



December 2007



A Word from the Director...

From the PETAL Blog: There was an interesting article in the September 27, 2007 edition of The Chronicle that talks about a new software called CommentPress.

The CommentPress software is essentially a template for the blogging site WordPress, but what makes it so exciting is that it allows readers of online texts to place comments in the margins, just like people have been doing with printed texts for centuries.

The template divides the browser screen vertically in half so that the original text is on the left and the comment area is on the right. Each paragraph of the original text has a little comment bubble that you can click to add a comment (and each bubble has a number that shows how many comments have already been posted). While the original text scrolls up and down, however, the comment box remains stationary so that it is always positioned next to the text you are currently reading (although you must click on the bubble of the paragraph you are reading for the contents of the comment box to change).

The real advantage of this tool is that it allows a virtual conversation not only between the instructor and students, but also, and perhaps more importantly, between the students and the text itself. It is a means to more meaningfully foster learner-content interaction, as well as to create a truly writerly learning environment.

To learn more about the CommentPress project, visit <http://www.futureofthebook.org/commentpress/>.

If you would be interested in using CommentPress, please let us know.

Visit the web site of the
**Program for the Enhancement of
 Teaching and Learning (PETAL)**
 for the full schedule of Spring 2008 events,
 teaching tips and links to web resources
www.southalabama.edu/petal

**Advance Registration by phone
 or email is encouraged**
 Phone: 461-1563
 Email: PETAL@southal.edu

Petal 2008 Events

New Faculty Development Seminars

W 1/23	3-5pm	Course Design and Devel	Litchfield
T 1/24	1-3pm	Course Design and Devel	Litchfield

Workshops

T 1/15	10am - 12pm	The "Clicker"	Gray
W 1/16	3pm - 5pm	The "Clicker"	Gray
T 1/29	10am - 12pm	Grade Book in Excel	Gray
W 1/30	3pm - 5pm	Grade Book in Excel	Gray

Brown Bag Lunch Discussion Rethinking Interaction: In Person and Online Robert Gray

Friday, January 25, 2008
 12 - 1 pm

Mr. Gray will lead a discussion on ways we can reconceptualize interaction, both in person and online, by rethinking the relationship between students and the content we are trying to teach them.

Faculty Roundtable Cooperative Learning Brenda Litchfield

Monday, January 28, 2008
 2 - 3 pm

Dr. Litchfield will present several strategies for improving student engagement and achievement through group activities.

2007-08 at the Midway Point

As we look back and evaluate what has been a very successful Fall Semester for PETAL, we are excited by the prospects of the coming Spring semester. Lots of exciting activities have already been planned and several more are on the drawing board.

PETAL will, of course, be offering the New Faculty Seminars for those new faculty whose schedules would not allow them to attend in the Fall. The seminars went very well this semester, and attendance was overwhelming. In fact, we had standing room only in all of the Wednesday sessions. Plus, we had 21 complete the series in their first semester and another 9 only lack one seminar for completion.

We will be continuing our Faculty Roundtable series in the Spring and have three very exciting sessions planned. In January, Brenda Litchfield will lead a discussion on Cooperative Learning. In February, Peter Wood will share his ideas on teaching using Podcasts. And in March, Jan Sauer will talk about how instructors can make better use of the library in their classes.

Our Brown Bag Lunch series will also continue in the Spring. In January, PETAL Director Rob Gray will be leading a session on interaction. In February, Ellen Harrington will lead a discussion on how to build intellectual skills, and in March, Dr. Litchfield will talk about preparing for tenure and promotion.

PETAL will also be offering several Technology Workshops in the Spring, and some of these will be a little different than originally published. We will, of course, be offering sessions on the Clicker. These will occur in January and March. Also in January, we will have a session on doing your grades in Excel. In February, we will have two sessions that talk about ways to augment the traditional classroom with the Internet. The first will deal with teaching hybrid courses, while the second will look at ways to use streaming video. In our New Faculty Seminars, we received several requests to do a session on teaching portfolios, so we will be doing that in April.

The PETAL Panel Discussions are still on the drawing board, but we are tentatively planning on having a discussion on multiculturalism in late February moderated by Richard Hayes, Dean of the College of Education, and another on the use of Web 2.0 technologies in early April that will be moderated by Richard Wood, Dean of University Libraries.

PETAL also offers videotaping services to help faculty analyze their teaching, as well as multimedia consulting, where we work with faculty to develop web sites, videos, or any other kinds of learning objects. We also have videoconferencing capabilities.

Finally, perhaps the most exciting news for PETAL in the Spring is that we are having an area on the Library's third floor remodeled to house our offices, a classroom, and a computer lab. We are very excited about this development and would like to thank Dr. Covey and Dr. Wood for making it happen.



Required Viewing for All Faculty

Michael Wesch, a cultural anthropologist at Kansas State University, has been producing a remarkable series of videos about the cultural and epistemological "r/evolution" that has been produced (enabled?) by the proliferation of the Internet.

One of these, *A Vision of Students Today*, should be required viewing for all University faculty. It provides a powerful look at how that epistemological/metaphysical shift is experienced by today's college students.

As an anthropologist, Wesch is primarily concerned with the cultural ramifications of this r/evolution, but his vision, as well as the phenomena on which it is based, also has tremendous implications for educators, both in terms of how we confront this new reality in our classrooms, as well as how we find new ways to envision and take advantage of these unforeseen possibilities.

The video can be accessed from the front page of the PETAL website (<http://www.southalabama.edu/petal>).

