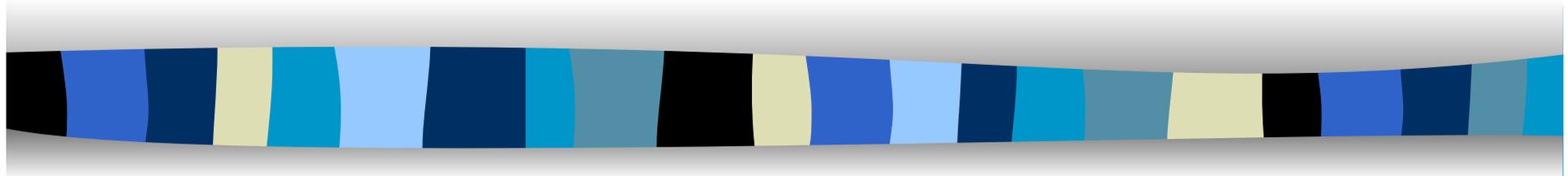


Digital portfolios and feedback practices in a *traditional* university course



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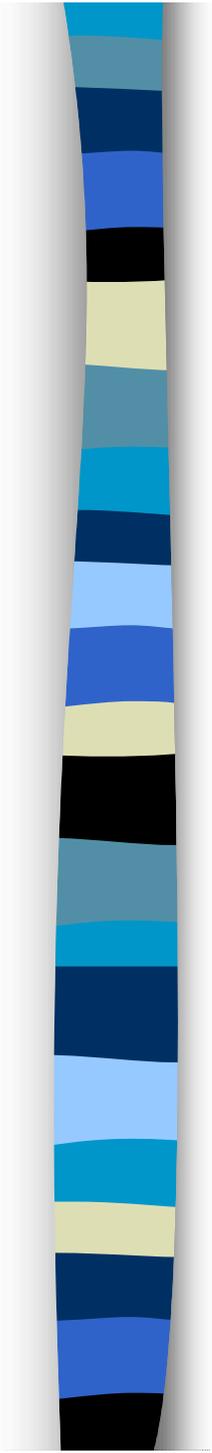
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”Assessment and e-learning. Threats, challenges and opportunities”

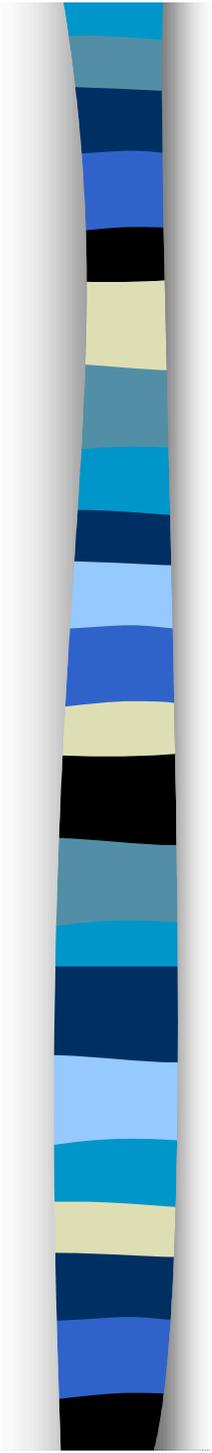
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Dysthe & Tolo



Introduction

- **Site:** The History Department at the University of Bergen, Norway
- **Type of portfolio:**
 - *discipline based learning and assessment portfolio*
- **Aim of change in assessment system:**
 - Improve student writing
 - Improve student learning
- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN FOCUS:
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING**



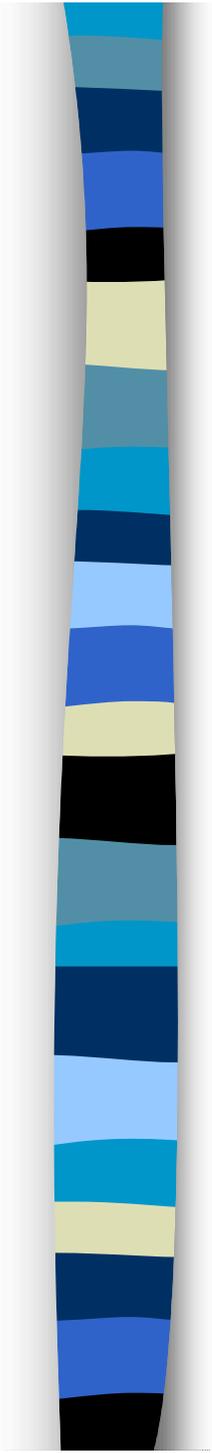
The research study

■ Aim:

- investigate how portfolio assessment is implemented in a traditional academic department
- the role of digitalization
- areas of improvement

■ Method & materials:

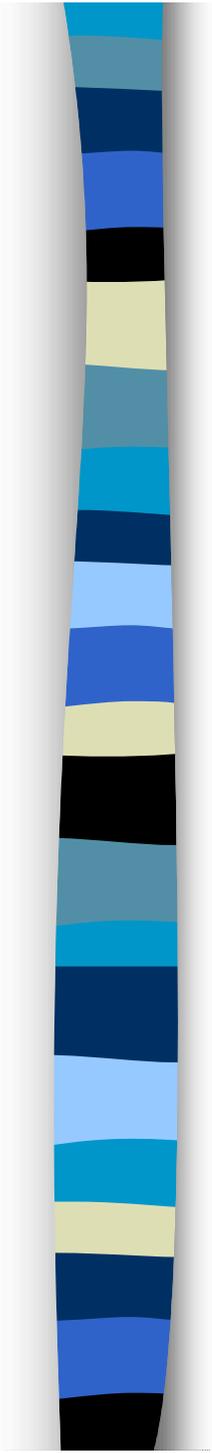
- Interviews with teachers, students, tutors
- Course evaluations
- Survey
- Students' texts



Theory: Socio-cultural perspectives on learning and assessment

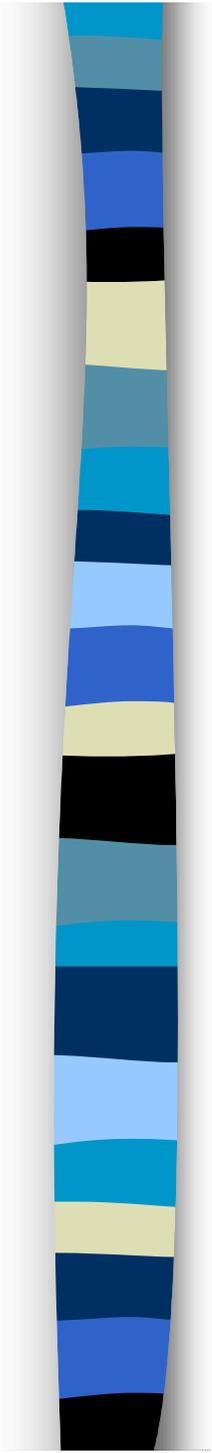
■ knowledge and learning

- **situated** (focus on institutional & disciplinary context)
- **social** (focus on interaction)
- **distributed** (afforded by the medium)
- **mediated** (portfolios as mediating tools)
- **dependent on language** (written genres)
- **dependent on participation in communities of practice** (establish effective rules and routines)



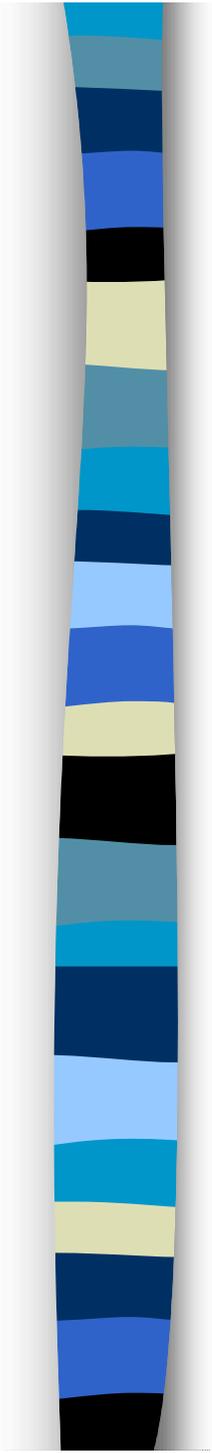
Research questions

- *Characteristics of digital portfolio assessment in history ? Learning benefits? Unused potentials?*
 - Contextual factors influencing the assessment format?
 - How does the history pf model differ from a `collection-reflection-selection model?
 - Benefits and challenges of digital aspects ?
 - How is the learning potential in digital and interactive feedback utilized?
 - What can be improved?



Summary: Digitalization of portfolios

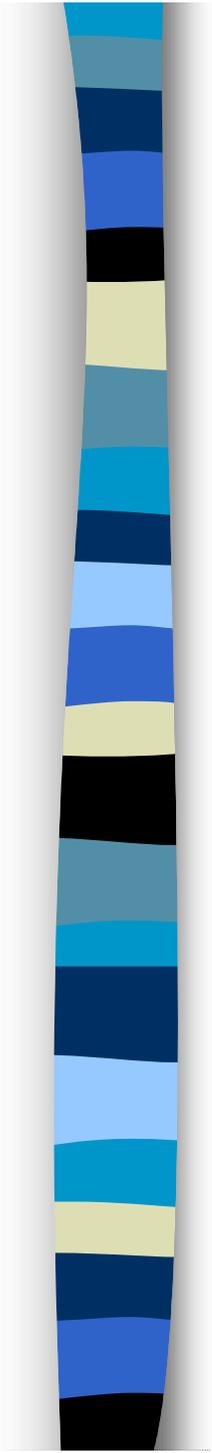
- *is a basic prerequisite for an effective feedback system*
- *does not ensure high quality feedback, nor that students actually use it when they revise*
- *necessitates*
 - *teaching genre knowledge & explicit quality criteria*
 - *training response and revision skills*



Findings 1:

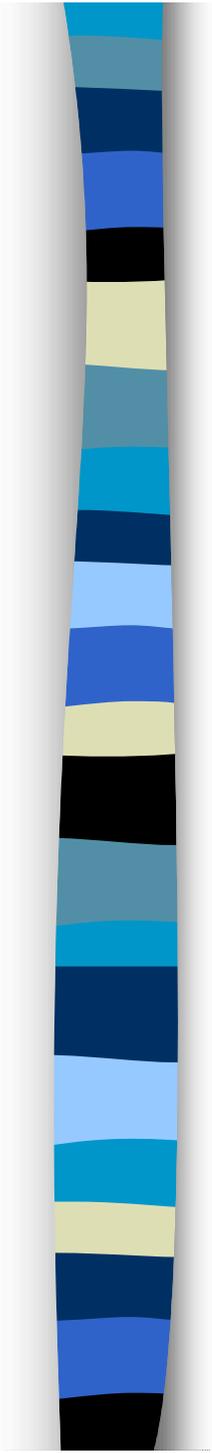
Learning opportunities of digital pf

- Transparency and accessibility of medium afforded improved formative assessment:
 - Interactive and distributed learning
 - exchange of feedback
 - learning from all aspects of feedback process
 - Better quality of public feedback



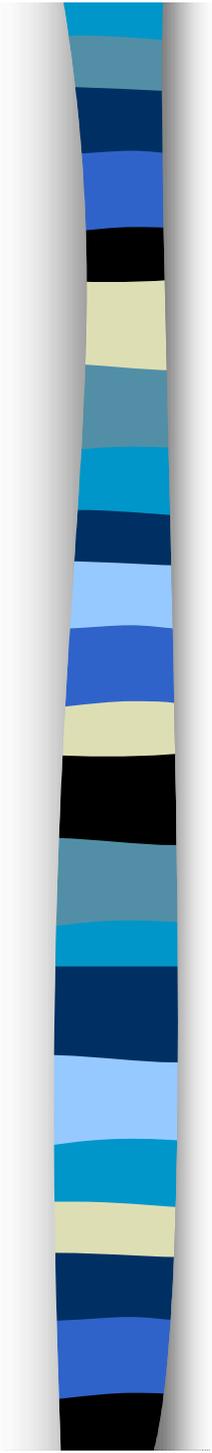
Findings 2:

- Digitalization needed to administer pf
- Disciplinary goals determine the use of digital tool
- Disciplinary traditions restrict the utilization of medium specific learning potential



Findings 3.

- 1) Students report learning from
 - 1) reading other students' papers
 - 2) reading feedback from teachers and peers
 - 3) writing comments
- 2) Great variations among students regarding length and quality of comments
- 3) Student revision of drafts in general rather superficial (omit problems instead of solving them)



Portfolio definition

- "A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, or achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of the student's self reflection" (Poulson, Poulson & Meyer 1991).
- A digital portfolio is in addition "stored and organized digitally and utilizes digital tools in the learning process and in the documentation" (Otnes, 2002).

A model of portfolio processes

Learning phase 1
(formative assessment)

Design of learning activities

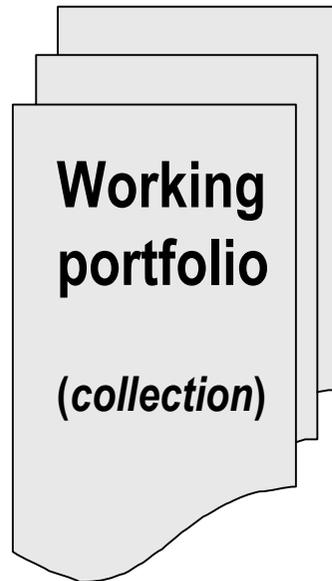
Individual-collective

ICT

Writing strategies

Feedback practices

Metaprocesses
(criteria, reflection)



Learning phase 2
(formative)

Selection

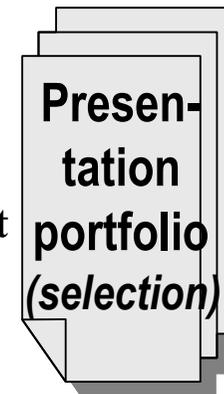


Self assessment

Criteria



Reflection



Learning phase 3
(summative)

Object of ass.

Ass. format

Student involvement

Criteria

Assessor

Reflection

Portfolio Assessment Processes in History (2003)

Learning phase 1 (formative assessment)

Argumentative historical essays

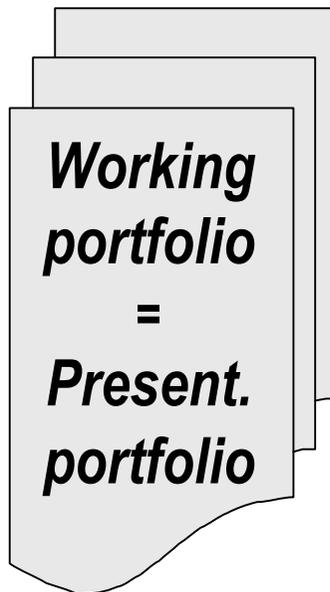
ICT:
drafts and comments
published in LMS

Writing: 4 papers (2000 w)

Peer & TA
feedback

No reflective text required

Required asynch.
discussion



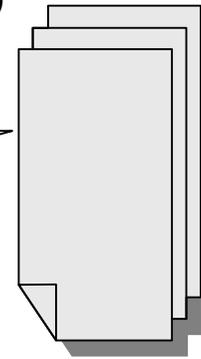
Learning phase 2 (formative assessment)

No selection



No self-
assessment

No criteria



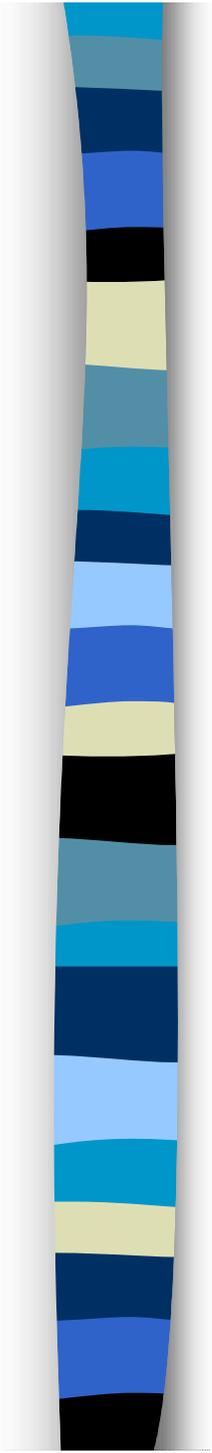
Learning ph. 3 (summative)

Holistic ass of pf
+ peer response
+ asynch. debates
75%

Assessors: tutor
+ external assessor

No student involv.

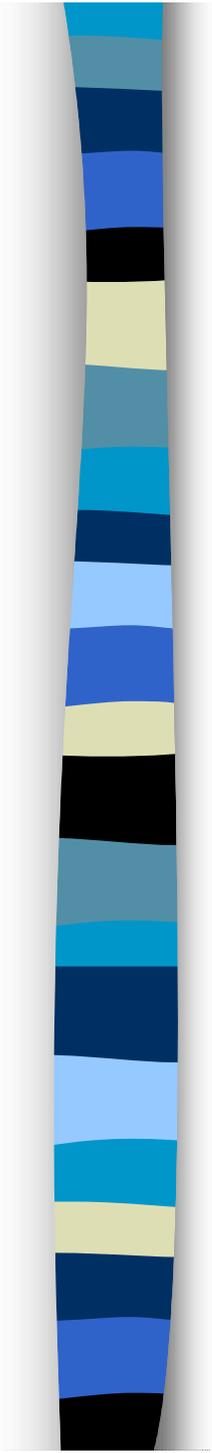
Trad. Exam
25%



Portfolio characteristic

(Modern history course spring 2003)

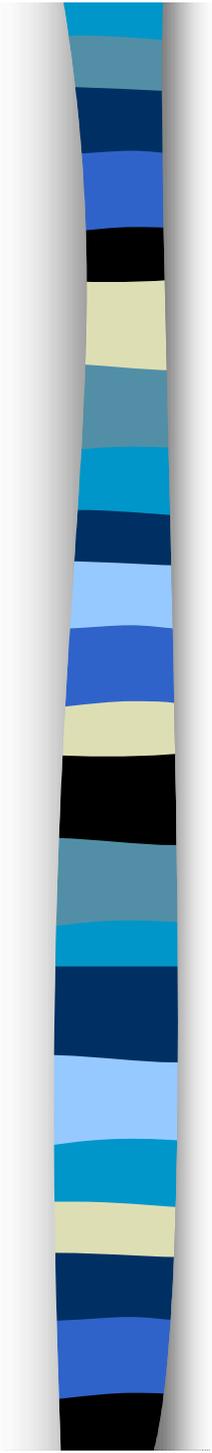
- Contents (basis for summative assessment)
 - 4 papers (argumentative essays)
 - link to their peer response to 9 student papers
 - link to their participation in the asynchronous debates
- Compulsory peer feedback -- *new*
- Teacher and student feedback public – *new*
- Peer response texts included in summative assessment -- *new*



Contextual factors 1: “Quality Reform” Norwegian higher edu.

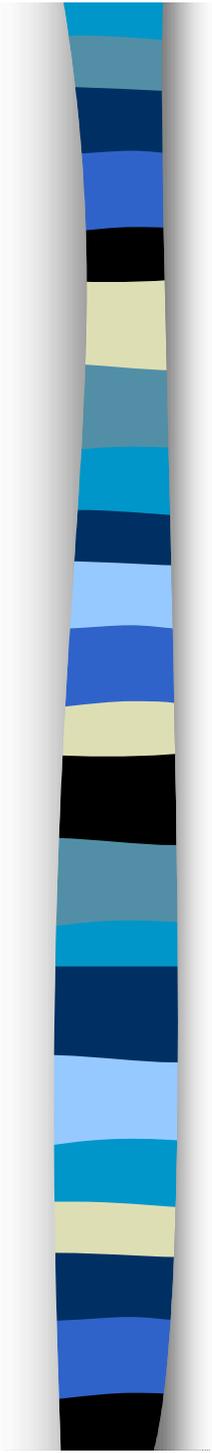
- Student active teaching methods
- integration teaching and assessment
 - portfolios recommended
- Closer follow-up
- Continuous feedback
- ICT (technology optimism)

- Changing the traditional “exam-giving” university



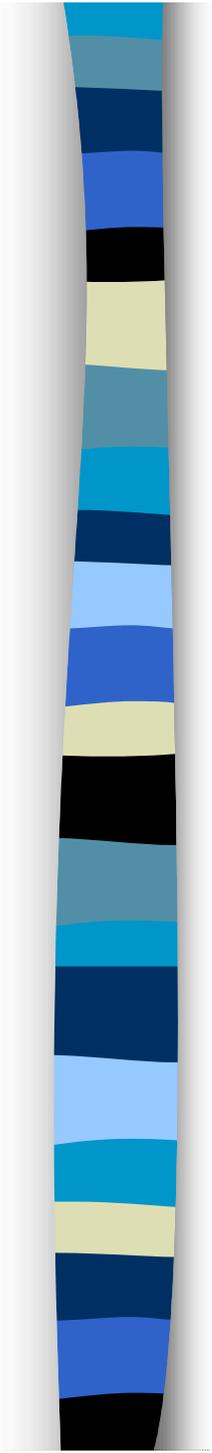
Contextual factors 2: disciplinary setting: the History Department

- Discipline with long academic traditions
- Untraditional aspects of this department:
 - ***Teaching high status***
 - ***Student learning high priority***
- developed local Learning Management System 1992-95:KARK
 - designed to support writing
 - fit the needs of teachers giving feedback to student papers
 - giving students access to each others papers
 - high student participation in Asynchronous discussion forum
- LOCAL OWNERSHIP OF MEDIATING TOOL



List of changes

- Portfolio collection of essays replaced end of term exam ? (hybrid solutions)
- Compulsory essay writing
- Compulsory peer feedback
- Teacher feedback made public
- Self-assessment (select 4 of 6 essays)
- Transparency replaced privacy



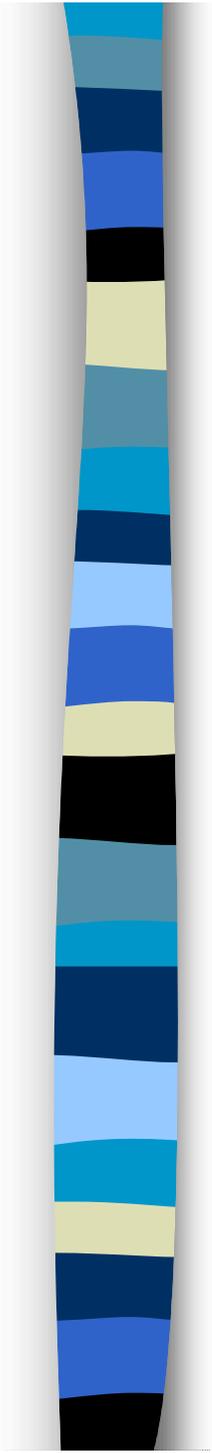
Finding 4: contextual factors alter portfolio format and learning potential

Autumn 2001

- 30 credits' course
- 6 papers in work portfolio
- SELECTION:
- 4 papers in pres. pf
- 2hrs writ. ex. + oral
- ass. by teacher + external assessor

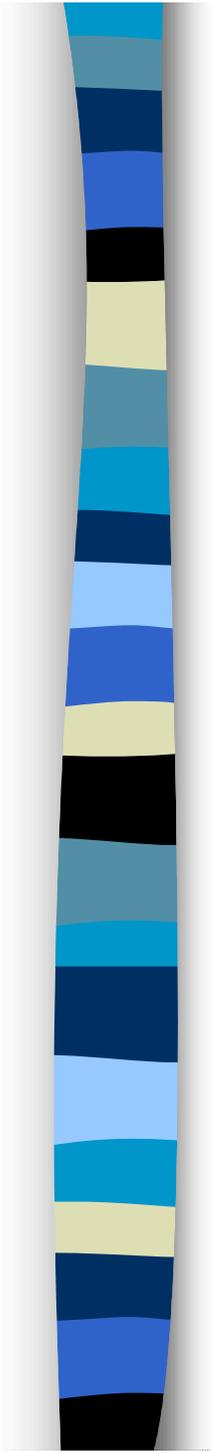
Spring 2003

- 15 credits' course
- 4 papers in work portfolio
- NO SELECTION
- 4 papers in pres. pf
- No oral exam
- ass. by tutor + external assessor



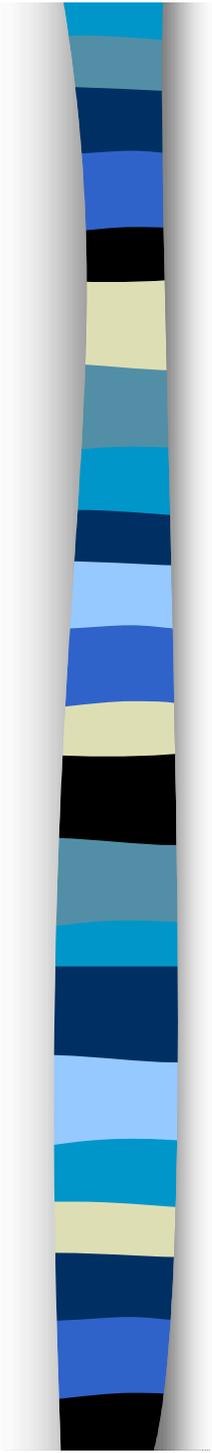
The reform paradox

- *the Quality Reform*
- *advocated portfolio assessment to improve learning*
- *required modularization of courses*
- *Result:*
- *reduced the possibilities of establishing an optimal portfolio model*
 - No selection, no reflection, no self-assessment



Findings:

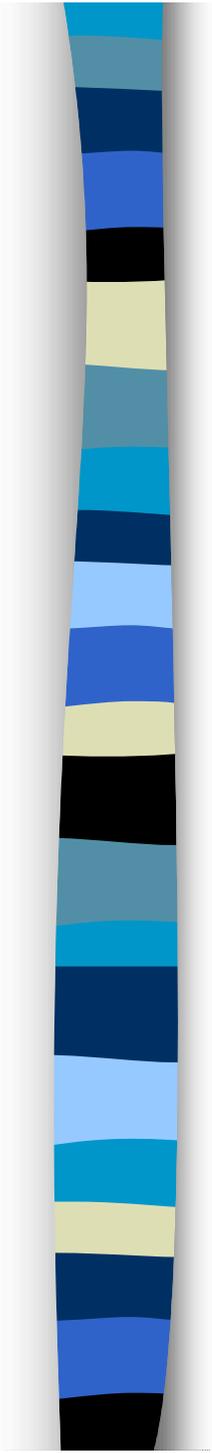
- Digitalization needed to administer pf
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Digital aspects:

”Filing cabinet or learning arena?”

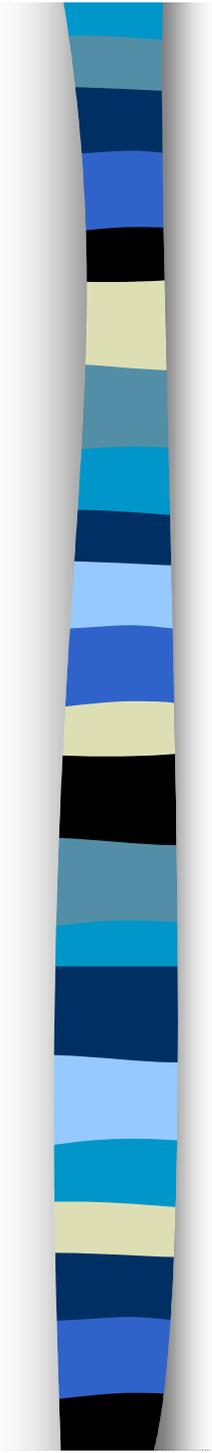
- Administration of pf: ICT deemed indispensable
- Medium specific learning potential
 - Multimediality? no
 - Did not support course goals: written text genre
 - Hypertextuality? no
 - Did not support goals: logical text structure
 - Interactivity ? yes
 - Supported goals: distributed, dialogical learning



Formative assessment processes: students' view of learning benefit

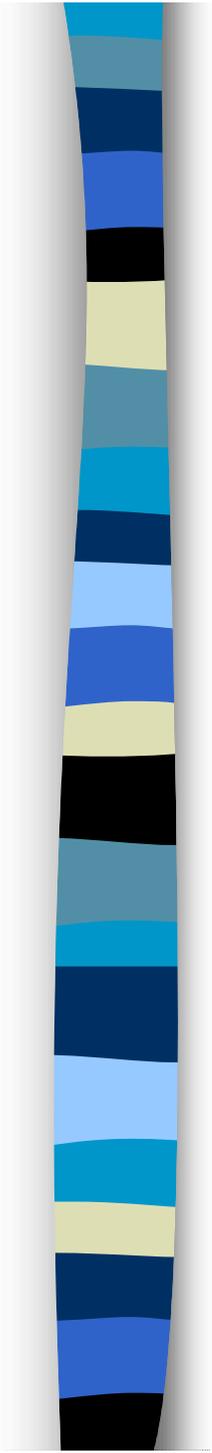
- Reading peer papers: 60 % high, 38% medium
- Giving feedback (writing comments) : 41% high, 43%
- Getting feedback from peers: 51% high, 46%
- Getting feedback from teacher or TA: 79%, 17%

- Using feedback in revision of their own paper
 - **Preliminary findings:**
 - Very limited use of feedback
 - Students' revision of drafts superficial



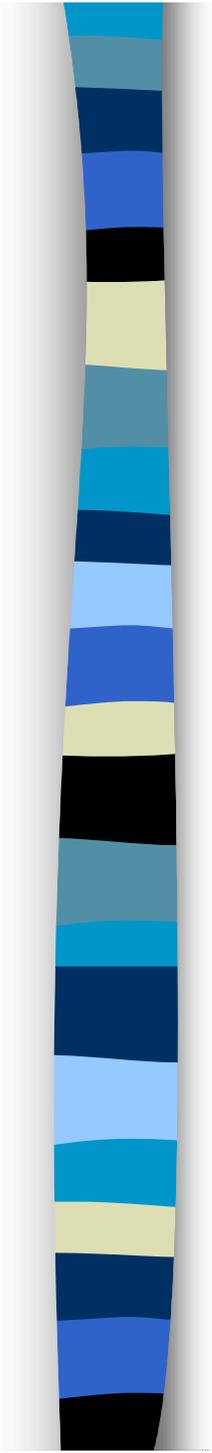
Challenges:

- **Utilization of learning potential in digital portfolios depends on**
 - **knowledge of possibilities in medium**
 - ***institutional constraints (i.e module size)***
 - ***course goals***
 - ***disciplinary traditions in pedagogical approach***
 - ***training of response & revision skill***
 - ***formulation and discussion of explicit quality criteria***



Threats in the History Department

- Human and economic resources
 - transparency of pf (teacher feedback) demanding
 - TA replace teachers - quality reduction?
- Institutional constraints: Modularization
 - superficiality
 - lack of time to experiment with media-specific learning opportunities
- Disciplinary constraints:
 - metacognition & procedural knowledge not goals



Summary: Digitalization of portfolios

- *is a basic prerequisite for an effective feedback system*
- *does not ensure high quality feedback, nor that students actually use it when they revise*
- *necessitates*
 - *teaching genre knowledge & explicit quality criteria*
 - *training response and revision skills*