ePortfolio Ready to Help MTSU Students Show "Who They Are"

MTSU student Jamin Robert Wilkinson has been an Egyptian artisan, Roman patrician, and French monarch.

No, not in some past life, but in a unique history class this past spring. Wilkinson took Professor Dawn McCormack’s Topics in World History: Reacting to the Past seminar as part of his History major.

In doing so Wilkinson made some MTSU campus history, as well.

He was one of a handful of students taking part in a pilot program of the Desire to Learn (D2L) feature known as ePortfolio.

Now that tool is available to every MTSU student.

“At first I was regretting taking that class, but now I am glad that I did,” said Wilkinson, who was completing an internship at the MTSU Center for Popular Music this summer as he prepared to graduate in August.

Previous group projects had left him frustrated because he never felt connected with his classmates—or the subject.

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The intensive, unscripted role-playing class allows students to use their lessons to bring ancient history to life by portraying real or representative characters. The spring class focused on the period of Egyptian history after the death of Julius Caesar, and also on the Second Crusade.

“They are given an identity and objectives they have to achieve, and those objectives are opposed by other people,” McCormack said. “They do work in teams, called factions, and there are some people who are in factions who have secret missions. And then there are always some people who are not in factions who the factions are trying to pull to their side.”

Wilkinson chose three characters. One was a composite or representative figure named Ameny, a lower-level artisan during the Armana period of Egyptian history. The others were Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and King Louis VII of France.

Lepidus (born c. 89 or 88 BC, died late 13 or early 12 BC) was a Roman patrician who was part of a triumvirate with Octavian (the future Augustus) and Mark Antony. Lepidus had been a close ally of Julius Caesar before his assassination.

"It was him!"

“For Ameny it was difficult since I had no prior knowledge of that period of Egypt, but read on the art style and what was happening in that period,” Wilkinson said. "For Lepidus, I was happy as can be and took his character a different way. Most people thought he was stupid, lazy, or worse in his time, but I decided to spice him up and acted like a tactician and helped plan things among my group.”

That plot twist on Lepidus allowed him to surprise classmates at the end.

“I was like the Wizard of Oz, the man behind the curtain, until the end and everyone said ‘It was him!’”

Wilkinson used ePortfolio for recording his “reflections” on what he was learning.

“I mainly used it as a way for me to boost my confidence and let people know I can write, I can research, and I am a great person. I still look at my work now and smile,” he said. “I feel like I have broken many barriers. I am not as shy, not as reluctant or self-doubting. I do not feel the burden of the past weigh on me anymore. I feel like I have improved in everything in my life.”

He will continue to use ePortfolio as he looks to either find a job or go to grad school.

“I believe it will help. It is a remarkable program. It allows you to go back and look at your work and help you organize it,” he said. “And if you're in doubt you can look at it and say, 'I can do this.' It’s my personal space."
McCormack said that is typical of the impact of D2L and ePortfolio.

"It is an extremely valuable tool," she said. "If people have not looked at it in a while they should go back and look at it and consider using it in the future."

At the start of the spring semester, she had her students set goals for their education and professional development and write “reflective essays” about their progress toward reaching them. Goals included improving at research, time management, and public speaking.

"What we did with ePortfolio is put all that together in one place," she said. "The idea is sort of the MT Engage thing where we get students to realize they can get a lot out of the class, more than just checking off a box that they finished the class. That they can achieve goals and develop skills that are important either in grad school or to employees. And to get them to see those things as they are happening."

She has utilized the Reacting method since 2013. It gives students the opportunity to develop not only historical knowledge but learn to work in teams, do public speaking, and practice persuasive writing.

"They become very motivated"

"So I set up a D2L group page and they can see each other’s papers and the discussion boards allow them to communicate all day and all night," McCormack said. "And they also spend a lot of time doing library research. I don’t assign it to them; they do it because they need it to play the game. Because it is a competition, they become very motivated."

Students helped each other learn ePortfolio and write papers in a true collaborative effort.

"I am there for support but they stopped relying on me to tell them how to get an A... They become very close to each other and we had some just amazing, life-changing things happen," she said.

The pilot program had five students produce simple ePortfolio pages for prospective employers or graduate schools.

"If they move it over to the ePortfolio part, then they actually have all their work—‘artifacts’ is what they call it," she said. "Then they can decide later what they want to include or not include in ePortfolio based on who their audience is. If their audience is a prospective employer they can tailor that ePortfolio to include the things that might be pertinent to that prospective employer."

Now she is planning to use it more extensively and wants to help students incorporate more video along with other “artifacts” in building their ePortfolios. Often, students approaching graduation put together resumes and presentations of their work in a rushed and unorganized way.

"They would say, ‘OK I need to get a job so I am going to throw something together.’ But now because of these tools we have available to us, we can get students to start thinking about this from Day One," she said. "And so we want students to think about their work and preserving their artifacts from Day One.

"And then as time goes on they are able to really support that they have skills and they can do things."
To hear the talk around campus, you might think there is a new teacher at MTSU named Lynda whose class everyone wants to take. And you wouldn't be far off—The University’s new contract with online training website Lynda.com is creating a lot of excitement this fall.

Billy Pittard, chairman of MTSU’s Department of Electronic Media Communications, knows the company’s namesake, Lynda Weinman, and in fact worked for her three years before joining MTSU in 2011.

He said the campus-wide Lynda.com subscription is a tremendous benefit for educators, staff, and especially the University’s nearly 25,000 students.

“It’s a tragedy when you have to spend class time teaching software skills, because everyone is at different levels,” said Pittard, who worked at Lynda.com in California from 2008-2011. “This is one of those opportunities to flip the classroom. You can assign learning software skills outside of class, then in class learn how to do something worthwhile with that software.”

Frustrated over the complex, hard-to-follow technical manuals available at the time, Weinman launched Lynda.com in 1995 as a site where students could find free training resources. Such resources are common today, thanks in large part to her pioneering work.

With thousands of training videos for every word-processing, video, graphic design, and web development program out there—and teaching on digital marketing, graphic design, IT security, and even job interviews—Lynda.com is designed to help anyone learn business, software, technology, and creative skills to achieve personal and professional goals.

Pittard, who developed content and recruited teachers for Lynda.com, said the first step in getting the most out of the website is to learn how to learn from it.

“You can go ahead and browse the Lynda.com to get ideas about how you might use the materials for your classes—and also about how you might use them for your own professional/personal development. I highly recommend you go ahead and browse the library. Lynda.com has excellent search-ability, so give that a try for any specific topics you might be interested in,” Pittard said.

MT students have access to online training website Lynda.com

Student Instructions for Accessing Lynda.com

- Log in to the access portal at: myapps.microsoft.com. Once the page loads, you will see the Microsoft Azure sign-in page.
- **Students:** Under Work/School Microsoft Account credentials enter your **MTMail email address.** (For example: If your MTMail email user name is jjones, you would sign in as jjones@mtmail.mtsu.edu). Then type in your **MTMail password.**
- Click the Sign-in button. *If you are prompted to choose a Work, School, or Personal account, then choose “Work or School.”
- After the sign-in is complete, you should be taken to the Applications portal. From here you can click on Lynda.com and automatically be signed in to use the website.

See these instructions at www.mtsu.edu/lynda. Learn to use Lynda.com at this link.

He said his department has been using it for years and envisions a benefit for every campus college.

“You can also assign a whole ‘course’ and require the students to earn a certificate of completion. The subscription includes the ability to download all materials used in the course videos,” he said.

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The benefit for MTSU students from this subscription will be long-lasting, he said, both for their education and subsequent career. An individual subscription to Lynda.com costs hundreds of dollars.

“When I was working at Lynda.com, it was amazing to me the feedback we got from subscribers. I would be wearing a Lynda.com jacket and a total stranger would walk up and say, ‘So you work at Lynda.com?’ I would say, ‘yeah.’ They would say, ‘I got my job because of Lynda.com,’” he said.

“For someone trying to learn a piece of software, I honestly don’t think there is a better way. Technical manuals are frustrating and tedious. You can jump on a Lynda.com course and it’s got it all there, broken down in manageable segments. You can stop, rewind, pick up where you left off."

Michael Wheaton, assistant to the director of library technology at the James E. Walker Library, has already used it to complete a project.

“I was trying to figure out how to make a YouTube video accessible to people with hearing disabilities. I was having trouble figuring out how to caption a video,” he said. He did a quick search for “captioning YouTube video” and 3 minutes later was doing it.

“I didn’t have to sit through a long lecture that covered way more than I needed to accomplish that task. Instead, I received exactly the dose of information needed to caption the video,” Wheaton said.

“Because Lynda.com tracks progress by user, it allows larger training packages to be broken into manageable chunks based upon the amount of time available, and when it is convenient, students return right where they left off.”

Traditionally, libraries are supposed to be quiet places.

But getting patrons to “Ssshhh!” may be harder than ever this fall as the buzz over Makerspace intensifies at James Walker Library.

On the second floor in the Digital Media Studio (DMS), a collection of 3D printers, resin printers, vinyl printers, laser cutters, virtual reality, augmented reality, micro-circuitry, robot-building kits, and more will be available to students in one location.

To use another library phrase, you could say “it’s long overdue,” said Kristen Keene, library specialist.

Since 2010, DMS has provided specialized computer equipment, expert assistance, and training for media-rich projects. DMS equipment already includes high-capacity Dell PCs and Apple iMacs, high-resolution screens, multimedia software, color and black-and-white printing, scanners, and accessories.

Find out more at library.mtsu.edu/makerspace.php.

“This is the natural next step,” Keene said of Makerspace. “Regular students have said, ‘I’m not a graphic artist but I still need some cool stuff’ for making creative presentations and assignments.

The goal is a self-directed, collaborative, problem-solving lab that draws upon digital literacy and entrepreneurship. Library staff members are working out policies and procedures for usage.

Priority will be given for education-related projects, but use won’t be limited to course materials. There will be some cost involved, either in the form of buying materials or bringing your own. There will be a requirement for training before using the equipment.

Michael Wheaton, assistant to the director of library technology at the library, and Valerie Hackworth, coordinator of public technology, have been as excited as kids in a candy store this past summer as they planned, ordered, and set up the equipment.

A new position, unofficially called a “Maker Guru,” is being filled, they said. That person will help students envision how to use the machines for their projects and help them get started. But library staff doesn’t want the
“This is good because it allows students to reinforce and take control of their learning in a fun and open-minded way.”

Aldair Nieto, junior Mechatronics Engineering major

process to become overly bureaucratic.

“That would destroy creativity,” Hackworth said. “This is a creation space. We will be here to help, but not babysit. We will be here to help you learn or if you have any questions or problems.

“It definitely is going to be do-it-yourself from start to finish.”

Possible academic applications of the equipment are unlimited, Keene said. There are “natural partnerships” with students in computer science, education, art, engineering, mechatronics, geoscience, architecture, and aerospace.

In addition, she envisions uses in fashion design, theater, business, education, health care, and more degree fields.

“A chemistry student might want to make a model of a DNA double helix,” Keene said.

Students already have been having fun “testing” the equipment.

Aldair Nieto, a junior and student programmer at the library, made a moveable hand from the 3D printer and a pulley system.

“I assembled all the 3D printed pieces of the arm together and attached the motors to inside the forearm space. I ran strings from the tips of the fingers to the servo motors pulley, which acted as tendons,” he said. “I used an Arduino micro-controller for the control board and implemented it with a Kinect camera. Then, I wrote a program for the robotic hand to mimic my hand.”

That fit perfectly with his Mechatronics Engineering major, but Nieto encourages students in all degree fields to consider how Makerspace can enhance their education.

“Anyone with an idea that needs a space with technological resources may utilize this type of environment,” he said. “For example, anyone who wants to make a fast prototype can use the materials provided within the Makerspace, such as 3D printers, wood, aluminum structures, electronics, etc. This is good because it allows students to reinforce and take control of their learning in a fun and open-minded way.”

And don’t be intimidated by some of the cutting-edge tech, he said.

“The equipment looks complicated, because it may be unfamiliar to them. Once they give it a try they will realize it is actually somewhat simple to use. All they need is a good imagination and to be willing to take a chance at trying something new.”
Election Tech: Links and apps to help you not miss the vote

**Timeline to keep in mind**

- **Oct. 11**—The deadline to register to vote in person in the Nov. 8 general election for state and federal offices—including president. You must be 18 on or before the date of the election you are voting in.

- **Oct. 19**—First day of early in-person or in-person absentee voting in Tennessee, which ends on Nov. 3. Early voting must be done in the county where you are registered to vote.

- **Nov. 1**—Last day to request an absentee ballot. The period for requesting an absentee ballot began on Aug. 10.

- **Nov. 8**—General election and last day an absentee ballot can be received and counted at the election office where you are registered.

Online voter registration is not quite here yet, but will be this time next year.

Meanwhile, MTSU and local and state governments offer several internet resources and tech shortcuts to make sure Election Day is not lost in the start-of-the-school-year craziness. A great place to start is mtsu.edu/amerdem.

Although students from outside Rutherford County can vote absentee or in-person in their home county, registering to vote in-person locally is the best option, according to Mary Evins, coordinator of the American Democracy Project at MTSU. And because of fall break, students should do so by Oct. 7.

"We have September for this effort," she said. "Student voting studies definitively inform us that students who do not register locally do not vote; they don't make it home to the polls."

If students have already registered to vote somewhere before coming to campus, they can transfer registration to Rutherford County by

- Submitting the voter registration form to the county election commission office, just down Main Street on Courthouse Square. Get more info at election.rutherfordcountytntn.gov.

- Downloading and mailing the application to the local county Election Commission office. That office will notify your previous voting location of the transfer.

Or they can vote back in their home county, either:

- By-mail absentee. A voter enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited college or university outside the county of registration can do this.

- In-person—either on election day, or during an early voting period.

If you aren't registered anywhere, your choices are fairly simple: Register back home or in Rutherford County. You can do this either in person or by mailing in the form.

To get Tennessee mail-in voter registration forms, email ADP at amerdem@mtsu.edu with your campus box number and number of forms you need. Or a form can be downloaded at sos.tn.gov/node/5996.

Following are on-campus voter registration sites through Oct. 7:

- American Democracy Project—Harrison House Rm. 108, 1416 E. Main St., next to Campus Security
- Gore Center—Basement of Todd Hall, Albert Gore Research Center
- Honors College—Coordinator Office Rm. 226
- Learning Resources Center—LRC West Lobby Rm. 101-S

Alan Farley, administrator of elections for Rutherford County, believes mail-in absentee voting is also a good option for college students not living within an easy drive from home.

"If they live outside of one of the neighboring counties, I would suggest making plans to vote absentee. It counts the same as any other vote."

Students from outside of Rutherford County need to decide soon how they will vote in November, or they might miss out, said Adam Ghassemi, director of communications for the Office of Tennessee Secretary of State.

"Where you consider home is where you should register. If it is where your parents live, register there. Or if you consider school your home, register where your school is located. It comes down to a personal definition of ‘where is home?’" he said.
Mathematica 11 is now available to students through the MTSU site license.

Mathematica is an online or desktop resource for coursework and academic research in any field that requires computation or visualization, including math, science, engineering, computer science, business, and finance.

It is commonly used for prototyping ideas and data analysis in industry. It offers

▶Courses: Mathematica has a long-standing document environment that is an extremely popular platform for any type of courseware.

Documents can include a wide variety of supporting calculations, graphics and charts, or easy-to-make, mouse-driven applications to visualize tricky concepts.

Mathematica is designed to be all-in-one software, eliminating the need to start over and learn new software for new courses.

▶Research: Rather than requiring different toolkits for different jobs, Mathematica integrates the world’s largest collection of algorithms, high-performance computing capabilities, and a powerful visualization engine in one coherent system.

It also features expanded functionality in machine learning, image and audio processing, neural networks, 3D printing, and many other areas that rival specialized software.

For a complete list of new features and enhancements in Mathematica 11, visit: wolfram.com/mathematica/new-in-11.

Mathematica developer Wolfram is hosting free web-based training sessions for students or anyone new to the website.

Each training session lets participants work alongside the instructor to create their first document in Mathematica and complete their first few calculations and visualizations.

Wolfram staff members are online and available to answer specific questions in the live Q&A.

Visit wolfram.com/training/special-event/hands-on-start-to-mathematica. Several September sessions are still available.

Participants will need access to either Mathematica for the desktop or Mathematica Online to utilize the hands-on aspects of this training.

Several MTSU departments have access for students to use Mathematica. But because there are a limited number of accesses available with the site license, it is best to talk to your instructor about the process for using it.

Do you know about the "Read and Write" tool?

MTSU students can use the free "Read and Write" for Windows program, which offers easy-to-use tools for researching, writing, and editing papers.

It features text-to-speech, word prediction, compilation of highlighted information, voice control of your computer, language translation, and much more.

Sign in to your PipelineMT account and click on the "Read & Write tab" to download it and view tutorials.
PipelineMT/RaiderNet
PipelineMT is the only avenue by which students can access RaiderNet services. Once you’ve logged into PipelineMT, click on RaiderNet and then choose the Student, Financial Aid, or Personal Information tab.
Through PipelineMT, students can receive email directly from their instructors, post discussions, exchange files, and join chat rooms available for each course. Announcements to students are also posted via PipelineMT. Additional information and minimum browser requirements can be found on the login page at mtsu.edu/pipelinemt.
PipelineMT is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but may be unavailable at certain times due to maintenance or special processing. See the Planned Down Time button on the PipelineMT login page.

PipelineMT Username and Password
For information about PipelineMT usernames and passwords, or if you need to reset your password, visit mtsu.edu/changepw or call 615-898-5345. Note: You need to enter a personal email address in RaiderNet to alter your password online. A link for completing your password reset is sent to your personal email address, and it is only valid for one hour.

Student Printing on Campus
Each student receives an $8 printing quota (320 black and white sheets) per semester to use for the term in which they are currently enrolled. Any amount unused by the end of the semester is non-refundable and does not roll over to the next semester. If the allocation is exceeded during the semester, students will be able to continue printing for a nominal price per page through RAIDER FUNDS. You will use your MTSU BlueID card to access your printing allocation. For specialized printing, BluePrint is available to assist you with any unique printing needs. BluePrint is located in the Student Union Building.

MTMail
MTMail is the email system for students. It is provided as a partnership between the University and Microsoft, using Office 365. Students receive their email accounts as part of their computing accounts. The MTMail account provides significant benefits.
All official University email will be sent to your MTMail account. Admissions, Financial Aid, and your instructors will ONLY have access to your MTMail address. If you wish to use another email system, you can forward the MTMail account to an alternative source.

Student Technology Access Fee
The student Technology Access Fee (TAF) is used for direct student benefit, including new and improved high-tech laboratories and classrooms, appropriate networks and software, computer and other equipment, and technological improvements in instruction.

The TAF helps students gain hands-on experience with the latest computer-based and discipline-specific technologies.
For example, the funds may go toward computer lab upgrades, new computer labs, new computer equipment and software, multimedia and master classrooms, recording and production equipment, and library resources.
Learn more at mtsu.edu/taf.
Students pay the TAF along with their other fees.
TAF expenditure recommendations from the Instructional Technology Committee are approved by the president and submitted to the Tennessee Board of Regents vice chancellor for finance for approval.
As soon as proposals receive board approval, purchases begin. The goal is to get the technology to students as soon as possible.
Equipment purchased using funds from the student Technology Access Fee is tracked to ensure it is being used as intended. Look for the special label on each piece of equipment that shows it is a result of technology fees at work.
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If you are a new student, you will need to activate your MTMail account by resetting your password. To begin, you should visit mtsu.edu/email. After your password has been set, you can go to the Office 365 login.

Once there, enter your MTMail email address, which takes the form of your MTSU username followed by @mtmail.mtsu.edu. A typical student address will resemble zzz2a@mtmail.mtsu.edu. The password is the one that you set with the Password Recovery Tool.

The MTMail account can be accessed from anywhere you have an internet connection. There are links to it on the MTSU home page at mtsu.edu (click on the MTSU envelop email link icon), or to access it from PipelineMT, log in and click the email icon in the upper right-hand corner.

Your MTMail account is separate from your PipelineMT account, and each has its own password. The same password can be set for both, though that is not recommended. If you wish to change your MTMail password, visit mtsu.edu/email. Once there, click on the Password Recovery Tool link.

MTMail is also separate from any other Windows Live or Hotmail accounts. If you own one of these accounts, it may be necessary for you to click on the “Sign in with a different account” option before you can enter your MTMail ID.

Students will keep their MTMail accounts as long as they attend MTSU. MTSU graduates will keep their accounts permanently. If a student leaves the University before graduation, the account will be terminated in about a year.

Types of MTSU Student Accounts

Each student is issued an individual MTMail email account with 50 GB of storage capacity. Your account name is your PipelineMT username with @mtmail.mtsu.edu added. Your passwords are not necessarily synchronized with your PipelineMT passwords, but you could elect to assign the same password for both. Your initial password is set by using the online Password Recovery Tool. Click the MTSU Email envelop icon link at the top of the MTSU home page.

MTSU Mobile App

MTSU Mobile, available for iOS and Android, provides easy access to personal class schedules, academic progress reports, midterm and final grades, shuttle bus tracking, and more. Visit mtsu.edu/mobile for more information.
IT Resources Policy

Acceptance of computing accounts means that users are aware of and accept MTSU's published policies and procedures. For the full text of the policy, go to ITD's Web pages at mtsu.edu/itd. Click on Policies and Guidelines.

MTSU Cable TV System Upgrade

The campus cable television system recently underwent an upgrade.

Changes include the inclusion of high definition for any available channel (almost 80 channels now in hi-def), plus four premium channels (StarMAX, Cinemax East, HBO Comedy, and HBO Family East).

For more information, contact Telecommunication Services at (615) 898-2991, or visit mtsu.edu/itdtele and click "Services."

Cable TV

Cable TV service is provided through ITD's Telecommunication Services to residence hall rooms. The service provides 96 digital channels, eight in high definition. Your TV must have a digital tuner to receive the broadcasts.

If you have an older TV with an analog tuner, a digital-to-analog converter will be needed and can be purchased through a variety of suppliers. Residents in Scarlett Commons and Womack Lane Apartments may also subscribe for cable service to bedrooms. Visit mtsu.edu/itdtele for more information.

Computer and Network Security

To reduce the threat of your computer being infected by a worm, a virus, or spyware, you should keep it as secure as possible. For more information, go to mtsu.edu/security.

Wireless Connectivity

Wireless internet access is available at many locations on campus including outdoor areas, lounges, eateries, and classroom buildings. Visit mtsu.edu/itd for more information and instructions for connecting.

Adaptive Technologies

Adaptive technology stations that facilitate the computing needs of students with physical or learning disabilities are available at several locations: Walker Library (technology throughout the building); the Adaptive Technology Center in Walker Library; and University computer labs in KOM 351, and BAS S137.

These stations feature special hardware and software such as CCTVs, trackball mice, screen magnifiers, screen readers, scan-and-read applications, large monitors, and scanners.

For more information visit w1.mtsu.edu/dac/atc.php or call 615-904-8550.

Your BlueID Card

The BlueID card identifies students, faculty, and staff for access to campus services and privileges. Your BlueID contains your MTSU ID number, which is required for all business transactions.

You can use your BlueID card to check out books from the library, cash checks, gain entry to the Recreation Center, campus computer labs, and residence halls, and attend campus events and purchase extra tickets.

You can also use your BlueID as a debit card. Just deposit money into a RAIDER FUND$ account by going to the cashier windows in the Student Services Building.

Then use your BlueID card instead of cash or checks at the bookstore, to pay registration fees, to buy a soft drink or snack, or to purchase meals at any food service locations on campus.

Contact the Business Office at 615-904-8077 for more information about RAIDER FUND$.

The BlueID WebCard Center is a secure online application that lets you manage your MTSU BlueID card. Visit the BlueID WebCard Center at blueid.mtsu.edu. Simply log in using your PipelineMT username and password.

The BlueID Office is in the Student Services and Admissions Center (SSAC), room 112. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.