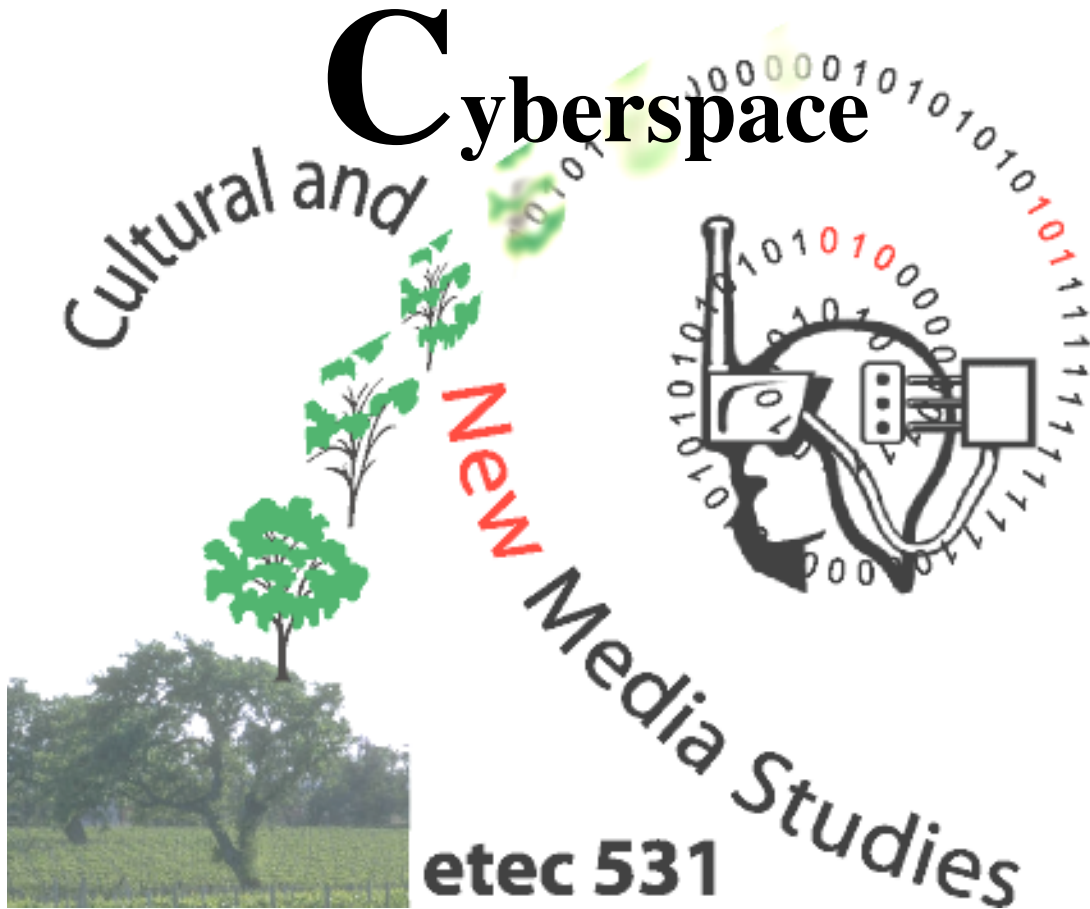


Primer for (Learning in)

Cyberspace



Dr. Stephen Petrina
Dr. Franc Feng
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Master of Educational Technology Program

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Introduction to ETEC 531

From the early days of the internet of the 1970s and the popularity of The Well during the early 1980s to the dawn of the web in the early 1990s, "online communication" was the primary justification for the new media technologies. When published in 1995, Howard Rheingold's *The Virtual Community* marked the height of this discourse and captured the spirit of internet and web enthusiasts. However, the last decade of critical cybercultural studies cast a pall over the virtual community thesis. Now, it is not clear whether "virtual community" is possible or even desirable. Little about communication, community and technology are unproblematic or can be taken for granted. Nevertheless, trends in web access and online courses continue unabated.

ETEC 531 addresses these processes and trends. The philosophy of the course is simple: use new media technologies to study and critique new media technologies; turn media consumption and production on themselves. In other words, the course provides an effective encounter between media production (or practice) and media critique (or theory). ETEC 531 was designed as a blended course (face-to-face (F2F) plus computer-mediated communication (CMC) in 2000 and was put online in the fall of 2004. Initially the course was an introduction to cultural studies, media studies and cyberculture. The second time it was offered in 2002, the course was taught with a focus on cyborgs. When the online version was designed a decision was made to focus on cyberculture and specifically explore ways in which culture, nature and technology are converging to intensify and transform everyday life.

ETEC 531 is now an integral part of the joint University of British Columbia – Tec de Monterey Master of Educational Technology (MET) program. The course engages students in the production of media artifacts to critique technology and is designed around nine modules that deal with issues such as cyborgs and hybridity, digital property, cyberpunk fiction, the posthuman, AI, information warfare, virtual reality, third nature and religion. The modules supplement the key text for the course, *Culture and Technology*, and structure the activities and projects. Based on sound principles of instructional design, the modules, activities and projects challenge students to represent their understandings of the content through image and sound as opposed to strict text-based formats.

The design of the course turns on the digital aesthetic: interactivity, immediacy, portability, etc. The design of the nine modules encourages students to actively attend to both content and form, and discourages a passive, drop-in and print-out engagement with WebCT. The course is designed so that digital forms, rather than printed matter, provide the necessary interactivity. ETEC 531 culminates in a group project that empowers the students to collaborate in two decisive ways. Small groups are challenged to create a project that is an essential component of a collective, class project.

Use of Technology

Drawing upon WebCT technologies, ETEC 531 has a coherent "look" and "feel" not typically found in other courses. It features a "Virtual Classroom" that pools the collective student portfolios and work together for public viewing. The course also features a "Technology Workshop," with online tutorials, a monthly course "Bulletin" to synthesize proceedings, and a behind-the-scenes database for compiling course information not readily accessed within WebCT. In many ways, ETEC 531 exploits WebCT's features to its limits. For example, the

“course-mapping” feature of WebCT is inadequate for an “at-a-glance scope of the course. The course balances asynchronous modes of communication (listserv, email, bulletin board, wiki) with weekly “live forums” or pre-scheduled, structured chats for interactive discussions of the modules. These weekly forums are supplemented by “transcripts,” which are made available to students who cannot “attend.”

We recommend that you use cable access or higher for this course. You will struggle with modem and phone line access. In our Technology Workshop, we provide a range of tutorials and tips for software downloads and purchases. For the most part, if you plan on doing a lot of media production, a Mac is the best way to go. PCs with Windows or Linux operating systems are becoming much more functional with graphics and for this course you will be fine with a P2 microprocessing speed.

Assessment

Each of ETEC 531’s nine modules involves a “pre-test” and “post-test” for self-assessment. The pre- and post-tests in turn drive the discussions in the weekly live forums. A rubric is used for the three required media productions and for the final projects. This approach helps the instructors maintain a consistent measure of quality across the assignments while maintaining custom, individualized feedback for each student. Well-defined criteria for the projects correspond to the assessment rubrics. An interim “progress report” is provided to each student based on the instructors’ assessment of WebCT database statistics. A significant component of the final grade for the course is based on participation, which serves as an incentive for participation in all its forms throughout the course.

Support

Theoretically, ETEC 531 was “front-loaded” with design features to allow the course, once launched, to unfold like a fine clock with minimal instructor involvement. Realistically, the course is redesigned “just-in-time” as a response to student requests and problems. Many of the general issues of content are resolved within the weekly forums. WebCT specialists at the University of British Columbia are mobilized more or less around the clock to respond to bugs and technical challenges. The “Technology Workshop” was designed to scaffold the students with a range of resources and tutorials for learning new media technologies. The “Technology Workshop” helps meet the difficult challenge of teaching technical skills online and is continually being updated. The group project teams are assembled with ranges of expertise in mind and the students are responsible to each other for a fair amount of “cognitive bootstrapping.”

Collective experience and learning in cyberspace challenges us to theorize the process. It *is* perhaps as challenging to take a class in virtual space, as it is to facilitate one. Of significance to the question of technological determinism, this space of mutual interaction has a way of leveling, humbling us all when responses to our posts on bulletin boards are delayed. It is similar for us all in cyberspace: when we wonder how our innovations, concerns and hopes might come across; when we wonder if what we have been trying to convey has been understood, when we suspect we might miscomprehend a virtual situation, when we wonder if we have altogether missed the point!

How might we make sense of the way in which, online or virtual learning in cyberspace with its potential to humble, offers new ways of understanding pedagogy and the social in learning, when students and teachers cannot look into the other's eyes, detect nuances, changes in motion, inflection, tone, and exchange nods of approvals. Ironically, with problems of virtuality that we examine in a graduate course on culture and technology, we are faced with the prospect of being reduced to pure text— students and instructors have been called upon to reach deep within to respond in responsible and caring ways.

We learn in social environments. A theoretical framework that fits with our experience is found in [Lave and Wenger](#)'s proposition of situated cognition, explained in their classic *Situated Learning*. Through this framework, Lave and Wenger rethink our formulation of learning as pre-configured. They emphasize participation, which “is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world” (p. 51). Viewing learning as a process of participation in “communities of practice,” they stress Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). This stems from their view of learners as legitimate participants who, while beginning on the periphery, move to the centre as learning progresses. Educators have interpreted this as an apprentice type model of learning— we are always learning with each other. In addition to this thesis that learning is inherently social, we can take three important concepts from Lave and Wenger: Learning is always situated, necessarily involves peripheral participation, and involves the artifacts of everyday experience. In our case, digital community or CMC forms with the digital artefacts we create.

Begin here...

WebCT, like Blackboard or Moodle, is technically a course management system (CMS). Theoretically, everything you need for online courses should be found within the CMS shell. You will nonetheless discover that everything you need is not in WebCT. ETEC 531 is fairly comprehensive but you will still find the instructors uploading and distributing files throughout the term. If you have not familiarized yourself with WebCT, please take time to do this. For the most part, the navigation bar on the left of your screen provides you with links to the main components of ETEC 531. Download the syllabus if you have not done this and review it. All of the assignments are described along with assessment. Complete the first participation task by following the steps on the “Begin Here” page, linked from the navigation bar.

In the first module, which addresses the Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Culture and Technology*, we outline many of the basic concepts in cultural and new media studies. The intent is to provide a "big picture" of the field and help you develop a complex, theoretical perspective on new media technologies. Figures 1 and 2 provide an overview of cybercultural studies and the Physical entities of Cyberspace. In cybercultural studies we act as though cyberspace is an accessible entity but when we think of cyberspace as merely the sum of a collection of technologies it is clear that there is “no there there.” Perhaps cyberspace is a good example of something that is truly bigger than the sum of its parts.

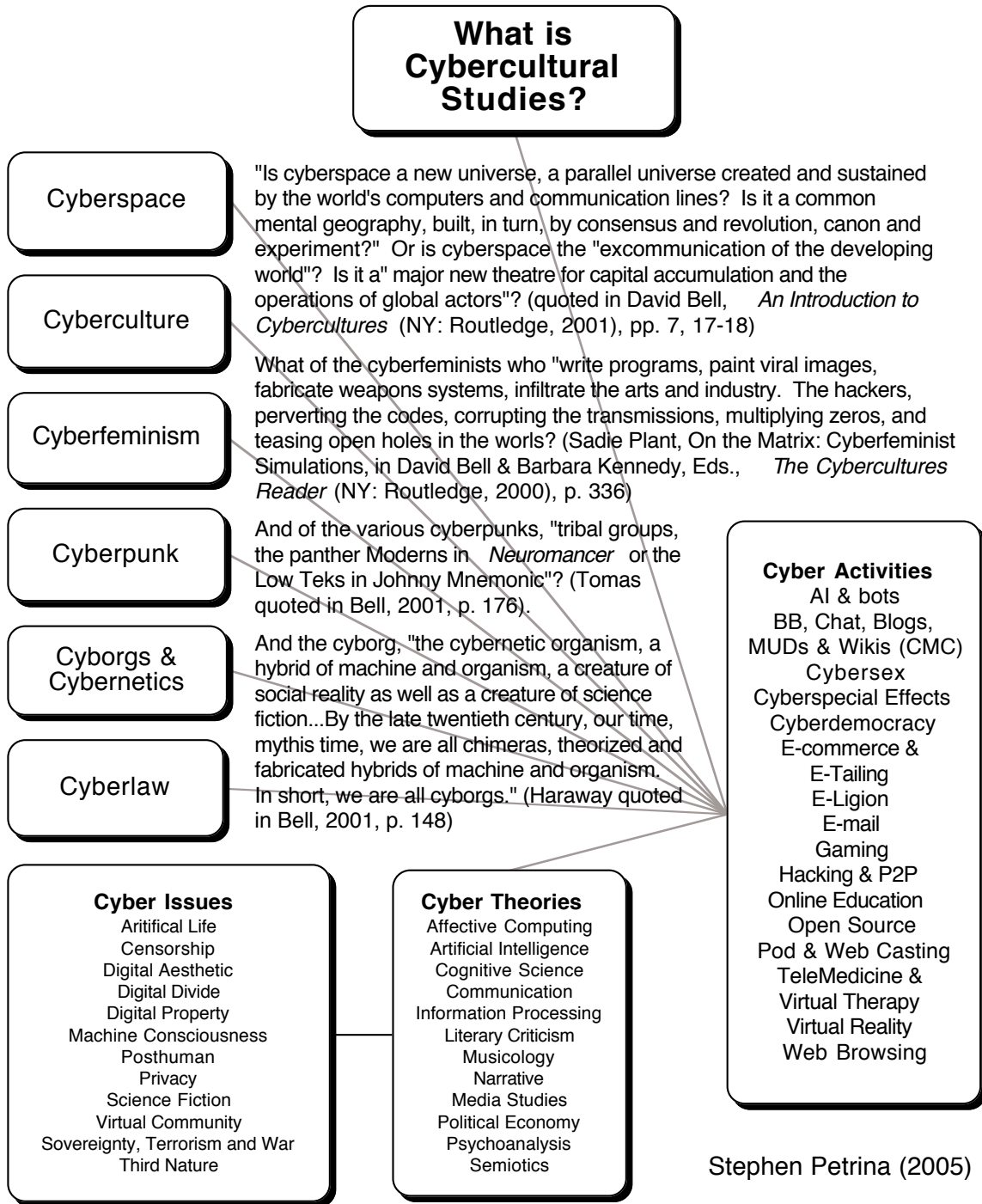


Figure 1. Cybercultural Studies

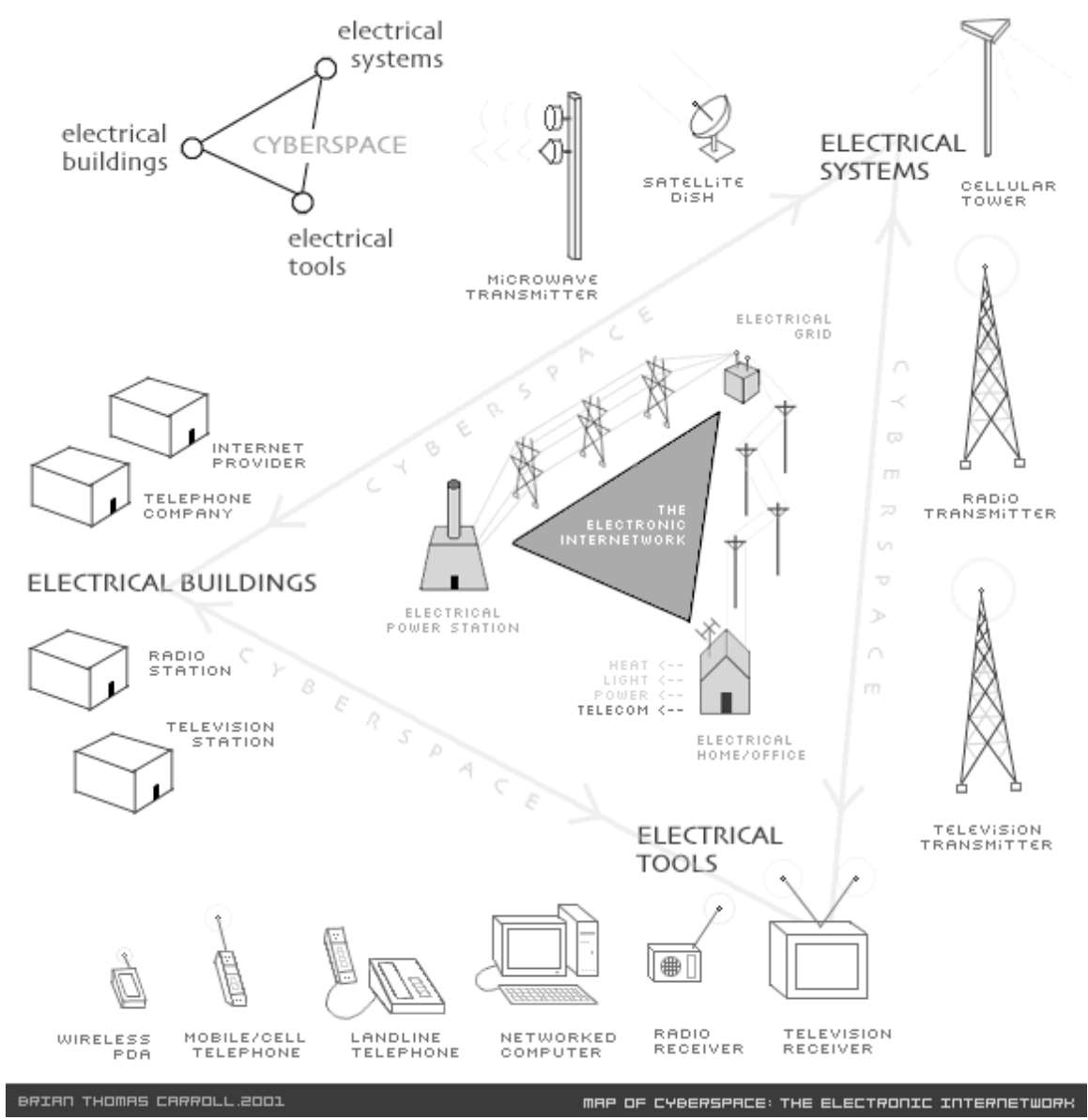


Figure 2. Map of Cyberspace

Although we use a variety of CMC options in ETEC 531 (e.g., BB, chat, listserv, e-portfolio, wiki), the discussion BB and chats are fairly structured. There are certain rules that we have found helpful for BB posts, our live forums or chats, and the ETEC 531 listserv. We call these our cyberdiscursive ethics.

Cyberdiscursive Ethics: Discussion (BB) Guidelines

The discussion BBs in ETEC 531 are not facilitated by the instructor(s) in a formal sense, but they are structured. The discussions are structured in two ways:

1. Around **content threads** (typically the module and readings for the week)
2. Around **course management issues** (typically issues that arise during the course).

Generally, students interact with each other on the discussion BBs. ETEC 531 instructors intervene and comment when necessary but do not typically respond to all threads.

The challenge is to find a comfortable zone somewhere between academic writing and casual exchange. The goal is to write in a conversational style but to draw on the issues and theories for course. We'll call this **academic conversation**. Students often get anxious over academic writing and the charge that they are "talking from nowhere." The other extreme is "talking from everywhere," a form of what Donna Haraway called a "God trick." "Talking from somewhere" is the goal— this somewhere may be your experience (with examples) or it may be from what you've read or from the theory we are addressing. We want you to theorize and this is different than merely providing your opinion, which is what so many professors dislike. There is a difference between your narrative or experience and opinion. Remember these tips for your media productions. Although discussion threads function well when weaving otherwise haphazard consciousness and ideas into organized streams, the very fragmentary nature of their organization does not easily allow for addressing concerns *across* threads. How can we deal with this? It will be up to some of you (as well as the instructors) to synthesize across threads.

The following "Rules of Engagement" are crucial to successful discussion BBs:

1. **Post at least on discussion message per week.** Part of your course participation mark is based on your posts to the discussion BB. Although WebCT tracks the quantity of your entries, which is important, we will also be monitoring the quality of your BB entries.
2. **Be succinct!** Limit your messages to 250 words (about 1 screen), and try to say what you want to say in one message!
3. **Use clear subject lines!** Courteously and wisely use the subject lines of the messages you post. Provide a sense of the message's content in the subject line. This facilitates skimming over groups of new and older messages.
4. **Be specific!** If you are responding to messages, make sure "re: <subject>" is in the subject line. If your message is part of a "thread," copy or quote exact references from the message you are responding to. But be sure to edit out that which is not relevant. This helps readers understand the context of your response.
5. **Offer readable text!** Use short paragraphs and point form notations. Headers over paragraphs are helpful.
6. **Be tolerant and use discretion!** What is of interest to some on the list may not be of direct interest to you! And, what is of interest to you, may not be interesting to others.
7. **Maintain professional interaction!** The discussion BB is for sharing insights, stimulating new ideas, expanding the discussion into new territory and increasing the cohesion and vitality of the group.

Cyberdiscursive Ethics: Live Forum (Chat) Guidelines

The weekly live forums in ETEC 531 are “structured chats” or facilitated by the instructor(s). The live forums are structured in two ways:

1. Around **content** (typically the module and readings for the week)
2. Around **participation** (we take turns in the order of names logged or entered into the chatroom— right side of your screen).

With large groups in a virtual classroom setting, this type of structure is necessary to avoid mass confusion, topic drift, domination of discourse, and frustration in participation. These are the values we aim to realize in each live forum:

1. **We value participation over elaboration.** This means that we want everyone to have a chance to participate in the live forum and to provide opportunity for this may have to compromise on the elaboration of certain views and expressions.
2. **We value direction over disturbance.** This means that we want to work as a group to provide direction for the live forum as opposed to tolerating a series of disturbances that come from many directions and flow towards many directions.
3. **We value complexity over complication or confusion.** The weekly readings and module ought to inspire complexity at a graduate (advanced) level. The forums ought to allow us to work through confusion.
4. **We value patience over speed and space.** Some are quicker typists than others and can fill space in a chat quite readily. Others need more time to prepare answers and type them. Some have higher speed connections than others. Please be patient while waiting for your colleagues to take their turns.

The following “Rules of Engagement” are crucial to a successful live forum:

1. To realize our live forum values and make the meetings productive and fulfilling, the instructor(s) has to facilitate. We have learned this by experimenting.
2. In this virtual classroom, the instructor(s) will queue up respondents to questions or issues. This typically unfolds as follows: “ok—let’s address the issue of digital aesthetics— is there a digital aesthetic and if so what is it?--- your turn Kirstie, and then George, Yan, Carlos and Chung...”
3. The order of students follows the order logged into the chatroom. If someone wants to pass, a simple “pass” typed in and entered will work.
4. Those who are queued up can prepare their comments while waiting.
5. Use chat acronyms (see below) to help simplify typing and communication.
6. If we all follow the rules we will reduce the chance that someone feels disregarded or left out.
7. Be patient with each other.

Cyberdiscursive Ethics: Listserv Guidelines

The ETEC-531 listserv allows us to communicate without having to log into WebCT. It can make life a little easier in many ways. ETEC-531 is unmoderated, meaning that what gets sent is automatically sent to everyone on the list (all of the classmates and instructors).

What is a listserv?

A listserv is an automated mail distribution tool. In this case, a UNIX-based computer in the Computing Center at UBC maintains a list of subscribers. As email messages are received by the computer, the UNIX listserver automatically reproduces and forwards that message to everyone on the list. The result is both a "one to many" and "many to many" correspondence. In addition, you still have the ability to send personal messages to anyone on the list by simply addressing an email message to them directly. Combined, these two methods allow for both public discussion and private exchange. Email for private exchanges has been used for quite a while; now we have a vehicle for more public exchanges. There are thousands of lists on any imaginable topic!

Besides posting, you need the Listserv to:

1. Subscribe to and unsubscribe from etec-531.
 - a. To receive a list of the email addresses of subscribers (your classmates in this case), send the following message to majordomo@interchange.ubc.ca:
subscribe etec-531
2. Get a copy of the email addresses of subscribers
 - a. To receive a list of the email addresses of subscribers (your classmates in this case), send the following message to majordomo@interchange.ubc.ca:
who etec-531

Posting messages to etec-531:

You will receive etec-531 messages in your regular mailbox. Messages can be copied, discarded, forwarded, printed or replied to. When you want to post a message to etec-531, whether as a reply to something that someone else posted or to introduce an issue for discussion, send your message as email to:

etec-531@interchange.ubc.ca

PLEASE NOTE that etec-531 is configured in such a way that if you use "REPLY" on your mailer, your message will only go to the sender. IF you intend your reply to go to everyone on the list, THEN (re)address your message to etec-531@interchange.ubc.ca! The idea is not to limit input, but rather to maintain some discretion and self-control to prevent an overloading of subscribers' mailboxes. BE CAREFUL and CARING.

Email and mailing lists can be potential hassles. As the volume of mail on listservs increases, you may very well become annoyed with the accumulation of messages in your mailbox. This is especially a problem if you subscribe to a number of lists. You ultimately have to sort through this mail to get the information that is relevant to you today. Or less desirable, you may delete your messages without reading them. Stay organized and use an email application to help.

8.

Common Chat Acronyms

2L8 Too late	CU See you
2U2 To you too	CUL Catch you later
4GM Forgive me	CUS See you soon
4RL? For real?	CUL8R See you later
AAMOF As a matter of fact	CWOT Complete waste of time
AFAICT As far as I can tell	CYA See ya
AFAIK As far as I know	CYE Check your e-mail
AFK Away from keyboard	CYL Catch ya lata
AIUI As I understand it	DBEYR Don't believe everything you read
AKA Also known as	DHYB Don't hold your breath
ASAP As soon as possible	DIIK Darned if I know
ATM At the moment	DIY Do it yourself
ATSL Along the same line	DL Download
ATYS Anything you say	DQYDJ Don't quit your day job
AWA As well as	DT Dang Typos
AWOL Absent while online	DW Don't Worry
B4 Before	DYFI Did you find it?
B4N Bye for now	EAK Eating at keyboard
BAC Back at computer	EG Evil grin
BAK Back at keyboard	EOD End of discussion
BBIAB Be back in a bit	EOL End of lecture
BBL Be back later	EOR End of rant
BBS Be back soon	F2F Face to face
BCNU Be seein' you	FAQ Frequently Asked Questions
BD Big deal	FCOL For crying out loud
BFN Bye for now	FITB Fill in the blanks
BC Be cool	FOCL Falling off the chair laughing
B/C Because	FOFL Falling on the floor laughing
BCNU Be seein' you	FTMP For the most part
BION Believe it or not	FTR For the record
BME Based on my experience	FUBAR Fouled up beyond all recognition
BOL Be on later	FUT Follow up to...
BOT Back on topic	FWIW For what it's worth
BRH Be right here	FYA For your amusement
BRB Be right back	FYI For your information
BRB Bathroom break	G Grin
BSTS Better safe than sorry	G2TU Got to tell you.
BTA But then again	G4U Good for you
BTDT Been there, done that	G2G Gotta go
BTW By the way	GA Go ahead
BW Be well	
BWG Big wide grin	
BYTM Better you than me	

CMIW	Correct me if I'm wrong		
GA	Good afternoon		
GAL	Get a life		
GAS	Greetings and salutations		
GD&R	Grinning, ducking, and running		
GE	Good evening		
GFN	Gone for now		
GG	Good game		
GI	Good idea		
GICBTS	Gosh, I can't believe that stuff!		
GICNBY	Gosh, I cannot believe you!		
GIWISI	Gee, I wish I said it		
GJ	Good job		
GL	Good luck		
GM	Good morning		
GM	Good move/match		
GMTA	Great minds think alike		
GN	Good night		
GOK	God only knows		
GOWI	Get on with it		
GR8	Great		
GTG	Got to go		
HAGD	Have a good day		
HAND	Have a nice day		
HCIT	How cool is that		
HF	Have fun		
HH	Ha-ha		
HH1/2KO	Ha-ha, half kidding only		
HHSF	Ha-ha, so funny		
HHVF	Ha-ha, very funny		
HO	Hold on		
H/O	Hold on		
HOAS	Hold on a second		
HTH	Hope this helps		
IAC	In any case		
IAE	In any event		
IAG	It's all good		
IAGW	In a good way		
IB2D	I beg to differ		
IC	I see		
IC	In character		
ICOCBW	I could, of course, be wrong		
IDGI	I don't get it		
IDK	I don't know		
		IDNK	I do not know
		IDNDT	I did not do that
		IIRC	If I remember correctly
		IK	I know
		IKWUM	I know what you mean
		IMAO	In my arrogant opinion
		IME	In my experience
		IMHO	In my humble opinion
		IMHARO	In my humble and respectful opinion
		IMHBMAO	In my humble but most accurate opinion
		IMNSHO	In my not so humble opinion
		IMO	In my opinion
		INRS	It's not rocket science
		IOW	In other words
		IRL	In real life
		IRT	In reply to
		IS	I'm sorry
		ISO	In search of
		ISTM	It seems to me
		ISWYM	I see what you mean
		ITMT	In the mean time
		ITYM	I think you mean
		JLMK	Just let me know
		JMHO	Just my humble opinion
		J/K	Just kidding
		JOOC	Just out of curiosity
		J/P	Just playing
		JTLYK	Just to let you know
		K	OK
		KHYF	Know how you feel
		KIR	Keepin' it real
		KISS	Keep it simple, stupid
		KIT	Keep in touch
		KWIM	Know what I mean?
		L8	Late
		L8R	Later
		LMK	Let me know
		LYK	Let you know
		LMBO	Laughing my butt off

LOL Laugh out loud	RHIP Rank hath its privileges
LOLOL Lots of laughs out loud	RL Real Life
LTNS Long time, no see	ROF Rolling on the floor
M8 Mate, a.k.a. friend	ROFLMAO Rolling on floor, laughing my a•• off
ME2 Me too	ROTFL Rolling on the floor laughing
MOO My own opinion	ROTFLMBO Rolling on the floor, laughing my behind off
MYOB Mind your own business	RP Role Play
N And	RPG Role Playing Game
NBD No big deal	RT Real-time
N2M Not too much	RTFA Read the flippin' article
N/C Not cool	RTFM Read the flippin' manual
NE1 Anyone	RW Real world
NFW No freakin' way	S2R Send to receive
NLT No later than	S/B Should be
NM Nevermind	SCNR Sorry, could not resist
NP No problem	SNAFU Situation normal, all fouled up
NRN No reply necessary	SOS Same old stuff
NM Not much	SOS Sibling over shoulder
NMH Not much here	SOSO Same old, same old
NMJC Nothing much, just chillin'	sp? Spelling?
NNITO Not necessarily in that order	SSDD Same stuff, different day
NO1 No one	SUSFU Situation unchanged, all fouled up
NOMB? None of my business?	SWDYWTTA So what do you want to talk about?
NOMBR? None of my business, right?	SYSOP System Operator (chat monitor)
NOTTOMH Not off the top of my head	SMH Shaking my head
NSISR Not sure if spelled right	TC That's cool
N/T Nice try	TCO Taken care of
NVM Nevermind	TMI Too much information
NW No way	TTBOMK To the best of my knowledge
OIC Oh, I see	TTFN Ta ta for now
OMG Oh my gosh	TTYL Talk to you later
OMOHOD One minute, one hour, one day	TTYYS Talk to you soon
ONNA Oh no, not again	TTYVS Talk to you very soon TMA
OOC Out of character	Take my advice
OT Off topic	TWIMC To whom it may concern
OT Other topic	TY Thank you
OTOH On the other hand	TYVM Thank you very much
PLZ Please	TGIF Thank goodness it's Friday
PLZRD Please read	TOH The other half
POS Power of suggestion	TOH Typing one-handed
POV Point of view	
PPL People	
RESQ Rescue	
RFC Request for comment	

<p> TNX Thanks TIA Thanks in advance TIC Tongue in cheek TBC To be continued TBH To be honest TC Take care U2 You too UR You are UR Your URSKTM You are so kind to me VBG Very big grin W/ With W2F Way too funny WC Who cares WDMB Will do my best WE Whatever W/E Whatever WNDITWB We never did it this way before W/O Without WRT With Regard To W8 Wait W8AM Wait a minute WADITWB We always did it that way before WAEFRD When all else fails, read directions </p>	<p> THX Thanks WB Welcome back (chat) WB Write back (e-mail) WTG Way to go! WU What's up? Y Why? YMBJ You must be joking YMMV Your mileage may vary YRG You are good! YVW You're very welcome YW You're welcome != Not equal to ? Huh? ?4U Question for you </p>
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