CALICO 2015

Places and Spaces: Redefining Language Learning

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Cross-cultural Collaboration: Learning from the Peers in the Cloud

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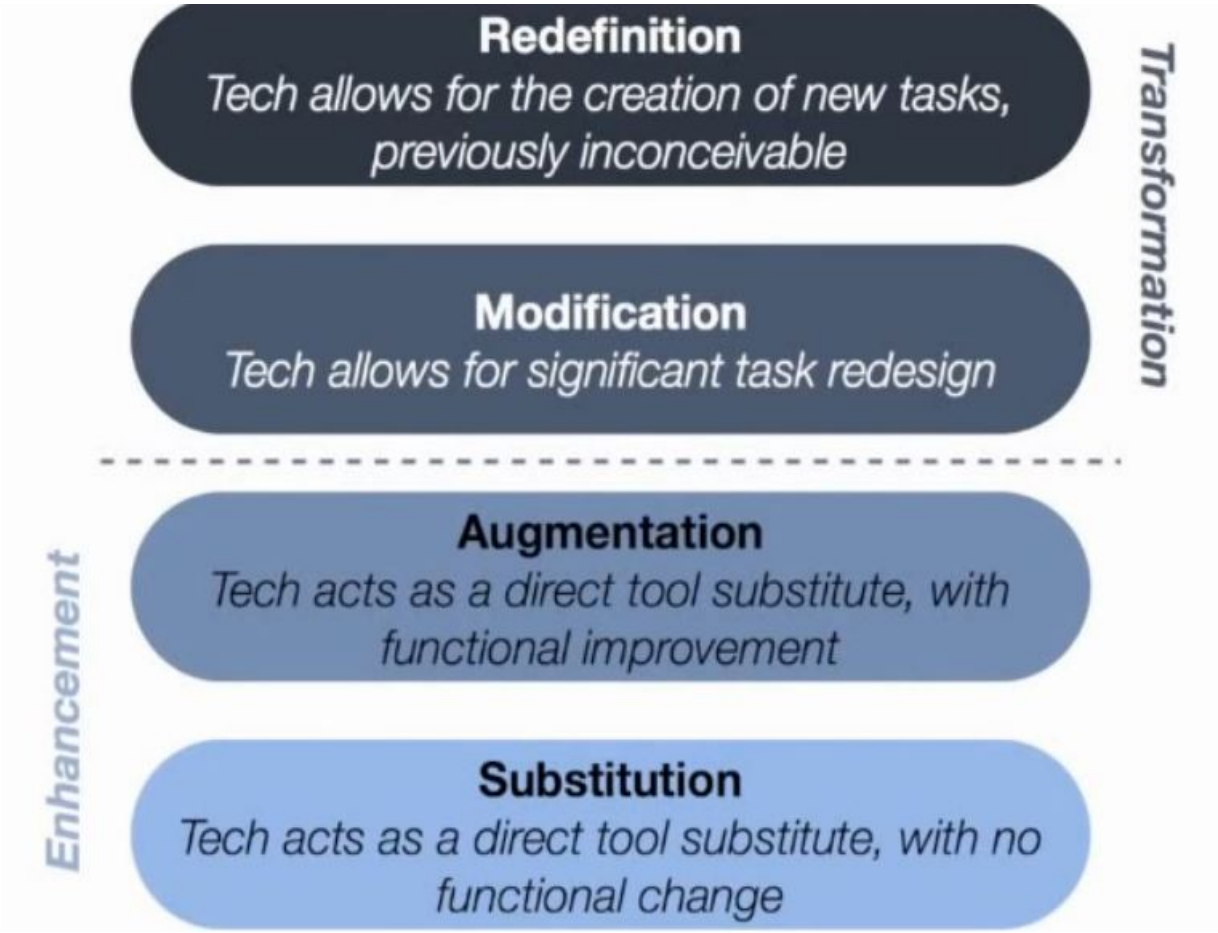
Presentation Outline

- **Redefining Language Learning: The SMAR Model**
- **What is *VoiceThread* & Why use it for Class?**
- **Examples of Student Work**
- **Findings from Student Surveys**
- **Discussion**

The SMAR Model
Ruben Puentedura, 2006



Redefining Learning:

Connecting Students from the U.S. and Canada

Pedagogical Expectations

Collaborative learning activities in the cloud would

- **Engage students beyond the classroom**
- **Allow for inter-institutional collaboration**
- **Stimulate active learning**
- **Provide opportunities to internalize information**
- **Encourage more thoughtful reflection**
- **Inspire facilitative rather than didactic teaching**

What is *VoiceThread*?

- **A cloud application for asynchronous communication**
- **Originally used by social and business groups**
- **Appropriated by educators for pedagogical purposes**
- **Follows the Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) standard**
- **Allows for Integration with most Learning Management Systems (LMSs): Blackboard, Sakai, Angel, Canvas, Desire2Learn, and Moodle**
- **No software installation is necessary**
- **System requirements are simple: an up-to-date version of Adobe Flash**

Why use *VoiceThread* for Class?

Main Features:

VT accepts input from users via five COMMENTING options:

- **Recording an audio comment (microphone)**
- **Recording a video comment (webcam)**
- **Typing (similar to text messaging)**
- **Uploading files (text, audio, video, images)**
- **Dialing in (phone)**

Why use *VoiceThread* for Class?

Main Features:

- **VT captures and holds an entire group discussion (thread) on ONE page (screen):**

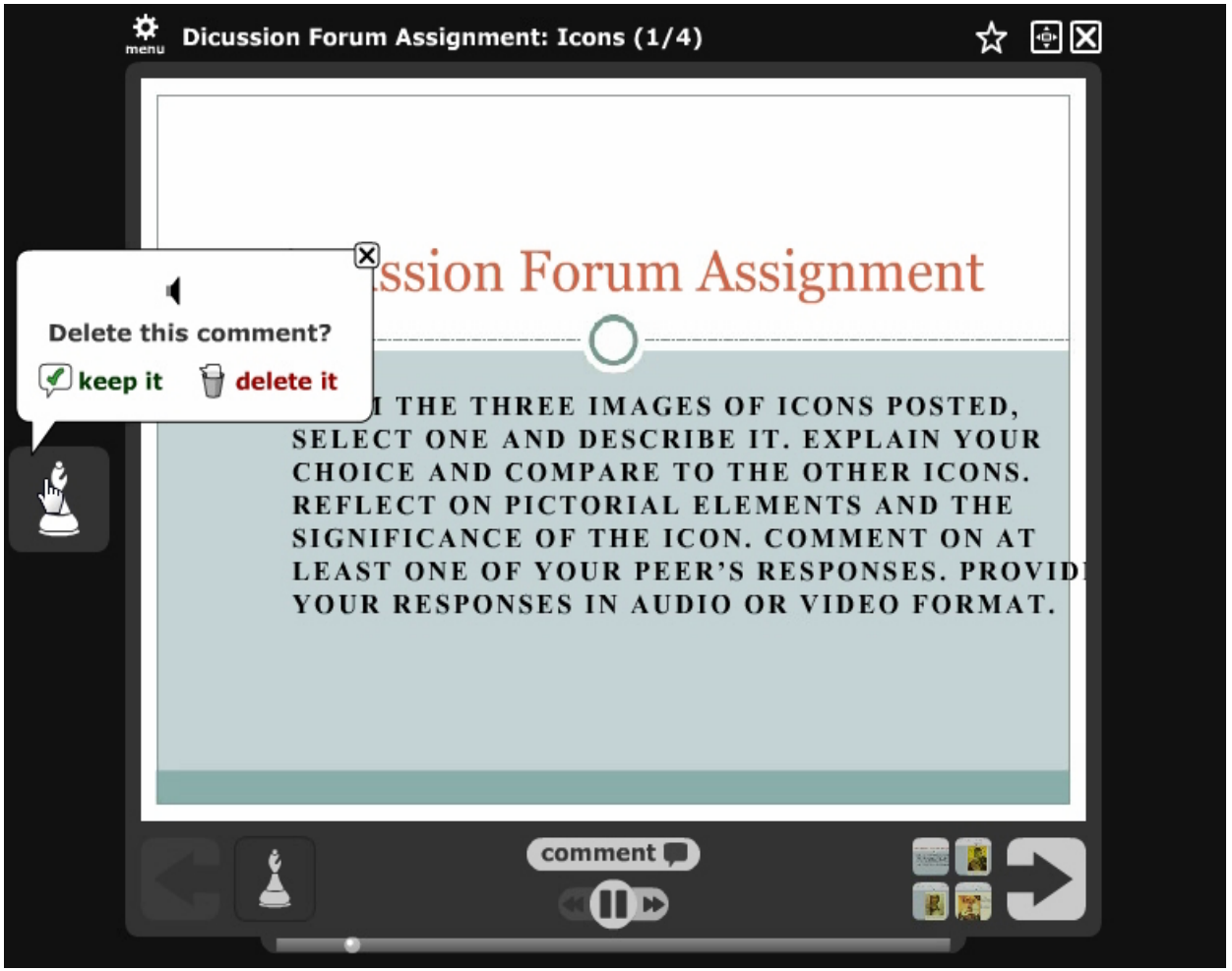
- **VT contains three SHARING options:**
  - **Keep private**
  - **Share with specific people**
  - **Open up to the entire world**

Why use *VoiceThread* for Class?

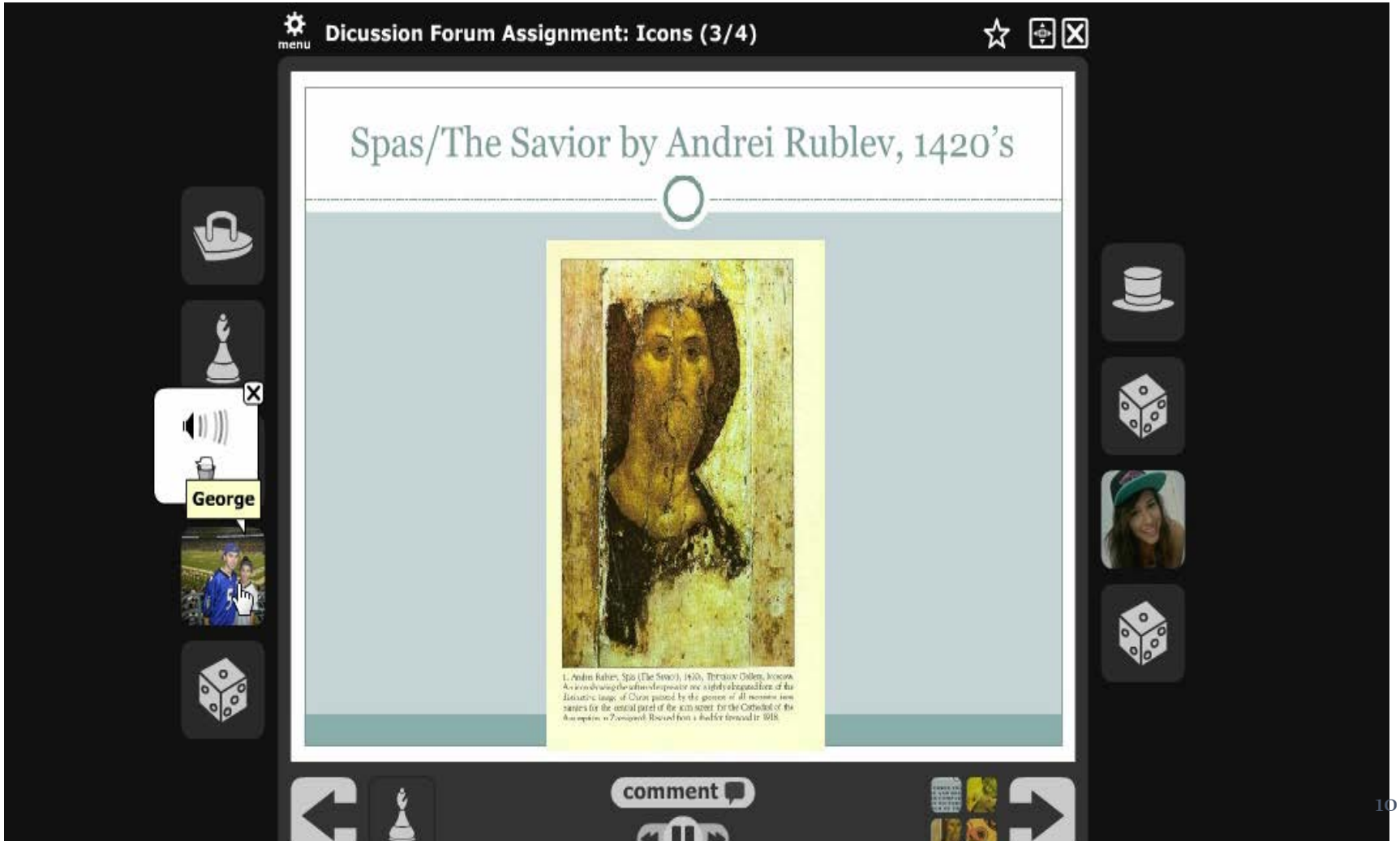
Functionality: VT Allows to

- **Zoom in and look around a specific artifact (e.g., an image)**
- **Leave or delete a comment**
- **Navigate through pages easily**
  (if more than one image is included)
- **Write or annotate on a video/explain what might be happening:** VIDEO DOODLING
- **Provide feedback**

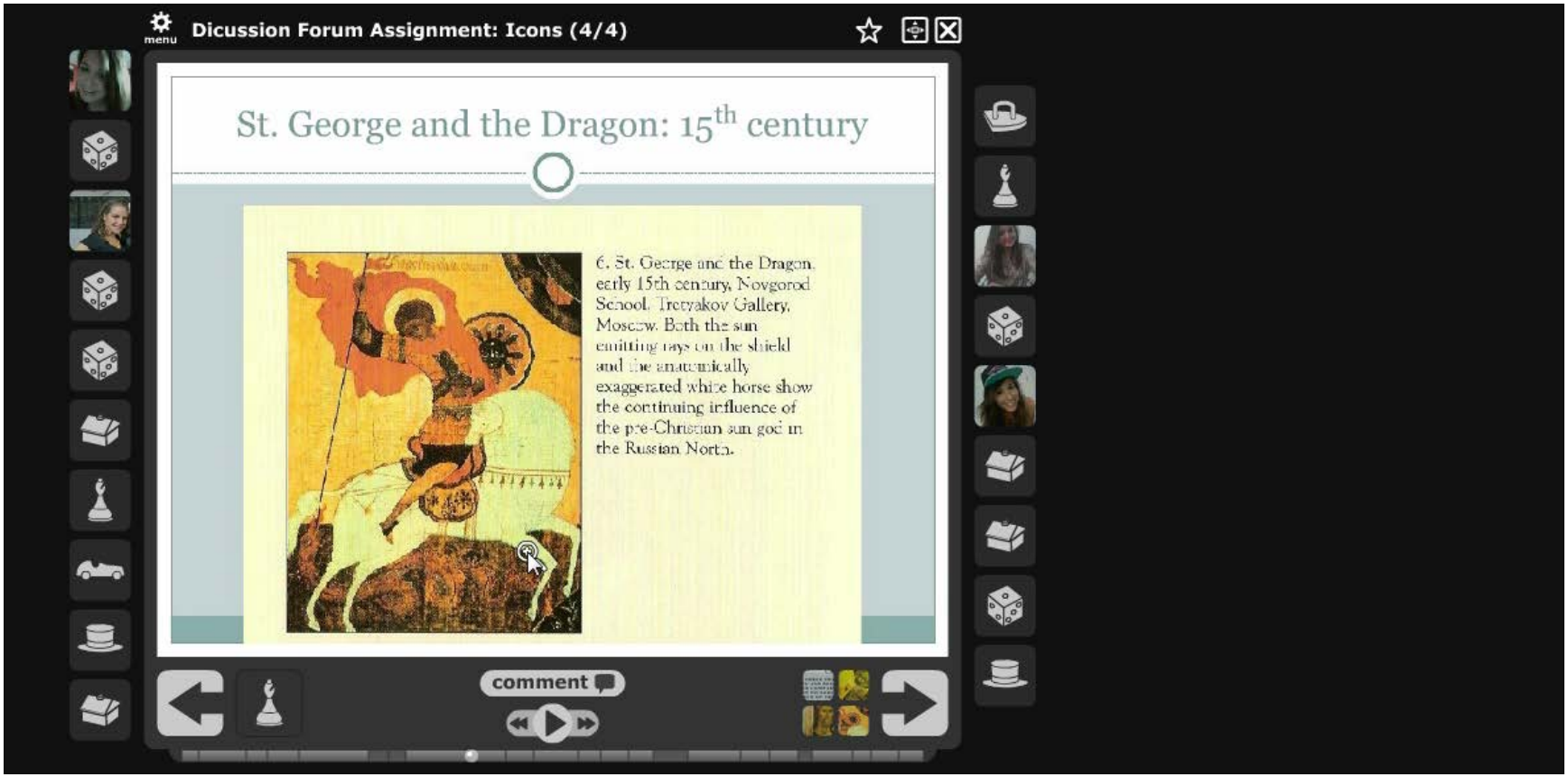
Examples of Student Work
Russian Culture & Civilization:



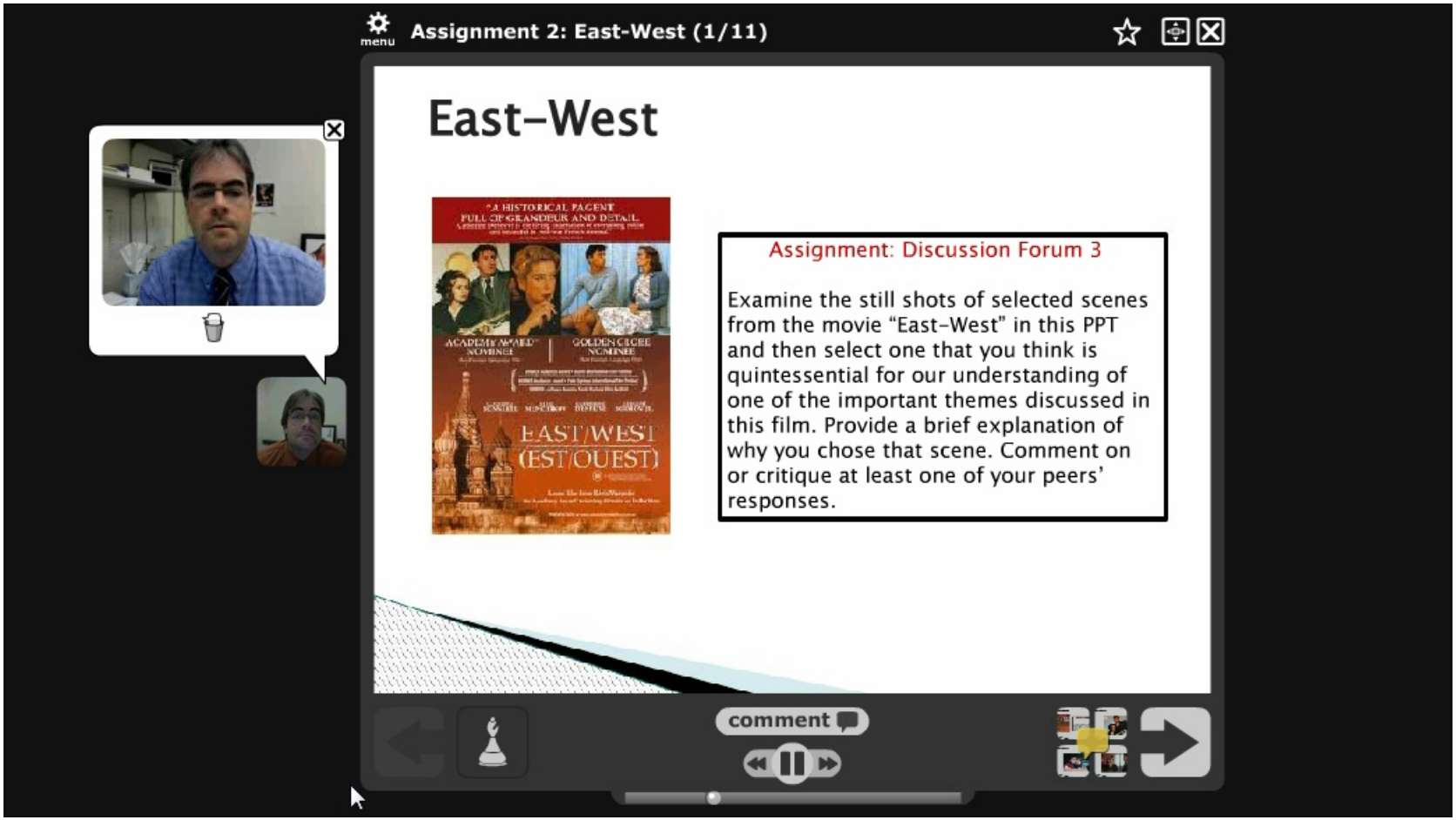
RUS-320 Russian Culture& Civilization



RUS-320 Russian Culture& Civilization



RUS-320 Russian Culture& Civilization



Student Exit Survey

Judgments were made on a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree); n = 14

Question	Mean	S D
1. Helped me express myself more creatively	3.57	0.82
2. Provided an additional way to interact with peers in class	3.79	0.41
3. Helped me spend more time thinking & discussing the topic	3.71	0.96
4. Was a “popularity contest” in class	2.07	0.88
5. Distracted me from learning the course content	2.07	0.88
6. Consumed too much time relative to other assignments	2.43	0.82
7. I was motivated, because my peers read and critiqued my posts	3.79	0.86
8. I was motivated, because my professor read and assessed my posts	4.07	0.70
9. My peers quickly reacted to and commented on my posts	3.43	0.73
10. I found commenting on my peers’ posts challenging	3.00	0.76

Student Exit Survey

Judgments were made on a descending 5-point scale

Question	Mean	Standard Deviations
11. I found participating in an online discussion challenging	3.07	0.88
12. Learning other students' opinions was useful for me	3.50	0.91
13. Overall, I found VT discussion useful for RUS-320	3.64	0.81
14. I'd like to continue using VT discussion in my other classes	3.36	0.81
15. I knew how to use VT after one demonstration	4.07	0.70
16. I found it interesting to comment on images in VT	3.93	0.88
19. I checked the posts from the University of Waterloo, Canada	3.36	1.04
20. I would like to continue using VT in other courses	3.14	0.74

Academic Benefits

Students:

- Participated more actively in digital discussions than in the classroom
- Stayed engaged by choosing a conversation strand that was of interest
- Participated in multiple strands simultaneously
- Thought about their comments beforehand- the sense of “safety”
- Provided comments that evolved into a thoughtful discussion
- Integrated other’s perspectives into their learning experience
- Developed critical thinking skills
- Were able to post comments from anywhere at any time
- Collaborate d with peers from different schools in a single conversation

Technological Benefits

- **Free accounts on VT public site (basic features only)**
- **Subscriptions for advanced features are affordable**
- **Tutorials for newbies**
- **Numerous examples of class projects and activities**
- **Learning curve for students is minimal**
- **Universal in access (from microphone, to telephone, to text, or webcam commenting)**

Discussion: How can we use VT Effectively?

- Supplement a course designed in any LMS
- Use *VoiceThread* projects that can support course objectives

What might be useful for instructors?

- Consider designing tasks around images
- Develop brief tasks tied to topics covered in class
- Discuss upcoming projects and potential problems
- Specify expected quality and quantity of communication
- Provide guidance on how to comment effectively and thoughtfully
- Consider bringing up posted comments in class
- Ask students to evaluate what makes a good comment
- Instruct students to register for VT with their school email accounts

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