

Making Virtual Learning Spaces A Reality

TEXAS  STATE
UNIVERSITY[®]
SAN MARCOS

The rising STAR of Texas

TXDLA August 2012

The Team



ITS Instructional
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El Cerrito Village

Introduction by Dr. Brock Brown

El Cerrito, New Mexico

San Miguel County

Founded 1824
Population approx. 13
Elevation 5712 feet

From San Marcos

725 miles

12 hours and 32 minutes



Statement of Goals

Virtual Field School Project

Avoid common pitfalls

Too much emphasis on visual aesthetics

Instructionally sound, but not visually engaging

The outcome should...

Be instructionally sound in design

Be visually engaging, but not overwhelming

Take advantage of existing multimedia resources

Review of Student Demographics

GEO 4190 blossoms!

Special topics course, taught in Fall 2011

Strong interest shown by GEO Ed and GIS majors

Field test limited to 4 students, with approval



Pre-Course Survey Results

Highlights

Tech savvy? (50/50)

Equivalent experience? (50/50)

Ability to master course objectives (100%)

Attitude toward hybrid approach (100%)

Feel like part of a learning community (100%)

History of Texas State in Second Life

2006

AUGUST

First sim purchased

2007

JANUARY

Bobcat Village virtual
campus completed

Second sim purchased

2007-2009

Instructors use the
sim for classes.

2009-2011

Shift towards building
simulations

Comparative Study of Virtual Environments for Teaching

Criteria for selection of development platform

Portability

Longevity

Affordability

Fidelity

Compatibility

Comparative Study of Virtual Environments for Teaching

Development Environments Evaluated

Second Life

Google Earth

OpenSim

Unity Engine

Development of the Village in Second Life



Gathering Data for the Simulation

Data Gathered

Building photographs

Videos of village tour and interviews

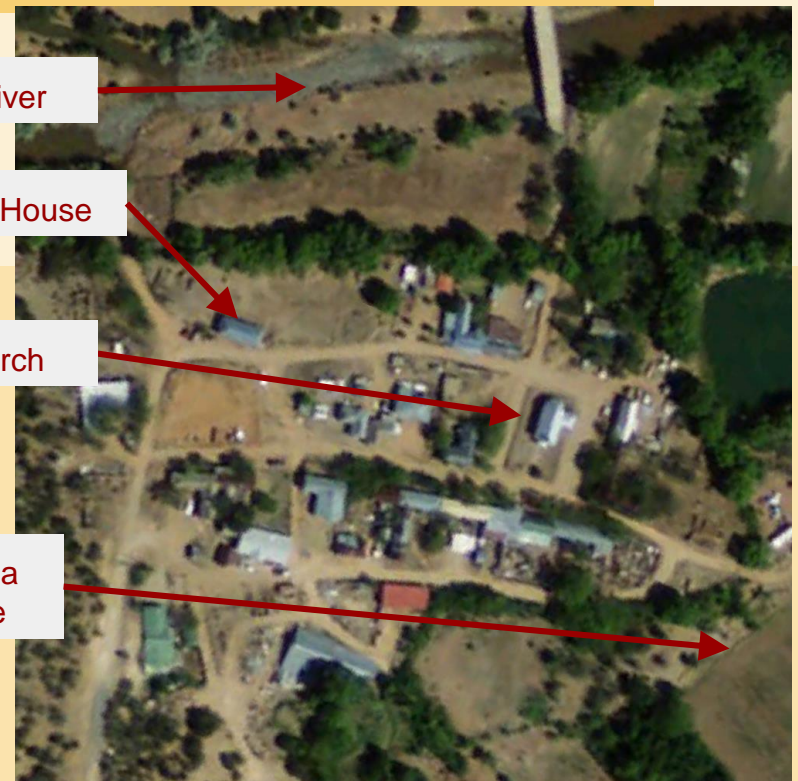
Elevation data

Publications on the history of the village

Layout of the Simulator



El Cerrito Village, Second Life



El Cerrito Village, New Mexico

Building the Virtual Village

Scale and Placement

Limited space on a simulator

Orientation & layout of the village

Building scale vs. avatar scale

Terrain scale vs. building scale

Photo Sourced Textures

Captured on digital camera

Edited in Photoshop to SL requirements

Uploaded and applied to objects in SL











Virtual Field School Simulates

Village Structures

- Church & Plaza
- Houses & yards
- Water pump & tank
- Walls, fences
- Domesticated animals
- Foliage
- Vehicles & Litter

Surrounding Elements

- Mesa Cliffs
- Trees
- Low lying ground cover

River

- Dam
- Acequia

Long Lots

- Gates for fields
- Irrigation runoff to river

Roads

- Bridges that provide access to the village
- Village streets

Additional Items in the Virtual Field School

Info Cones

Video tours

Interviews

Information pages

Self-Assessment activities

Surveys

Virtual Classroom

Hay bales

Slide Projector

Signage Displays

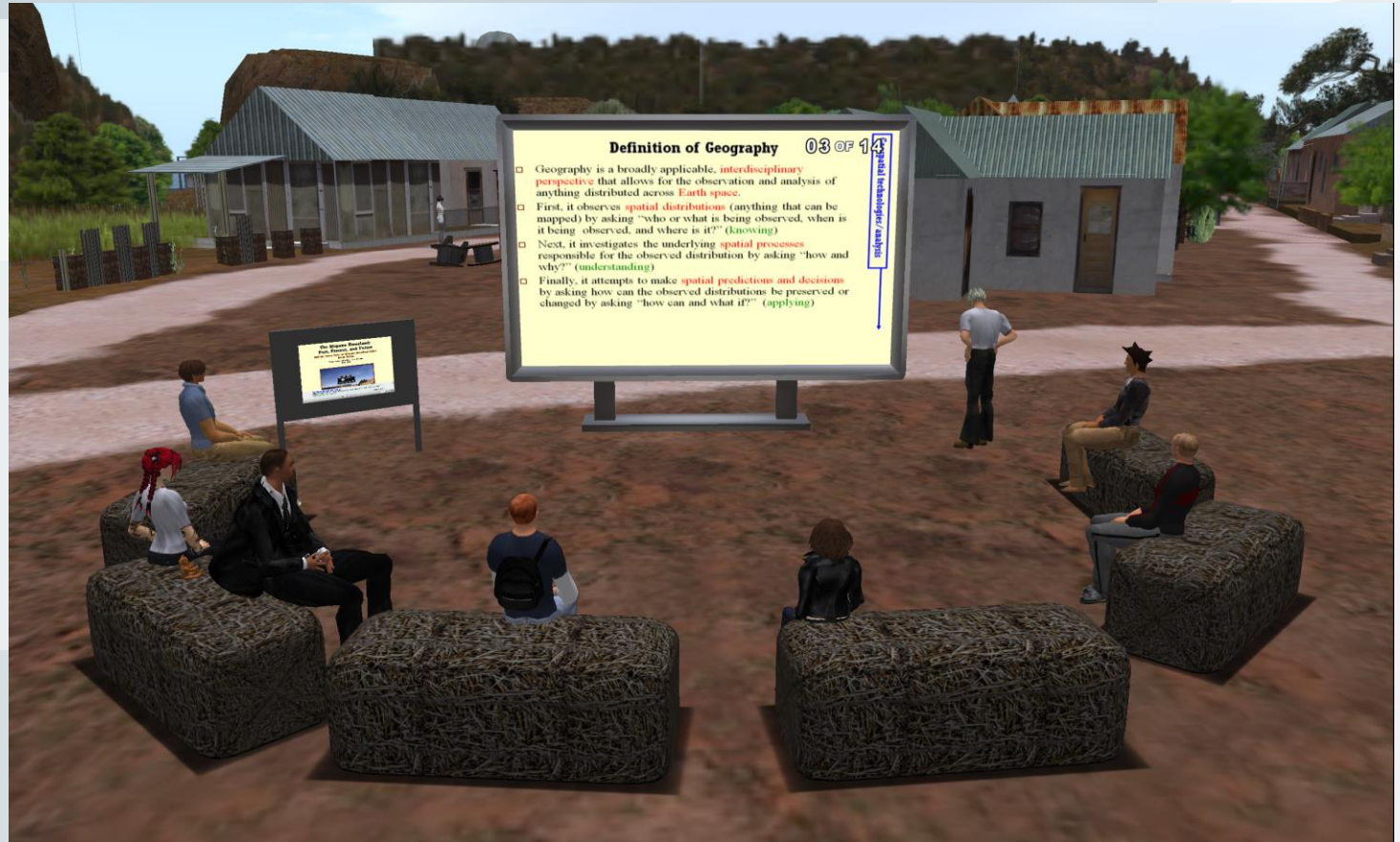
Instructions

Map & guides

Video of Virtual El Cerrito



Developing the Course



Designing the Course

Choosing the format

A hybrid approach

One-on-one faculty consultation

Course planning matrix

Planning Matrix

		Instructional Activities	
Modules	Objectives	Ungraded	Graded
The Hispano Homeland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the physical elements and cultural processes leading to the development of an archaic folk culture. 2. Justify the Hispano Homeland as an archaic folk culture. 3. Identify reasons that the other Spanish Homelands did not develop archaic folk cultures. 4. Develop a justifiable argument for why the Pecos Enclave was probably the longest persisting and least degraded area of archaic folk culture in the Hispano Homeland. 	<p>Video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module intro video <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1 from The Hispano Homeland • Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community by Leonard and Loomis <p>Village Visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Walk Along “the Ditch” (Bright Red Cones 1 – 6). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This sequence will take you on a tour of the ditch up to the dam, discuss the history and importance of the ditch, terrace levels, El Barranco, Canyon de Pena, ditch association, and other information about the ditch. <p>Attend live lecture (in Second Life)</p>	<p>Discussion Assignment: If someone were to ask you to tell them what an "archaic folk culture" is, how would you define the term for them? Why do you think a Spanish-based archaic homeland arose in New Mexico and not in the other homelands?</p> <p>Written Assignment: Reflection on Virtual Field Visit</p>

Developing the Course

Course material

Discussion Forum Activities

Extra Credit Activities

Final Project

Online Mini-Lectures

Use of Media Cones

Building the course in our LMS

Delivering the Course

Scheduling issues

Training the students

Communicating online

Guest speakers

Training the Faculty

Acclimating the faculty to online teaching pedagogy

Facilitating forum discussions

Managing communication

Managing LMS course site

Delivering lectures in Second Life

Second Life Technical Support

Second Life Class Session

voice troubleshooting

slides for the classes

Second Life technical troubleshooting

voice chat

video card / network performance issues

End of Course Survey Results



Lessons Learned & Looking Ahead

Keep the hybrid format

Add an additional F2F Second Life training session

Add instructor-led “walks” in the village

Add more collaborative learning elements

Add more “gaming” elements

Increase instructor participation in discussions

Address faculty’s feeling of disconnect

Don’t *apologize* for the technology

Questions & Answers



“It is amazing to me that we are able to recreate a real life village on the computer, and allow people to tour and research this place. I am all for Texas State and other universities pursuing more opportunities like this one.”

-student comments

“The ability to independently walk around EL Cerrito to get a sense of the environment and peer into the (digitally) well preserved history of the village is nothing less than extraordinary.”

-student comments