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## Media Release

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## The Ohio State University Office of Continuing Education Expands into Virtual World

### *CEd Course Development Grant Buys Island in Second Life*

COLUMBUS, Ohio, January 2 — Sharon Collingwood, Ph.D. (43085), lecturer in the Department of Women's Studies, College of the Humanities, is taking her course, Women's Studies 110d: Women, Culture and Society, into an interactive virtual learning environment through a **Continuing Education Course Development Grant** awarded by The Ohio State University Office of Continuing Education (CEd).

"We're excited to be a part of this, because to the best of our knowledge, this is the first venture into the virtual world for an Ohio State University classroom," says Director of CEd Tony Basil, Ph.D. (43221).

Using Second Life, an online 3-D virtual world, the course will offer a radically different Women's Studies 110 to students in need of a more flexible schedule.

"Educational use of Second Life is still a very new idea," states Dr. Collingwood.

Thus far, Dr. Collingwood has bought real estate called Minerva Island where she has constructed classroom and study space. The entry point of Minerva centers on a virtual University Hall where students can meet with faculty to discuss their work. The building will also be the home for a virtual Women's Studies library where student work on a variety of topics will be displayed.

Although Minerva is designed as a teaching space, most of the island does not resemble a traditional classroom. Students can discuss their coursework under the shade of a large tree overlooking a virtual ocean. Group projects will be completed in a lab area that resembles a large beach. Students may also choose to work on their projects on a platform in the clouds.

"Our work on Minerva will be supported by an intensive web site where students will be able to access text, images, quizzes, self-tests, and podcasts," adds Dr. Collingwood.

"The Office of Continuing Education has always been dedicated to serving the university's nontraditional students, but Minerva Island interactively and socially extends the reach of the university's educational capabilities beyond the city or even the state," says Director of CEd Tony Basil, Ph.D.

Students as well as Dr. Collingwood have already created avatars, animated personas, for themselves so that they can explore the island and communicate with each other in real time. In fact, Dr. Collingwood, who is Ellie Brewster in Second Life, will be one of the judges for the Women's Studies prize in digital media to be awarded to The Ohio State University undergraduate who designs the best avatar representing an important figure in women's history.

Women's Studies 110 is an entry-level online course that covers a broad spectrum of issues of interest to

women. The student base for this course comes from many disciplines; student projects have been presented in the fields of art, music, journalism, theater, biology, sociology, law, business, and engineering. Students are encouraged to relate what is learned in class to their own personal experiences. Students with disabilities can opt for a more accessible version of the course than web-based.

For information regarding Women's Studies 110d, Minerva Island, and Second Life, visit [ced.osu.edu](http://ced.osu.edu) or call (614) 292-4483.

Proposals/Applications for the 2008 CEd **Course Development** funds are due early March. For more information, visit [ced.osu.edu](http://ced.osu.edu) and click on "Contractual Outreach" and then select "Development Grant" or call (614) 292-8860.

Started in 2004, The Ohio State University Office of Continuing Education's **Course Development Grants** support faculty offering credit and noncredit courses in a variety of formats that make education accessible to an expanded base of learners.

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