

# ePortfolios and Reflective Learning in Global Education

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# VMI's Core Curriculum Requirement in History and Culture

The Academic Program prepares graduates who can...

- ⦿ Identify cultures of the world and the components and practices that distinguish them from others.
- ⦿ Appreciate a culture's distinctiveness either through texts or experiential contact.

# ePortfolios and Reflection

- **Artifact** - Work completed by the student and uploaded to the ePortfolio.
- **Reflective tag** - A short paragraph written at the time of posting an artifact:
  - What did I learn? How did I learn it? Why was the learning significant? What do I need to do, or know, next?
- **Reflective essay** – An essay in which a student reflects on learning experiences over time, making observations about, and drawing conclusions from, the work.

Inter/national Coalition on Electronic Portfolio Research, Cohort VI Study:

## Main Findings

- Cadets' learning about culture was facilitated by their engagement in a process of reflection that entailed posting tags and artifacts throughout the semester
- The presence of reflective tags within the ePortfolio space correlated strongly with a high quality of reflection in the reflective essay

# A Process-Centered Pedagogy of Reflection for ePortfolios

**Reflection-on-action:** writing about a recently completed assignment posted as an artifact and how it contributed to their learning

**Recursive reflection:** the act of reflecting on reflection to facilitate an ongoing dialogue about students' understanding of their own processes of learning

**Constructive reflection:** drawing connections among artifacts and reflective tags

**Reflection-in-presentation:** the reflective essay supported by self-selected evidence from the ePortfolio to support observations about learning over time

## Sample Reflective Tag

This study was particularly effective in introducing the primary themes of this course. Prior to reading *Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World*, I had given little thought to the effect such a common fruit can have on culture. The reading and subsequent assignments allowed me to understand how foods have had a tremendous impact on world affairs. This assignment has also made me more aware of and curious about other foods and their cultural significance, which contributes to the overall understanding of the course.

[Food and Hunger in History (HI 316WX)]

# Using Reflective Tags to Facilitate the Study of Culture

All human beings have cultural experiences with food that may be framed as questions: How is it procured, how is it stored, how is it prepared, when and with whom is it eaten, et cetera. Sometimes we even attach rituals to our preparation and/or consumption of food.

- Write a paragraph describing as fully as possible one of your most memorable experiences with food, paying attention to the cultural context of that experience.

## Reflect and Connect

- Share and discuss what you've written with the person(s) next to you. Take note of cultural similarities and differences.

# Compose a Reflective Tag

- In learning about someone else's food experience, what did you discover that deepened your understanding of your own experience with food?
- How was writing about the experience valuable? To what degree did talking about the experience contribute new insights?
- Imagine yourself in a semester-long course that examines historically the cultural dimensions of food. What would this activity prompt you to want to know, or do, next? And why?

# The Value of Reflection

“Through reflection, we can circle back, return to earlier notes, to earlier understandings and observations, to re-think them from time present (as opposed to time past), to think how things will look to time future.”

--Kathleen Blake Yancey