Using Digital Objects in Collaborative Student Research Projects and Assessment

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ARTS AND SCIENCES (BASC)

Arts and Sciences (BASc) programmes

The Arts and Sciences (BASc) degree is UCL's Liberal Arts course. The degree offers a great range of disciplines across UCL. Students combine science and humanities/social science courses according to their interests and take Core modules designed to foster interdisciplinary thinking.

The aim of the BASc is to graduate students with a breadth of knowledge, capable of working across the disciplines in our increasingly interconnected world. Our first cohort graduated in 2015 and have moved into a wide range of

Degrees

- UCAS Y000 - BASc Arts and Sciences (3 years)
- UCAS Y001 - BASc Arts and Sciences with Study Abroad (4 years)
- Study Abroad at UCL (Affiliate/Exchange students)

The Core Course

- 1 term; intermediate-level core course
- 2h lecture + 1h seminar weekly (taught by PGTAs)
- 50-60 students (10-15 in seminars)
- 10% affiliates
- BASC students & other disciplines
- Assessed by Digital Object (Group work, 40%)
- Assessed by 2000 words Individual Report incl. group work and self-assessment (60%)

Digital Object: What is it and Why use it?

We want the students to explore:
How to create and carry out a small-scale research project
How to plan and manage group work
How to practice multi-disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity
How to employ creativity in research
How to write for digital media
How to design a multi-modal presentation

Choose something that genuinely interests you, bothers you or confuses you. It is preferably based on something you do not yet understand and which you would like to understand, perhaps in order to be able to act more appropriately towards it.

"**Qualitative research into everyday life materials** is not just possible, … it can be enjoyable, a personal learning experience and of high scientific quality, potentially equal to the quality of much larger research projects."

(Svend Brinkmann)

Digital Object: What is it and Why use it?

A Digital Object is:

- Multi-modal

- Digital

- Editable

- Interactive

- Open

- Distributed (networked)

(Following Kallinikos, Aaltonen and Marton, 'A theory of digital objects', 2010)

Voicethread: http://voicethread.com
Storify: http://storify.com/
Xtranormal: http://www.xtranormal.com/
Pixton: http://pixton.com/uk/
Issuu: http://issuu.com/
Storybird: http://storybird.com/
Weebly: http://www.weebly.com/
Animoto: http://animoto.com/
Prezi: http://prezi.com
Wikispaces: http://www.wikispaces.com
TedEd: http://ed.ted.com
Google Sites: https://sites.google.com

or any blog, web space or wiki site!

Vegetarianism and Identity
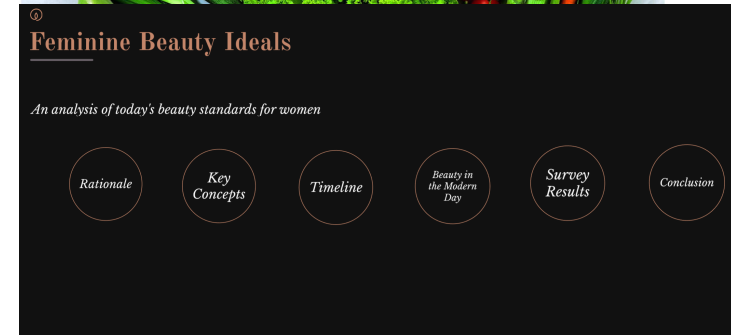
Groups use video, word association maps, word clouds, google maps, podcasts, animations, coding, illustrations, graphs, photo documentary … and a lot of text in various lengths and formats
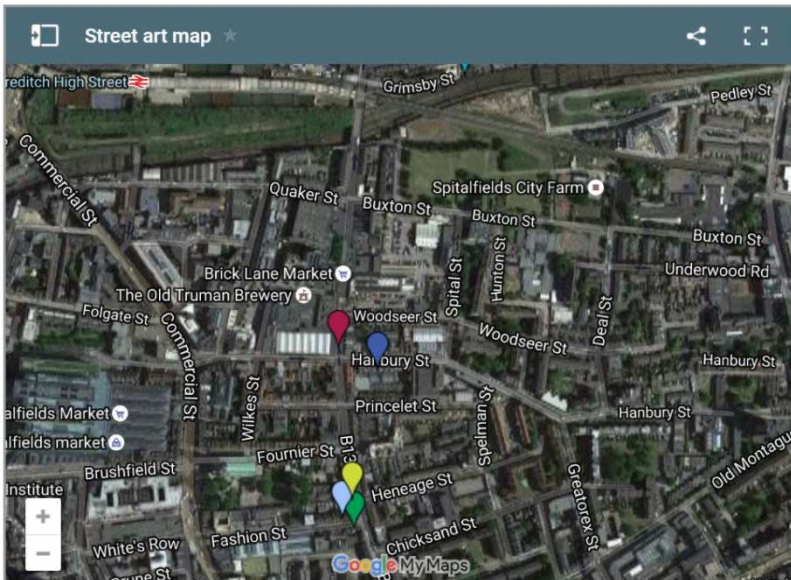
What is a hipster?

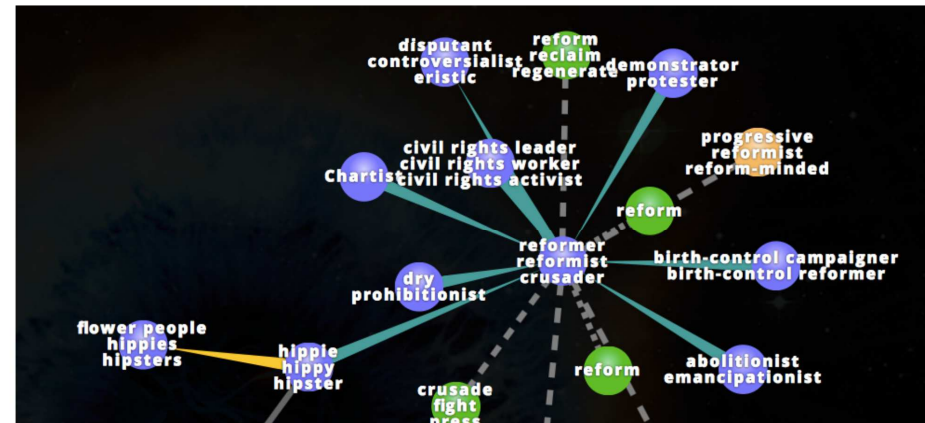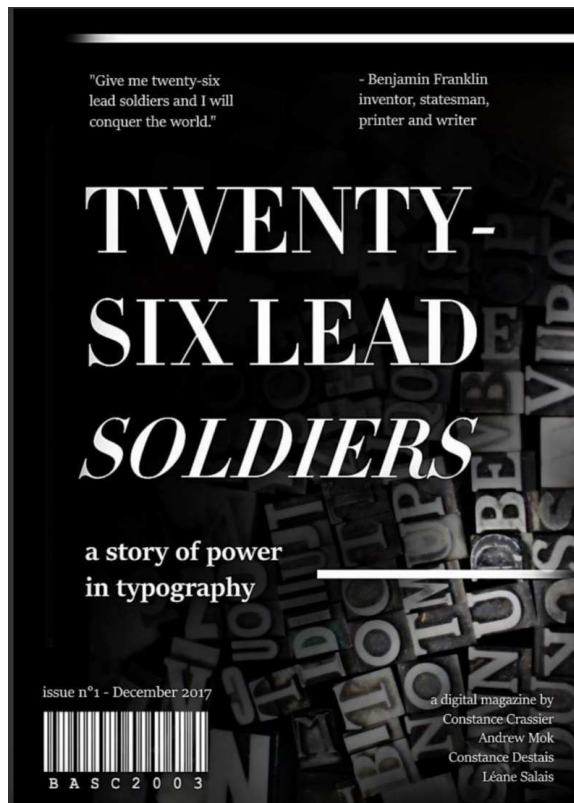In order to understand the meaning of the word 'hipster', we first looked at its 'academic' linguistic context. Through visuwords.com, a website which uses data from linguistic students and official dictionaries, we were able to generate a word association map.

Using a digital magazine format to present a project on 'power in typography'

A Qualitative Investigation of Guilt

BACKGROUND

What is the social phenomenon?

Guilt is an exploration of the constructions of guilt by the media; in the context of incidences of sexual offence in the US and the UK. As a group, we found ourselves drawn to the concept of personal culpability and guilt whilst reviewing cases of the Supreme Court but quickly became fascinated with the potential variation in perceptions of guilt fashioned by individuals, associated parties and most notably the media.

https://guiltinthemedia.weebly.com/

Assessment criteria: Presentation

Criteria	A. 70+	B. 60-69	C. 50-59	D. 40-49	F. 39-
Presentation and technical competence	The DO sustains clarity of presentation in terms of its general presentation and the integration of and connection between individual parts. If audio-visual elements are included: Faultless to excellent in: pace, audibility/visibility, recording quality. Texts are written in grammatically correct English and in a mature style appropriate to academic writing. Texts contain few type errors. Referencing, where appropriate, is accurate and consistent.	The DO demonstrates overall clarity of presentation in terms of its general presentation and the integration of and connection between individual parts, although some aspects of the DO may be less well integrated. If audio-visual elements are included: Generally well presented but some issues in any of pace, audibility/visibility or recording quality. Texts are written in grammatically correct English, although there may be some errors and stylistic lapses. Texts contain relatively few type errors. Referencing, where appropriate, is generally accurate and consistent.	The DO is lacking in overall clarity of presentation in terms of its general presentation and the integration of and connection between individual parts, while some parts of the DO may be well connected and integrated. If audio-visual elements are included: Competently presented but some major issues in any of pace, audibility/visibility or recording quality. Text is mostly written in acceptable English, although it may be clumsy in places, with frequent grammatical and stylistic lapses. Texts are marred by type errors. Referencing, where appropriate, is uneven in quality.	The DO lacks overall clarity of presentation both in terms of its general presentation and the integration of and connection between individual parts. If audio-visual elements are included: Very poor in either pace, audibility or recording quality. Presentation seriously impeded. English is competent only at a rather basic level, with possible interference from other languages, and problems of expression may impede the development of a coherent argument. Texts are marred by frequent type errors. Referencing, where appropriate is haphazard and of consistently poor quality.	The DO shows little or no attention to presentation in terms of its general presentation and the integration of and connection between individual parts. If audio-visual elements are included: unintelligible; a very dull presentation. Uninspired and hard to listen to. Texts are carelessly presented and littered with type errors. Referencing, where appropriate, is extremely haphazard and completely disregards conventions.

Student Experiences

" Throughout the creation of the digital object I have also developed further transferrable skills, such as website building, which I had not attempted before. I have a better understanding of the respective limitations of qualitative and quantitative methods, and am able to apply the methods and mindsets of different disciplines to a research question with greater confidence. I can carry out discourse analysis, think critically about academia, and judge objectivity and its limitations. My thinking is more multidisciplinary, and the group work we carried out benefitted from similar approaches from all the team members.

Student Experiences

" To conclude, I believe that, when individuals from a variety of backgrounds, nations, and degrees come together to work towards the same objective, the learning curve couldn't be any steeper and the environment emerging from this composition is incredibly enriching as well as intellectually stimulating.

Digital Object Collection

- The paradox of the hipster (http://ucl2017.wixsite.com/thehipster)

- What is 'good' street art (http://an-exploration-of-street-art.weebly.com/)

- A story of power in typography (https://issuu.com/andrewmok/docs/typography-do)

- Social media and values (http://instagram.com/follow4basc)

Student Experiences

" Coming into the project I was worried about the group-work component, as I have had mixed experiences in the past. However, my experience this time was incredibly positive, and I am extremely grateful for the hard work and constant support of my team members. I wasn't sure how this project would contribute to my learning experience when I started, but I have learnt valuable skills and I have expanded my knowledge and understanding, as well as being reminded again of the values of an interdisciplinary team. I have also learnt to consider digital content in a very different way, analysing speech and the use of images, the choice of language and the meaning behind what is in front of me, as well as questioning whether or not it is authentic.

Student Experiences

" This group work taught me a lot, as I was able to see other people's perspective, and learned to value socio-cultural differences amongst individuals. It was interesting to be able to speak to vegetarians first-hand, and connect their ideas to content we had discussed previously in lectures. Through creating a Digital Object rather than a traditional essay, I was able to engage with our topic at a much deeper level and gathered a lot of meaningful insight. I believe that I contributed well to the Digital Object overall, and was able to meet deadlines we had set as a group. However, I experienced some technical difficulties with audio and video quality of the interviews. Unfortunately this could not be fixed, as we did not want to re-film interviews and lose important insights or authenticity of answers.

Student Experiences

" As a group, we learnt first of all how to be organized and work as a team, how to respect our peers but also how to comply with the timeline we implemented. Personally, I usually prefer working by myself as my shyness- my principal weakness-makes it difficult for me to impose my ideas. However, I was surprisingly comfortable with this group, probably because I was inspired by this topic and that all the members tried to make everyone share their thoughts.