ArtRage: <http://www.ambientdesign.com/> (scroll down for free 'starter' version)

Paint.NET - <http://www.getpaint.net/>

Photoscape - <http://www.photoscape.org/ps/main/index.php>

GIMP - <http://www.gimp.org/> (open source, very steep learning curve, but a powerful tool)

### **Digital Storytelling resources**

The Fifty Tools : <http://cogdogroo.wikispaces.com/StoryTools>

'50+ web tools you can use to create your own web-based story.'

Story Box: <http://www.story-box.co.uk>

### **Inspiration and tips for storytelling**

Educational uses of digital storytelling: <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/index.html>

Examples of digital stories:

<http://www.photobus.co.uk/>

<http://www.storycenter.org/stories/>

<http://www.frankejames.com/debate/?p=118>

Ira Glass's Tips on storytelling:

[http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2007/03/ira\\_glasstips\\_o.html](http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2007/03/ira_glasstips_o.html) - intended for radio or tv storytelling, but some interesting tips

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Good luck with your studies, and we look forward to seeing you online!