

Workshop: Leveraging Digital Affordances to Make Language Learning Stick

11:15 – 13:00 and 14:15 – 16:00, bldg. C5 3, room 2.09

How can you integrate digital technologies in your language classes productively to create cultural artefacts, participate in target language discourse, develop identities, and make an impact on one's community? We will explore these questions in the workshop using the example of Teach About U.S., an open access blended-learning platform that hosts intercultural language projects on sustainability and political science with a special focus on American studies. We will review and try out hands-on examples of digital task formats and easy-to-use Web 2.0 tools (e.g., YouTube, online glossaries, chat and forum, online quizzes, blogs, social media). The workshop will also provide participants with sample learner texts from previous project cycles exemplifying how the aforementioned tasks and tools can be implemented and evaluated in your classroom. All presented curricula and accompanying materials can be used free of charge on the platform itself as well as in the form of printable handouts. Visit the download section at www.teachaboutus.org.



Going Green – Education for Sustainability

'Going Green—Education for Sustainability' is a German-American blended learning project for the EFL and CLIL classroom. Going Green is part of the U.S. Embassy's *Teach About U.S.* initiative developed in cooperation with Leuphana University, Lüneburg, and LIFE e.V., Berlin. More than 3,000 participants in the U.S. and Germany have participated since 2014. We will focus on this school project during the workshop.

Registration

1. Visit the *Teach About U.S.* Moodle platform at <http://www.teachaboutus.org/>.
2. Create a new account: Click on Create new account in the top right box and fill in your personal information.
3. Confirm your registration by clicking on the link in the confirmation e-mail.
4. Log-in on the Moodle platform using your user name and password.
5. Join an already existing course by looking it up in the course search field (top of main page) or request a new course (see below).

Requesting your own E-Classroom

To register your own e-classroom, visit www.teachaboutus.org, click on the "Course request" link in the quick links section, and fill out the registration form. If you need support regarding the registration, please contact Ms. Katja Krüger (LIFE e.V. Berlin) at krueger@life-online.de. You can also access a demo e-classroom (and forward the link to interested colleagues). Simply visit the Teach About U.S. platform (<http://www.teachaboutus.org/>) and click on "Demo Courses" in the green "Sustainability" tab.

Going Green Project Itinerary

Going Green is an annual project, to be concluded in the second half of the school year. The deadline for the annual student competition is usually in the spring or early summer of each year. Check our upcoming events or subscribe to our newsletter for updates. (All materials can be used independently from the competition cycle.) School visits by speakers and U.S. Embassy staff can be arranged through the MeetUS program. For MeetUS visits, please contact Heike Mead at the U.S. Embassy Berlin (MeetUS-berlin@usembassy.de). She will direct you towards her colleagues in the U.S. Consulates.

From the Going Green FAQ section

+++Who can participate? What is the target group?

We invite all teachers and students of English and CLIL courses in Germany as well as interested courses in the U.S. to participate in the project and the student competition for sustainable action plans. The target group comprises EFL courses in the upper secondary level ("Qualifikationsphase") and students in the U.S. in social sciences and German as a foreign language classes. An overview of curriculum content (see <http://www.teachaboutus.org/>) lists connections between the topic of sustainability and the 16 state curricula for English in this age group. However, even groups as young as fifth grade have participated in the past!

+++I teach CLIL (content and language integrated learning) classes. Can we participate?

Yes, Teach About U.S. curricula are suitable for different types of CLIL (content and language integrated learning; bilinguales Sachfachlernen) courses, especially with a focus on political and social sciences. The Going Green project and the project week "Power to the People - Renewable Energy in the Community" also foster the integration of STEM school subjects. The project materials provide opportunities for language practice, political and civic learning, as well as intercultural contents. The paradigm of research-based learning on local case studies is at the heart of all of our school projects and the materials offer various possible ways to make adjustments to your specific learner group.

+++I teach young learners. Can we participate?

Generally yes, but this is likely to require adjustments to the project curriculum. The projects are designed to serve the target group of upper secondary school students in the "Qualifikationsphase" of the German Gymnasium. Teachers can make adjustments to tasks and materials as well as adapt the level of task support on the platform. The proposed classroom work is not mandatory and teachers can use the provided materials selectively in their courses according to individual learner needs and ability. Contact the Teach About U.S. team for further suggestions regarding this aspect.

+++My school's curriculum is packed. How can I fit the project into my courses?

We don't want you to take unnecessary detours from your curriculum. This is why we have designed the project contents in line with state curricula for English in the upper secondary school and U.S. curricula. This means that the suggested classroom work should cover curriculum contents and can, if necessary, be easily extended or adjusted. Think of it as an invitation to incorporate new teaching and learning resources into your classes as well as a strong connection to learning with digital media and authentic resources. You'll find suggestions for the curricular implementation of each project on our website.

+++Do I have to participate in the competition?

We highly encourage participants to develop their own sustainability action plans (Going Green) / their election predictions (U.S. Election) and take part in the student competition, but this is not a mandatory requirement. Although such a participation will offer a great motivational incentive to your students, we understand that sometimes time pressure and other constraints can stand in the way of such an approach. So, our message is: You are very welcome to participate in the project, even if you cannot submit a contribution to the competition.

+++My school doesn't provide the infrastructure to use e-learning regularly. What can I do?

You are not alone in this. From our teacher networks we know that the digital infrastructure in schools can vary tremendously, ranging from schools with wireless web-access and tablet classes to schools with traditional computer labs and inconvenient access to digital technologies. *Teach About U.S.* does not require access to computers during each lesson. Inquire about arrangements at your school, e.g., to use your computer lab once a week. If possible, also ask your students to bring their own devices as the platform will be compatible with smartphones, tablets, and laptops. The materials also allow for a flipped classroom approach (see below), i.e. asking your learners to access the online materials at home and discussing them at school. In addition, selected *Teach About U.S.* materials will be accessible for download, so that participants can use them in an 'offline' environment.

Related projects

In addition to Going Green, we offer three other online courses. For further information, please visit <http://www.teachaboutus.org/>.

Project week: Power to the People (annually)

Attention! The mayor of Leinwig is seeking your help to transform her town's energy supply. But the clock is ticking, and you must present your blueprint to an expert commission at the end of the week. The citizens of Leinwig are counting on you. Will you answer their call and help build the town's future?

This interdisciplinary project week unit for upper secondary courses connects the Science and English language curricula. Students are asked to investigate the energy infrastructure in the fictional town of Leinwig, understand the science behind renewable energies, and develop a concept for their community's future energy supply.

Humboldt 250 (starting during the 2018/19 school year)

This year, people around the globe are commemorating Alexander von Humboldt's 250th birthday! Two centuries ago, this historic figure set an example of what it means to be a global citizen, one who traverses cultures and scientific disciplines like few other people of his time – and one who became known for his efforts to promote the transatlantic partnership. In this new project module, students discuss what global citizenship truly means and learn about Humboldt's many achievements. A final student competition focusing on "Humboldt and YOU" will remain open until the summer holidays (date tba) with awards recognizing creative student projects.

U.S. Embassy School Election Project (in the fall of 2020)

We are continuing the successful 2012 and 2016 Election Projects, a mock election of the U.S. President, in which over 5,000 students have participated since 2012. Predicting the election outcome, however, is not an easy task as learners must look beyond their own political preference and find out why others may hold different beliefs. As part of the project, students adopt a U.S. state and become its virtual citizens investigating the state of its economy, the state of its economy, and local cultures. Students make a prediction of their state's voter behavior on election day: Will it turn red or blue? A student competition for creative outcomes and a final student conference on the eve of election day conclude the project. In 2012, our participants' prediction was more accurate than most published polls in the U.S.!