

Dr. StrangeLibraryLove or:

**How I Learned to Stop Worrying & Love
(or, at least, Appreciate)
Google**

Virginia Connell

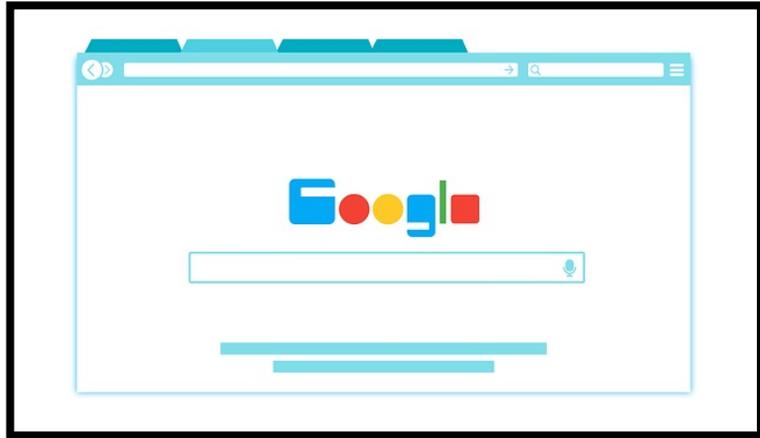
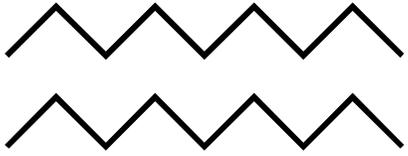
Concordia College
Moorhead, MN



Why?

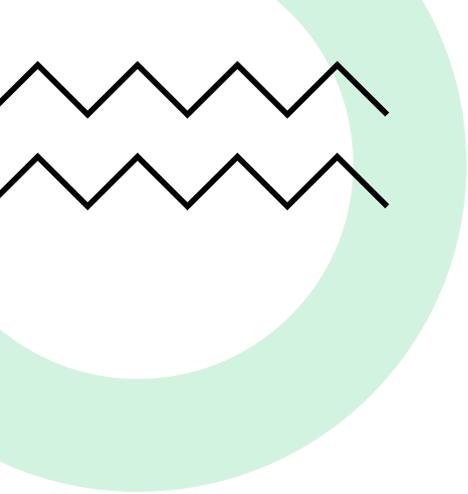
What might be the
value of a class like
this?





Why Focus on Google?

- Attitudes about Google
 - Students grew up with cautions
 - Students love Google & what it offers
 - I use Google everyday
- Students will lose access to many databases after graduation
- Instill life-long learning skills & dispositions



Why Investigate Life Online?

Online life is an extension of IRL

- Sometimes online life is a unique expression of “real life”
- As users of the internet, we are more than just consumers
- It is legitimate to have expectations of and set standards for sites wishing to be worthy of our attention

The central question of how to live a good life online creates opportunity to discuss:

- How we define a good life
- Naturally occurring topics affecting every element of our lives: citizenship, community, happiness, privacy, data harvesting, bias, gendered spaces, etc.

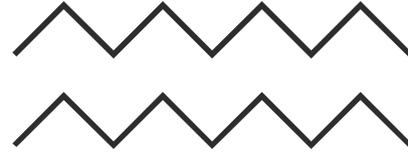


How?

What did I need to do
to build such a
class?



Practicalities I



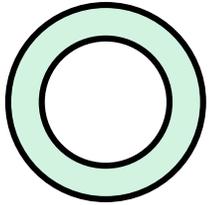
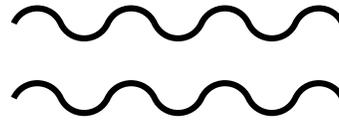
Addressing my worries

- I needed to change my attitude about teaching Google first
 - Move away from cautions & warnings
 - Move toward evaluating what makes a good site
- What strengths did I already have to bring to this project?
 - English/Philosophy double major
 - Years of teaching grammar-composition classes for FY students

Evaluating how I actually use Google

- Acknowledge years of reading & evaluating in a print-only environment
- Choose sites based on what is valuable/useful/helpful/approachable
- What makes me return to a site as worthy of my continued use?
- Being willing to accept site flaws if
 - Site intentions seem to be good
 - Site builders/owners are responsive
 - Site provides reliable information

Practicalities II



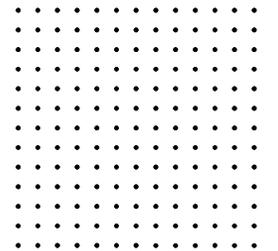
Background Research

Finding a departmental “home” for such a class

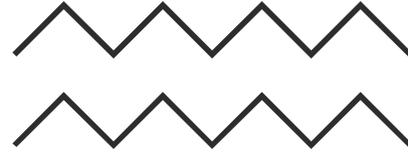
- No curricular code for a library class

Conversations with:

- Registrar
- English department faculty: book club class as a model
- Curriculum Committee Chair
- Relevant faculty in Philosophy and Communication Studies



Practicalities III



Finding texts

Core text to ground the values we would discuss

- Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
 - Explicit emphasis on the Good Life & on virtues
 - Argument for developing virtues through habit (thus, growing a disposition to look for the Good)
 - Building an understanding that choosing the Good is a true choice, both as a user of the internet and on the part of web content-creators

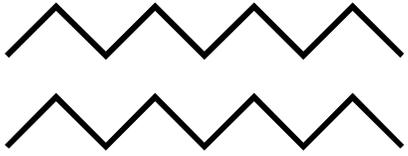
A lab text to provide practical experience

- Caulfield's *Web Literacy for Student Fact Checkers*
 - Hands-on practice during the second half of each class
 - Everyone learns as we share findings
 - Real-world examples
 - Tools to use on student-suggested examples
- [HUM200 LibGuide](#)

Who?

Enrollment





Class Level

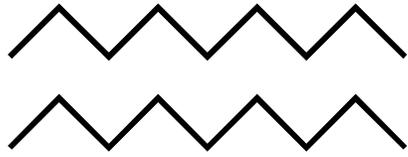
Humanities 200

- Open to Sophomores and above
- Our FY Library Launch
 - Covers all FY students in their required Inquiry 100 class
 - Emphasizes using academic library resources for their school work
 - The Launch outcomes are reasonably “sticky” so I didn’t want to send mixed signals to FY students regarding appropriate source use
 - Most FY students have yet to understand the complexity of registering for classes, so having them wait to take 1-credit classes is developmentally appropriate

When?

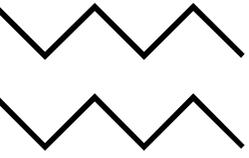
Semester &
Timeline



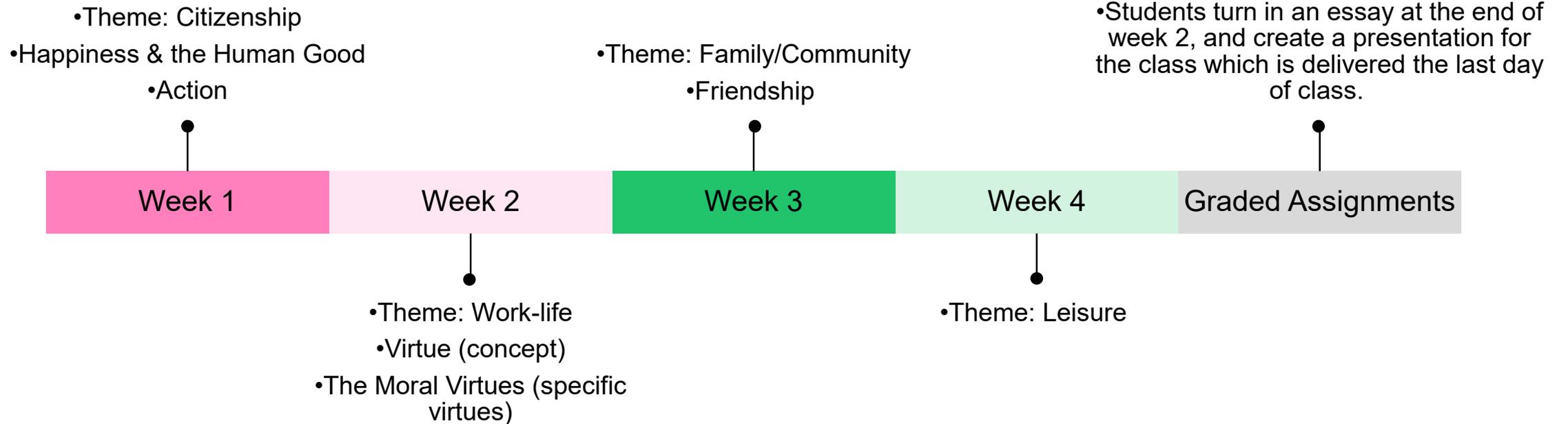


Spring Semester

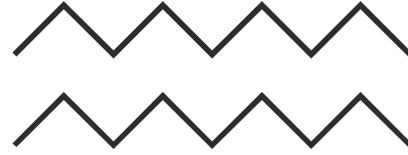
- Originally F2F
- During the pandemic, switched to synchronous online (now that I have developed it as an online class, I may keep it this way)
- Total class: Four nights, once a week
- The class is offered during the first month of classes in January; this allows students to complete the essay and the presentation before other major projects are due for their other classes
- 3-hour class (during the first half, we unpack the Aristotle reading for the day; after a short break, we use our Web Literacy text to complete the lab portion of the class)



Class Timeline



Essay: Example Topics



Pleasure/Honor/Wealth

- Example: How might Aristotle view the way an online gambling site is built and measure it against his notion of the Life of Pleasure as an incomplete good?
 - Are there protections in place to limit the amount a person can lose? Is there a way to assure that all players are adults (because youth are not yet “rational” enough to make these kinds of choices, according to Aristotle)? Does the site sell data of either winners or losers to outside businesses who might prey on the players’ love of chance?
- Example: Do you have knowledge of an MMOG (Massively Multiplayer Online Game) that creates space for people to experience pleasure or honor?
 - Does it carve out a welcoming space? Does it protect younger players from accidentally spending on in-game micro-transactions (loot boxes, etc.)? Are *all* players welcome (can players join the game if they use accessible keyboard shortcuts, for example)?

Boastfulness

- LinkedIn: Does the site reward/discourage boasting (in Aristotle’s understanding, to “claim things that bring glory”) when the person has not done anything glorious?
- Does the site or culture of LinkedIn allow for bullying/shunning/racist or otherwise offensive language or behaviors to remain in public areas of the site?
- Or you might examine the culture of LinkedIn itself – so, looking at what many posts seem to share with regards to attitude (about individual accomplishments, if you are using Boastfulness as your measure)

Liberality

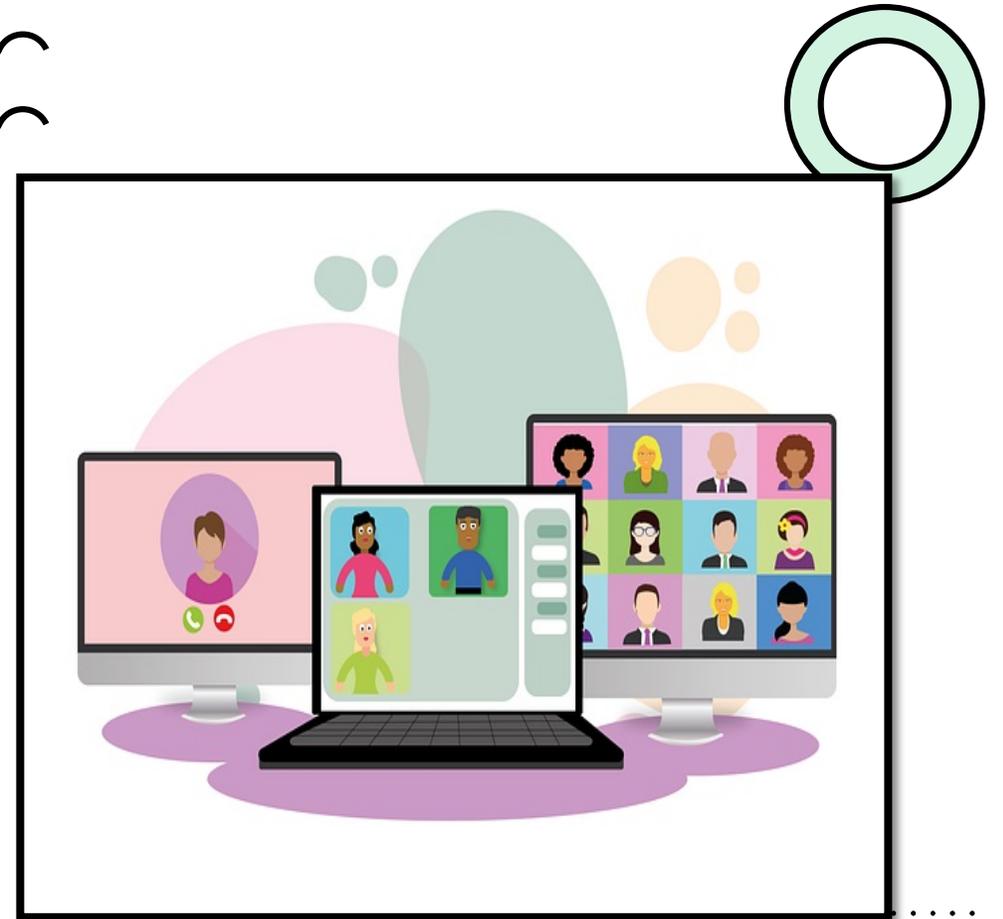
- Example: Online banking/loan institutions – do they reflect some of the better characteristics of Aristotle’s Liberality?
- What would be the online banking fees compared to another institution?
- Are they dependent on good-quality internet or other infrastructure that some people might not have?
- How is their customer service (perhaps as reflected in their published policies, if you know of no specific stories) – can you reach a human to help you if needed?

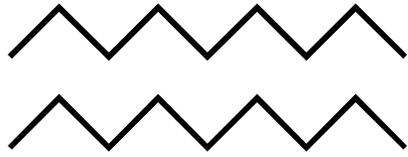
Pandemic Teaching

Having never taught online before, but having completed my SLIS degree in an online program, I knew of several things that might help students stay engaged.

In addition to the usual standards of being responsive, creating good spaces for interaction, and being more flexible than usual about deadlines, I tried these tactics:

- Created “Lobby” slides for while students were entering the Zoom room:
 - Play the standard librarian game of combining 2 weird words to see if you can get only 1 result in Google; share these at the start of class
 - Go to Google Doodle Archive and find a favorite to share in the chat
 - Check out Atlas Obscura and Open Culture while you wait for class to start
- Made every slide set available after class and was more expansive in the Notes section than usual
- Logged in early and logged out late, in case students needed additional time to talk about





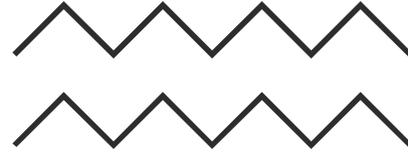
Some Student Finds

- Aeon + Psyche (an online magazine that “illuminates the human condition through psychology, philosophical understanding and the arts”)
- EJAtlas (Mapping Environmental Justice)
- IMSLP (International Music Score Library Project)
- Bassmaster (Did you know there is Fantasy Fishing?!!!)
- Ologies (Science podcast)

Nuanced evaluations of some everyday sites:

- TikTok
- Spotify
- Twitch
- Discord
- YouTube & YouTube Music

Extending this Model



Book Clubs

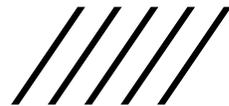
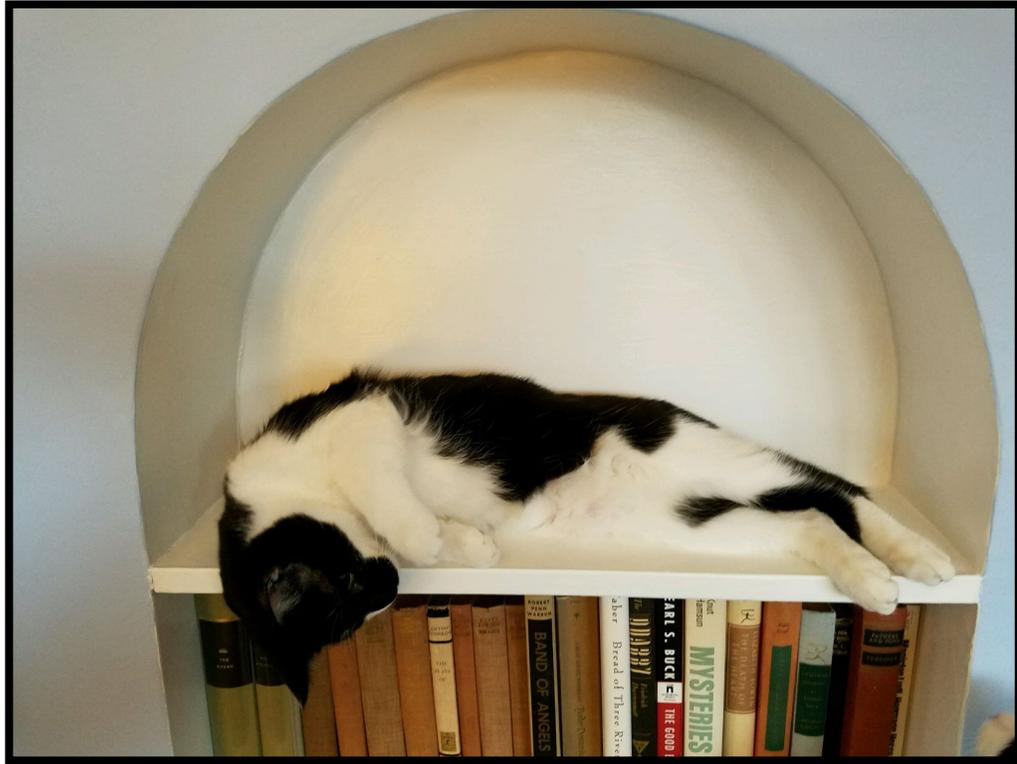
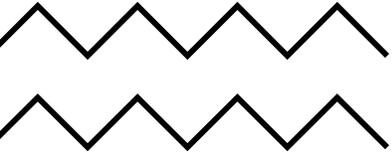
- Nonfiction or fiction with themes of ethics or ethical decision-making
- Books with an “internet” plot or focus would work
- Modified Caulfield activities for hands-on practice

Themed Sessions

- Using one of the 4 themes for a stand-alone group conversation about life online: citizenship, work-life, community/family, leisure
- Preparing a set of topics for group work with real-time searching & evaluating
- Participants could leave with a list of the “best sources”

Scalable Options

- Depending on the texts or themes chosen, searching for good-quality, ethical venues online could work for any age group
- Elementary/middle school/HS age users might enjoy a gamified version of searching (for in-depth look at this, see Ian Bogost’s [Persuasive Games](#); for the tl;dr explanation, [the Wikipedia article](#)).

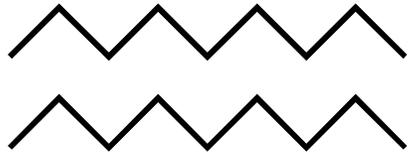


THANK YOU

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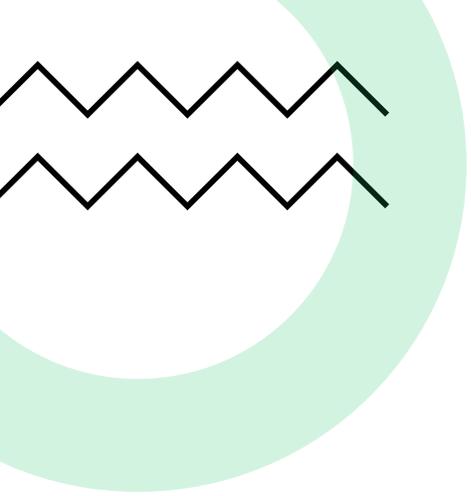
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[HUM200 Course Guide](#)



Resources

- Aristotle. [*Nicomachean Ethics*](#).
Multiple online full-text, free versions exist, including an [audiobook version](#). I used our library's Britannica Original Sources version due to ease of access, but students could choose which version they preferred. I was unable to find a version with page numbers online.
- Caulfield, Michael. [*Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*](#).
- [HUM 200 Course Guide](#) (LibGuide).
- This PowerPoint and handouts of the assignments are available on [the LSL21 site](#).



Q & A

