

Appendix I

The Cultures of the American Renaissance

Second Life – Balkun FIG – Fall 2007 Assessment Survey

Indicate how often you used the following Second Life resources available in the House of Seven Gables Bb course and "wiki":

	Daily	Weekly	Once every two weeks	Monthly	Rarely or Never	Not Applicable
YouTube movies				2	11	
Second Life tutorials		1	3	7	5	
Step-by-step building directions			3	7	4	1

Indicate how frequently you accessed or used the following resources in your course:

	Daily	Weekly	Once every two weeks	Monthly	Rarely or Never	Not Applicable
I accessed content areas in the House of Seven Gables Bb course (e.g., Announcements, Course Documents, Syllabus, External Links, etc.)		8	6	2		

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not Applicable
I don't hesitate to use a new technology tool on my computer even if there is no one available to show me how.	6	5	1	3	1	
The Second Life materials in The House of Seven Gables Bb course helped me with my project for this course.	1	8	3	2	2	
Preparatory face to face instruction (CTC Lab Sessions) in the use of Second Life helped me develop the skills necessary for my project.	8	5	2			
Working with my team members and an instructional designer helped me consider other ideas that I would not have considered for my project on my own.	7	5	3	1		
The Second Life project activities had no effect on whether I kept up with the work in this class.		4	7	5		
I felt compelled to complete the reading of The House of the Seven Gables as compared to the other readings assigned for this course because of the Second Life activities.	5	4	5			

I was able to find or create the objects that I needed for my project in Second Life	1	7	1	5	2	
The Second Life project activities did not compel me to explore the novel in greater depth than I otherwise would have.	3	2	4	4	3	
The room/space that I recreated in Second Life looks similar to what I envisioned when I read the novel	1	4	6	5		

Open Ended Questions – Part 1

What preconceived notions about the places where learning can happen did you have prior to this class? Have they changed at all and if so, how?

I now understand that we are entering into a completely new age in which we will be able to learn a lot more in a new interactive manner online and in virtual worlds.

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I suppose (if one were to suppose) that learning can take place anywhere. Typically, it takes place in a slightly rundown room with a chalkboard, desks, and sub-conscious longing.

My opinions, notions, whatnot...they have not changed.

I didn't think that learning could happen in Second Life but toward the end of the semester, I realized that thinking about objects and images as universal communicative mediums was an exercise in Symbolic and Imagistic ways of thinking. I don't think that this is the only way that literature should be read but it certainly reflects a certain trend in literary analysis that Graduate Students (and even undergraduate students) should acquaint themselves with.

As a teacher, I like to think that I'm openminded about the kinds of teaching and learning that can be made possible by technology. I don't really think that my experience with Second Life changed my notions about this particularly.

I am used to the classroom and BB discussion room. I am aware of "field trips" but was

not familiar with SL and that learning can occur there."

didn't have preconceived notions about where learning can happen. However, I wasn't expecting Second Life to give me as much insight into the novel as it did.

I believe that much learning happens outside the classroom through reading and creative projects. My views on learning have not changed.

I strongly believe that learning can occur anywhere. However, I do not believe that the Second Life project coincided with that I wanted to learn from this course. Participating in Second Life has changed my view on \innivative\" learning in that now I am more hesitant than before to incorporate new tools like this one. "

My conception of education has not changed at all. I have always held reservations about online learning, but with regard to interpersonal communication, response time to questions, confrontation, debate, etc. The learning and research I did for this project does not differ, save that it will reach a greater audience. I appreciate the work, however, and would use this had I a class of my own. I feel it uses online education without sacrificing communication and inpersonality.

I thought that learning can happen most anywhere, and this class confirmed that notion. I've participated in a class that was partially online before, so I wasn't suprised that learning could take place virtually on the computer.

Although I think that Second Life can be useful, I don't think that we had enough time to really explore the world.

I didn't think a place like Second Life could offer any education, though I think our class created a good place but I really didn't find any other educational sites that helped in Second Life.

I have always had an open mind about places where can happen. Being an education major at Seton Hall university, I found that the multimedia in the classroom was effective and cost efficient ways of engaging the multiple styles of learners simulateously, which also saves time and human resource. Therefore, this second life project was exciting to tackle. For the most part, I had fair good knowledge and control over what I was creating' however, there were some technical difficulties that prevented us from accomplishing certain tasks.

Do you believe the approach to textual analysis implemented through the Second Life project is useful for learning about literature? Please explain your response.

I didn't particularly like Second Life. It creeps me out, the whole virtual thing. I'm old school.

Yes, I believe it was and is useful. As there are different types of learners, it is obvious that accessing a virtual world will help some more than others, but overall it is an interesting, new and interactive way to learn. It's an great tool for students and teachers alike. Whether people are building a place or accessing it for activities, a closer reading of the text is necessary and there is further integration and illustration of the culture of the time during which the piece was written – or whatever the creators' goals may be regarding intent, themes, etc.

I think it is more useful of a way to think about writing (writing, which often heavily relies on constructing symbols that represent emotions). I think that Second Life would be a more useful tool for learning about poetry for this reason; however, all literature relies on the symbol as a device in some respect.

Possibly, but not specifically at the graduate level. I think it could be incredibly useful for a high school or undergraduate environment, but I like to think that at this level, students are capable of making intellectual leaps and using their imagination to envision texts and place themselves within their boundaries.

Yes, SL not only requires that we get involved with the text but also in such a way that we have to "teach" or share the information we learned to someone else. This method of teaching someone what you have learned has proved beneficial."

I'm not altogether sure. Creating the garden made me think about landscape and property and about history as they pertained to the novel.

I believe that the research for the project was useful for grasping the novel. However, I felt that trying to get the technology to do what I wanted was frustrating and took away from time that could have been spent on researching ideas.

No, I do not. The Second Life project did not open new doors for me in interpreting the novel. In fact, I feel that I learned more about the other texts in class than the House of Seven Gables novel. When we were scheduled to discuss the novel, we spent most of the time playing with our avatars and learning how to navigate Second Life. I wanted to learn more about Hawthorne and the text, not about the strange places we should avoid in Second Life. It didn't even matter what our avatar looked like - we should have all had the prototype avatar unless someone wanted to change his/her person on their own. I do not feel like my project is useful in learning more about the House of Seven Gables.

I don't necessarily agree that it is completely useful for textual analysis. Going back to

one of the Leikert scale questions, I had an idea of what the cent shop - and the rest of the house, looked like. That image is now gone, replaced by a more concrete image. While it is certainly helpful to research and learn about the context in which writer developed their ideas, and the history that surrounded them, this physical manifestation took away from my imagined house.

So - two points. It was certainly helpful to discuss the particulars about the reading - history, cultural information, etc. It did, however, take away some of the imagination. I guess that's a good trade, though...

Not particularly. Although second life is more interactive than an in-class presentation, the software and technology seems still to cumbersome at its current stage. Therefore, alot of time was spent in dealing with technology and less on concepts and interpreting the novel.

I think that it could be if we were given more time to really focus on the project.

I think there are some kinks to work out, but I think there is a lot of potential for Second Life as a resource.

I consider this 2nd Life group project of furnishing, populating and teaching about the House of the Seven Gables very interesting. The incorporation of multimedia into the curriculum is effective in reinforcing learning. Unlike the limitations of the PowerPoint presentations, lectures, and papers, the virtual sphere in 2nd life gives its users unlimited space to be creative and interactive. Two of my most satisfying experiences in 2nd life are that I am able to meet and work with my partner anytime that we agree, and I get to see the finished product of the house collectively. This is the first time that I get the opportunity to witness and interact with a conglomeration of abstract ideas of my classmates in a virtual world.

The technology itself (the act of searching for objects in SL and creating interactive games) was not always helpful. There are a lot of irrelevant items and sites in SL that you have to sift through to get what you want. But the project did help me to focus - not just on a single room or character, but on a single significant aspect of a given character.

I do. It forced us to do the same kind of research, but to implement it in a different way. I think that seekig out the objects was at times tiresome, but the work within the house itself felt like a nice addition to a written research project.

Yes, I do believe the approach is useful, albeit in moderation. While no viable substitute exists for reading the literature itself, the Second Life project gives students a chance to express their understandings and ideas concerning the literature in a non-traditional yet enriching format. Part of learning about great authors and their works comes in the exploration process, and Second Life clearly enables that to occur in more realistic ways. We can \see\" the house, and we then decide how it should look according to Hawthorne's (and our) interpretations. That said, it takes some getting used to before one makes all of the connections and grasps all of the technology involved. I do feel, however, that it is

worth continued exploration with other texts.

Did the creation of objects using Second Life help to increase your comprehension of the novel (themes, characters, material culture, historical period, etc.)? Please explain your response.

Not especially. The creation of objects in Second Life seemed more an exercise in technology and binary knowhow than about the novel--or literature in general--specifically.

The actual creation of objects and finding of objects did not increase my comprehension, but my research of what the objects should be and should look like did.

I wouldn't say the creation of the objects did this at all (objects were typically found instead of created); however, researching what kind of objects would be used in the ideal second life situation where one could create the objects or have objects created was useful for understanding the period.

No. I feel that I understood the concept of material culture through our discussions in class, and I grasped the novel through writing and reading about it. Using Second Life may have increased my knowledge about Second Life, but that wasn't specific to the novel.

No, the research completed prior to the creation of objects helped to increase my comprehension of the novel.

Yes it did - the garden was filled with flowers and vegetables and that helped me understand the subtext of the garden itself - that it was as much about the actual land as it was a symbol for life and the fate of the Pyncheons.

Creating my room helped me to visualize the Cult of Domesticity.

It helped me learn more about the historical period, but it did not have any impact on the novel itself. In fact, I think that participating in Second Life is limiting at an undergrad/grad level because it strips one's imaginative vision from the novel and conforms it to what Second Life makes available or what you can create.

The whole idea of creating the house and setting in your own mind is not only neglected, but impossible to do once *The House of Seven Gables*, according to Second Life, is placed in your mind.

Yes. Please see the previous response. I enjoyed, and got a better idea about, the rich history, cultural events, etc.

It did help me get a greater sense of a material culture approach to the novel, as the

objects in the house gave a greater context for understanding what life was like during the period in which the novel takes place.

I don't necessarily think so. I think the actual research for the project helped more. I found that I spent more time looking for the objects than should have been necessary. More of this time could have been spent on research.

Not so much with the creation of objects--perhaps finding some of the furniture but otherwise it was difficult to find/make appropriate objects.

Yes, the purchase and creation of objects helped me to further understand the importance of the garden. For example, it took a lot of time and effort to create the fencing of the garden but the finished product totally change the face of the garden. As a result, I thought of the amount of work that Holgrave and Phoebe invested to maintain the garden. This observation, therefore, helped me to understand and appreciate the aesthetic and cultivating values that gardens provide to the users.

I understand the historical context of the novel more than I did before - considering what items would actually exist in a 19th century room required research.

NOt particularly. It felt like I had my ideas and then I needed to figure out how to apply them to this specific medium. My comprehension was already complete by the time I was thinking about how to use SecondLife to represent it.

In my case, we didn't create too many objects on our own. We did find outside objects and place them into our designated area. At first, that was a chore, because the one object we needed, we couldn't find. Once we did find it, and saw it placed in our area, the wheels in our minds began turning, and we started to see our project unfold before our eyes. I would have liked to participate more in the "creation" process, but I am sure I will do that at some later point in time.

What would you have found useful that was not provided to you regarding Second Life?

The info and help re: SL was exemplary.

A few classes on creating/finding/editing objects and simply getting around in second life at the start of the semester.

The ability to have objects made based on credible research--students would do the research and a professional would design the objects based on the specifications indicated through the research (instead of finding a gun that could stand in for a 19th century civil war rifle, one could have a historically accurate replica made)

Frankly, I would have preferred to work more independently on this project - while I wouldn't have minded having a partner, I felt very limited by having three people to report to on the project.

I guess I was the special case...I wish I had opportunities to visit the CAT to log on, explore and create objects in SL.

I'm not sure - there were technical glitches that were irksome - probably I would have preferred to have the research somehow populate pre-determined objects within SL, so that creating/buying the objects didn't take up so much time.

I would have liked to have more help dealing with the technology. I would have also liked to know about Second Life Exchange earlier in the semester so that I would have spent less time flying around looking for objects. I also would have liked to have less restrictions on money in order to buy the objects that I felt fit into my room, rather than flying around looking for free objects that did not fit into nineteenth century decor.

I wasted a lot of time trying to navigate the site. Second Life is not user friendly yet and that proved detrimental to my learning experience of Second Life. However, I am not in grad school to learn Second Life, so if I could have sent my research materials to TLTC and then it was formatted, that may have been more useful.

? Not sure.

I mostly only followed the instruction provided for creating my space in second life.

I think that everything was provided for us, but we needed more time to really make it useful.

Just more time one-on-one to really learn how to use the program.

I am uncertain.

I would have appreciated more direction as to where to look for relevant/decent free items. This would have left more time for research.

That's hard, because what wasn't provided really wasn't anything I could put into physical terms. This project felt large, and I think it felt larger than it needed to because it was new and remarkably open for use. We were provided with ideas, which was nice, but it's still a different milieu than we are used to in grad classes, and school in general. We've talked about how a large pool of objects for use would be nice. Having Mary and Heidi around was excellent,, but I feel that in group work sessions there was just too much for them to handle, and that is more a function of a 2 to 20 person ratio than their performance.

The only aspect I would really change is the timeline for working on the project. Though I consider myself tech-saavy, I still had a hard time grasping certain ideas and then immediately implementing them, with no time to really experiment. Part of that comes in having to complete other course components, but I would have liked some more hands-on training and even a little class time to work on the project.

What was your role in your team? (research, technology or both)

I completed research and took the time to gather and create objects and put the room together.

Research.

Both

Mainly technology, but I did research as well.

Research

Research and some technology, like finding and buying the appropriate flowers, chicken coop, chickens, etc.

both

Research and a little technology

Both

My role was a combination of researcher and technology

My partner and I worked evenly on the project. We split the room up into themes and worked from there.

Both

Technology

Both

Technology

Research and Technology

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
I feel that constructing a virtual model of the novel improved my comprehension and recall of the events in the story and the themes the book explored..	3	4	3	5	1	
By manipulating symbols and objects in Second Life, I was able to make new connections and interpretations that I would have not been able to make from reading the book and discussing the novel in class.	1	4	3	7	1	
Virtual environment technology provides a learning space for understanding literary text in a number of different ways and employing different critical perspectives in a manner that could not be achieved in a traditional classroom setting.	2	7	3	1	2	
The Second Life project did not enhance the cooperation and collaboration among students.	1	4	2	5	4	

The time spent employing Second Life as a supplement for learning was far greater than expected.	4	5	5	1	1	
Technical problems that arose using SL on my computer did not interfere significantly with my learning experience.	1	2	4	5	4	
The time spent employing Second Life as a supplement for learning was worth the investment.	2	3	5	3	3	
I enjoyed taking this course.	6	8	1	1		
I prefer to complete course work as I have always done it, rather than trying something new.	2	2	3	5	3	1
I did not bother completing Second Life online activities assigned for the course as other course requirements were of greater value to me.	2	3	4	4	4	3

Open Ended Questions – Part 2

What features of the Second Life project helped you to learn the most?

Seeing/discussing the conference that Dr. Balkun held in second life on the last day of class helped me to visualize other activities that one could use second life for. so, instead of the impractical approach to trying to construct historically accurate objects, one could use boxes with pictures on them for activities where the students could more easily see the objects as more symbolic than actually representing the historical period)

The interactive activities and necessary employment of symbols.

The research element of the project taught me a great deal.

Identifying specific subjects/passages within the text to focus, providing a greater appreciation for the entire novel

research into the garden, and how Hawthorne used the garden to mirror themes of class, gender and history

I learned the most through research that did not involve being logged onto Second Life.

I think the Thinc book was the most helpful.

The notecards and the ability to assign pictures...or vice versa, depending on your point of view (uploading pics and assigning notecards.)

the research in preparing for the project was the most helpful aspect of the project.

The research aspect of the project helped me learn the most. Other elements of Second Life were interesting, but didn't help with my comprehension of the novel.

Initiating the research to form activities that were interesting and involved for my classmates--it required a lot of creativity.

The landscaping, fencing, purchasing and situating the objects helped me learn the most.

The research required to complete the room.

Again, I don't think that I learned anything more because of secondlife. It was just an interesting way to implement my work.

Finding objects, working with spatial issues, and exploring Second Life seemed to help the most.

What other technology tools or skills did you learn or acquire as a result of your work on this project?

None/NA

I learned how to maneuver in second life and make notecards.

I learned how to use Second Life more fluidly. I feel confident in my ability to work in the world.

Everything to do with Second Life – I had never used any type of virtual world before.

(Besides obtaining free clothes and objects) I learned the basics - teleporting, walking, uploading images, creating/placing thinc book, searching

A little graphics skills, and conceptualizing in 3-D

While I learned the basics of Second Life, I did not acquire any technology tools or skills that would help me beyond the program.

I am uncertain, really. I learned how to make notecards, a thinc book, and scripts.

Just using SL and that it existed. Now I know what Ira Flatow is talking about when he refers to SL in Talk of the Nation, Science Fridays.

I began to remember a little bit of the programming skills that I used from previous engineering classes, although computer program is a large part of the reason why I quit the engineering program.

I'm not sure that I learned anything in Second Life that I didn't know already. Over all, the skills that I did learn won't be of much use to me outside of this class.

How to use Windows MovieMaker and also how to better manipulate the Internet and online space.

I learned how to dress and undress my avatar, build and modify items, travel between worlds and how to create assignments in second life.

I have a better understanding of the abilities and limits of technology.

Windows movie maker.

I learned how to use Windows MovieMaker (to some degree), and I also received an introduction to a virtual world. I plan on exploring each further down the road.

What features of the Second Life project did you like the least?

There were definitely some 'holes' in the world and, at times, the program was slow, but our computers are really not as good as they should be to interact fully in a virtual world.

All of it.

finding objects.

While I got along with my instructional designer on a personal level, I did not find her input into my project particularly helpful.

There not being a back-up plan for those who do not have access to the internet or a computer with the program

Manipulating objects, notecards, ownership -this was not easily done. Also, a small thing like hitting \mute\" for the notecards just once, prevented me from seeing any notecards at all - didn't know how to fix this until we put in a ticket with SL. Their knowledge base is not the easiest thing in the world to use, either."

I found the program to be very slow. It often crashed my computer. Also, I did not like how you could not change the textures properly on multi-textured items. I was also extremely frustrated by the walls of the house, which were not solid. My avatar kept falling out of the house, so I spent most of my time trying to get back to my room.

I disliked the entire project, to be honest. I do not feel that participating in the Second Life project enabled me to participate in the scholarly academic discourse, which we are told we must attempt to enter into. I think the project was a distraction, an attempt to do something new, but ultimately failed in a graduate level course. It did not help me understand Hawthorne better in the least bit.

Moving around.

I disliked the difficult user interface, the time delay, the inconvenience of not being able to access a computer with second life on it at all times, the difficulties with creating objects and manipulating previously created objects.

Finding objects seemed frustrating. Long meetings \in world\" that did not seem to accomplish much also were also not helpful."

Sometimes the Second Life software would cause my computer to crash or run very slowly, thus making it difficult and frustrating to complete the tasks at hand.

The inability to modify or use objects that I purchased as well as the other objecting getting in the way of the object that I wanted to modify. For example, when I was setting the cobblestone walkway, I had difficulties moving it because the trees were in my way, so I couldn't access the walkway features.

I would have liked more time to work on this, although it would extend beyond the limits of the semester. More could have been accomplished, and I think an entire course could be dedicated to creating the house.

Foraging for materials.

The one feature I disliked was the fact that we didn't have \rooms,\" but simple divisions between our spaces. Also, I would have preferred more consistent guidelines and ones that remained constant throughout the project. At times, I felt like parameters shifted

entirely too often. "

Did this project give you tools/ideas that you would apply in your own teaching or profession?

No.

I might try an activity similar to the one that Dr. Balkun used in the conference. Second Life does have a lot of potential.

Yes, I would definitely like to bring Second Life and/or more online interactive projects into my classroom next semester.

Yes. I love the Wiki.

This project sparked my curiosity. I would like to explore SL more and would incorporate the use of technology in my own learning experience in the future.

Doesn't really apply...

I do not intend to use Second Life again, but I like the idea of trying something new to see if it will be a successful learning tool.

No, I would not use Second Life. I do not think it is a proper vehicle for presenting information on a text or in interpreting a work of literature.

I feel that the intent of the project was to do something innovative and tech-savvy and unfortunately I think the learning process was sacrificed in the process.

Certainly. I like the out of class and in class participation is fostered.

Possibly. Although I wouldn't aspire to use this technology,if it becomes increasingly popular it's nice to know that I have a foundation in it.

I think that a project like this is more suitable for elementary or high school students rather than college.

It taught me how to think of technology in a new, more helpful way.

Yes, I envision creating researches in 2nd life.

I think so. Using online spaces is going to become more and more common, I think, in the classroom. I like that I will be able to say that I've been on the cutting edge of that new classroom tool.

Yes - without a doubt, I will explore integrating this into my own teaching.

Other comments:

The course was fun and interesting and I learned a lot about The House of Seven Gables and a new educational media. Thank you for a great semester!

Merry Christmas.

Second Life only became fun and practical late in the semester after becoming acquainted with it. For this reason, it might make more sense to use Second Life for two consecutive semesters or in High School where classes last for a year.

I really appreciate what this project was trying to achieve. However, I felt like a guinea pig, and during the hardest semester of my life, I was fairly resentful of that.

Thank you all for your assistance!

It was a good experience, one I would normally not have undertaken. Glad to have experienced it. Also, extremely grateful for the support of the Instruction Designer (Heidi Trotta) who significantly lowered the stress factor!

n/a

Clearly, I do not think Second Life is a viable project for a graduate class and I do question whether learning about and interpreting a piece of literature via Second Life is even possible.

Thank you for your time and effort!

Over all, I think that Second Life has the potential to be helpful. In this case, it didn't really help with my comprehension of the novel.

None

Not really.

I think the house provided a good physical space to work in, but I feel like this would have been more fun with a differen novel. Perhaps making a street of nantucket for Moby Dick or New York City for leaves of Grass.

Good overall!