



## **Borderless journeys in photography**

This exemplar is relevant to Digital Student challenge:

### ***Deliver a relevant digital curriculum***

An undergraduate photography course at Coventry University is simultaneously an open online course (without formal registration) that attracts up to 35,000 participants every time it is run. When he was first invited to teach, photographer Jonathan Worth insisted that his classes should be open to all, a position he has maintained ever since. *'I teach connectedly and my students learn in a live connected environment'*, he says. The course aims to develop students' visual and digital fluency through open-ended tasks that may begin with photography but can take off into digital storytelling, online identity work, video and audio, mash-ups and social commentary. Alongside the weekly tasks, students are asked to engage with the [course blog](#), to [tweet](#) and to blog reflectively. Guest lecturers join the class by skype and recorded video interviews. The [online staffroom](#) has a condensed account of the different ways that students can engage with phonar.

Because the course takes place on the open web - using web services such as Flickr, Vimeo, SoundCloud and Facebook – it reproduces students' social habits online. It also allows students' work to be publicly visible and commented on. The course iPhone app has been downloaded over 2000 times, and the course itself was recently recognised for outstanding innovation in the international [Reclaim Open Learning Challenge](#). Student blogs and tweets show how much they are getting from the open experience, and some student voices have been captured for a [Jisc OnAir session](#). Larissa says:

*'For my dyslexia it helped a lot... You had videos, you had interviews, so it wasn't just sitting reading a book or giving a handout of sheets, actually I could go, I could interact, I could listen to stories, I could look at other people's work.'*

and Shaun:

*'I've barely really used Facebook or anything like that, but now it's actually taking that from being like a more of a recreational type of thing but actually turning it into a very professional tool'. 'Once [my work was] up in an exhibition space, it gives you the confidence that other people might enjoy it, so I started entering a few competitions and you know putting the work out there, and I think a few others in the class did.'*

The course has also attracted external funding from a variety of sources (including Jisc) to support ongoing innovations. All materials are available for use and re-use under a Creative Commons by-sa licence.

### **How does this meet the challenge?**

- This is a genuinely borderless classroom, with a teaching/learning approach that is complex, open-ended, negotiated, and potentially unsettling.
- From the start, students are producing public digital artefacts and engaging in public debates about their meaning.

- The course provides a variety of online spaces in which student can try out ideas and comment on one another's work.
- Elements of this approach could be adopted into a more conventional course e.g. the creation of public artefacts, the commitment to open course materials and processes, the inclusion of guest lecturers and other external voices.

### **Find out more**

- [Course materials and tasks, course blog](#)
- [Case studies](#)
- [Presentation on trans-media story telling](#)
- [MOOC report from Universities UK](#) (which includes a case study on Phonar)

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