

Chapter 4

This study examined the on-line delivery of Survey of Education (IGS 298), The Explorers. Course content explored critical events/discoveries in human history from the first through the eighteenth centuries. The course did not meet in a conventional classroom but was instead conducted entirely electronically through listservers, email and the use of a text based virtual classroom. Given the subject matter involved, it was felt by the instructors who designed this experimental course that using the virtual classroom as an interactive canvas upon which to recreate important events and discoveries in human history would provide a highly engaging learning opportunity for student participants.

This chapter reports the findings from the survey instrument along with illustrative quotes from the class log. Quotes from the class logs are best understood to be written speech rather than prose. These conversations occurred in real time, and, given the multi-user nature of the environment, typing speed of participants, computer slow downs and modem connection rates, may sometimes contain fragments of conversations left over from earlier discussions along with the topic currently being considered. It should be further noted that quotes from class logs are reproduced exactly as they occurred, typos and all.

Demographic Description of Participants

In order to provide the reader with a greater understanding of the background and characteristics of students participating in this study, we begin with descriptive statistics concerning the demographics of the observed students.

An analysis of student survey data (N = 12) revealed a population with a mean age of twenty-eight (28) years. The youngest student in the observed group was twenty (20) years of age and the oldest forty-four (44) years of age. Gender distribution was sixty-seven percent (67%) female and thirty-three percent (33%) male. Fifty percent (50%) of

participants were full-time students and fifty percent (50%) were part-time students.

Asked if they had access to a computer and modem at home, fifty percent (50%) of participants reported that they had computers and modems at home and fifty percent (50%) reported they did not. With respect to typing speed (self-reported by survey respondents), mean typing speed for the group was found to be forty-one (41) words per minute with the slowest student typing speed reported at twenty-five (25) words per minute and the fastest at sixty (60) words per minute.

In answer to a question concerning the age at which the student was first introduced to computers, the mean age was found to be nineteen (19) years with the earliest exposure occurring at twelve (12) years of age and the latest at thirty-four (34) years of age. By comparing the mean age of students participating in this study (28 years) with the mean age at which they were first exposed to computers (19 years), we find that students in this study have, on average, nine (9) years of computer usage experience.

Role of the Instructor

As the role of the instructor teaching in a virtual classroom continues to evolve and be refined, students were asked to describe their ideas about the purpose of the instructor in such an environment. Unlike most traditional distance learning environments which include an instructor, physical classroom with students and distance learning sites equipped with two-way audio and one (or perhaps two-way) video links, the instructor in a virtual classroom interacts and communicates with students entirely by text on a computer screen and is often at home or in his/her office during class instruction. Given the unique instructional setting of the MariMUSE environment (somewhere between conventional computer assisted instruction (CAI), multi-player, real-time "adventure" games, traditional classroom lecture, and facilitated small group discussion/exploration, the purpose and function of the instructor is a role requiring careful review and consideration.

Asked to describe their ideas about the purpose of the instructor in a virtual classroom, of the twelve (12) students who responded, a primary theme which emerged was that of instructor as guide, leader (in the sense of sharing a journey rather than mapping out the route) and facilitator of learning. Student responses such as:

"guide and intellectual leader, not to give lectures but coordinate a learning environment" and "To guide the class in a discussion lead mostly by the students" were typical of student survey responses. This role is well illustrated in an exchange recorded on the afternoon of October 1st about mid-way through the course (Note: the instructor in this exchange is named Avalon):

Ways of Knowing(#4256v)

Avalon says "We come to know things by relying upon our experience, the words of others(such as authorities) and by reason."

Dallas says "yes"

Avalon says "So that experience and reason?"

extreme says "I agree with Daffy's summary"

Daffy says "extreme?"

Billy says "yes"

Daffy says "Ok, what do you think then makes opinion different from knowledge?"

Avalon looks to Dallas.

Dallas says "everyone has an opinion, but only those who reseach and experience have knowledge"

Alex says "Im sure it seemed rasonable that the earth was flat to the people who didn't know it was round."

Avalon smiles at Alex...thinking that was an interesting comment.

Cookie says "facts will always hold true-1+1=2 all over the world. opinion changes not everyone thinks that swimming is fun."

Avalon nods, looking at Cookie.

Daffy says "and evidence about swimming may not change your opinion?"

Billy says "it is ture alex, without reseach and experience. "

Cookie says "very true, that's a fact!"

Billy says "i agree "

extreme says "Knowledge is something we think is factual and opinions are based on experiences and beliefs not necessarily true"

Dallas says "than why is it that some scientists think the earth and man kind as we know it will come to an end and others don't, they are both experienced and both educated?"

Daffy says "so I could present evidencnt that the would is round, but I have no evidence that will make you think chocolate is delicious if you do not like it."

Daffy says "sorry, world"

Alex says "now your talking tastes"

Alex says "or opinions"

Billy says "yes, may be without try it"

Daffy says "there is a saying..."on matters of truth disagreement is productive, on matters of opinion, disagreement is fruitless"

Cookie says "dallas, what your talking about is opinion, it has not been proven"

A secondary theme was found in the frequent use of such terms and phrases as "help focus our lectures", "keep them focused", and "keep the students on track" to describe the purpose of the instructor in a virtual

classroom. Although somewhat related to the primary theme of instructor as guide, leader and facilitator, some students also appeared to count on the instructor to be an "authority figure" when necessary to resolve confusion, terminate "bogged down" discussions, provide learning agendas and direct activities. In the following example, recorded during an afternoon class in mid November, we are able to see not only the instructor's (Avalon, Daffy and Wlad) efforts to support student discussion, but also observe the "behind the scenes" private dialogue between instructors during class instruction. Statements which are preceded by [fac] indicate exchanges between faculty.

Daffy says "well, in general, why do you think people were so anxious to measure time (remember, they measured years, months, etc"

Lashea says "how about that section on the moon, any comments"

Todd_N says "good question"

[fac] Daffy: do I hear brain gears grinding?

[fac] Wlad: I'm not sure what is going on.

[fac] Avalon: hopes there is smoke

Avalon says "What about the moon?"

[fac] Wlad: Good, I think a more specific question may start something happening.

Avalon looks at Lashea? How was the moon used to measure time?

Kim_W says "They used the cycles of the moon to measure time."

Todd_N says "the moon measures time of the seasons"

Daffy says "did the moon give people an accurate calendar"

[fac] Avalon: nice follow up daffy.

Daffy says "?"

Avalon looks around the room?

Avalon says "Lashea?"

Avalon says "Kim?"

Wlad says "But does the moon really measure the seasons?"

Todd_N says "the moon is also different sizes at different times of the mo."

Kim_W says "The moon did not give them an accurate calendar."

Avalon wonders what the moon measures..

[fac] Wlad tries to get something started.

Avalon looks to Kim.

Daffy says "why not Kim?"

Chayla_K says "it measures night from day, and in the summer the nights are shorter than they are in the winter."

[fac] Daffy: this is like trying to pry fruit cocktail out of a jello mold

Avalon thinks Chayla is moving in the right directions.

Daffy says "how many days in a year?"

Kim_W says "365"

Todd_N says "no ,but it can measure some relation of time"

Daffy says "and how often does the new moon come?"

Kim_W says "That is 365 days in a year by our current callendar. "

[fac] Wlad Wonders if we need to jump in and do some modeling?

Avalon says "Todd eluded to the moon and the month. This is an important issue."

[fac] Avalon: I think we may.

Lashea says "one of the first times that someone noticed the cycle of the moon is with menstrual cycle of women and how long a pregnancy lasts."

Wlad says "What about leap year? Is there really 365 days/yr?"

Avalon nods to Lashea.

Lashea says "no"

Avalon says "What other natural phenomena are used to measure time."

[fac] Daffy: by modeling , you mean discuss rather than ask?

Todd_N says "the seasons"

Kim_W says "The changing seasons, the rise and fall of the Nile river."

[fac] Wlad: Do some discussing, along with bringing up more questions.

Avalon smiles.

Daffy says "the nile made a good calendar!"

Lashea says "your right"

Avalon says "Why did it?"

Daffy says "who do you think had the most accurate early calendars?"

[fac] Avalon: 10 minutes in to this one already.

Avalon thinks this group needs some coffee.

Lashea says "because they planted crops according to the rise and fall of the waters"

[fac] Daffy: yipes, I was hoping to get to the Emperor's Clock

[fac] Wlad: Tuff getting this group rolling today. Were they like this last week?

Avalon says "What makes water rise and fall?"

[fac] Avalon: there were only two last week. That is part of the problem.

Finally, for a smaller number of students, responses such as "I believe an instructor is the expert in computer usage" or "To help us figure out what we are doing when we get lost" and "To be able to answer questions if we get stuck on something" suggests a minor third theme of instructors as providers of both academic and technical support.

Purpose of the Class

Students were asked to describe what they thought was the purpose of the class, what instructor(s) expected them to learn. For eight (8) of the twelve (12) respondents, the dominant theme was critical thinking skills. Statements such as

"How to think! I think the purpose of this course was to show us how people acquired knowledge in the past to give us a basis for continuing to do so in the future"

and

"I believe our instructors wanted us to be able to think beyond our textbook"

are good representative examples of this primary theme.

The following classroom exchange recorded in mid October (in which Daffy and Avalon are the instructors) illustrates the types of activities which may have lead students to these conclusions:

Dallas says "I think you can't 100 know something until you've experienced it"

Daffy says "What about the other kinds of knowledge. Besides experience, can we make a general statement about where we get knowledge?"

Avalon looks to Dallas thinking that was an interesting comment.

Billy says "may be"

Daffy says "We can't experience everything, can we?"

Cookie says "it's not just experience alone you must replicate that experience"

Daffy says "It is now dark outside"

Daffy says "do you believe me?"

Billy says "no"

Cookie says "How dark?"

Dallas says "we have to believe that some research we do not do ourselves is right, because even though I'm experiencing this computer system I have no clue how it works but I know it does"

Daffy says "even though it may have been light when you last looked?"

Avalon looked out the window and saw darkness.

Daffy says "I was just outside a minute ago"

Billy says "no, on the other side of the earth is not."

Daffy says "now, without seeing it for yourself, do you know it is dark (in Phoenix)"

Billy says "no"

Billy says "may be look at watch"

Daffy says "why not, Billy"

Avalon thinks that is an interesting kind of fact/belief.

Daffy says "how do you know dinosaurs existed?"

Daffy says "dinosaurs"

Dallas says "in the movies, or the tar pits"

Avalon looks at Alex.

Billy says "from the book"

Alex says "through the findings of scientists"

Daffy says "So you do know things you have not experienced?"

Billy says "yes"

Five (5) of the twelve (12) respondents also identified "knowledge", its acquisition, use and evaluation, as a strong secondary theme. This theme was well summarized by a student who responded

"To be able to integrate the knowledge you have obtained in two years, to be able to write a comprehensive essay detailing these concepts, to become a more rounded thinker".

Permeating this "knowledge" theme was the students perception that faculty wanted them to be more critically aware of the validity of "knowledge" sources and of how knowledge is interconnected and integrated with daily life.

Three (3) of the twelve (12) respondents indicated they had no idea what they were expected to learn or were confused about the course objectives. One student replied

"I really do not know what the instructors expected us to learn in this class. I have not been able to figure it out".

Teaching Style

Students were asked to describe the teaching style of their instructor(s). A recurring theme for five (5) of the ten (10) respondents was the experience of shared learning. Responses such as

"My instructors use the method that they and the students share equally" and "Billie's (Avalon) teaching style is to figure out what we learned together, to be supportive in praise and gentle in criticism"

were typical of student perceptions of teaching style.

A second theme shared by the majority of students dealt with the instructor as a facilitator of exploration/learning rather than a source of information. In describing this experience, students made statements such as "guide and intellectual leader, not to give lectures but coordinate a learning environment" or "many times it was mentioned by them on how they didn't have a definite answer to something, but wanted our input to an idea presented." A representative example of the types of instructor actions/responses which may have contributed to this viewpoint is provided below:

Avalon says "The church taught the people were heathens and inferior."

mickey says "but aren't they more valuable???"

Avalon says "But this would not be acceptable today."

Sheila_P says "That's true"

Avalon looks to mickey wonder who is more valuable.

Avalon says "Our knowledge (truth) of who is inferior had changed."

mickey says "everyone thinks themselves of course"

Sheila_P says "Some think of others first"

mickey says " has it, people still think of tribal communities as inferior"

Paul_B says "those people didnt know what a church was, so how could they possibly believe what we do"

Avalon wonders how exploration and discovery contributed to this changed knowledge of the value of differnt people.

Perhaps this experience of exploratory learning was best summed up by a student who said:

"There was quite a bit of encouragement to take an opinion that we might have and focus it towards some kind of conclusion. A lot of behind the scenes encouragement. Very open to trying new ways. Very positive kind of learning environment."

Students appeared to draw a distinction between a teaching style which emphasized the process of shared learning (i.e. small group discussion, teaching/learning partnerships) and the experience of exploratory learning. Those students who referenced exploratory learning as the teaching style of their instructor also used such words as supportive, positive and encouraging in describing the teaching/learning environment created by their instructor. Only one instructor (Avalon) was specifically referenced by students during the interview process.

Things Students Enjoyed

Students were asked to describe what they most enjoyed about learning in the IGS298 class. For eight (8) of the twelve (12) respondents, the theme which emerged most strongly was their enjoyment of discussion/communication. Comments such as "great thought provoking discussions" and "This type of classroom really forces the student to think and focus on what you want to say" were typical expressions of this theme.

An additional, but perhaps important, part of the discussion /communication theme were descriptions by two (2) students of the

freedom of expression they felt in the IGS298 environment. One student stated

"I am basically a quiet person. (Older, grandmotherly type!) I found it exciting that some of the ideas I presented in this medium were accepted as good. I would have never presented some of the things I did in this class in a "real" classroom"

while another student expressed the same experience as

"Freedom. I enjoyed being able to express myself when I wanted to and how I wanted to."

A second theme found in reviewing student responses was the enjoyment and excitement of using a new technology. Four (4) of the twelve (12) respondents used phrases such as

"We were all participating on a voyage of discovery of new learning environments together"

and

"I find most enjoyable about the learning in IGS298 is being a part of the new teaching style. I find it very exciting"

to sum up their experience.

A representative example of the new teaching style and technologies referenced by students can be found in the following virtual classroom exercise (in which Avalon is the instructor) recorded on the afternoon of November 7th which followed directly after a reading assignment in the Discoverers. In order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the interactions taking place, the researcher has included explanatory notes in parenthesis:

Avalon says "I want to try something a little different tonight."

Billy says "ok"

Avalon says "Go back to the igs classroom."

(Students move to a new location)

IGS298 Classroom(#7967RvJ)

Contents:

Billy(#14318Pvcn)

dog(#2009v)

Bulletin Board(#3488v)

Obvious exits:

Vikings<V> Meeting Room E <ME> Meeting Room D<MD> Meeting Room

Cookie has arrived.

Alex has arrived.

Dallas has arrived.

bubbles has arrived.

Avalon says "now to the vikings! Let's explore tonight together."

(Talking narator object is triggered by students entering the new location)

Vikings(#14686RvJ)

Vikings! A word that struck terror into the hearts of many a European in the 8th century! You smell smoke and sense you may well be in danger. You are in northern Europe at the end of the 8th century! As you look up, you see smoke and plunder! Rape and Murder! Stain Cuthbert's church has once again been desecrated.

(Description of objects at this location)

Contents:

Explanations for the plunder(#6177v)

High Stone Tower(#14699ev)

Saint Cuthbert's Church(#14141Hv)

Obvious exits:

igs classroom<igs> knorr<ship> Snow bird<SB> Av's office<AO>

Alex has arrived.

Cookie has arrived.

Dallas has arrived.

(Objects automatically interact with students)

Quick! Run for the stone tower! Quick, type enter tower!
bubbles has arrived.
Billy has arrived.

Alex has left.

(Objects continue to interact with students)
Look! Alex races for the tower, hoping to climb to safety before the
maurders kill em and steal all of the church's treasures.

You find yourself out of breath from the rapid climb up the 15 foot
ladder. For your safety, you might want to pull the ladder up--now!
High Stone Tower(#14699ev)

Contents:
Cookie(#14314Pvcn)
Alex(#14317Pvc)
ladder(#14758v)
climbing down the ladder(#6444v)
jewels(#14759v)
bubbles joins you in the tower.
Dallas joins you in the tower.

Cookie pulls up ladder

Avalon says "Remember this is what the Monks did?"
Avalon says "What was unique about the raids of the vikings?"
Avalon says "Or what do you remember about them?"

Cookie says "they learned to wait out their prey"

bubbles says "people were worried by them."

Dallas says "they seem to be pretty violent and not leave much
behind"

Avalon laughs at the way Cookie put that.

Cookie says "they hit they isolated villages"

Avalon looks to Alex?

Alex says "they sailed in so they could be undetected"

Avalon nods...yes...

Avalon says "Now let's see if Cookie was right about waiting out the prey."

Avalon says "Type leave"

Billy has left.

Cookie has arrived.

bubbles has arrived.

Alex has arrived.

Dallas has arrived.

(Object interaction changes in response to student arrival at new location)

A Monk climbs down the ladder and hands over treasures to the Vikings. Unfortunately, he could not stay in the tower forever. Look! Alex races for the tower, hoping to climb to safety before the murderers kill em and steal all of the church's treasures.

Cookie says "dead monks"

Avalon says "Yes Cookies That is true."

(Information returned when a student looks at an object named jewels)

Explanations for the plunder(#6177v)

The wrath of God was upon the people. Clearly, they had sinned. Why else would God have allowed the desecration of Saint Cuthbert's church?

Avalon says "Why did they pick on the Monks."

Avalon says "Or better yet, why do no one else ever do this?"

Dallas says "they were isolated with riches"

Alex says "they were basically defenseless"

bubbles says "they had many treasures"

Avalon nods to Dallas and Alex.

Cookie says " others did but in more civilized ways\ "

Avalon says "Why Cookie?"

Alex says "they were not dominated by religious beliefs"

Avalon grins broadly at Alex....

Cookie says "taking their lands and diminishing clrical privlages"

Avalon says "Yes Alex...and yes Cookie"

Avalon says "The Vikings were pagan...they had no fear of the Christian God."

Cookie says "most people were scared to touch the church"

Avalon says "Let's learn a little more about the Vikings. Type sb"

Cookie goes through the exit marked Snow bird<SB>.

Cookie has left.

It is interesting to note the relatively small number of students who enjoyed learning about the advanced global networking technological and sophisticated multi-user virtual reality software used to provide the course. For the great majority of students, the value of the course was in its content and activities rather than its method of delivery. Students seemed to find far greater value in the human contact, discussion, learning and interaction facilitated by the technology rather than any particular value in the technology itself.

Three (3) of the twelve (12) respondents particularly enjoyed learning about the history of discovery. A typical responses was:

"I found the whole course to be enjoyable. Discovering how and when the world came to gain all this knowledge was fascinating."

Although enjoyment of learning about the history of discovery was not specifically referenced by each of the eight (8) students who indicated they enjoyed the discussion /communication aspect of the course, a review of course logs reveals that the majority of all class discussions focused on some aspect of history or discovery. Perhaps for some of these eight (8) students, the activity of discussion was more significant than its content.

For a relatively small number of respondents, two (2) of twelve (12), getting to know the other students in class was sighted as the only, or one of only two, enjoyable learning experiences in IGS298. Although it could be reasonably argued that getting to know other students in the class was a likely source of enjoyment for all students, one respondent reported that

"I found nothing enjoyable about this class, other than meeting people, like I do in all my other classes," while another reported the most enjoyable aspect of IGS298 as "Getting to know the other people in the class."

Things Students Didn't Enjoy

Students were asked to describe what they found most frustrating about the IGS298 class. A major area of frustration identified by nine (9) of the twelve (12) respondents concerned technical aspects of using the MariMUSE environments. Many of the following issues were held in common by several students:

Four (4) students reported difficulty getting help using MariMUSE. Responses such as:

"Having had very little computer experience before this class I would have liked more technical instruction. There are some things I am still not capable of doing, or learned very late in the semester that would have made this class less frustrating."

and

"Another frustrating situations was with the student computer assistance staff in the library. No one could ever answer my questions. Once a female answered a few questions for me, but she wasn't working the evenings I had time to work on computer. So I had to fend for myself", were typical.

Three (3) students indicated that the technical demands of the course, by which they appeared to mean the amount of time required to learn to use the editor, listserver, and MUSE commands, were excessive or frustrating. Students used such phrases as:

"Not knowing all that the system can do" or "the software learning is one thing we should be credited for" and "my lack of fully grasping everything in the class (pine, email,)" to describe this experience.

Finally, two (2) students reported significant difficulty with accessing the dial-up modems.

"In the beginning (and even sometimes still), not being able to hook into the computer when I was in the mood" and "modem problems"

For five (5) of the twelve (12) respondents, frustration with assignment due dates was a significant issue. Typical of student responses were statements like:

"I was very frustrated with the assignment due dates, especially the first essay was due on a weekend day", or "schedule is the most frustrate. It is because sometime I don't know when is the due date and what is the assignment" or "There were times when i would come to class on Saturday to find that there is a writting assignment due that Monday. That would really make me upset."

Perhaps related to frustrations concerning assignment due dates were comments from two (2) of the twelve (12) respondents who reported that the course seemed "disorganized." The students stated that: "And the class

could have been more structured" and "I felt that this class was very unorganized."

Another theme identified by four (4) of the twelve (12) respondents was the frustration of not having a computer and modem at home. Students identified a variety of difficulties as indicated by the following statements:

"Being locked into the library's schedule since I don't have a computer at home", or "Not everyone has a computer at home and gain access to the information daily. There were times when I would come to class on Saturday to find that there is a writing assignment due that Monday. That would really make me upset. Because sometimes I can only get on the computer once a week"

and

"I always felt behind when I finally got to the library to work on computer. I think I should have invested in a home computer prior to taking this class."

Lack of a computer and modem at home may have presented an obstacle, in fact or perception, to some students in accessing MariMUSE to determine due dates for class assignments and/or in completing these assignments. However, although some students indicated that they were confused about chapter readings and assignments due dates, in reviewing the class logs, numerous examples similar to the following were found in which faculty (Avalon and Doc) made frequent efforts to remind students of reading and writing assignments:

Avalon thinks Chayla is very quiet.

Todd_N says "the christians?"

Avalon says "Close Todd. The church."

Avalon says "And where did the scripture put the center of the earth?"

Lashea says "at the highest point"

Avalon says "Well, Lashea that was mentioned, but it was not the center."

Avalon says "I need to ask you all a question."

Avalon says "Have you read the book?"

Avalon says "Have you tried to answer the questions yourself?"

Todd_N says "they also believed the earth to be 7/6 land and 1/7 water"

Doc says "7/6?"

Chayla_K says "I just got my book on Monday, so I haven't had time to catch up on everything yet. I have read some and I have skimmed over some"

Lashea says "the center of the earth was the most sacred"

Avalon says "Yes Todd."

Avalon says "Okay. Chayla admits she has only read parts and skimmed. How about you, Todd?"

Lashea says "they also know that Africa took up 1/5 of the globe"

Avalon says "Lashea? How carefully have you read and answered the questions?"

Todd_N says "18,19 skimmed 20"

Lashea says "it says on p 148 that the African continent stretch from 38 degrees north latitude to 38 degrees south latitude, 1/5 around the globe"

Todd_N says "i did not know the reading for this week"

*Avalon says "Thanks or you honesty, Todd and Chayla."
Avalon looks to Lashia.*

Lashea says "it say on p 148 that the African continent stretched from 28 degrees north latitude to 38 degrees south latitude, 1/5 around the globe."

*Avalon says "I think we need to talk a bit about doing the readings."
Avalon says "I say this because I would like these discussion to be helpful to all."*

Todd_N says "ok what do we need to read this wk"

*Avalon says "The list of readings was passed out the first day of class.
And the list is also on Pine."*

Avalon says "I can resend you the list if that would help, Todd."

Todd_N says "thank you"

*Avalon says "And I can send you each the notes I took in preparatoin
for today's class."*

Avalon says "but, I can't do the reading and preparing for you."

*Avalon says "Next week we need to move on to the next section, and
on Oct 3 you have paper due."*

Avalon says "I am truly concerned that you are falling behind."

Todd_N says "do we turn that in through the comp."

*Avalon says "You can turn in the paper via Pine or you may give us a
disk."*

Avalon says "Whichever is easier for you."

*Lashea says "they knew latitude better(north and south). Longitude
(east and west) were more complicated Mariners relyed on "dead
reconing" to calculate distance trveled"*

Avalon says "I will send you my notes on the questions."

Avalon says "In Pine."

*Avalon says "It is nearly 10:30...and I would like you to have time to
get these and print them before you leave today."*

Todd_N says "how are the other groups doing"

Avalon says "Thursday night was wonderful!"

*Avalon says "The group had read the material and we had a
marvelous discussion."*

Avalon says "I did not run the Wed or Thursday afternoon groups."

Avalon says "Do you have any questions?"

Todd_N says "i will try and do a better job"

Avalon says "I do hope you will be back next week, with thoughtful answers to at least most of the questions."

Avalon says "Thank you Todd..."

Student Comments

Students were provided with an opportunity to include any additional comments they might wish to add. Six (6) students chose to respond. Although two (2) of the six (6) respondents were disappointed with the course, stating that:

"My feeling on this class and classes of its nature are that they are taking us away from the basics of education. I am here to learn about computers and not to speculate about where in the hell knowledge came from"

and

"I think we should talk about more than just knowledge, truth and knowing. More of a Freshman type class to learn about computers and meet people. I work 40 hrs and 13 hrs school and I really can't use any of this for my job"

the majority of respondents (four (4) of six (6)) had a very positive and rewarding experience stating:

"I rave about this class to everyone and people want to go sign up for it, there needs to be more virtual classes" or "I really enjoyed this experience. I feel you had to be better prepared for this class than a "real" one"

and

"At the beginning of the semester I thought I should drop this class because it really took up more time than I anticipated, but Mr. Walters

was very helpful in encouraging me try it a little longer. Thanks, Mr. Walters, I really enjoyed this class and realize now that had I dropped the class in the beginning I would have missed out an exciting experience. I will be the first to encourage student to sign up for this class and enjoy a new way of learning. I failed to mention that I also felt this was the sorriest class I had ever taken at the beginning of the semester, boy was I wrong. You have to try something new in order to judge it. I tried it, and I liked it"

It is interesting to note that of the four (4) students who commented on their enjoyment of the course, all were female and three (3) were the oldest of all twelve (12) respondents with ages ranging from thirty-five (35) to forty-four (44) years. Those who enjoyed the course least were males between twenty-six (26) and twenty-eight (28) years.