COURSE GUIDE:

E-learning and digital cultures

Session 2010/11

Contents

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 learning spaces. All course content – apart from copyright-protected readings – 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 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 presence on the web has been less public, it is perhaps a chance to understand and reflect on what difference this makes to you as a student, 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 we hope you will 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://edc.education.ed.ac.uk/. This is where you will find the course activities, your own blogging and lifestreaming space, and links to the readings. We will also be conducting tutorials in Twitter, Synchtube 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 film festival 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 blogging, synchronous and asynchronous tutorials and text chat. You will develop one online visual artefact (block 1), one ethnographic 'story' using an online application of your choice (block 2), and one example of posthuman pedagogy (block 3), all of 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 Synchtube and 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 (more about this below, in 'Assessment').

Block 2: Virtual communities and virtual ethnography
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. There is information on the course web site about the ethical and practical issues you should take into account in choosing your community.

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.

During this block you will think up or find an example of a posthuman pedagogy, and feed this into your lifestream. You will also begin work on the final assignment in block 3.

Week by week plan

Block 1: Popular cybercultures and visual literacies

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
week 1: 20 September *cybercultures*	readings film festival	Synchtube tutorial Twitter tutorials	synchronous chat Twitter exchanges	lifestream
week 2: 27 September *cybercultures*	readings film festival	Twitter tutorials	Twitter exchanges	lifestream
week 3: 4 October *literacies*	readings chat tutorials	Skype chats	synchronous chat	lifestream
week 4: 11 October *literacies*	artefact creation peer feedback	building and online commentary in various environments	working alone on artefact providing and receiving peer feedback	lifestream

Block 2: Virtual communities and virtual ethnography

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
week 5: 18 October *virtual communities, virtual ethnography*	readings brainstorming	discussion in Holyrood Park Hub	discussion board	lifestream
week 6: 25 October *micro-ethnography*	researching	community environment of choice	working alone	lifestream
week 7: 1 November *micro-ethnography*	researching storytelling peer feedback	reporting environment of choice various environments	working alone providing and receiving peer feedback	lifestream

Block 3: Critical perspectives

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
week 8: 8 November *cyborgs and the posthuman*	readings discussion collective 'storytelling'	blogs and Twitter wallwisher	Twitter exchanges and blog postings group 'storytelling'	lifestream
week 9: 15 November *cyborgs and the posthuman*	readings discussion collective 'storytelling'	blogs and Twitter wallwisher	group discussion group 'storytelling'	lifestream
week 10: 22 November *cyborg pedagogy*	readings chat tutorials 'posthuman pedagogy' idea	Skype chats blog	synchronous chat blogging	lifestream

Assignment preparation

	activity	medium	mode	assessment
weeks 11 and 12 *assignment writing*	assignment writing and building	environment of choice	working alone	assignment

Assessment

The course is assessed in two ways:

1. a public lifestream and written summaries (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), 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, delicious bookmarks and other feeds are 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), virtual ethnography (block 2) and example of posthuman pedagogy (block 3) 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 Flickr photostream, 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.

Each week you will write a brief (250 word maximum) synthesis of the week's lifestream content in your blog. You will also 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 reverse-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/. You may also like to read the description of this course's use of lifestreaming, and some thoughts from last year's students, at http://lifestreamblog.com/university-of-edinburgh-students-provide-thoughts-on-lifestreaming-for-their-course/

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 once you have your feeds set up and working, you will soon be able to make sense of it, and we will give you all the support you need.
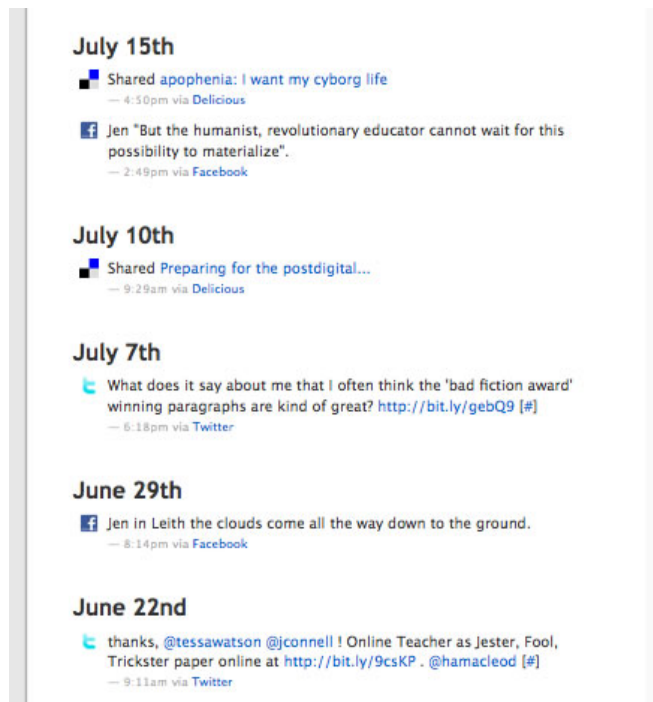
A lifestream screenshot

Why are we doing this?

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

- 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, and shouldn't be more than 250 words, but it should itself feed into the lifestream. Rather than reflecting directly on the course content, the purpose of these weekly postings is to synthesise and review the content of your lifestream. It is expected that each will contain references to the links, tweets, blog posts and any other content from that week. 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 12 December 2010.

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. One of the key differences of the assessed lifestream for this course 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 lifestream and 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, the virtual ethnography and the posthuman pedagogy example) 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 lifestream and 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, virtual ethnography and example of posthuman pedagogy – 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, medium and the additional assessment criteria (up to three) 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 12 December 2010**. 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. Submit a copy of your final lifestream summary, and a link to your lifestream, in WebCT.

Your assignment should be submitted by **Sunday 9 January 2011**. 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 Cultures 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://edc.education.ed.ac.uk/.

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

- all course materials, announcements, aggregated comments and tweets from the course, and links to readings

- 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/

- Skype: http://www.skype.com

- Synchtube: http://www.synchtube.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://edc.education.ed.ac.uk/. 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://edc.education.ed.ac.uk/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.
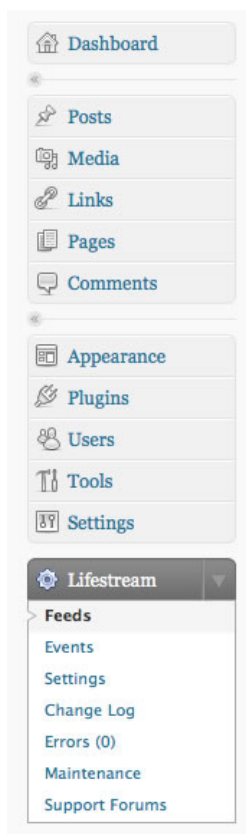
Add your first feed to your lifestream by clicking the relevant "Add a Feed" icon (see the "recommended feeds" and "other possibilities" sections below for suggestions about where to start). By default your course Wordpress blog will be included in your lifestream. Some popular sites have a custom Lifestream feed option:
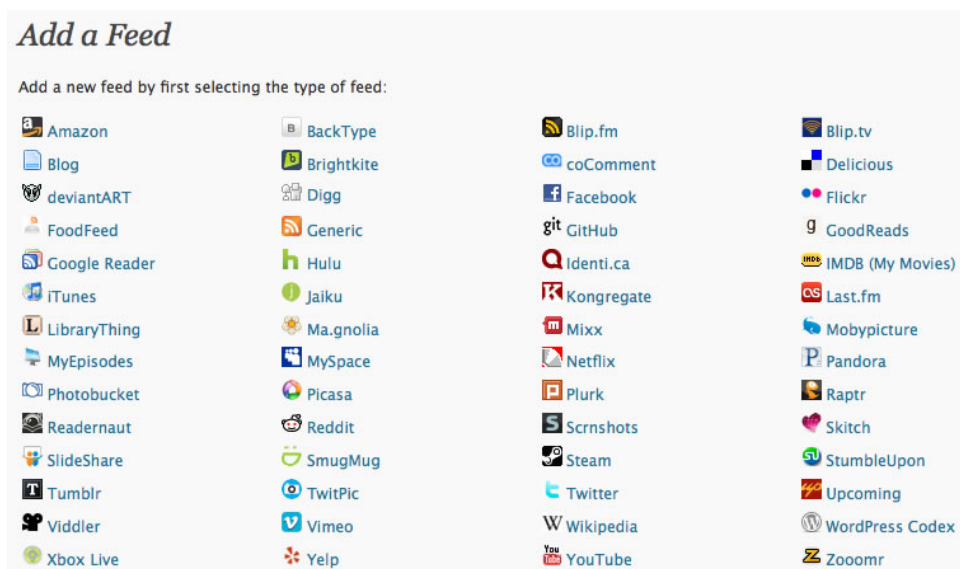
3. Any site that has **RSS feeds** can be added to the lifestream, even if it doesn't have a custom icon as above. To add a feed from a site or service without a custom icon (for example, your comments from the EDC site), choose "Generic". The generic "Add a Feed" page lets you enter the URL of the RSS feed directly.

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
Show partial excerpt for events. ▾
This feed can show a more detailed description of the event.

Owner:
jen ▾

Add Feed

4. Once you've added your feeds, go to the 'Settings' link in the Lifestream menu and do the following:

   • Untick "Hide details of grouped events by default"

   • 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 350)

   • set the start and end dates for your lifestream. As you want your lifestream to cover the period of the course, make sure to start around about 10 September 2010 (10-Sep-10), and make the end date around 13 December 2010 (13-Dec-10).

5. Navigate to your lifestream by clicking "visit site" at the top of the admin screen. In the "Pages" list in your blog, you will see a Lifestream link. Click here and check that your lifestream looks as you want it to.

6. 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 and therefore can't be part of your assessed lifestream, so proceed with caution.**

Recommended lifestream feeds

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 feeds 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 is 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 the course-provided blog – this will ensure your entries are included in the 'all posts' blog, and that comments on your posts are shown in the various comment feeds, and it will automate your blog posts to be added to your lifestream.

Alternatively, or additionally, 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 you write in to your lifestream as well, if they are relevant to the course.
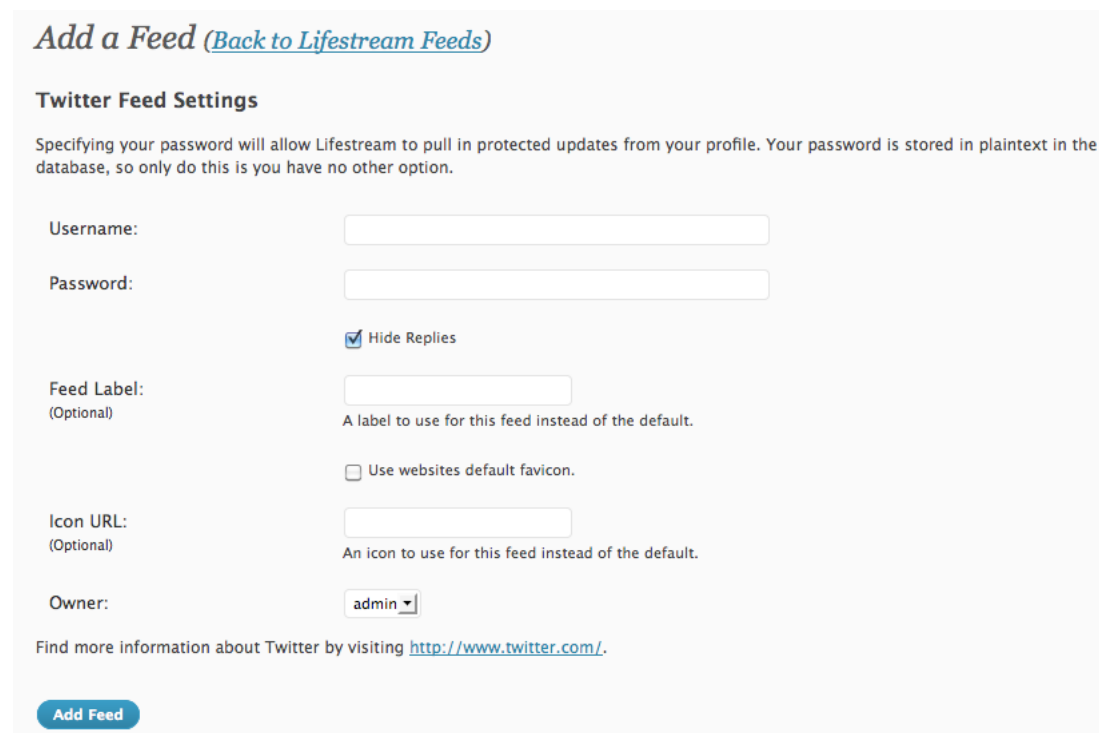
Comment Feed

The comments you write on other blogs on the EDC site may constitute an important part of your engagement with the course. We will set up a comment feed for you at the start of the course which will feed all your comments from across the site into your lifestream. You may

delete this if you wish, but we recommend leaving it in and just deleting any comments you don't want in your lifestream from your 'events'.

Twitter

We will be using Twitter quite a lot in block 1 as we explore representations of digital culture and participate in 'twittorials', and you will definitely 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, select Twitter in the 'add a feed' section of the Lifestream → Feeds menu in Wordpress. A new page will open.

Type in your Twitter username. You only need to enter your password if your Twitter feeds are usually protected (not recommended for this course). If you want to show your replies to other Tweets (recommended), untick the "Hide Replies" box. You can leave the rest of the optional items blank. Click "Add Feed" to add Twitter to your Lifestream.

There is more about setting up and using a Twitter account 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 by uploading images or photographs you have made or taken. If you don't have a Flickr account, you can set one up at http://www.flickr.com/.
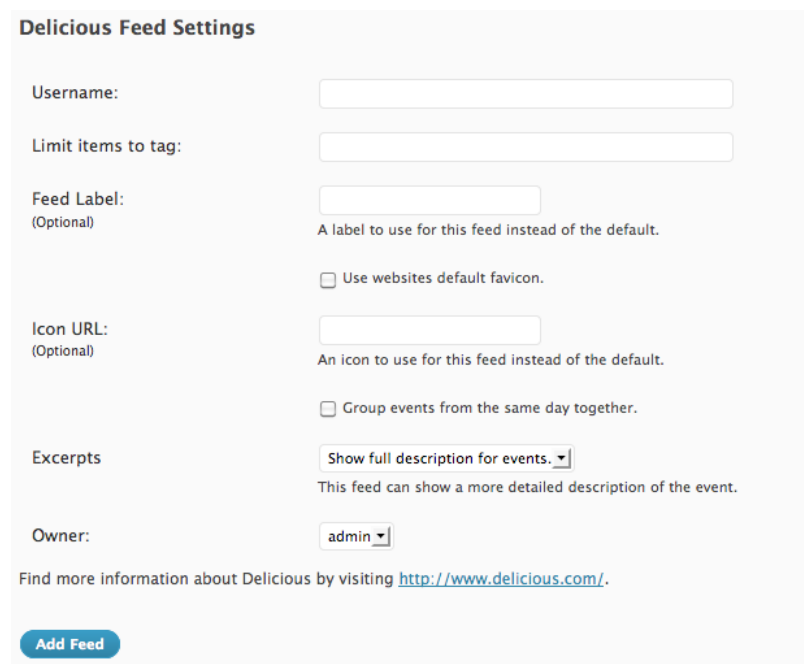
For the purposes of your lifestream, **your Flickr ID is not the same as your Flickr username**, so you need to use IDgettr at http://idgettr.com/ to find your ID. In IDgettr, type in your photostream address and click 'find'. Use this ID (which will be a string of numbers and some letters) in your Lifestream 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. These notes won't appear in your lifestream, but your tutor or other visitors can click through to Flickr to read them.

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.

Delicious Feed Settings

Username:	
Limit items to tag:	
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	Show full description for events. ▾
	This feed can show a more detailed description of the event.
Owner:	admin ▾

Find more information about Delicious by visiting http://www.delicious.com/.

Add Feed

Delicious also gives you two options that don't appear in all feed settings: group events together, and excerpts. Make sure NOT to tick the "Group events from the same day together" box in the Lifestream setup, as this will prevent descriptions from appearing in your lifestream. And, make sure to choose "show full description for events" from the excerpts drop down menu.

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.

Tumblr

Tumblr (http://www.tumblr.com/) is a microblogging platform that makes sharing short snippets, images, quotes, and thoughts very easy. Students and tutors on the previous run of this course found it very helpful as a method of lifestreaming quotes from the readings and elsewhere on the web, but you can also use it for quickly posting videos, images or other web content.

Again, if you add a Tumblr feed, be sure to untick "Group events from the same day together", and choose "show full description for events".

Holyrood Park Hub
The new Hub for the MSc in E-learning is at http://www.elearning.education.ed.ac.uk. Once you have your account there set up, you can bring a Generic feed of your activity in to the lifestream if you wish. The feed will be something like:

http://www.elearning.education.ed.ac.uk/members/username/activity/feed/

Where "username" is your student number.

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 Tumblr, or find another way to get it there. 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, do remember that this will be publicly visible in your lifestream unless you delete individual 'events' as you go along.

Lifestream tips
Here are some helpful tips picked up from last year!

When setting up a feed:

- Where available, make sure to choose "show full description for events"

- Make sure NOT to tick the "Group events from the same day together" box in the Lifestream setup, as this will prevent descriptions from appearing in your lifestream.

- If you are having problems, you generally won't find solutions on the web sites of the service in question – the lifestream is not standard technology, and most people won't have heard of it. If you can't find the solutions in this handbook, your best bet is to ask your tutor or other students on the course.

When editing the lifestream:

- Be very careful when deleting events – it is not possible to get them back once you've deleted them.

General tips:

- Test your feeds when you first set them up to be sure they are working as you expect (for example, add a link with a description to Delicious using the tag you've selected and make sure that both the link and the description appear in your lifestream).

- It often takes a while (sometimes hours) for an item you've added on a site to appear in your lifestream. This is because RSS feeds refresh at different rates and times of day. If your item has not appeared after 12 hours, check your settings and ask your tutor if you need help.

Finally, don't hesitate to ask your tutor if you get stuck. And stick with it – while the lifestream is quite complicated to set up and get your head around, once your feeds are working you can relax and focus on creating content and engaging with the course – the lifestream will take care of itself!

Customising your WordPress identity

Along with using WordPress to create your lifestream and blog and access course materials, you can use it to create an identity for yourself in the course environment.

First, you should 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. 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. When you are done, click the blue "Update Page" button in the right-hand column.
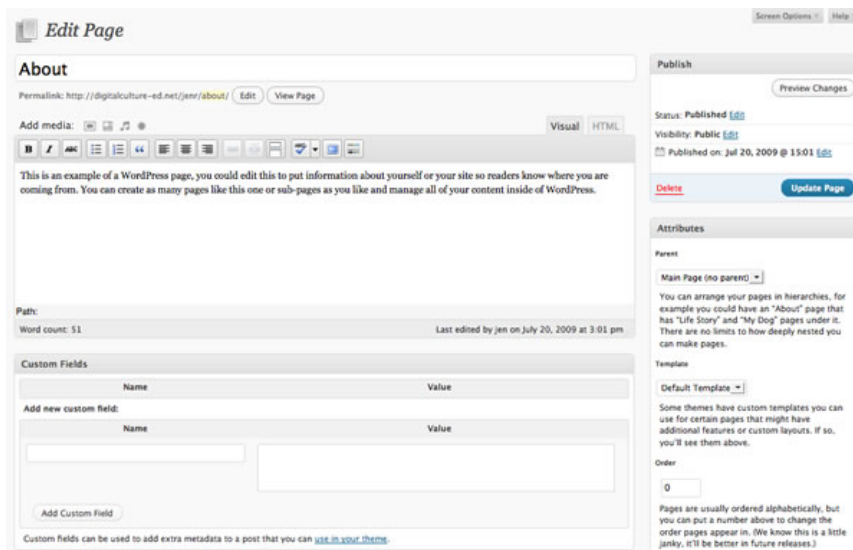
Another way of customising your identity on the course site is to **upload an avatar**. This will appear alongside comments you make on the site. To upload an avatar, go to "Users" in the Wordpress admin sidebar menu, and then click the "Your Avatar" link. Browse for the image you want to use on your computer, and click "upload". Your avatar will now be associated with your comments (including ones you have already made).
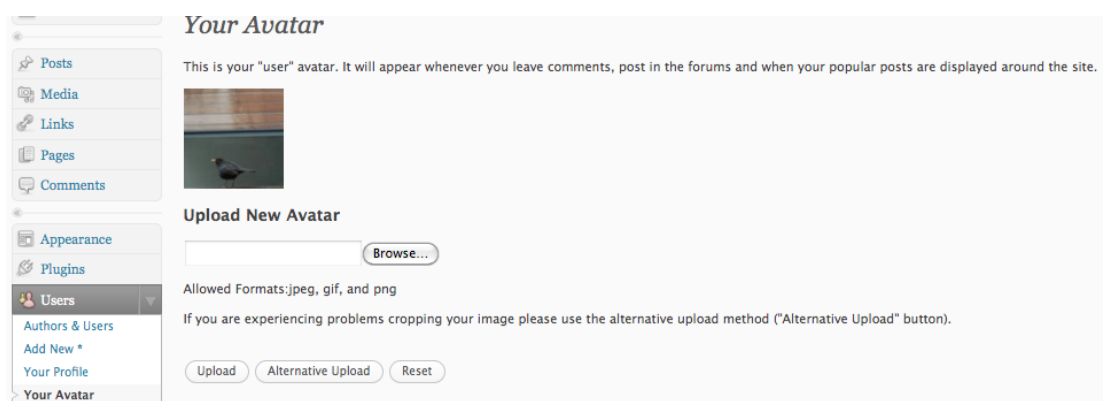
Other course environments: Twitter, Synchtube, Skype and the Discussion Group

Twitter
Starting in Block 1, we will conduct a series of synchronous and asynchronous tutorials. Using Twitter (http://www.twitter.com), we will experiment with tutorials (or "twittorials") in Block 1, and we will also use Twitter throughout the course for general discussion and 'ambient collegiality'. 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 the course, 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 hashtag for the course is #ededc.

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/), 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 hashtag #ededc somewhere in each tweet. For example:

> *#ededc 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!)

Synchtube
For the first time this year we are trying out a synchronous chat environment called "Synchtube" to create a tutorial space in which to discuss one of the film festival clips. Synchtube essentially wraps a text chat environment around a Youtube video (or series of videos), enabling people to watch and discuss a video in 'real time' with one another.

When the tutorial time is announced on the course site, we will give you a link to use to join the discussion room. Once there, you can use the "Chat" bar to type messages to others in the room. You can click the "Synch Me" link beneath the video to synchronise your watching with the group 'leader' (Sian or Jen). To take control of the video again, just click "Reload video", and you can pause and rewind as needed.

Skype

Other 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.

Discussion group

In the Holyrood Park Hub, we will create a private group for the EDC 2010 course, and post information about how to join it. In week 5, when we come to our ethnographic work, we will use the discussion space for that group to give us a private space in which to discuss the micro-project and choice of community. Instructions about using the Hub are in the technologies handbook. The main thing to remember is that when you are posting messages, make sure to choose the EDC 2010 group from the drop-down menu under "Post in Group Forum".

Post a New Topic:

Title:

seminar suggestions

Content:

I'm wondering what people think about

Tags (comma separated):

seminar, advice, msc

Post In Group Forum:

Thoughts on the hub

[Post Topic] [Cancel]

Suggested resources for creating artefacts

In each block of the course 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, in block 2 it will be an ethnographic snapshot of a virtual community, and in block 3 you will describe an idea for a posthuman pedagogy. You will have considerable freedom in each 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 (www.youtube.com)

- curate a web gallery using Flickr (www.flickr.com)

- create a slide show on Slideshare (http://www.slideshare.net/)

- create a multimodal poster in Glogster (www.glogster.com)

- make a 'big canvas' presentation in Prezi (www.prezi.com)

- create a 'twibe' - http://www.twibes.com/

- blog it (blocks 2 and 3), 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/home
Scrapblog: http://www.scrapblog.com/
Fotoflexer: http://fotoflexer.com
ArtPad: http://artpad.art.com/artpad/painter/
Queeky: http://www.queeky.com/

Mac:

ArtRage: http://www.artrage.com/artragedemo.html (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/The_Seashore_Project/About.html (based on GIMP)
Beautiful Dorena: http://www.pixelpoppin.com/dorena/index.html
Pixen: http://opensword.org/Pixen/

Windows:

ArtRage: http://www.artrage.com/artragedemo.html (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.'

Voicethread: http://voicethread.com
Xtranormal: http://www.xtranormal.com/
Pixton: http://pixton.com/uk/
Storybird: http://storybird.com/
Weebly: http://www.weebly.com/
Animoto: http://animoto.com/

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 - intended for radio or tv storytelling, but some interesting tips.

Other possibly useful resources:

Wordle: http://www.wordle.net/
Bubbl.us: http://bubbl.us/

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