Interpersonal and intercultural understanding in a blended second culture classroom

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A critical stance toward one's own views as well as the ability to take on the perspective of others is required for intercultural and interpersonal understanding. This chapter presents a study from an undergraduate course used to fulfill a requirement in the category of gender, race, class, ethnicity, or non-Western area studies. A critical social-constructivist approach to pedagogy shaped this course, entitled Dialogue of the Sexes: Women and Men in German-speaking Societies. This study focused on the ways that meaning is made in computer-mediated and face-to-face (FTF) discussions. Through the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from the course, it demonstrates that a blended class format involving both FTF discussion and threaded, asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) can promote the kind of sociality, criticality, and co-construction that lead to important shifts of perspective.

This chapter describes how one course used a blended format – blended between face-to-face (FTF) classroom encounters and computer-mediated communication (CMC)⁴ – to develop intercultural understanding in students through a critical social-constructivist (CS-C) approach to language and culture pedagogy. The course was called Dialogue of the Sexes: Women and Men in German-speaking Societies. It was one of the classes offered to undergraduate students at our university to fulfill their requirement to take a course from the category of Gender, Race, Class, Ethnicity, or Non-Western Area Studies within what is called the General Education curriculum. These courses are conceived of in this way:

1. The term hybrid is more commonly used in the United States to describe this kind of class format, but we have chosen the European term blended to emphasize the fact that activities in this class ran from one format to another.
General education is designed to accomplish several goals... Taken together, the experiences of general education encourage the student to develop a critical and inquiring attitude, an appreciation of complexity and ambiguity, a tolerance for and empathy with persons of different backgrounds or values and a deepened sense of self.\(^2\)

These goals mesh very well with Byram’s (1997) conception of teaching intercultural communicative competence, which emphasizes that, “There ... needs to be a willingness to suspend belief in one’s own meanings and behaviors, and to analyze them from the viewpoint of others with whom one is engaging” (p. 34). To be able to stand back from one’s beliefs and actions and view them from another point of view requires criticality, and it also leads to a greater understanding of the self.

“An appreciation for complexity and ambiguity,” to quote from the course description above, is required for deeper understandings of culture, the self, and the other. Identities are not constant. Humans are defined by their social relations to others and by their culture, and these things are in constant flux. In order to understand fully this dynamic, one needs to live it, and be critically aware of living it. There is no simple way to hand this knowledge over to students. This kind of understanding, however, can grow out of discussion.

One proposal for this type of learning has been offered by Brookfield and Preskill (2005) in a book entitled *Discussion as a Way of Teaching*. Even though their book is not applied to second or foreign language or culture learning, they offer important ideas about making discussions critical – a key aspect of the approach we took in the class that is used as an example and data source here. As Brookfield and Preskill describe it,

When participants [in discussion] take a critical stance, they are committed to questioning and exploring even the most widely accepted ideas and beliefs. ... One of the defining characteristics of critical discussion is that participants are willing to enter the conversation with open minds. This requires people to be flexible enough to adjust their views in the light of persuasive, well-supported arguments and confident enough to retain their original opinions when rebuttals fall short.

This approach to learning functions very well within a CS-C framework, in which learning is considered an act of re-creation on the part of each learner embedded in a particular social context.

Through qualitative and quantitative analyses of data collected in a class based on CS-C approaches to pedagogy and focusing on the ways that meaning is made

\(^2\) [http://catalog.arizona.edu/policies/974/genedure.htm](http://catalog.arizona.edu/policies/974/genedure.htm). This website describes the goals and general course objectives of the general education course structure for the entire university.
in discussions using a blended format of CMC and FTF modalities, we seek in this chapter to answer the following general research questions: What impact did the CS-C pedagogy and the use of discussion as way of teaching/learning have on the students in the class? How did the use of a blended model of CMC and FTF discussion influence the students and the objectives of the class? Did CMC serve to enhance the class and its proposed aims, or did it have a negative or a negligible impact on them?

Critical social-constructivism

What informs the conceptualization of learning that guided the events described in this chapter are our readings of CS-C theories, which emphasize a critical approach to social interactions and to discussion for learning, where interpersonal relations and the influence of these activities on learning become evident. This notion of a critical approach, as Luke (2004) has explicated it,

... entails an epistemological Othering and ‘doubling’ of the world – a sense of being beside oneself or outside of oneself in another epistemological, discourse, and political space than one typically would inhabit. ... [It is] the out-of-body experience of watching oneself watch oneself as an object of power and naming oneself as such. (pp. 26–28)

Our use of the ideas and our applications of these theories make possible the out-of-body experience of watching ourselves (both learners and teachers) performing acts of power and mediating them through discussion as they emerge in the learning ecology of the CMC-FTF classroom. When we write about the learning ecology of our classroom, we emphasize, as does Dimitrov (2002),

... learning as essentially holistic – not only the human mind – reason, logic, ability to think and decide – is the most important agent in this process. Equally important are also the human heart – feelings, emotions, ability to love and care – and the human soul – intuition, inspiration, ability to aspire and meditate. The heart and soul factors are vital for any manifestation of human creativity, and without creativity learning is a mere repetition of knowledge borrowed from books and gurus. (pp. 386–387)

It is within the complexities of these aspects of learning that students and instructors develop voice and identity.

Voice and identity, though, are not themselves simple, clear, or monolithic concepts in any way. One definition of voice(s) helps explicate the complexity of the phenomenon: “Voices can mean the same as ‘ideas and opinions;’ but has
another meaning …: voices in the sense of ways with words, accents, grammatical, lexical and broader discoursal choices, feeling ‘at home’ in particular genres and discourses” (Ivanič 1998: 183). Writing, either formally or in a CMC context, always conveys a representation of the self of the writer. These representations of self are most prevalent in process writing where the writing is dialogic or discussion-oriented, and where the learners have an opportunity to develop an understanding of the way that readers appreciate and respond to their writing. In our applications of these ideas, this opportunity occurs in both the CMC discussions as well as in the FTF classroom discussions, which expand on and extend the topics and exchanges in the CMC discussions. In this way, then, our model supports processes which lead to a multiplicity of ways for learners to become aware of voice and express identity. As Vollmer (2002) has summarized, “… students increase their control over written discourse when they become aware of the interpretive contexts for their texts and develop a metalanguage from which to analyze these contexts.” Ivanič and Camps (2001) also maintain that critical awareness offers writers/learners the means to “maintain control over the personal and cultural identity they are projecting in their writing” (p. 31). This stance then explains the “critical” part of our teaching model’s name.

The “social-constructivism” part of CS-C is the belief that learning is not the transfer of immutable facts from teacher to student. Instead, the nature of knowledge requires that learning take place as a re-creation of the knowledge in the learner’s mind, a process residing in social contact embedded in a particular context. Truth is a matter of human perception which is shaped by social relations and conventions. Because learning always happens as an act of re-creation in the learner’s mind, education is best served by recognizing this process of learning as opposed to fighting it. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) explain how learning occurs in this way, even in the “hard” sciences, where facts are easier to delineate. Whatever the nature of the field of study, learning is always a matter of negotiation with the human mind. Learning in areas of study like culture, where the subject matter defines itself through change and multiplicity, is particularly impoverished and even nonsensical when an attempt is made to broach the subject without the dialogical.

As was pointed out so clearly in an article by Schulz, LaLande II, et al. (2005), there is a lack of professional consensus regarding appropriate definitions of culture for classroom instruction, common objectives and instructional content, as well as appropriate assessment in the area of cultural knowledge and awareness. Exploration of these issues must continue, both among the professionals of our field, and with the learners in our classrooms. The critical-social constructivist perspective that is an essential aspect of our pedagogy allows written discussions
in CMC to become one important way to explore social identity, which Harklau (1999) terms “cultural inquiry through writing” (p. 125).

Sociality and co-construction

Two final aspects of the critical-social perspective that apply to both the class and our investigation of its results are the ideas of sociality and co-construction. In its simplest definition, sociality is a tendency to associate with others and form social groups. In the ecology of learning that we investigate here and the pedagogical applications of the ideas presented above, participation and related sociality are key elements. As Lankshear and Knobel (2006) have discussed,

> Participation means involvement in some kind of shared purpose or activity – taking part in some kind of endeavour in which others are involved. The kinds of activities one might participate in may be things that are already more or less established, with more or less recognised norms and criteria. Alternatively, they might be things that are evolving and being developed, such that one's participation becomes part of building a practice or an affinity or community that may continue to evolve. (p. 4)

From this understanding of participation as sociality, the concept of co-construction of ideas in the learning ecology of the blended CMC-FTF classroom emerges. Co-construction and meaning making occur when people exchange their ideas on a specific topic, collaboratively creating new knowledge, a tangible product, or a common understanding of a concept, and re-acculturating this knowledge into their own belief and knowledge systems. Obviously, participation and sociality are required for this kind of knowledge creation through co-construction.

In order for sociality to develop naturally in the blended classroom ecology that we encouraged, we needed to develop ground rules for congenial and collaborative interaction on the discussion boards of the courseware and in the FTF contexts of the classroom. Brookfield and Peskill (2005) discuss the importance of co-constructing ground rules for discussions in class. Experience in our classrooms has shown us that time spent co-constructing basic guidelines for decent and congenial contributions, rather than hierarchical or exclusionary contribu-


4. This is the general course management software package supported by our university, called Desire 2 Learn. It is most commonly known as D2L. The preposition never occurs, even in the full name.
tions, or even flaming, is time well spent. Some of the materials used in this class to initiate these discussions are included in Appendix C. Our experience with this class was that even though some students expressed mild hostility at the beginning of the class (e.g., adding “b.s.” in the subject line to describe an assignment), this behavior very quickly yielded to the indirect peer pressure of no response in kind from other students. The students established a serious but friendly tone, where politeness, mutual support, and inclusiveness were the implied ground rules for interaction. Data to support this point is included below in a further discussion.

Blended learning

Our class used a blended format in order to encourage sociality and critical awareness. It was believed that sociality could best be encouraged through FTF contact, while CMC, in the form of a threaded electronic discussion, would be an ideal writing environment where students could take their time to produce well thought-out responses with a heightened awareness of audience. If we could create a class environment that encouraged sociality, critical discussion and a co-construction of ideas, then conditions would be right for the participants to come to new understandings of their own and others’ perspectives.

We are not the first researchers to have aimed for students to view their own and others’ perspectives in a new light, and reports on encouraging this shift in students and their teachers are numerous in the literature. Furstenberg, Levet, English, and Maillot (2001) created an online site called CULTURA, whose primary objective was to help students see the world with “other eyes.” Their project gets students to work in tandem with other students who live where their target language is spoken, and together they investigate differences that are often subtle or difficult to pinpoint between two cultures. Other intercultural exchanges accomplished through tandem learning have also been specifically crafted to get the students to take a step back from their own cultural beliefs in order to get a more critical view of them. This more distanced view is considered necessary for coming to understand the point of view of someone from another culture (Belz 2002; Belz & Müller-Hartmann 2003; Müller-Hartmann 2000; O’Dowd 2003).

Although some of these projects have reported finding the desired results (e.g., Furstenberg et al. 2001; von der Emde, Schneider, & Kötter 2001), height-

5. See Abrams (2003) for a discussion of CMC and flaming, which can be defined as posting messages that are deliberately hostile and insulting, usually in the social context of a discussion board, as in our classroom context.
enanced intercultural understanding is far from an automatic outcome of cross-cultural online discourse (Kern, Ware, & Warschauer 2004). Many researchers have reported difficulties in these efforts, which resulted in frustration (Belz 2000; Belz & Müller-Hartmann 2003), miscommunication (Ware 2005; Ware & Kramsch 2005), or deepened negative stereotypes on the part of the students involved (Meagher & Castaños 1996). Reasons cited for these problems include unequal levels of technological or linguistic competence between the two groups of students (Belz 2002); differences in university schedules and student motivations (Belz & Müller-Hartmann 2003; Kramsch & Thorne 2002); and issues of interpersonal communication and Internet pragmatics (Belz & Müller-Hartmann 2003; O'Dowd 2003; Ware & Kramsch 2005).

This last factor is particularly important. In a situation of intercultural education, students are already grappling with trying to understand the point of view of an other and with perspectives that differ from their own. When this effort is mediated through online communication, the possibility for misunderstanding is multiplied because most forms of online communication used in language and culture classes, such as email and MOOs, are only text based. Tone of voice and body language add a tremendous amount of information to a message, and messages that are stripped of these features can easily be misinterpreted (Walther 1996).

The blended nature of the course described here allowed students to interact online and take advantage of what online communication has to offer – fewer chances of loss of face (Ware 2005), an opportunity for increased participation on the part of every class member (Kelm 1992; Kern 1995; Warschauer 1996), and an increase in the students' as opposed to the teacher's, role (Beauvois 1998; Kern 1995) – while also allowing ample time for FTF contact with their interlocutors so that the gaps left by online communication could be filled during live interaction.

Another characteristic of this class that sets it apart from the recently referred to culture classes is that, while a foreign (German-speaking) culture was the focus of the course content, the students communicated with other students at their own university instead of students in another country. Students in this course explored new perspectives on their own lives and the similarities and differences between their life experiences and those of the people in the room with them, while at the same time discussing texts about people from the German-speaking world.

In this way, the students could learn by analogy. They started with interpersonal comparisons that were smaller leaps: seeing ways in which they had much in common with classmates they might have otherwise considered very different, while at the same time gaining new perspectives (largely through classmates' reactions to their own work) on themselves and their own lives. This understanding was then used as a bridge to bring about an analogous understanding of the lives and perspectives of people in the German-speaking societies that were the
focus of the course's content. This chapter shows how this process, with online communication as an essential element, was able to "... help students enter into a new realm of collaborative inquiry and construction of knowledge, relaying their expanding repertoire of identities and communications strategies as resources in the process" (Kern et al. 2004: 254).

Data

Both qualitative and quantitative data were used for this project. The qualitative data include all written products made by the students for the course, such as the writing assignments and the discussions on the electronic, threaded discussion board on the course management system Desire 2 Learn (D2L; described below). The quantitative data comes from a survey that was administered near the end of the semester. Of the total 22 students enrolled, 18 took the survey, knowing that the teacher would not see the results until after the grades were turned in, and that they could answer the survey anonymously if they wished.

In order to triangulate the qualitative data and to have a way to check our interpretation of them, we wanted to ask direct questions to the students about the ways in which the blended learning environment of the course affected them. The items on this survey were created by adapting Moos' (1987) conceptual framework of social environment and the New Constructivist Learning Environment Survey (Taylor, Fraser, & Fisher 1997). The survey can be seen in Appendices A and B, along with the results, which are also interwoven into the discussions of the quantitative data.

The participants

The students

The students who took part in this ecology of learning had enrolled in a class to satisfy their general studies requirements, as described at the outset of this discussion. They were a mixture of undergraduates at different points in their studies: beginning (freshmen), midway (sophomores or juniors), or finishing (seniors). Their age range was 18–23. The majority of the class was American citizens, but there were two international students as well. Of the 22 students who finished the class, 4 students were nonnative speakers of English, but only 1 of those 4 seemed to have slightly less than fully fluent and accurate English usage. Their exposure to the cultures and language of German-speaking countries before the class was
minimal. Only 1 of the students was studying toward a minor in German Studies, and she was 1 of 2 students who had rudimentary skills in German language use. The class was taught in English, and all the readings were in English, but a few German words occurred in the readings, and three films/documentaries in German with English subtitles were shown during the semester. There was a generally quiet atmosphere in the class at the beginning, but as students got to know each other better and feel integrated into the learning ecology, they gradually began to contribute more easily and openly in the FTF sessions.

The teacher and her role in the class

The instructor for this class was a full professor in the Department of German Studies. She is known among colleagues, students, and personal friends as having something of a “mom” personality, both as someone a person can go to for assurance and advice, as well as prone to expressing sentiments that seem to exemplify maternal concern. Her speaking style is authoritative, punctuated frequently with a lowered chin and furrowed brow during moments of silence as she gauges whether her students have any confusions that they need to discuss. She practices this stance frequently because her typical teaching practice is to present to her students complexities with which they are expected to engage dialogically, as the examples in later sections illustrate.

The teacher never lectured in class but did give extended answers extemporaneously to questions that came up in class. The primary way in which the instructor’s point of view was present was through the questions that she posed for the students to discuss with each other, and through the material which she had selected for class. The instructor never participated in the online discussions, although the students knew that she was reading them. Her feedback tended to be brief. When grading, she filled in numbers in a grading rubric, thus communicating to what extent she believed that the student had completed the stated objectives, and she added summarizing comments, such as,

Donna,6 I very much enjoyed reading your autobio. I’m sorry for your loss of your father at such an age, but your reflections about what it has meant to you are eloquent. I would have liked to have read a little more about your reflections on Others and on the cultural or gender implications. This is a very good job, though!

6. A pseudonym.
Despite what could sound like a low level of activity in the course, if one were to interpret the facts in light of typical teacher behavior in traditional classes, the instructor’s involvement and personality came through to the students, and in a positive way. The three questions on the survey that asked the students their impressions of the teacher – whether she cared about their interests (19a), whether she was fun (22a) and whether they felt that they could trust her (28a) – all received 100% responses of either agree or strongly agree.

The class

The students met twice a week for a total of 3 contact hours per week. In one session per week, the class met in a regular classroom and engaged in FTF discussions of the topics in the syllabus, the readings, and the students’ projects, all of which focused on comparative and contrastive views of their personal and cultural identities in both their first language(s) and culture(s) and in the cultures and identities that are salient in present-day German-speaking countries. The second session of the week met in a computer lab that was designed specifically for collaborative teaching practices, and was conducted using a mixture of FTF conversation and asynchronous CMC. Throughout all sessions, participants were asked to see and construct themselves as learning and knowing subjects rather than to listen to lectures by a teacher. As subjects responsible to their peers, they brought their attitudes, positionalities, and perspectives into their own focus and consciousness (Quasthoff 1993; Rao 1993; Wildner-Bassett & Meerholz-Haerle 1999).

The aim of all written and oral activities in all aspects of the class was to realize basic tenets of critical, feminist, and positional pedagogies which encouraged learners to “... situate themselves within the complex of linguistic, cultural, and value-laden practices in which they participate ...” (Zuss 1994: 264). The written conversations resulting from these assignments show how the learners see and

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7. These numbers refer to the questions in the questionnaires included in Appendices A and B.

8. The computer screens are embedded into the tables so that it is easy to see over them and instead see one’s classmates and the instructor. The chairs are rolling office chairs so that reconfiguration of the seating arrangement is easy. The basic seating arrangement is in three “pods” of eight computers in a circle, so students face each other rather than the teacher’s desk.

9. See also Brookfield and Preskill (2005: 156–157) for a similar discussion.

10. The full syllabus of the course, including a more detailed description of written discussion assignments, is included in Appendix C.
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construct themselves as learning and knowing subjects. Excerpts from their conversations are explored below.

The students' first assignment was to write an "Intellectual and Cultural Autobiography," which went through three rounds of peer review before a final draft was due. The assignment was described to the students as a request for them to define how they see the world and what had shaped that viewpoint for them. It is important to note here that Brookfield and Preskill (2005) also suggest "...giving students opportunities to talk and write autobiographically ..." to encourage a "...mutual receptivity to new ideas and perspectives ..." (p. 9). The semester's further assignments and activities revolved around this essential first assignment. In this way, participants defined and co-constructed approximately 60% of the content of the course – readings and other source materials (websites, films, documentaries) served as the other 40%.

As the semester continued, there were two more assignments that were closely related to and built on the first, namely one researched and one interview profile of women or other others in German-speaking societies. The final assignment was a paper that required students to make connections among all of the writings and profiles they had accomplished during the semester and how those connections related to the overall goals of the class. With this final assessment opportunity, the learners were invited once again to reflect on the connections they could make among the ways of knowing and being that they had co-constructed throughout the semester.

The online component

The course management software, Desire 2 Learn (D2L), that is used and supported at the university where this course took place, is very flexible. Not all of the options that are available in a D2L course space were used for this class. When a user logged onto the course, he or she saw "News Items." This space was used to post class reminders, such as when an assignment was due. On the top menu bar, there were links to all of the major parts of the website. These were: "Learning Activities," "Discussions," "Links," and "Dropbox."

Like most pages on D2L, the "Learning Activities" page had an outline format. Topics were listed, and under them, subtopics, which were clickable links. One topic on this page was "Weekly Schedule of Activities." Below it were one-line descriptions of the weekly activities. Clicking on one of these activities took the

11. See the syllabus in Appendix C for the entire description.
user to another page which had a description of what exactly the students were supposed to do for that activity. Another major topic on the “Learning Activities” page was “Quizzes and Preparation.” Each link below that topic led to explanations of what would be on the quizzes and how to prepare for them. Other material found in “Learning Activities” included grading rubrics and detailed explanations of the procedures students were expected to follow.

The most heavily trafficked part of the course website was “Discussions.” This section contained one area for each of the discussions that the students participated in. These were threaded discussion boards, where each contribution was identified by a subject line and by the name of the author, as well as the time of posting. It was possible to attach documents to each posting. Just like with email, participants could reply to messages, and the reply was grouped under the original message where it was indented in the master list. In this way, threads of discussion were identified.

The “Dropbox” was where students went to turn in final copies of some of their assignments. Specific folders were set up for each assignment. These folders had due dates attached to them, after which point the student could no longer submit an assignment. The instructor returned assignments with comments on them, either in an attached Word document or separately, in a D2L window that was specifically for that purpose.

Student perception of D2L use

Students appreciated the use of CMC in the class. On Item 2a of the survey, 17 out of 18 students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I would like to see some of the ways we used computers in this class used in other classes.” Of the 18 students, 13 said that it was clear to them why computers were used in the class (Item 12a). From the survey items where students responded with frequency measures as opposed to agree or disagree, only 1 student said that it was never the case that working on the computer allowed the class to do things that would not otherwise have been possible, and 8 students said that that had been true many times (Item 17b). No students responded with never to the statement “Using computers added a kind of flexibility to the course that I appreciated” (Item 12b). Finally, other items on the survey showed that the students experienced very few difficulties in using the technology (Items 20b, 23b, and 30b).
Intercultural understanding

Students in this class felt that they had come to a better understanding of another culture as a result of their participation. In response to the survey item (15b) that said "I understood something about a culture that I did not understand before," no one in the class disagreed, and 12 students indicated that it had happened to them many times. As a student wrote in her final reflection paper, "I have taken away a much more complete knowledge of a culture I was never previously interested in." She went on to say that, in contrast to the majority of her college courses, what she learned in this course would stay with her through her whole life, adding, "I think that this semester has shown me a new and valuable approach to analyzing life."

This comment indicates that the students gained knowledge about the culture of study, which is one part of Byram’s (1997) model of what is needed in the development of intercultural understanding. Also necessary is a critical understanding of oneself and one’s own perspectives, as well as understanding the perspective of another. To the statement “I understood new perspectives and points of view because of this class” (Item 10b) and “Something in this class led me to understand someone else’s point of view better” (24b), only one person (a different one for the two items) answered with never. On the former (10b), 13 out of 18 students said this revealing moment had occurred for them many times.

Students gained new perspectives by being able to relate to the lives of people from another culture. One student wrote, “The research paper at first scared me because I had no idea how I was going to find someone from a German speaking society to relate to” but he went on to say that he and his classmates were all able to do that. In order to gain new perspectives on others, the students had to understand their relation to others in the world. One wrote,

I have learned a lot about myself and others during the research profile process. One important thing that I have learned about myself is that I really have an American view of the world. Since I have grown up in the United States during the late 20th and early 21st century, during which time the U.S. has played a dominant role in the world, I tend to see world events from an American perspective. It has really opened my eyes to other perspectives of the world and taught me to be more sensitive towards them.  

Similarly, the student who turned in his first few assignments in the class with “b.s.” as part of the title wrote at the end,

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12. All quotes are direct quotes, lifted straight from the students’ written work. Errors found in the quotes were in the originals.
I have also learned to be not so judgmental. Prior to this class I may have been some-what judgmental. Learning about various aspects of profiles has open win-
dows to various cultures unbeknownst to me. I have greatly improved as a person
as a result of this class and the D2L participation that came along with it.

Students were able to change their perspectives on others by relating to material
about the German-speaking world and discussing it primarily with their peers.

Before this semester, I never really thought too much about my life in connec-
tion to German-speaking cultures. I have learned that I have a connection to this
culture just as I have some sort of connection to many other cultures. By learning
about German culture through people, it is much easier to connect to rather than
gathering this information from books. It is also much easier to connect to this
information after discussing these topics with other people from my culture and
age group.

By starting with a process of relating to others who were right there beside them,
these students were able to bridge their understanding from the others in their
class to the others elsewhere in the world. This bridge also worked in the opposite
direction. By gaining greater perspective on aspects of German culture, students
came to new understandings about their own society: "Finally, while reading the
profiles about German immigrants my perspective on how immigrants are treat-
ed in the U.S. and abroad really changed."

Therefore, in this learning ecology, the goals of interpersonal growth, identity
formation, expanding higher level thinking, and experiencing CS-C pedagogy
were important aspects of the course. In addition, of course, the goal of inter-
cultural understanding, with the target culture of the German-speaking societies
in the 20th and 21st centuries, was a main focus of the class. Leading students to
achieve these goals was accomplished through the various class assignments, as is
evidenced in the following student’s description of her experience with interview-
ing someone from Germany: 13

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13. The writing assignments were these:

1. Researched profiles of women or other Others in German-speaking societies written by
class members.
2. Standpoint (intellectual and cultural) autobiographies of class members.
3. Interview profiles of women or other Others in local societies written by class
members.
4. Published profiles of women from the past and present in our reading and handouts.
5. Written reflections on the connections among these pieces and the lives of class
participants.
... when she agreed to help me with this interview, and all she could say was "finally, I get to talk about how great my life in Germany is, to someone who is actually interested!!" Much of the information that I got from Birgit very much mirrored the topics that have been discussed in the classroom regarding German society. Such things as the implied gender roles, schooling, and the historical aspects of German culture were discussed which acknowledged my previous familiarity from this course with the dialogue of the sexes in German society.

This student expresses well how the experiential phase of learning through a FTF interview interfaces and supports classroom CMC and CS-C of the learning ecology. All of these facets of class activity move through the complexities of personal identities and experiences to support the goals of both interpersonal and intercultural understanding in the blended second culture classroom.

Co-construction

Through discussion, the students shaped each other's perspectives and influenced the way that they wrote about issues later on in the course. For most assignments, the students had to post their responses to prompts from the teacher, and then they had to respond to a certain minimum number of their classmates' postings. Sometimes the posting was done by individual students, but often it was done in groups of two or three. Within the group, the students discussed ideas and either came to a consensus or at least came to understand the other group members' point of view. Several times small groups reported their answers by saying what each different student in their group thought, providing support for each idea. Other individuals or groups then responded in the threaded discussion to these postings.

In addition, the students wrote intensively in the CMC context, where the assignments were described this way:

Dialogue journals, which will consist of 7–10 entries throughout the semester. These journal entries will be the result not only of one student's writing, but will be collections of discussions and process evaluation in the small groups and with partners.

The dialogic learning portfolio will contain the above two sets of entries (drafts and written discussions), and it will also contain assignments which address particular topics. The assignments will be in the form of short, relatively formal written summaries and essays, and they will be based on interviews, comparative readings, etc. The process approach will be fully integrated by having portions of the discussion groups, as well as the electronic synchronous discussions, dedicated to the topics and content that will eventually be reflected in the written assignments.
In almost every posting, the students praised the thoughts and writings of the classmates to whom they were responding, even when the message also included disagreement or a critique of the other person. When reviewing each other’s drafts of assignments, students were encouraged to use the Track Changes feature in Word. Either through that feature or in the discussion space proper, students typically encouraged each other to probe deeper into ideas. For example, when one student wrote in his autobiography that he learned not to be afraid of the real world, one of his peer editors wrote, “what type of situations helped you not to be afraid of the real world.” Another example is the following:

The other comment was about the “personalness” of the paper. It seems like you just want to list off the absolute facts about yourself and I see no ambiguity or doubt in your analysis of the events in your life. It’s hard to understand why you are the way you are because you’re just telling us instead of explaining it. Again, I really like your writing style ... just write more.

The student whose rough draft is described above reworked her autobiography to be an extremely honest work, where the voice she used to express her identity changed dramatically to talk about her feelings about being abandoned by her mother at the age of four and how she has continued on to become a very optimistic and strong person as a result of working through her broken heart.

In all cases, peer reviews shaped and helped to make clearer later drafts of assignments. Students enjoyed influencing each other’s work. One student wrote about a second draft, “I really like how you listened to my suggestion and I think the changes that you made have greatly improved you paper. I really liked how you went into more details about your grandmothers death, and your sister being born, your life is very interesting.” There was less of an opportunity to see a chronicle of how peer comments affected students in the discussions, but sometimes they wrote directly about that effect. For example, one student early on into the semester wrote, “thanks for your criticism, it does help me reread what i wrote making sure to state my same idea more clearly.”

Even when students were not told to change something about their writings, they were often inspired to by what they read from their peers. There were several comments such as, “very commendable to chose a broad belief in tolerance toward ‘others’ ... i have to admit, my response seems superficial in comparison ... kudos,” or “As for the importance in the other areas, such as #1 ... you made me think about wanting to change some of my answers.”

In a discussion about Austrian women during wartime, one group compared one of the stories for discussion with Rosa Parks’ act of resistance. Four different groups of students wrote back in the discussion that they had not thought of that connection but that upon reading it, they considered it very insightful: “Finally, the
Another particularly good expression of this personal growth was the following:

When I first signed up for this class I expected it to be like any other. Just a class where you learn simple facts about history and put them in to memory only for them to be lost shortly down the road. To my surprise this class brought something to the table that I had not expected. It taught me to look at others and help me diminish some stereotypes. In doing this it also created a whole new look at something, myself. The activities we did in this class helped me take a look at my own life and relate it to situations that others deal with that may be similar or completely opposite from mine.

The survey results point to some important re-evaluations taking place in the students. More than half of the students overall reported one or more of the following: changes in career plans, political beliefs, views on spirituality, and their abilities as a listener (9a, 10a, 32a, and 4a, respectively). That is, over half of the students surveyed experienced a shift in themselves in at least one of those four areas.

Predispositions

The items in the survey were a measure of the extent to which the course had served to encourage critical thinking and intercultural and interpersonal understanding, or the extent to which the survey takers appreciated and participated in the goals and structure of the class. To look at these notions, we did a quantitative analysis on survey responses. Each item of the survey had four possible answers, phrased either in terms of agreement or disagreement (survey items labeled with an \( a \)) or frequency of an occurrence (\( b \) items). A value was assigned to each answer, on a scale of 1 to 4, with a higher number indicating greater critical thinking, intercultural and interpersonal understanding, or satisfaction with the course. In this way we were able to rank the items, as well as find mean scores for each student. Higher mean scores reflected a greater appreciation of and engagement with the course.

We found that for almost all items, there was a consistency of the ranking of the items. That is, items fell into the same relative rank order, from strongest to least agreement, across the board, both for the students with lower mean scores and higher mean scores alike. There were, however, three items for which the ranking of responses differed from this otherwise consistent trend. These were item 14a, “I play an important role in this class”; 13b, “Participating in this class made me feel smart”; and 28b, “Participating in this class made me feel creative.” The students with an overall less positive mean (bottom third) response gave very
low scores for these items in particular, in contrast to the group of their classmates whose overall mean response was higher (top third).

Because these three items were exceptions to the overall consistency of rank ordering, we examined the qualitative data from the autobiographies to look for a possible insight that might be related to this apparent inconsistency. In the autobiographies, we discovered that these students’ descriptions of their contexts and ecologies in early childhood differed dramatically from one another. The three students whose overall mean scores on the survey were highest, made the following observations about their childhoods: “I was fortunate enough to have been raised in an environment where I was taught that no dream was too big and was given the opportunities to achieve them”; “I feel fortunate to be able to ascertain these opportunities, dreams, goals, aspirations due to my loving, supportive family”; and “Growing up, I was blessed to have an amazing family.” In stark contrast, the three students whose mean scores on the survey were the lowest came from unfortunate and difficult early environments, as they described: “Despite all my animosity toward them, my parents have taught me a great deal .... They have taught me how not to treat others, and especially how not to treat my child”; “This was very hard for me because I felt like I wasn’t grounded and I had no real home .... It forced me to grow up on my own. I think a lot of times I grew up too fast,” and “Through my short 21 years of life, I have seen many lives cut short because of bad choices. During the first few years of my life I met all of the relatives I would later either see or hear about passing away due to their bad decisions.”

It would seem, then, that these three items are indicators of an important underlying difference. The survey questions are about confidence and self-worth in the classroom environment. Students who did not find support in the class for those aspects of their lives now came into the classroom experience, by their own reports, with a history of a lack of support or without a particularly nurturing environment. CS-C classroom experiences for a single semester are apparently not salient enough to overcome what some learners bring into the experience.

A disconnect between FTF contact and CMC

We have reviewed much evidence that shows that the format of the class encouraged discussion and criticality and that the students appreciated the way the class was structured. There is, however, one aspect of the course that did not work out quite as expected and that was somewhat perplexing given the fact that most of the course was quite successful. There is an apparent disconnect that some students experienced between their FTF and CMC interactions with each other. The
strongest and clearest expression of this disconnect comes from one woman's final paper:

However, because of the format of the class was rather impersonal, I found I never really got a chance to truly get to know my classmates. The profiles although informative and interesting, I felt as if I was reading about strangers.

As the researchers, we found this quite consternating for several reasons. For one, the information that the students read about each other in the autobiographies was very intimate information, and students were able to learn things about each other, from the beginning of the semester, that one rarely learns about one's classmates. This intimacy makes the student's descriptor impersonal a surprising word choice. We conjecture that because of the formal writing format of the autobiographies, complete with three rounds of peer editing that included suggestions on wording and sentence structure, the students perceived the material as overall formal and therefore impersonal, despite the content of the papers.

Their online discussions were not quite so formal as some of the quotes provided suggest. Still, these online discussions were written with a certain amount of premeditation, with the knowledge that a written record of the postings would remain throughout the semester and beyond, for all in the class to see, and they were written explicitly to fulfill requirements laid out by the teacher. Even FTF conversations were frequently conducted with the goal being for students to write out in the CMC format a summary of their conversation in such a way that it could be understood by all who viewed the discussion board, which, to repeat, constituted a permanent record.

It may be that for these undergraduate students, what is said in spontaneous conversation simply feels more personal than what is communicated through formal writing. After all, they have spent all their lives participating in spontaneous speech. In contrast, their experiences with premeditated, organized writing have largely been restricted to written assignments in the educational context. Although many of these students, as members of a generation that grew up using computers, have no doubt used CMC extensively in their private communication, the nature of that CMC is sure to be qualitatively different from what they practiced in the class described in this chapter. Email is considered by a large proportion of younger people to be an outmoded, overly formal and slow form of communication, now that instant messaging has become the norm for younger people's use of CMC (Thorne & Payne 2005).

The following quote from another student's final paper on connections touches on this idea of formality being opposed to the real and personal, but at the same time it cites the distance created by CMC as something that promotes disclosure.
I have experienced a level of honesty from my classmates I have rarely experienced before. This honesty is partly due to the open format of the writing assignments. We were allowed to destructure our essays – make them less formal and more real – and that opened the door for the content to also be more real. It is also due, in part, to the feeling of anonymity that online posting allows.

This quote highlights the opposing forces that our chosen form of CMC, threaded electronic discussions, introduced to the class dynamic. By imposing a pre-determined format and style, and by encouraging more carefully considered and constructed answers, it encouraged higher level thinking that led the students to new insights about themselves, others, and humanity itself. At the same time, for some members of the class, it defamiliarized communication and kept relations with their classmates from feeling very personal and friendly.

Conclusions and implications

As a reminder for our readers, our research questions were as follows:

1. What impact did the CS-C pedagogy and using discussion as way of teaching/learning have on the students in the class?
2. How did the use of a blended model of CMC and FTF discussion influence the students and the objectives of the class?
3. Did CMC serve to enhance the class and its proposed aims, or did it have a negative or a negligible impact on them?

Our surveys and study of the data from students’ writings for the class have shown that the learners were constantly challenged to co-construct their own ways of and contents for knowing. The effects of a blended classroom, where both FTF discussions and the spatially and temporally independent means of communication and co-construction that were afforded by the integration of CMC were another key concentration of our inquiry. We focused on learners’ engagement with the processes of their learning, as they interacted in an electronic medium and we reflected on their FTF interactions as well. For the most part, they were able to connect in a real and personal way to the practices of CS-C and the theories that inform them. We have been able to demonstrate that by gaining more and more familiarity with the practices of CS-C learning and teaching made manifest in FTF interactions and written conversations using CMC, learners became active participants in a new, emergent paradigm where they created knowing that had measurable effects on them in psychosocial and interpersonal ways. We have shown how a CS-C model has an impact on interaction and learning in postsecondary language
and culture education. This impact especially has effects on voice and identity in the CMC aspects of the blended classroom.

Our analysis of the data focused on the key areas of criticality, sociality, co-construction, identity development, and the implementation of blended pedagogy using both CMC and FTF interaction. The main findings are summarized here:

1. Sociality was evidenced by participants' heightened openness and honesty toward each other through their computer-posted writings, and by their feeling of comfort in each other's and the teacher's presence. One student summed up the essence of this point when she wrote, "[We] ... learned about our interconnectedness, the need for sincerity and honesty in our every day lives, the value of reaching out to someone...."

2. Critical social-constructivism maintains that all knowing is socially and culturally determined, and that the interaction that students have with their fellow learners, when guided by critical thought, leads to new ways of knowing and constitutes learning. The class approach, imbedded in criticality and sociality, was able to accomplish this goal, as evidenced by student writing and by the survey results. Students were themselves surprised at how much they could learn from each other, and were able to report on their own emerging co-construction of knowledge, both in the survey and in their writing: "I have learned how to reflect on myself by reading how other people reflect on themselves."

3. The effects of early family experience emerged from the data as a surprisingly strong influence on learners' responses to the survey and in their writing. This observation raised our awareness about the individual learner variables and pre-dispositions toward (or away from) confidence and self-worth in the classroom environment. Those students who did not demonstrate the experience of finding support in the class for those aspects of their lives came into the classroom experience, by their own reports, with a history of a lack of support or without a nurturing early environment. CS-C classroom experiences for one semester are apparently not powerful enough to overcome what some learners bring into the experience. This aspect of our findings motivates us to further investigations into the interaction of CS-C and blended classroom pedagogy with individual learner differences and self-reports about early family experience.

4. There is an apparent disconnect that some students experienced between their FTF and CMC interactions with each other. It may be that for these undergraduate students, what is said in spontaneous conversation simply feels more personal than what is communicated through formal writing. Also, as members of the generation that is moving from email to instant messaging as a preferred mode of communication, they may find the discussion board
postings to be too formal, and therefore opposed to real and personal interaction. At the same time, though, students mentioned that the distance created by CMC was something that promoted more personal disclosure. This perception of distancing is reinforcement for our motifs of criticality and social constructivism. The students themselves realized that the blended CMC-FTF classroom gave them a means to gain a sense of Luke's (2004) "... out-of-body experience of watching oneself watch oneself ...." From that perspective they could observe their own experience, ponder their own identities in development and express the results of the process in what they termed "personal disclosure."

In the class described in this chapter, students came to new interpersonal and intercultural understandings through a radical change in their ways of acting in a class. This paradigm shift toward co-constructing meaning is a function of all participants' finding the courage to teach and learn in the risk-taking format of CS-C. We therefore conclude that the sorry state of higher education that Hersh and Merrow (2005) describe – a mutual nonaggression pact between professors and students, with each side agreeing not to impinge on the other and students preferring to be passive receptacles – is not inevitably true. Students are at least as surprised in their emergent paradigms of co-construction as are their teachers, but we all find the risks we take to engage in this new paradigm well worth the rewards.

We close, as is most appropriate, with the words of one of the students, who also helped us make meaning in what this investigation found. She writes,

> On my first day of class, I thought, "Oh, God. It's going to be a long semester." I was convinced that this class was going to be a touchy-feely, weird, pseudo-feminist lecture that I would just have to get through to get my Gender/Race/Class/Ethnicity/Non-Western credit. I was wrong. ... people were open and honest and willing to share even intimate details of their lives simply because it was asked for. That seems so basic, but it's the most important thing that I learned in this class. If you show a little interest in someone, take just a little bit of time and ask them a sincere question, they will give you a sincere answer. Most Americans have forgotten the value in "getting to know each other." ... This class has taught me a thing or two, and that's saying a lot for an elective. I learned about our interconnectedness, the need for sincerity and honesty in our every day lives, the value of reaching out to someone, and the beautiful little things we all experience that make life bearable. I didn't just learn about the person in each profile I read, I learned about humanity in general. I'm glad I didn't let my judgmental side get the best of me on the first day of class.
References


### Appendix A: Part A of the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item number</th>
<th>Items listed from those showing most agreement to least agreement</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28a</td>
<td>I can trust the teacher.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a</td>
<td>I haven't learned much in this class.*</td>
<td>18*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19a</td>
<td>The teacher doesn't care much about the students' interests.*</td>
<td>18*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22a</td>
<td>The teacher isn't much fun.*</td>
<td>18*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26a</td>
<td>The way we are graded in this class is fair and representative of the class goals.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>The goals of this class were not clear to me.*</td>
<td>18*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7a</td>
<td>This class isn't as good as I thought it would be.*</td>
<td>18*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24a</td>
<td>I would rather ask the teacher for help with the class than ask a classmate.*</td>
<td>16*</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18a</td>
<td>I can't really be myself in this class.*</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21a</td>
<td>Being in this class makes me nervous.*</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23a</td>
<td>This class helped me understand my own life experiences better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>I would like to see some of the ways we used computers in this class used in other classes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20a</td>
<td>I expressed myself very freely and openly in this class.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34a</td>
<td>The teacher is inflexible about how we can be and act in the class.*</td>
<td>16*</td>
<td>2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25a</td>
<td>The teacher is competent with technology.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31a</td>
<td>The other students can count on me to express my opinions.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a</td>
<td>I have made friends in this class.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td>I pursue topics that are interesting to me in this class.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12a</td>
<td>It wasn't clear to me why we used computers so much in this class.*</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Things were well timed in this class – neither rushed nor too slow.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33a</td>
<td>I am a better communicator as a result of having taken this class.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35a</td>
<td>I don't expect to ever talk to my classmates once this class is over.*</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17a</td>
<td>I know the names of the other students in this class.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27a</td>
<td>I am clearer about who I am because of some of the discussions we have had in this class.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16a</td>
<td>After this class, I would be more likely to stand up for my own or others' rights.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14a</td>
<td>I play an important role in this class.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>The class dynamic changed a lot during the semester.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30a</td>
<td>My writing has improved as a result of this class.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13a</td>
<td>I am a more compassionate person after having taken this class.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29a</td>
<td>I have not changed my ideas about my heritage as a result of this class.*</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11a</td>
<td>After this class, I am a better reader.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9a</td>
<td>This class has had no effect on my career plans.*</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>13*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After this class, I am now a better listener.  
I have reevaluated my political views because of something that happened in this class.  
This class has had no effect on my views about religion or spirituality.*

* Originally, the students responded with one of four answers: *strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.* For clarity, the answers are reported with the two choices of agreement grouped together, and similarly for disagreement. Of the 35 items, 7 items are framed negatively, so that disagreement with the statement reflects a more positive attitude towards the class. These items are marked with an asterisk. Finally, the items are reported in an order that reflects the items with the most positive responses first. The left-most column shows the order in which the items appeared on the version of the survey that the students responded to.

### Appendix B: Part B of the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item number</th>
<th>Items listed from those showing most agreement to least agreement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once or twice</th>
<th>A few times</th>
<th>Many times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10b</td>
<td>I understood new perspectives and points of view because of this class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23b</td>
<td>I needed to ask for help with D2L.*b</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19b</td>
<td>Someone laughed at my ideas in this class.*</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td>There was a misunderstanding in the class that wouldn't have arisen if we weren't communicating through computers.*</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15b</td>
<td>I understood something about a culture that I did not understand before.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30b</td>
<td>Having to get access to a computer for this class made me lose time.*</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11b</td>
<td>Someone in my class said something really stupid during a class discussion.*</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25b</td>
<td>The teacher got frustrated with the technology that we used for the class.*</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20b</td>
<td>I got frustrated with the technology that we were supposed to use.*</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17b</td>
<td>Doing things on computer allowed us to do things that we wouldn't have been able to do otherwise.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18b</td>
<td>My classmates made very interesting contributions in this class.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21b</td>
<td>I expressed myself in this class and then felt very satisfied being able to do that.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12b</td>
<td>Using computers added a kind of flexibility to the course that I appreciated.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13b</td>
<td>Participating in this class made me feel smart.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>I forgot about my personal problems while I was in this class.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9b I said/wrote something in this class and someone else really got what I was trying to say. 1 6 5 6
24b Something from this class led me to understand someone else's point of view better. 1 5 6 6
28b Participating in this class made me feel creative. 4 5 4 5
29b I had an interesting exchange with someone in this class that I wouldn't have had if we weren't communicating through computers. 4 4 5 5
3b I left class in a better mood than when I went in. 2 3 8 5
14b I could see my classmates' ideas develop over the semester. 2 4 7 5
16b I felt good about helping a fellow student in this class. 1 6 6 5
8b The computer end of the class created additional work for me.* 6* 4* 3* 4*
6b I could see for myself that I was developing as a student. 2 5 7 4
5b I talked to someone outside of the class about concepts that were discussed in this class. 2 8 5 3
22b I formed study groups with others in this class. 9 6 1 2
2b The teacher let me change a class assignment so that it better suited what I wanted to do. 8 4 3 2
27b I learned something new about computers in this class. 5 9 2 1
26b I have asked other students for help in this class. 4 11 2 1
7b Something from this class led me to forgive someone I know. 14 1 1 1

b Of the 30 items, 8 items are framed negatively, so that disagreement with the statement reflects a more positive attitude toward the class. These items are marked with an asterisk. Note also that the items are reported in an order that reflects the items with the most positive responses first. The left-most column shows the order in which the items appeared on the version of the survey that the students responded to.
Appendix C: Class syllabus and selected activities

Welcome! German 274 Spring 2005
The Dialogue of the Sexes: Women and Men in Contemporary German-Speaking Societies
Gen.Ed. Tier II Course in Individuals & Society and
General Education Gender, Race, Class, Ethnicity, or Non-Western Area Studies
Instructor: Prof. Mary E. Wildner-Bassett

Brief Description of the Course: This course views many aspects of the daily lives of individuals in the contemporary European German-speaking societies. The course content includes recent historical perspectives, such as the Wall and unification; daily life, including the political issues that affect daily living; and personal profiles of women and others in German-speaking countries. Collaborative computer-mediated activities in the COHlab in ML 412 will be integrated as essential elements of the course.

Texts: A reader for the class will be made available, as will occasional additional handouts.

Weekly Schedule of Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activities/Topics</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>Introduction to the course and formation of working dialogue groups</td>
<td>Aptheker, B. 1989. <em>Tapestries of Life: Women's Work, Women's Consciousness, and the Meaning of Daily Life</em> (excerpts)</td>
<td>Begin discussion of “Intellectual and Cultural Autobiography”</td>
<td>Students will be asked to find a partner who can be somehow defined as &quot;other&quot;, i.e. of other gender, background culture, family background, orientation, etc.</td>
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<td>January 31–Feb. 4</td>
<td>Peer editing in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</td>
<td><em>Women in Austria</em>, pp. 104–119. &quot;Politics, Gender, and Equality&quot;</td>
<td>Intellectual and cultural autobiography. Work on extending and deepening</td>
<td>Exploring the WWW and other sources for information on women in German-speaking societies. Discuss in detail with your partner and your discussion group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 7–11</td>
<td><strong>First quiz on readings and discussions</strong> Peer editing in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</td>
<td>Bohnen, A. 1993. <em>Women in Society: Germany.</em> pp. 11–35</td>
<td>Second draft of Autobiographies due</td>
<td>Historical views: Milestones in German-speaking women's lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 14–18</td>
<td><strong>Historical views: Social situation and personal expectations of women and men in the immediate post war years</strong></td>
<td><em>Women in Austria,</em> pp. 213–234, &quot;War and Gender Identity: The Experience of Austrian Women 1945–1950&quot;</td>
<td><strong>Autobiographies final draft due</strong> Begin work on research profiles a woman or another &quot;other&quot; in German-speaking society</td>
<td>Focus on aspects of the person's life that overlap or are very similar with your own interests, goals, talents, personal history, or other overlaps. The second focus will be on aspects of the person's life that are different or &quot;other&quot; than your own interests, goals, talents, personal history, or other overlaps.</td>
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<td>February 21–25</td>
<td><strong>Diversity in the German-speaking world: “Other” women and men. Peer editing in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</strong></td>
<td>Bohnen, A. 1993. <em>Women in Society: Germany.</em> pp. 67–81</td>
<td>First draft due in COHLab for peer editing of researched personal profiles in detail with your partner and your discussion group in the COHLab session</td>
<td>Read for focus on aspects that overlap or are very similar with and different or &quot;other&quot; than own interests, goals, talents, personal history, or other overlaps.</td>
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<td>February 28–March 4</td>
<td><strong>Equal rights: Women, men and the law in German-speaking countries. Peer editing in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</strong></td>
<td>Reading: <em>Women in Austria,</em> pp. 56–82, &quot;Rights at last? The first generation of female members of parliament in Austria&quot;</td>
<td>Continue work on personal profiles. Second draft due for peer editing</td>
<td>Read for good writing and for aspects that overlap or are very similar with and different or &quot;other&quot; than own interests, goals, talents, personal history, or other overlaps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 7–11</td>
<td><strong>Review sessions: Historical perspectives, daily life and personal profiles of women and others in German-speaking cultures. Second quiz on readings and discussions</strong></td>
<td>Viewing of documentary films</td>
<td><strong>Final version of research profile due. Begin work on interview profile.</strong> See comments this week and first week after break.</td>
<td>Interview with women or another &quot;other&quot; in your society. Compare with researched profile of a woman or another &quot;other&quot; in German-speaking society. Interviews are similar to those you have read in the readings for this week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 14–18</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break</strong></td>
<td>No Classes</td>
<td>Have Fun</td>
<td>Be Safe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Reading/Assignment</td>
<td>Discussion/Activity</td>
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<td>March 21-25</td>
<td>Women and men in the &quot;New Germany&quot;: Unification (the Wende) and change.</td>
<td>Excerpts from Dodds and Allen-Thompson. 1994. <em>The Wall in my Backyard</em> and Kolinsky, pp. 259-294</td>
<td>Work on <em>Interview profile</em>. Write a summary and description of your interview, including what your criteria were for the choice of the person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 28-April 1</td>
<td>Women and men in the &quot;New Germany&quot;: Unification (the Wende) and change. Peer editing in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</td>
<td>Shoemaker, S. 1996. <em>My Second Life.</em> Video viewing and discussion</td>
<td>First draft of Interview Profile due. Discuss your reactions to the film in detail with your partner and your discussion group.</td>
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<td>April 4-8</td>
<td>Gender identities and life stories. Comments on peers' work in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</td>
<td><em>Austrian Women,</em> pp. 197-212, &quot;Representations of the beginning: Shaping Gender Identities in Written Life Stories of Women and Men&quot;</td>
<td>Final draft of <em>interview profile due</em>. After reading this section, reflect once again on cultural and personal shaping of identity. Compare your own experiences to what you have read.</td>
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<td>April 11-15</td>
<td>Third quiz on readings and discussions</td>
<td>Kolinsky, pp. 100-150</td>
<td>Begin summary statement – Connections. Written reflections on the connections among these pieces and the lives of class participants.</td>
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<td>April 18-22</td>
<td>Girls and boys, women and men in schools and higher education</td>
<td>Kolinsky, pp. 100-150</td>
<td>Write a description of your own schooling experiences to date, with a focus on gender issues that might occur to you. Compare your own experiences to what you have read. Discuss in detail with your partner and your discussion group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25-29</td>
<td>Class summary and review. Peer editing work in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</td>
<td>Illustration of class concepts in viewing and critical discussion of the film <em>Run Lola Run</em></td>
<td><em>First draft of connections statement due</em>. What is the &quot;dialogic emergence of culture&quot;? Where are you in the process of entering a dialogue with the German-speaking cultures? Where are you in the dialogue of the sexes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2–5</td>
<td>Continue class summary and review. Comments on peers' work in COHLab; Discussions in classroom</td>
<td>Review postings by fellow students; review any other readings</td>
<td><em>Final draft of connections statement due</em>. What is the &quot;dialogic emergence of culture&quot;? Where are you in the process of entering a dialogue with the German speaking cultures? Where are you in the dialogue of the sexes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 12 8:00-10:00 am</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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*COHLab is an acronym for the Collaborative Computing Laboratory of the College of Humanities at our institution.*