



## Learning as Scholarship: Developing Integrative Learning in the First Year and Beyond

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We know from the literature and from student comments that the first-year experience is crucial to student academic achievement but also to their overall engagement in higher education, personal development and retention.<sup>1</sup> In short, we need to set students up to succeed in the first year and to ensure an enriching educational experience. This means that their experiences both inside and outside the classroom are related and need to be integrated. The combination of these two aspects of student life at university addresses the issues of transition, the education of the whole person, and the fostering of student engagement by developing students as “scholars of learning.”<sup>2</sup> Students met weekly in the course, “Reflection and Action” with a professor where the overall learning outcome was to develop the habits of mind to be successful in university (we aimed to develop scholars of learning – learners who inquired into their own learning as well as identified what effective learning looks like). Throughout the course (based on a “great dialogues model”) engagement and active participation in dialogue encouraged ownership of points of view while sharpening student awareness of conflicting or competing lines of argument. Integration of information literacy into the curriculum ensured that students developed the critical analysis, thinking, and evaluating skills that all scholars develop, and that are needed for success in higher education. Central to the success of the course were teaching partnerships among experts from different learning contexts – liberal arts (interdisciplinary faculty members), library, student affairs and community partners.

Students created ePortfolios to integrate their learning experiences. The use of ePortfolios, seeded in the first-year course and the uPod, will continue throughout the university experience and be “completed” with a capstone course in each students’ major area. Students will also have the ability to continue their ePortfolios as alumni. This holistic approach to learning, scaffolded throughout the curriculum, better prepares students for engagement and success at university, but also develops responsible citizens who are able to integrate their learning and better serve their communities.

### Example Student ePortfolios

Jessica Brunton <http://eport.uwaterloo.ca/html/snapshot.php?id=30408565262713>

Faith Cameletti <http://eport.uwaterloo.ca/html/snapshot.php?id=7617173397557>

Alex Romanowski <http://eport.uwaterloo.ca/html/snapshot.php?id=3399366534687>

Katie Zaparanuik <http://eport.uwaterloo.ca/html/snapshot.php?id=85770466072271>

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Terenzini et. Al., “Making the Transition to College,” in Robert J. Menges, Maryellen Weimer and Associates, *Teaching on Solid Ground: Using Scholarship to Improve Practice*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996, p. 43. See also George D. Kuh and Associates, *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*, Washington: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

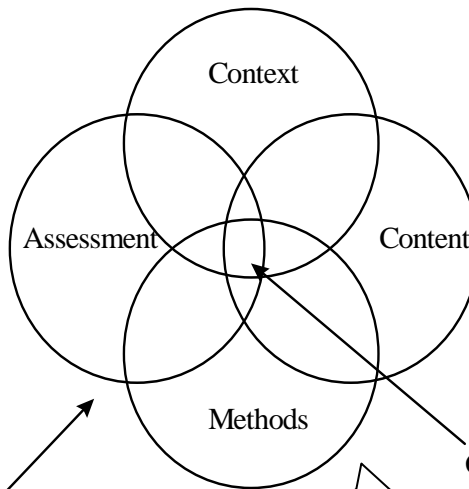
<sup>2</sup> Barbara Cambridge, “Electronic Portfolios and the Scholarship of Learning,” Keynote Address to the St. Jerome’s ePortfolio Conference, St. Jerome’s University/University of Waterloo, July 2008.



## Implementing the Course

- First-year, first-term students only
- Course recommended by Student Advisors
- Small class (no more than 20 students/section)
- Textbooks (core texts) provided

- 4 core texts
- Additional materials related to course themes (reflection/action and responsible citizenship – films/poems/texts)



- Writing assignments (analytic papers, weekly reflections)
- Presentations (Group research, ePortfolios)
- Electronic Portfolio (culminating assignment)

- Discussion-based classes (engaging with texts, students, instructor) – develop thinking, speaking, discussion skills around themes of reflection/action and responsible citizenship

Course Evaluation

You and Your Philosophy

- Students should “make connections” between course materials and “real” world

- Guest lecturers – engage students in interdisciplinary approaches
- “Field” trips i.e. library – develop their students’ ability to conduct research and present it effectively
- Build writing skills through weekly writing assignments
- Learning Community – build students’ ability to collaborate