

[Dr. Leslie Jarmon - The University of Texas at Austin](#)

Category : Past Speakers

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Building on a talk given to The Austin Forum earlier this year by PhD graduate student Joe Sanchez, Dr. Leslie Jarmon, Senior Lecturer of The UT Graduate School will discuss research and learning in the 3-D virtual world environment of Second Life. The workshop includes interaction with other participants via the Second Life online virtual world in real time.

Virtual worlds like Second Life are social technologies where many users connect to the same network and interact simultaneously as "avatars" (a virtual representation of yourself). It is not a game but an inherently social experience. The nearly 10 million residents of Second Life, for example, can fly, teleport, explore, meet people, socialize, attend classes, work with non-profits, and engage in commerce. Some 200 universities and educational institutions and corporate entities such as IBM, Toyota, Dell, AMD, Sears, and the NBA have a virtual presence in Second Life.

As co-founder of the Educators Coop in Second Life (along with Joe Sanchez), Dr. Jarmon will describe an experimental cooperative research pilot. The Educators Coop provides educators and researchers with a unique residential community environment designed to cultivate new inter-disciplinary relationships and collaborations. In effect, the coop residents are improvising a new learning community of practice in Second Life. Early data indicate that researchers' virtual interactions and collaboration on projects - actual experiential activity in the virtual world - are challenging them to imagine and construct "knowledge" from different perspectives as they explore possibilities in this virtual world environment.

Dr. Leslie Jarmon is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Texas at Austin with the Office of Graduate Studies Professional Development & Community Engagement Program, where she has designed and taught graduate-level courses since 1998.

Dr. Jarmon's Graduate Studies courses include:

- GRS 390P Exploring Multicultural Communication: Communicating Across Disciplinary Cultures in Second Life (<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/pdce/grs/GRS390P.html>)
- GRS 392J Community Engagement: Project Management and Consulting Projects (<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/pdce/grs/390Jce.html>)
- GRS 392W A Systematic Approach to Academic and Professional Writing (<http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/pdce/grs/392w.html>)

Dr. Jarmon is a leader in the University's entry into virtual world environments, specifically Second Life (SL). Her avatar's name is Bluewave Ogee, and she has presented at numerous conferences in Second Life including Best Practices in Education in SL (May 2007), the American Sociological Association (August 2007), and the New Media Consortium Symposium on Creativity (August 2007).

Dr. Jarmon's current research focuses on virtual world environments as new sites for collaboration and the creation of communities of learners, on an international scale. She is a co-founder of the

Educators Coop in Second Life, an experimental residential community of interdisciplinary educators, researchers, and librarians from around the world (<http://www.educatorscoop.org>).

Dr. Jarmon is perhaps best known for creating the world's first multimedia digital dissertation to be accepted entirely on CD-ROM ("An Ecology of Embodied Interaction: Turn-Taking and Interactional Syntax in Face-to-Face Encounters." - 1996, UT). After teaching as an Assistant Professor of Communication at Indiana University in Bloomington, Dr. Jarmon was invited back to join the faculty of The Graduate School at the University of Texas where she designed research models for collaboration with IT corporations sponsoring research with the Science, Technology, & Society Program and with the McCombs School of Business Plus Program. She was the coordinator and chief designer for the world's first large-scale Civic Forum on the Societal Implications of Nanotechnology, and she was principal designer of the "nano scenario" civic engagement model. Dr. Jarmon was instrumental in creating research partnerships between the University of Texas, the World Congress on Information Technology 2006 (WCIT), and leading private sector information technology companies. Finally, Dr. Jarmon has been with the McCombs School of Business MBA Plus Program since its inception in 2002 where she has coordinated the Business Across Borders Program and the Plus Project Training Program.

Her other interests focus particularly on technology and education and applications of low cost technologies in service to developing countries. In the past, Dr. Jarmon served as an inaugural National Research Fellow with the U.S. Corporation for National Service where she conducted research on private-public sector partnerships with the national Welfare-to-Work Program. Her research led to extensive use across the country of AmeriCorps-VISTA volunteers working with micro-lending organizations and other grassroots community economic development entities. She also served as the Regional Coordinator of the Micro-Enterprise Development Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean with the United States Peace Corps. Dr. Jarmon served two tours of duty as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Costa Rica and Ecuador in the 1980s.