

## Documenting Teaching: Seminar Overview

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*“The problem is, I either find nothing or everything interesting. I am continuously battling with the idea that this is just what I do [in my classroom] on a regular day so it is very hard for me to hear what I wouldn’t usually hear (making the familiar strange) or this new perspective continues to make everything strange and I hear it all...”*

One of the key motivating factors in the development of this seminar on “Documenting Teaching” was a belief that deepening our collective understanding of teaching and learning depends on making public large number of multimedia representations that reflect what happens with diverse students in many different contexts, subject areas, and grade levels. Producing large numbers of websites like those featured in this exhibition, however, is no simple matter; thus, this seminar served as a kind of pilot experiment to see whether it might be possible to create educational settings that could allow many graduate students to learn about teaching, research and the representation of teaching and to create final products that could enhance the learning of others.

In the seminar, a group of nine students were asked to develop multimedia websites that:

1. Focus on a key issue or concern in teaching and learning that is likely to be of interest to a wide audience of teachers and teacher educators.
2. Engage viewers quickly in the issue; offer materials they can take away to enhance their own work; and provide enough materials to enable viewers (ideally in teacher education or professional development settings) to use these websites pursue their own questions and investigations.

The seminar met twice in the fall semester to introduce the goals of the seminar, discuss general issues of the documentation and representation of

### Excerpts from students’ written reflections during the seminar:

*“The idea of ‘significant’ is constantly challenged... I wonder constantly if I have ‘missed’ a good, better, best, event.”*

*“we want to find a good balance between reality and possibility...”*

*“I’m feeling both fuzzy and clear about where things are going...”*

*“Many questions... Maybe it is better they remain unanswered for the time being...”*

*“The process of this project and the show not tell component is reminding me of plowing and field to ready it for the seeds that will grow.”*

*“I have found that with each question I ask, two or three more pop up!”*

*“I want to get away from the idea that I am presenting my audience with a neat little box of information that will work in their classroom.”*

*“I am a little nervous about how this information will be applicable to a broad audience. The “so what” question keeps circling around in my brain.”*

teaching, to begin the site selection process. In the spring semester, the seminar met weekly and students were asked to either develop a relationship with a teacher who was interested in having his or her work documented or to document their own teaching; to negotiate entry and permissions; to develop and carry out a concise documentation plan; and to create a website that could make the teaching they documented public (link to key questions for documentation?). Throughout, the seminar ran largely in “workshop” fashion, with students presenting their developing plans and getting feedback from their peers and the instructor. The students also benefited from presentations and advice from members of Academic Computing Services at Teachers College and the use of computer and video labs; but most developed these sites with relatively little experience or formal training in web development or video production.

Several aspects of the seminar were particularly noteworthy. Students were asked to identify an audience, and, where possible, get feedback from the members of that audience on their documentation efforts as well as on the development of their websites. In addition, a little more than halfway through the spring semester, students were asked to present the initial materials they had collected and their emerging plans for their websites to a class of first year doctoral students. This presentation required members of the seminar to articulate publicly their key ideas and to see how an “unknown” audience might respond.