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Using Technology for Integrating and Grading Diverse Writing Styles in a Large Writing-Intensive Introductory Environmental Science Course

Robert Boyd Harrison¹, A.B. Adams², Brian Strahm³, Beth Liddell⁴, Angela Costanzo⁵, Eric Sucre⁶, Julie Forcier⁷, Kyle Petersen⁸ and Nick Johnson⁹

Introduction to Environmental Science, ESC110, is one of the most popular courses taught at the University of Washington, with about 2000 students annually. Besides lectures and exams, course requirements include producing a large group project, individual-student peer review of the group project, rewrites and participation in an online discussion list. All of these assignments are organized and published on the internet. Grading of material is done directly from the published material, with grades and feedback also published on the internet. Students are encouraged to rewrite and improve their writing for higher grades. The ability to display all material from a single or multiple students at the same time, filter for plagiarism and check the "writing level" is extensively used to discourage copying of material from other sources. Due to the large amount of writing required and feedback from peers and teachers, students can elect to receive writing credit for this course toward their general degree requirements. The University of Washington is very culturally-diverse, and ESC110 represents a cross-section of all students and majors. Instructors have seen a definite culturally-related reluctance from some students to write and publish material in their own words, and a great deal of effort has been integrated into the course to encourage writing, peer-review of that writing, and improvement. The presentation will cover some of the approaches used to make sure students do their own writing, and how that writing is evaluated and feedback given.

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