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Best Practices in Online Teaching

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Best Practices in Online Teaching

By:

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Best Practices in Online Teaching

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Online:

< <http://cnx.org/content/col10453/1.2/> >

C O N N E X I O N S

Rice University, Houston, Texas

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Table of Contents

1 Course Goals	
1.1 Course Goals and Objectives	1
2 Getting Started	
2.1 Prepare for Success	3
2.2 Using a Course Management System (CMS)	5
2.3 Prepare Your Students for Learning Online	7
2.4 Specify Course Goals, Expectations, and Policies	10
2.5 Create a Warm and Inviting Atmosphere to Build a Learning Community	14
2.6 Online Instructor Performance Best Practices and Expectations	20
Solutions	22
3 During Teaching	
3.1 Introduction	23
3.2 Promote Active Learning	26
3.3 Model Effective Online Interaction	28
3.4 Monitor Student Progress and Encourage Lagging Students	33
3.5 Assess Messages in Online Discussions	34
3.6 Sustain Students' Motivation	37
3.7 Provide Feedback and Support	39
3.8 Encourage Students to Regulate Their Own Learning	43
3.9 Understand the Impact of Multiculturalism	46
3.10 Deal With Conflicts Promptly	48
3.11 Use Evaluation Data	50
Solutions	56
4 Putting It All Together	
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 Manage Grades and Exams	60
4.3 Follow Intellectual Property Guidelines	61
4.4 Manage Time and Workload Effectively	63
4.5 Participate in an Online Teaching Community	68
4.6 Teaching Blended Learning Courses	69
Solutions	74
Index	75
Attributions	76

Chapter 1

Course Goals

1.1 Course Goals and Objectives¹

1.1.1 Course Goals & Objectives

1.1.1.1 Goals

The goals of this course focus on:

- Preparing participants to become effective online instructors by discussing the essential skill sets necessary for teaching in an online environment
- Collecting effective practices and strategies for teaching in an online environment

1.1.1.2 Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and perform essential preparation tasks prior to teaching the course
- Articulate an instructor's role in an online learning environment
- Develop appropriate strategies for promoting active learning
- Recognize learner characteristics or styles and apply appropriate strategies to monitor and facilitate students' online learning
- Apply effective strategies for facilitating and assessing online discussions
- Manage your time, workload, and administrative issues related to teaching effectively online

1.1.1.3 Course Structure

This course contains three sections:

- **Section 1: Getting Started** – Focuses on preparing yourself, your course, and your students for a constructive learning community.
- **Section 2: During Teaching** – Presents the many critical tasks necessary to create an active, interactive, and motivating learning environment for your students.
- **Section 3: Pulling it All Together** – Summarizes helpful tips, including managing your workload.
 - **Blended Learning Content in Module 3:** Presents a summary of the growth of blended learning, and suggestions and recommendations for teaching blended learning courses. This section is specially provided for those who are interested in the blended learning topic.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14872/1.1/>>.

Each module includes practices important to effective online teaching. Each practice includes sections labeled “What to do?” “How to do it?” and “Why do it?” respectively.

- **What to do?** – Summarizes each effective online teaching practice in one or two sentences.
- **How to do it?** – Lists suggestions for you to achieve the purposes listed under “What to do?” Included are examples from our real courses for your reference.
- **Why do it?** – Presents a succinct literature citation to support the effective online teaching practices listed under “What to do?” from both theoretical research and practical experiences.
- **Voice of Experience** – Provides interviews of experienced online instructors. Make sure your audio is enabled when you access it.

1.1.1.4 What course components will I see?

- **Introduction** to each module
- **Self-Assessment Questions**
- **Course Content** composed of "What to do?", "How to do it?", and "Why do it?" on each lesson page
- **Activities**

1.1.2 Activity

Each CNX module has a discussion board at the bottom of the page. Post your answers to the questions below on the CNX discussion board.

Discussion forum

■ [*Join the discussion »*](#)

Figure 1.1

Step 1: Introduce yourself briefly. Please focus on the following questions when you post the message:

- To which college are you primarily affiliated?
- Have you taught face-to-face at the college level? If yes, how long have you been teaching?
- Have you taught online at the college level? If yes, how long have you been teaching? If no, when do you plan to start teaching online?

Chapter 2

Getting Started

2.1 Prepare for Success¹

2.1.1 Introduction: Good preparation is half of the success!

Online teaching is an art. . . just like oil painting, writing, or any other art.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14871/1.6/>>.



Figure 2.1: Outdoor Easel Setup, Photo by Karl Leitzel, Penn State University, World Campus

*If you are just starting an oil painting, you need to prepare brushes, paints, canvas, and other miscellaneous items such as an easel or reference resources. You need to know how to choose your brushes and prime your canvas for the best possible effects. You will also need to decide what your painting will convey and how to accomplish that goal on the canvas. **

Similarly, when you start teaching an online course, you need to decide what you want your students to achieve from taking the course, and how you can attain that goal by thoroughly preparing before the course start date. More importantly, you need to know how to ready your students and your course for an effective teaching and learning environment.

In this section of the Best Practices in Online Teaching course, we present the key information you'll need to consider when preparing for your online course:

- Prepare for Success
- Using a Course Management System (CMS) in Your Teaching
- Prepare Your Students for Learning Online
- Specify Course Goals, Expectations, and Policies
- Create a Warm and Inviting Atmosphere to Build a Learning Community
- Online Instructor Performance Guidelines/Expectations and Best Practices

NOTE: *The information about oil painting is referenced from:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_painting²

2.1.2 Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 2.1

(Solution on p. 22.)

Do students automatically know how to learn in an online environment when taking an online course for the first time?

Exercise 2.2

(Solution on p. 22.)

I've taught a course face-to-face and am going to teach the same course online next semester. Can I use the syllabus from my face-to-face teaching in the online version of the course?

2.1.3 Be prepared! Good preparation is half of the success!

Success in the online classroom is greatly enhanced if you know your way around the structure and operation of the course environment. In the physical classroom we anticipate an environment based on prior experience, for example, a room with light switches, a chalk board, perhaps a projection screen, seats and so forth. We rarely need to familiarize ourselves with a new classroom because of our experience with past facilities. In the online classroom we may not be as familiar with the “surroundings” and operational course features and can quickly become frustrated with the online experience. This is particularly true if you did not serve as the original course author.

Spending time prior to the course in the online “classroom” to familiarize yourself with its features, design, and operational aspects will create a smoother transition for you and your students. You'll want to review the presentation of the course content, become familiar with the discussion space (if used), understand the sequencing of required student activities (homework) assignments, and know where and how you can post and interact with the class participants. For example, course related emails are more easily tracked and managed when sent through the ANGEL system rather than externally in other email systems.

Contacting your instructional designer and getting to know your online classroom will serve you by removing anxiety about course operation and allowing you to focus on creating the right learning atmosphere for your students.

2.2 Using a Course Management System (CMS)³

2.2.1 Using a Course Management System in Your Teaching

Course Management Systems (CMS) provide a range of tools to support learning and the administration of courses in an online environment. Through a CMS, instructors can deliver virtually any content to students that could be delivered in a traditional face-to-face setting. Examples of commercial systems include: Blackboard⁴, ANGEL⁵, or Desire2Learn⁶. Examples of open source systems include: Moodle⁷, Sakai⁸, or Atutor⁹.

You will need to become familiar with the specific feature set offered in the CMS used in your university or organizational setting. The following is a brief summary of the types of tools you will need to use in your online teaching.

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_painting

³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14873/1.6/>>.

⁴<http://www.blackboard.com/us/index.Bb>

⁵<http://www.angellearning.com/>

⁶<http://www.desire2learn.com/>

⁷<http://moodle.org/>

⁸<http://sakaiproject.org/>

⁹<http://www.atutor.ca/>

- **Communication tools** - include tools such as email, discussion forums, and chat to allow faculty to correspond with students quickly and conveniently, and students can also use these tools to work on group projects and discussion.
- **Dropboxes** - Through the use of dropboxes, students can submit lessons and other electronic files to instructors, and instructors can then provide feedback directly to students through the dropbox functionality.
- **Assessment tool** - Instructors can administer quizzes and exams online using an assessment tool. Many systems allow for automatic grading of quizzes in the case of multiple choice or true/false questions. And for short-answer or essay questions, instructors can often grade responses and provide feedback on a question-by-question basis.
- **Gradebook** - Some systems provide course gradebook; a single location for storage of all course assignments, from online items such as dropboxes and quizzes, to offline items such as proctored exams and class participation.

2.2.2 Selected Faculty Competencies - Using a CMS

Faculty competencies for using a CMS may include more than those here presented and will need to be adapted to the specific CMS used at your institution. The list below was generated by Instructional Design and Development (ID&D) staff of the World Campus at Penn State University. The list reflects faculty's commonly asked questions or difficulties while teaching in ANGEL, the CMS currently in use at Penn State.

Competencies you should possess include (but are not limited to):

- posting an announcement
- sending email within the system to one student or all students
- posting to or moderating discussion forums
- setting up groups
- using the calendar (Optional)
- managing students' assignments
- submitting course grades at the end of the semester
- establishing settings that notify instructor by e-mail when students submit an assignment
- using the key instructor tools (e.g. Login Report, WhoDunIt Agent, Ungraded Items Agent, User Preview Tool, etc.)
- grading dropbox and quiz submission
- resetting student quiz
- setting points for assignments
- using the course gradebook

2.3 Prepare Your Students for Learning Online¹⁰

2.3.1 What to do?

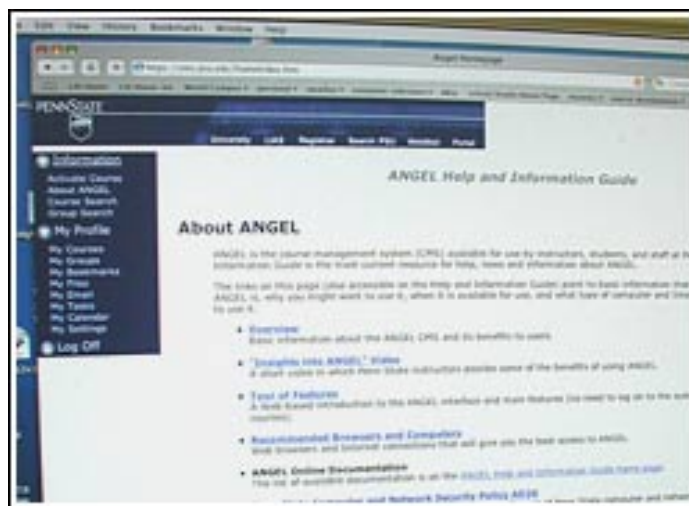


Figure 2.2: Screenshot of a Course Management System, Karl Leitzel, Penn State University World Campus

Effective online instructors provide sufficient orientation for students regarding the tools used in the course, technical help, and strategies for effective online learning.

2.3.2 How to do it?

- Post a welcome message to help students get started.
- Include a brief orientation for students to get familiar with the terminology and tools used in your CMS. (See Example 1) (Example 2.1: A Brief Orientation for the Students)
- Provide contact information (email, phone number, etc.) for technical help in different ways: post in syllabus, group email messages, or by course announcement. (See Example 2 (Example 2.2: Using Announcement to Welcome Students))
- Remind students to set up email forwarding to their preferred accounts; however, as a best practice, faculty and students should keep all course-related communications within the CMS space for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality of student educational record information.
- If you are more likely to check your e-mail through another e-mail account (as opposed to w/i the CMS), have your e-mail forwarded to your alternate account. That way, you'll be sure not to miss any important correspondence! This will also prompt you to login to the CMS to reply to student messages (see above)
- Provide your contact information, standard response time, and preferred communication methods (such as email, phone, or IM).
- Provide online office hours as needed.
- Structure the course by providing guidelines for participation and other class policies to help students learn more effectively. (Please see more about this in the Specify Course Goals, Expectations, and Policies Module (Section 2.4))

¹⁰This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14875/1.4/>>.

- Provide resources and strategies for online learning, and explain how learning online is different than learning in a classroom.
- Include a Student FAQ. (e.g. common questions about courses, registration, tuition, financial aid, course materials and software.)

Example 2.1: A Brief Orientation for the Students

It's almost the first day of class and you probably already have all of your pencils sharpened, your notebooks filled with paper, and have gone to the bookstore to select books. Or maybe not! Even if you've never taken an online course before, you know that learning online will be different than learning in the traditional classroom. You never have to use a pencil as you can do all of your writing using the computer keyboard. You may choose to forgo notebook paper as all of your notes can be stored on your computer and textbooks will be mailed to your home address. Of course, you can take your computer to class and not use a pencil or notebook paper but you have to be in class at a specified time. Online class gives you a bit more flexibility and you can work in your pajamas if you are so inclined!

Now that we've mentioned a few of the differences, let's look at some things that are the same between online and traditional learning environments. You will learn the same content and do the same assignment as traditional students. You will be taught by the same professors who teach on campus and you will receive the same Penn State degree as the students who sit in class (not wearing their pajamas.)

The purpose of this lesson is to prepare you for the course and give you the opportunity to use the course tools. At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- communicate with classmates through course e-mail;
- post a message to the discussion forum (and attach a file to your posting);
- submit a file to the drop box;
- access reading materials on electronic reserve from the PSU Library;
- have a fuller understanding of plagiarism;
- participate in Elluminate Live! sessions.

Example 2.2: Using Announcement to Welcome Students

Welcome to CMLIT 153 International Literature and Film!

Since we are starting off on a Wednesday, each Lesson will be scheduled roughly from Wednesday to Wednesday. This week we will be completing:

- Lesson #1 under the Lessons tab
- Reading "The Dead" by James Joyce and an introduction to Narrative Form
- Viewing the film, North by Northwest

Just a Reminder of some things that you should remember to do this week:

- Read through the Getting Started Folder and don't forget to introduce yourself via the Meet your Classmates discussion forum
- Read through the syllabus and course plan to see if you have any questions
- Download/printout the files that are on e-reserve (go to the Tools tab and click on the E-Reserve link)
- Order your books online, pick them up from the bookstore or you can get a copy on reserve in the library
- Figure out the best way for you to see the films and check on their availability (in the library, through a video rental place or through netflix)

Useful tips for using ANGEL:

- Under the Tools tab you can click on "What's New Agent," which will bring up a sidebar that will let you know what items you have not yet looked at or items that have been newly posted or added to the course.
- If you are more likely to check your e-mail through another e-mail account (as opposed to ANGEL), you can have your ANGEL e-mail forwarded to your webmail account. That way, you'll be sure not to miss any important correspondence! It's very easy. Here are the steps:

1. Click on my Profile
2. Click on my Settings
3. Click on System Settings
4. Fill in your Forwarding Address
5. Select "Forward my course mail and keep as new in course"

I really look forward to meeting you and working with you!
All the best, Nicole

2.3.3 Why do it?

Online learning can be frustrating for students pedagogically and technologically, especially for those who are taking the online course for the first time; Therefore, successful online programs usually provide student orientations in the beginning as well as technical support throughout the course (Ko & Rossen, 2004).

Students should be aware of the time commitment for "attending" classes delivered online (Lao & Gonzales, 2005).

2.3.4 References

Ko, S. & Rossen, S. (2004). **Teaching Online: A practical guide**. 2nd Ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lao, T. & Gonzales, C. (2005). Understanding online learning through a qualitative description of professors and students' experiences. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, 13(3), 459-74

2.3.5 Activity

The orientation/welcome message sets the tone for the course and provides the learner with your expectations of them in the course. The exact language may vary between course instructors. It is often helpful to read and review others orientation message for ideas of effective style. Please draft an orientation message for your students taking the online course. Use the orientation example above to help you get started.

2.4 Specify Course Goals, Expectations, and Policies¹¹

2.4.1 What to do?



Figure 2.3: Photograph by: Christophe Libert, Runner – Meeting, Gaz de France in Paris (2005), Photo #458554, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/458554>

Effective online instructors provide at the outset course goals, expectations, structure, and related course/department/University policies.

2.4.2 How to do it?

Many of the following components commonly appear in a course syllabus. However, you may choose to include some of them in your course Announcements or elsewhere:

- Course name and overview
- Instructor's name and contact information
- Course goals and learning objectives (See Example 1 (Example 2.3: Course Objectives))
- A description of course structure, including how online courses work generally as well as specifics
- Course materials or textbook(s) (both required and optional)
- Course schedule, including lessons, reading assignments, assignments and deadlines, projects, quizzes, exams or papers, and/or other learning activities planned
- Grading policies (Please see more at Tips for an Effective Syllabus¹² by Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT))¹³
- Academic integrity (See Example 2 (Example 2.4: Plagiarism and Academic Integrity)), policies (See Example 3 (Example 2.5: Academic Integrity Policy)), and readings (See Example 4 (Example 2.6: Readings for Academic Integrity))

¹¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14874/1.3/>>.

¹²<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/syllabus/>

¹³<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/>

- Guidelines for student participation (See Example 5 (Example 2.7: Guidelines for Students' Participation Example)) and collaboration including: (a) Guidelines for online communication (See Example 6 (Example 2.8: Guidelines for Online Communication)), such as posting messages to online discussion board, responding to messages posted by others, sending course emails, and working in teams in the online course; (b) Policy for assignment submission and grading (e.g. by dropbox or by email); (c) Netiquette guidelines for the online course and/or additional netiquette resources (See Example 7 (Example 2.9: Netiquette Guidelines))

2.4.3

Example 2.3: Course Objectives

Course Objectives Sample 1

At the end of this course, learners should be able to:

- Appreciate the complexities involved in developing and executing a disaster plan for both EMS and hospitals
- Describe the coordination involved in integrating these plans with existing federal and state personnel and resources
- Explain the role of various domestic and economic policies on the planning for and recovery from disasters and terrorist emergencies
- Identify the key psychological and social consequences of disasters and terrorism that must be addressed in disaster planning and response
- Outline specific issues unique to urban search and rescue, disaster communication, agricultural biosecurity, and critical infrastructure protection
- Recall fundamental research methodologies in the study of disasters

Course Objective Sample 2

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a sense of the historical scale of natural disasters, the rate at which they occur, the 'hot spots' for major disasters, and the degree to which the recent past is representative of the overall record
- Compare and contrast the scientific causes and impacts of major categories of natural disasters (e.g. tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, volcanos, and mudslides)
- Analyze any given natural disaster from a scientific, historical, and social perspective
- Articulate key considerations in planning and decision making related to managing the impacts of natural disasters

2.4.4

Example 2.4: Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

In an effort to help you understand why academic integrity matters, to engage you in conversations about approaching your graduate work with academic integrity and to create and model a learning environment that fosters such an inclination, we've created this component of orientation. It is our hope that your learning experiences across this program of study promote an atmosphere of academic integrity that values "the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner" (PSU Academic Integrity Policy).

Since this course is one that requires you to do research it is logical to expect that we will help you to do research well, particularly in an electronic venue. As faculty, we see this as a shared responsibility with our students. Our goal here is to develop your conceptual understanding of

plagiarism, help you to detect it and ultimately, help you to avoid engaging in it. As noted by Lipson and Reindl (2003), “[u]niversities tend to rely on three explanations for academic conduct violations: 1. **criminal plagiarism** describes the actions of students who knowingly and intentionally claim others’ work as their own; 2. **sloppy scholarship** describes the actions of students who know the rules for proper citation. . . [but] engage in scholarship of inexcusable carelessness; and 3. **ignorance of the rules** ” (p. 8).

As a proactive measure, there are numerous resources available that can support us in promoting academic integrity and in identifying the “... **connection** between [a] scholar’s own ideas and the ideas of others” (Lipson and Reindl, 2003, p. 9). Stated differently, how can we distinguish between using sources of information appropriately and being sources of information?

Source: Lipson, A. and Reindl, S. (2003). The responsible plagiarist: Understanding students who misuse sources. About Campus, July-August, 7-14.

For more resources see - iStudy Module from Penn State - Information about Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Copyright¹⁴

Example 2.5: Academic Integrity Policy

According to Penn State Policy 49-20,

"Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle."

To support your the commitment that each of you made to practice academic integrity in the course orientation, additional content has been added at the bottom of the Lessons tab. The folder "Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Copyright" contains information that you are expected to be familiar with. Completion of the module per se is not required; however, again, you are expected to be familiar with the information and will be held accountable.

Example 2.6: Readings for Academic Integrity

Below are three sources of information regarding this topic that are specific to Penn State University as well as the College of Education . Visit each website and take note of the various definitions, expectations, examples, strategies, and policies relating to academic integrity and plagiarism.

1. TLT Cyberplagiarism: Detection and Prevention. (Available at <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/>¹⁵ .) Focus on the following sections, in particular: Definition, Causes, Detection, Prevention, Under "Site Menu" see "Student View" for advice to students
2. PSU definition and expectations of Academic Integrity (Available at <http://www.psu.edu/dept/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20>¹⁶)
3. College of Education Policy Statement (Available at http://www.ed.psu.edu/edservices/certification/academic_integ.htm)

Example 2.7: Guidelines for Students’ Participation Example

In calculating each student’s participation points, the instructor will take into consideration the following:

- Total number of hours logged
- Total number of log-ins
- E-mail activity (number of emails initiated, number of emails replied to)
- Total number of discussion forum posts

¹⁴<http://istudy.psu.edu/FirstYearModules/CopyrightPlagiarism/CopyrightLesson.html>

¹⁵<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/>

¹⁶<http://www.psu.edu/dept/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20>

¹⁷http://www.ed.psu.edu/edservices/certification/academic_integ.htm

- Peer evaluation results

At the end of the course, students will be ranked from first to last for each category (i.e. worst to best). The number of participation points allocated will then be based on each student's overall relative ranking score.

Example 2.8: Guidelines for Online Communication

Staying in touch

The online course format offers a number of ways to stay in touch (note: these tools are specific to ANGEL but other CMSs have similar tools). Here is a quick summary:

Medium	Type of Message
Welcome Page	General course announcements from instructor to class
General Course Discussion area	Questions related to course logistics, functionality, etc.
Weekly Team Discussion Areas	Communications around specific weekly team activities
Instructor's Office Chat Room	Scheduled live chats with instructor (open hours will be announced periodically during the course)
Student Lounge Chat Room	Option for live chats among class members (Students can set up times to chat whenever)
Course E-mail	Individual communications between class participants and/or instructor

Table 2.1

Example 2.9: Netiquette Guidelines

Netiquette is important when emailing your instructor and your fellow students

Follow the guidelines that are listed below for all email sent in this class:

1. Be clear. Use standard English and do not abbreviate. Spell check, revise and edit your messages before sending them. Use appropriate subject lines that reflect the content of the message.
2. Be polite and careful. Do not use ALL UPPERCASE LETTERS!!! or multiple exclamation marks, as it is sometimes difficult to understand the tone of the message. Similarly, avoid sarcasm and irony, which can be misinterpreted by the reader.
3. Be inclusive. Send group messages to all members as well as to the instructor to ensure that all lines of communication stay open.

2.4.5 Why do it?

The course syllabus is the “map” for your students' learning in your course (Ko & Rossen, 2005).

“Develop a course expectations agreement for students to read and ‘accept’ as an online assignment during the first week of the course. This document will help students to understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from the instructor” (Kleinman, 2005, pp.13-14).

2.4.6 References

Kleinman, S. (2005). Strategies for encouraging active learning, interaction, and academic integrity in online courses. **Communication Teacher**, 19(1), 13-18

Ko, S. & Rossen, S. (2004). **Teaching online: A practical guide**. 2nd Ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

2.5 Create a Warm and Inviting Atmosphere to Build a Learning Community¹⁸

2.5.1 What to do?



Figure 2.4: Photo by Maciek PELC, Terrace in Choragwica, from stock.xchng, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/812888>

Distance learners can feel isolated, especially at the beginning of a course. Effective online instructors understand this and employ strategies to overcome this isolation through building a learning community.

2.5.2 How to do it?

- Welcome students before the course begins by sending a course email or posting a course announcement. (See Example 1 (Example 2.10: Welcome Email))
- Resend welcome email to new students after drop/add period
- Post a personal introduction about yourself (See Example 2 (Example 2.11: Meet the Instructor's Page))
- Write in an informal tone (See Example 3) (Example 2.12: Weekly Email to Students - From PSY 451, Summer 06)

¹⁸This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14877/1.4/>>.

- Provide lots of encouragement and support, especially in the beginning of the course. (For more information about providing support, please see Provide Feedback and Support (Section 3.7) module)
- Incorporate the "human touch"
- Commend students privately by email
- Encourage students to create their own homepage, or post a short self-introduction to the discussion forum, or set up a "user profile"
- Encourage students to develop some social space by creating a group inside or outside of the course site
- Upload your picture and encourage students to upload their pictures to the CMS

Example 2.10: Welcome Email

Welcome to HLS 410!

This is one of the foundation courses in Penn State's Masters degree and certificate programs in Homeland Security.

To get started, click the Lessons tab above and work through the material in the Course Orientation folder. That will get you oriented to the course, the Angel environment, and the university's academic integrity policies. You can also review a high level course overview by clicking the Syllabus tab above.

We are looking forward to a stimulating, engaging, and collaborative learning experience in the course.

Again, welcome!

Example 2.11: Meet the Instructor's Page

From RUS 100, Summer 06

Instructor Photo

Galina Khmelkova

S408 Burrowes

Tel: 814-863-7486

Email: Use ANGEL mail system for course mail. I will respond to your emails within 24 hours

Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-4:00 pm and Thursdays 4:00-6:00 pm

I will be available by phone or in the ANGEL chat room at these times.

Zdravstvujte! Hello everyone!

Let me introduce myself. My name is Galina Andreevna Khmelkova. Don't be surprised by reading such a strange name. I am Russian and in Russia especially when we address a teacher, professor or elder person we don't know, we use this combination of the first name, patronymic and last name. The patronymic name is formed from the father's name with the help of suffixes. My patronymic name means that my father's name was Andrei.

I was born in Volgograd, the city, which played a very important role during WWII. At that time my city was called Stalingrad. Before the city got this name it was Tsaritsin. One can find the similarity with St. Petersburg, which also had different names: Petrograd, Leningrad and then the original name was returned.

I studied in Moscow at the Peoples' Friendship University, and to tell you honestly that was the best period in my life. My specialization was philology and Russian as a second language.

After graduation I worked in Laos where I taught the Russian language for three years. Then I returned to Volgograd and started to work at the Department for Foreign Students of the Pedagogical Institute. I have taught students from several different countries and continents. I was sent to work as an Instructor of Russian in Slovakia where I stayed for two years. And it so happened that I came to USA on an exchange program in August 1991 and still work here at Penn State at the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures (with a year and a half break because of the INS rules).

I have been teaching this course on Russian Culture and Civilization for several years, but this is only the third time it has been offered online. That means that we may still have some problems.

I know that some of you are taking an online course for the first time. So let's work and learn together to make our course interesting and useful. I'll be glad to answer any question you have about Russia.

Udachi! Good luck!

Example 2.12: Weekly Email to Students - From PSY 451, Summer 06

Weekly Email to Students - From PSY 451, Summer 06

Hi, 451'ers. I hope that you're able to enjoy some of the summer weather, in between your 451 tasks and other work/classes! Our family had a nice time at Sesame Place (a Sesame Street theme park in Langhorne, PA) and visiting relatives.

I've had a chance to review last week's discussion, and I'm really impressed, in general, with the thought and tactfulness of most posts and replies. If you have completed your participation in 4 discussions, congrats! If not, keep up the good work! I will grade the group movie assignments in the next couple of days. Nearly every group selected Remember the Titans, so I'll likely grade those first.

As for this week, you get to examine another of the most interesting leadership topics: transformational leadership. It's neat to compare and contrast transformational and transactional leadership, etc. You have less reading this week (although the quiz will still be 20 questions) in part so that you can work on your group's interviewing. I would be happy to review any group's interview questions in advance of the interviews, as long as you give me some lead time. The group project will be here before you know it, so interview your folks ASAP!!!

Also, you have the MLK Letter from Birmingham Jail assignment to work on. Be sure to cite specific portions of the source, apply various concepts related to transformational leadership, and proofread your papers prior to submitting them. I've been happy with the quality of most individual assignments, but these qualities tend to distinguish responses that earn 100% from those that only earn partial credit.

Keep these tips in mind as you look ahead to next week's case - the Personal Experience Paper. I'm sure that you probably have been relating many of the leadership theories/approaches to experiences that you've had personally. This paper will be your opportunity to write up your application of 3 theories/approaches to your own life. The paper is worth 50 points and should be 4-5 pages long, so I'd suggest putting some thought into it this week and then writing it up next week.

That's about it... enjoy your week and let me know if you have any questions,

Dr. L

2.5.3 Voices of Experience

To hear insights from experienced online instructors about preparing for online teaching, access any or all of the following interviews. Please make sure your audio is enabled.

Jonathan Mathews

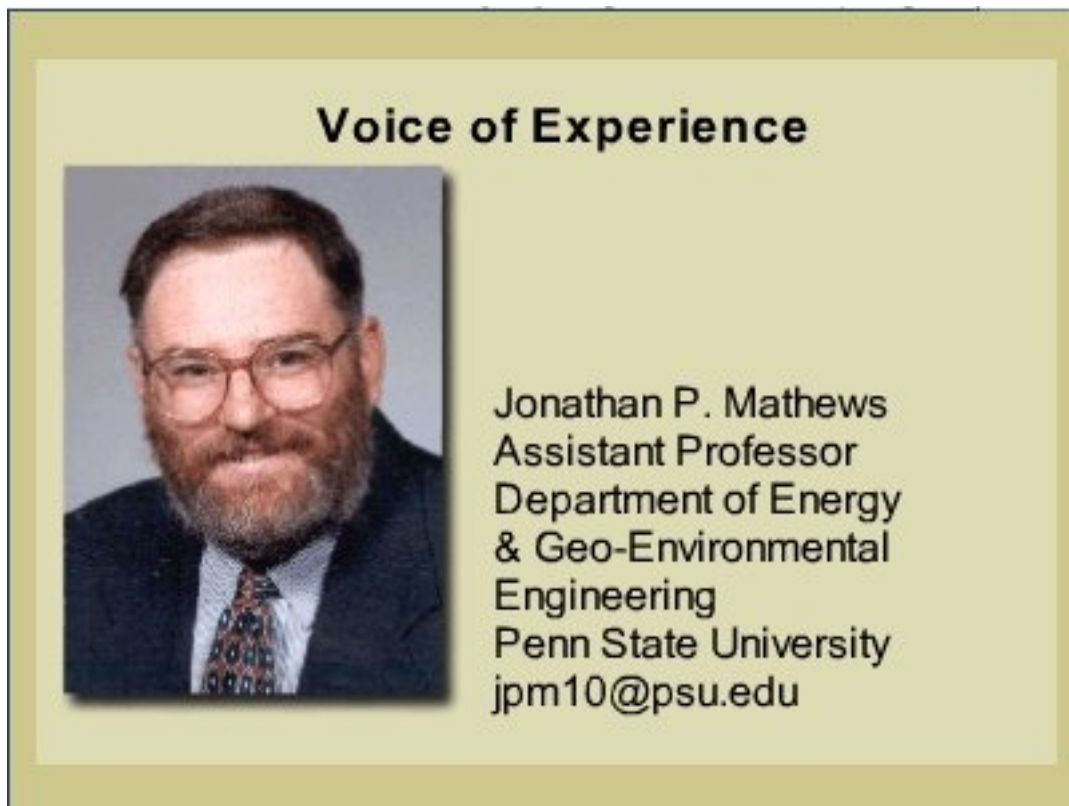


Figure 2.5

Mathews - Background (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m14877/latest/MathewsBackground.mp3>

Figure 2.6

Mathews - Suggestions for New Instructors (mp3)

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<http://cnx.org/content/m14877/latest/MathewsSuggestionsNewnstructors.mp3>

Figure 2.7**Mathews - Managing Expectations (mp3)**

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<http://cnx.org/content/m14877/latest/mmanage.mp3>

Figure 2.8**Alfred Turgeon**

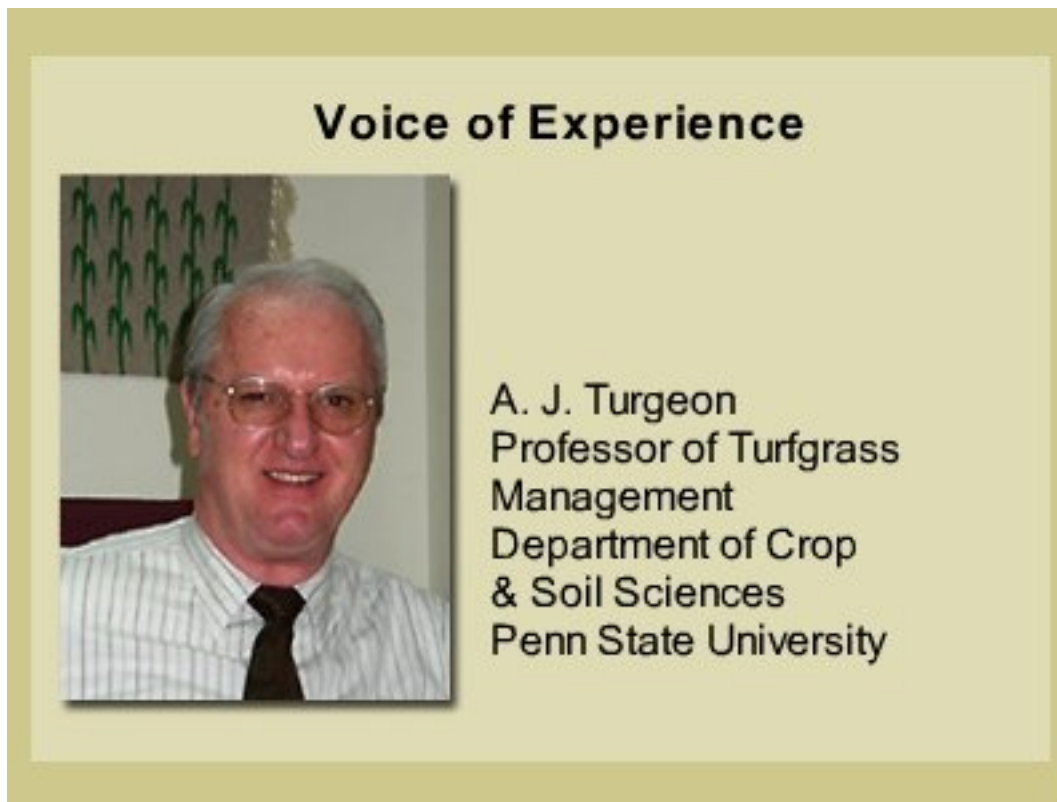


Figure 2.9

Alfred Turgeon - Advice for New Faculty (Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m14877/latest/aadvice.mp3>

Figure 2.10

Alfred Turgeon - Skills Needed for Online Teaching (Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see <http://cnx.org/content/m14877/latest/askills.mp3>

Figure 2.11

2.5.4 Why do it?

"It is always important to remember that in the online environment, we present ourselves in text. Because it is a flat medium, we need to make an extra effort to humanize the environment. In the face-to-face classroom, students have the opportunity to get to know one another as people—before or after class, during classroom discussions, and in other campus locations such as the student lounge. In the online environment, we need to create these opportunities more purposefully" (Palloff & Pratt, 2001, p. 32).

2.5.5 Reference:

Palloff, R.M., & Pratt, K. (2001). **Lessons from the cyberspace classroom: The realities of online teaching**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

2.6 Online Instructor Performance Best Practices and Expectations¹⁹

2.6.1 Introduction

The online learning environment presents a unique set of challenges that require clear definition of instructor performance. The following Instructor Performance Expectations are best practices. They identify the minimum level of interaction and management needed between students and instructors to maintain a quality online learning environment.

SPECIAL NOTE: This version of Performance Best Practices and Expectations have been developed as criteria for instructors in World Campus course offerings. They can also serve as general guidelines for other online instructors.

2.6.1.1 The specific best-practice-based performance expectations include:

1. The World Campus and the students in courses offered via the World Campus rely on instructors to follow the established course schedule and to deliver the course within the scheduled time frame, making schedule adjustments as needed to meet deadlines for graduating students and others with special circumstances.
2. Instructors can help insure a successful learning experience by practicing proactive course management strategies. Instructors are asked to monitor assignment submissions and to communicate and remind students of missed and/or upcoming deadlines.
3. Many of the students studying via the World Campus are adult learners who have work and family responsibilities. At the beginning of each semester, instructors should establish and communicate to students a regular schedule for when they will be logging in to the course—normally once per day,

¹⁹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14878/1.2/>>.

Monday through Friday (although this may vary by course). Since many online students are active in courses on weekends, instructors may wish to include in their schedule time to monitor courses on weekends.

4. Online learners look to the instructor as their main source of course information and progress. If an instructor will be unable to log into the course for more than four business days (e.g., during professional travel), the instructor is asked to give one week's notice to students and to Outreach Student Services. In cases of personal emergency, instructors are asked to notify students and Outreach Student Services as soon as possible if they will be away from the course.
5. Because online learners must manage their time carefully, timely instructor feedback is especially important to them. Instructors are expected to provide feedback to student inquiries within one business day. If the instructor cannot provide a detailed response within one business day, the instructor is asked to respond to the student within one business day to note when a more detailed response will be provided.
6. Feedback on assignments will be most helpful to students when clear and concise language is used to explain the degree to which relevant course outcomes have been met. Even when student questions are vague, instructors are encouraged to stimulate a dialog that will help students understand and communicate their needs.
7. The instructor is asked to grade and submit to students all digitally formatted assignments and exams within two business days of receipt. Proctored exams should be graded and submitted to students or Outreach Student Services (whichever is appropriate) within five business days of the receipt.
8. Penn State University policy dictates that instructors must post the final course grade within two business days of the course end date and/or receipt of the final assignment/exam. **Course grades are to be submitted via eLion, except under special circumstances that will be noted to the instructor.**
9. The use of the ANGEL e-mail tool ensures the security of the class communications and allows for tracking of all interactions. For this reason, the ANGEL e-mail environment is the preferred communication system for all World Campus courses. Other modes of communication between instructors and students (e.g., fax, phone, surface mail) may also be needed in courses.
10. High quality course content is essential for a successful learning experience. For this reason, instructors should notify the World Campus immediately about inaccurate course content, confusing information, broken links, and other course design issues.
11. On occasion staff members from the World Campus find it necessary to contact instructors; because these communications may be of an urgent nature, instructors are expected to respond to e-mail, phone, or FAX communications from the World Campus within one business day and to surface mail communications by the date specified.
12. Faculty teaching in World Campus courses need to have immediate and predicable access to the same technology as is required for student participation. World Campus course design and technology requires access to high-speed Internet access (DSL, cable modem, or satellite). A complete description of World Campus technical requirements can be found at: <https://courses.worldcampus.psu.edu/public/diagnostics/general.shtml>²⁰

2.6.2 Activity

The Instructor Performance Expectations document describes some of the "best practices" for the online instructor. Please select one of the Expectations and provide a brief rationale of why you agree or disagree with the statement. Post your answer to the discussion board for this page.

²⁰<https://courses.worldcampus.psu.edu/public/diagnostics/general.shtml>

Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 2

Solution to Exercise 2.1 (p. 5)

No. Students may enter an online classroom expecting traditional classroom teaching methods; they may lack the level of independence required by online learning; they may demonstrate new personality traits not previously revealed in traditional classrooms (Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

Palloff, R.M., & Pratt, K. (2001). *Lessons from the cyberspace classroom: The realities of online teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Solution to Exercise 2.2 (p. 5)

No. The syllabus for a resident course is good to go when it includes course goals, learning objectives, course materials, assignments due dates, grading, and class policies. However, for an online course, the syllabus may need to include guidelines, tips, relevant policies, and detailed schedules for lessons and assignments, which can help students successfully complete the online course.

Chapter 3

During Teaching

3.1 Introduction¹

3.1.1 Introduction: Know your medium!

Online teaching is an art...just like oil painting, writing, or any other art.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14943/1.5/>>.



Figure 3.1: Artist Karl Leitzel at Work, Photo by Karl Leitzel, Penn State University, World Campus

*Oil paint is a mixture of pigments and certain kinds of oils, such as walnut oil, poppy seed oil, or others. One basic but important rule when applying oil paints is “fat over lean,” which means you should use “oilier” paints for each extra layer to avoid cracking or peeling. Knowing the paint (the medium) helps you to master fine techniques in oil painting. ***

Likewise, when teaching online, one fundamental feature of the medium, the Internet, is that teaching and learning is done at a distance. As a result, many teaching and communication strategies seemingly not necessary in a face-to-face setting will now need to be spelled out to avoid miscommunication or confusion. Therefore, when teaching online, you’ll need to know the characteristics of an online environment and attend to appropriate ways of communicating, interacting, motivating, and supporting your students. These elements in an online environment are certainly differently from those in a traditional face-to-face setting.

In this Section, we present strategic teaching steps:

- Promote Active Learning
- Model Effective Online Interaction
- Monitor Student Progress and Encourage Lagging Students
- Assess Messages in Online Discussion
- Sustain Students’ Motivation
- Provide Feedback and Support

- Encourage Students to Regulate Their Own Learning
- Understand the Impact of Multiculturalism
- Deal with Conflicts Promptly
- Use Evaluation Data

NOTE: ** The information about oil painting is referenced from:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_painting²

Exercise 3.1 *(Solution on p. 56.)*

Is frequent instructor-initiated personal email the most important way to improve students' sense of community and learning experience in general?

Exercise 3.2 *(Solution on p. 56.)*

Would content-directed online courses with less focus on collaboration and discussion affect the quality of learners' learning experience?

Exercise 3.3 *(Solution on p. 56.)*

Many Course Management Systems (CMSs) generate reports about students' log-on activities and progress in the course. Would that be enough for me to assess students' participation in online discussions?

Exercise 3.4 *(Solution on p. 56.)*

Will my participation in online discussion improve student engagement in the course discussions?

3.1.2 Activity

The dynamics of the online classroom can cause a shift in the role of the instructor. How would you characterize the role of the instructor in the online learning environment? List some of the characteristics of this role. How is this role different from the face-to-face environment? If you wish, post your comments to the discussion board for this page. You may wish to reference one or all of the following concepts as you consider the role of the instructor:

- Teacher-centered vs. Learner-centered learning environment
- Sage-on-the-stage vs. Facilitator-on-the-side
- Activity-rich vs. Media-rich online courses
- Online vs. Traditional face-to-face classroom
- New social and learning dynamics

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_painting

3.2 Promote Active Learning³

3.2.1 What to Do?

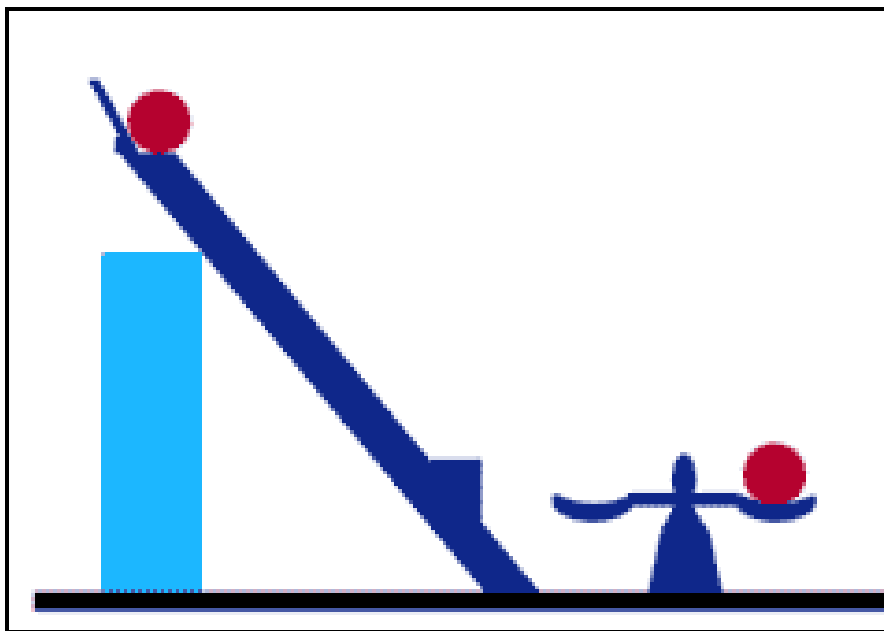


Figure 3.2: Perpetual Motion Machine, Created by Karl Leitzel, Penn State World Campus

Effective online instructors challenge their students' thinking and foster active, constructive participation in learning.

3.2.2 How to Do It?

- Emphasize the importance of learning by playing an active role in the learning process, not from direct instruction or lecture as in a traditional classroom.
- Provide opportunities for the students to critically critique and/or reflect upon certain course topics.
- Encourage your students to use the Internet for researching on course topics; however, remind them to be critical about the information they will share with peers. (For more information, see Intellectual Property Guidelines module (Section 4.3))
- Encourage your students to be proactive in their learning by doing the following:
 - Regularly logging into course site
 - Submitting assignments on time
 - Completing quizzes within required timeframe
 - Reading messages posted and replying within required timeframe
 - Cooperating with teammates, etc.
- Provide opportunities for your students to be actively involved in information seeking and problem solving.

³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14977/1.2/>>.

- Provide opportunities for your students to interact, to collaborate, or to review a peer's work.
- Encourage your students to participate in online discussions actively by:
 - Designing thought-provoking discussion questions: see Crafting Questions for Online Discussions⁴ from ITS
 - Encouraging students to respond to questions at a deeper level
 - Using discussion forums effectively by posting "messages that weave several strands of conversation into a summarization that may prompt people to pursue the topic further" (Berge, 1995)
 - Pointing out "opposing perspectives, different directions, or conflicting opinions" (Berge, 1995)
- Use different discussion formats listed below to cultivate students' critical thinking (MacKnight 2000, p40.):
 - Small group discussions
 - Buzz group: two people discussing for a short period of time
 - Case discussions using real-world problems for analysis and suggested solutions
 - Debating teams wherein students present ideas, defend positions, and argue against opposition's reasoning
 - Jigsaw groups where subgroups discuss various parts of a topic and report to the others
 - Role play mocking real settings
- For more information about facilitating online discussions, please see Ten Tips for Generating Engaged Online Discussions⁵ by Donna Reiss.
- For more information about self-regulated learning components, please go to Encourage Students to Regulate Their Own Learning Module (Section 3.8)

3.2.3 Why Do It?

"It is critical to understand the pedagogical potential of online learning for providing active and dynamic learning opportunities for learners. Faculty can employ strategies and activities that will engage students in 'producing learning' (Barr & Tagg, 1995) for active learning" (Vonderwell & Turner, 2005, p.66).

"Learning occurs in a social context through collaborating, negotiating, debating, peer reviewing, and mentoring; Collaboration requires a level of reflection that promotes knowledge construction and a deep understanding of the subject matter" (Grabinger & Dunlap, 2000).

3.2.4 References

Berge, Z.L. (1995). Facilitating Computer Conferencing: Recommendations From the Field. **Educational Technology**, 35(1), 22-30.

Grabinger, R.S. & Dunlap, J.C. (2000). Rich environments for active learning: A definition. In Squires, D., Conole, G. & Jacobs, G. (Eds.). **The changing face of learning technology (pp.8-38)**. Cardiff, Wales, UK, University of Wales.

MacKnight, C.B. (2000). Teaching critical thinking through online discussions. **EduCause Quarterly**, 4, 38-41

Vonderwell, S. & Turner, S. (2005). Active learning and preservice teachers' experiences in an online course: A case study. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, 13(1), 65-84

⁴http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/online_questions/

⁵<http://www.wordsworth2.net/activelearning/ecacdiscustips.htm>

3.3 Model Effective Online Interaction⁶

3.3.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.3: Photo by Simon Stratford, You Got Mail, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/6444>

Effective online instructors provide a good role model for active participation and interact frequently with their students to create a sense of learning community.

3.3.2 How to Do It?

- Respond to student comments or questions within time frames set at beginning of the course
- If circumstances require you to change the time frame for responses, notify students beforehand and provide new time frames. (Example 1 (Example 3.1: Emails Sent to Class About Changes in Response Time))
- If you will be unavailable for some period during the semester (i.e., traveling), notify students beforehand. (Example 2 (Example 3.2: Travel Delays))
- Provide general feedback to the entire class on specific assignments or discussions. (Example 3 (Example 3.3: Sample Feedback Provided to a Class))
- Provide specific encouragement and comments to students who have completed assignments. (For more information about support, please see Provide Feedback and Support)
- Provide meaningful feedback on graded assignments with recognition of good work as well as specific suggestions for improvement. (Example 4 (Example 3.4: Feedback on Graded Assignments))
- Provide a weekly “wrap up” before the next lesson begins.
- Introduce a new week with an overview (including deadlines) of what is coming up. (Example 5 (Example 3.5: Sample Message Introducing a New Week))

⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15030/1.1/>>.

Example 3.1: Emails Sent to Class About Changes in Response Time

Dear Class,

I have had to unexpectedly leave town for a death in the family. I will be available through e-mail for the next few days, but my e-mail access may be sporadic. I will do my best to be in touch with you as soon as possible. I am still in the process of grading your assignments, and will not have them done by the end of today, as I had hoped. I appreciate your patience and understanding at this time. I am not sure when I will be back in town, but will address any questions/concerns through e-mail.

I am attaching your project assignment to this e-mail. The project is not due until the end of week 8, but some of you have been asking for this information. Now you have it if you want to get a head start on this.

–Bryanne Cordeiro

Example 3.2: Travel Delays**Example 2 - Travel Delays**

Hi Class,

OK, so I'm headed to Pompeii tomorrow, which means that there may be another slight delay in my access to the Internet, but I suspect all will be fine. It turns out that, overall, Italy is just as capable of ANGEL access as the US, so there shouldn't be a problem. But, I wanted to make you aware of the possible situation under which a day or two might pass between now and my next computer time.

I hope this isn't too big of deal, and I again appreciate your patience!

Ciao, Jason

Example 3.3: Sample Feedback Provided to a Class

The stuff a lot of you found on-line for the attitudes discussion is great! Very interesting! You should take some time to check out what everyone else posted if you get the chance. One of your fellow students even found a satisfaction survey on-line. Others found great advice from managers about how to deal with angry employees and customers. Neat stuff!

Amie Skattebo

Example 3.4: Feedback on Graded Assignments**ANGEL email sent to class, ESL 015, Fall 06**

Hi class, Here's my feedback in your work on the summary of Lean's article.

What I was looking at:

1. if you have explicitly and clearly summarized the points as to why numerical grading system is not appropriate. Don't just say it's bad because it's unfair: Lean explained why it is unfair and how it can be detrimental to the students.
2. if you sum up the points as to why descriptive reports on the students might be a better way to replace the numerical grading. You need to include claims and assumptions about why this system would work better. His claim might be "descriptive way works better", but his assumption can be the reasons why that would work better. Let me see, as your reader, why Lean was supporting the descriptive way.
3. how you cited his examples in your own words to support points 1) and 2).

Please review your summary and see if you have stated all of these three points. Again, I would welcome your further revision on your summary.

Thank you. K. Park

Example 3.5: Sample Message Introducing a New Week

Hi, 451'ers. I hope that you are all having a good week!

I just wanted to remind you that this week's case (based on the Hartwick Case on MLK's Letter from Birmingham Jail) is due on Sunday. It is an individual assignment, and so far only one individual has completed it.

Looking ahead to next week, your group will need to complete another movie case by 11:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 9. I suggest that you start determining which movie your group will watch/discuss so that everyone can view it and respond in time. Your movie choices include: Remember the Titans, Apollo 13, and Lord of the Flies.

Plus, keep progressing on your final group project. Be sure to get in touch with your interviewees and conduct your interviews as soon as possible!

Dr. L

3.3.3 Voice of Experience

To hear insights from experienced online instructors about preparing for online teaching, access any or all of the following interviews. Please make sure your audio is enabled.

Jonathan Mathews

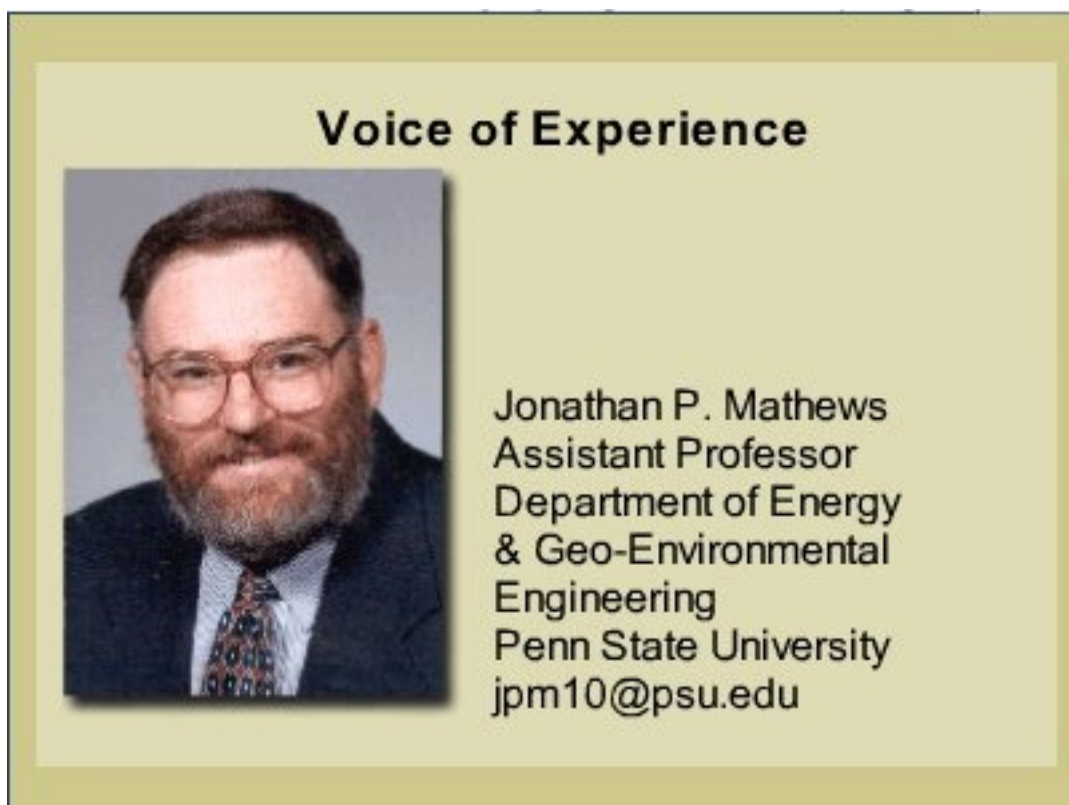


Figure 3.4

Mathews - Suggestions for New Instructors Regarding Online Interactions (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15030/latest/MathewsSuggestionsNewnstructors.mp3>

Figure 3.5

Alfred Turgeon

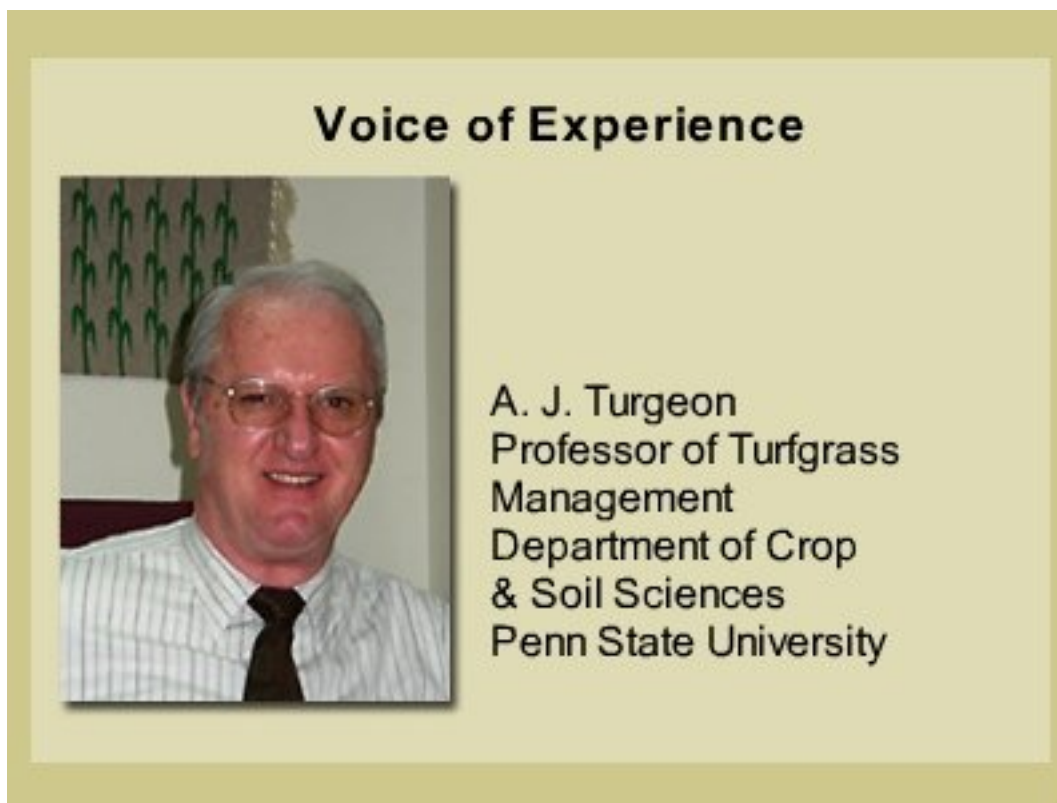


Figure 3.6

Alfred Turgeon - Managing Student Interactions (Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15030/latest/TurgeonStudentInteractions.mp3>

Figure 3.7**3.3.4 Why Do It?**

"Teacher presence online (Anderson et al., 2001; Murphy, Smith & Stacey, 2002) is important in structuring and facilitating an effective online learning experience, and helping to establish an online learning community among the students" (Wilson & Stacey, 2004).

"Reinforcing and modeling good discussant behaviors can be helpful to encourage courtesy and interaction" (Berge, 1995).

"Instructor involvement and engagement in online learning is crucial. Online learning requires instructors to take on active roles in facilitating students' learning. As well as peer support, instructor presence in supporting and guiding students' learning and engagement are important for enabling active learning" (Vonderwell & Turner, 2005, p.82).

3.3.5 References

Berge, Z.L. (1995). Facilitating Computer Conferencing: Recommendations from the Field. **Educational Technology**, **35**(1), 22-30

Vonderwell, S. & Turner, S. (2005). Active learning and preservice teachers' experiences in an online course: A case study. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, **13**(1), 65-84

Wilson, G., Stacey, K (2004). Online interaction impacts on learning: Teaching the teachers to teach online. **Australasian Journal of Educational Technology**, **20**(1), 33-48

3.4 Monitor Student Progress and Encourage Lagging Students⁷

3.4.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.8: Lost, Photo by and used with Permission from Penny Mathews, Photo #576588, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/576588>

While recognizing different student learning styles, instructors monitor student progress, identify lagging students, and help them minimize their procrastination through appropriate monitoring and encouragement.

3.4.2 How to Do It?

- Be aware that students who fall behind are in jeopardy of not completing the course within the same semester of enrollment. This may endanger student financial aid for the following semester, or student reimbursement of tuition if the student is receiving funds from a third party (such as an employer).
- Many Course Management Systems have tools to track student progress in course activities (e.g. the WhoDunIt Agent in ANGEL allows an instructor to track students' progress in course activities).
- Contact students who haven't logged in for over a week to inquire whether they're experiencing technical difficulties or problems with course content, team communications, etc.
- If students cannot participate due to technical problems, connect them immediately to get technical help.
- Contact students who have not completed assignments by email or phone.
- Send a weekly email summarizing course activities as a general reminder to the whole class near the end of the week.
- Introduce a new week with an overview of upcoming events and deadlines. (See Example (Example 3.6: Introducing a New Week))

⁷This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15059/1.1/>>.

- Include flexibility in grading if possible (e.g. Allow students to drop lowest grade; Give choices for when students can complete assignments (e.g. Pick 2 out of 5, etc.)
- Differentiate lurking learners from lagging students.
- For more information related to this section, please see 2.6 Feedback and Support (Section 3.7) module.

Example 3.6: Introducing a New Week

Email sent to class, PSY 451, Spring 06

Hi, 451'ers. I hope that you are all having a good week!

I just wanted to remind you that this week's case (based on the Hartwick Case on MLK's Letter from Birmingham Jail) is due on Sunday. It is an individual assignment, and so far only one individual has completed it.

Looking ahead to next week, your group will need to complete another movie case by 11:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 9. I suggest that you start determining which movie your group will watch/discuss so that everyone can view it and respond in time. Your movie choices include: Remember the Titans, Apollo 13, and Lord of the Flies.

Plus, keep progressing on your final group project. Be sure to get in touch with your interviewees and conduct your interviews as soon as possible!

Dr. L

3.4.3 Why Do It?

Although some students may do better in an online environment than in a face-to-face classroom, we should not expect every student to succeed in an online environment; therefore, instructors should recognize and work with those who are not successful in the online class (Palloff and Pratt, 2001).

Students seem to have more opportunities to procrastinate in online classes than in traditional ones; procrastination may affect students' satisfaction with online courses but not for students in traditional lecture classes (Elvers, Polzella, & Graetz, 2003).

3.4.4 References:

Berge, Z.L. (1995). Facilitating Computer Conferencing: Recommendations from the Field. **Educational Technology**, **35**(1), 22-30

Vonderwell, S. & Turner, S. (2005). Active learning and preservice teachers' experiences in an online course: A case study. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, **13**(1), 65-84

Wilson, G., Stacey, K (2004). Online interaction impacts on learning: Teaching the teachers to teach online. **Australasian Journal of Educational Technology**, **20**(1), 33-48

3.5 Assess Messages in Online Discussions⁸

3.5.1 What to Do?

Assessing students' messages in online discussions encourages their participation and hopefully helps improve the quality of discussion as well. Set specific assessment criteria and make the criteria available to students in the beginning of the course.

⁸This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15035/1.1/>>.

3.5.2 How to Do It?

- Include the assessment criteria for online discussions within one or more locations (See Example (Example 3.7: Example - Referring to Assessment Criterion)):
 - The course syllabus
 - A course announcement prior to the first online discussion task
 - The instructions for the discussion task
- Make sure the assessment criteria measure both the quantity and quality of the online messages.
- When designing a rubric for assessing online discussions, consider assigning some points to encourage posting.
- Make use of sample rubrics from literature:
 - **Edelstein & Edwards' (2002) Assessing Effectiveness of Student Participation in Online Discussions.** This rubric considers five categories that are important for building a learning community: promptness and initiative, delivery of post, relevance of post, expression within the post, and contribution to the learning community.
 - **Garrison's, et al. (2001) Cognitive Processing Categories.** May be useful when assessing the quality of postings: (1) triggering (questioning); (2) exploration (information seeking and sharing), (3) integration (providing solution), and (4) solution (testing solutions)
 - **Kleinman's (2005) Grading Rubric for Online Discussion Participation.** Provides detailed grading criteria.
 - **Dringus & Ellis' (2005) Assessment of Student Progress in Forums**
- For more information about facilitating online discussions, please see Ten Tips for Generating Engaged Online Discussions⁹ by Donna Reiss.

Example 3.7: Example - Referring to Assessment Criterion Message Board Discussions

How it works: * Midnight Sunday through midnight Friday
I will post a question by midnight Sunday. Your tasks are to:

1. Post a thoughtful, unique answer to the instructor's question in 300 words or less (your answer should not be the same as someone who has already posted). You should build an informed response between Sunday night (when the question is posted) and Friday night (when your response is due).
2. You will be graded on the quality of your responses—not quantity. Be thoughtful rather than verbose. Due midnight Friday. Each student will be graded on an individual basis (max score is 10)

The grading criteria used includes:

- Your ability to synthesize different aspects of the posted question, particularly with reference to the articles in the course packet. The more detailed your explanation of specific points from the articles, the better the quality of your response.
- Your skill in posting a response with specific and unique examples that showcase your understanding of the salient points of the posted question, as well as your understanding of different aspects of the course materials (such as course packet articles, lecture notes, and textbook readings).
- Your ability to build a final, thoughtful response based on prior postings. This requires you to respond more than once to the instructor's post. Your final response should be structured around your previous postings, and you will attempt to integrate your different thoughts and opinions.

⁹<http://www.wordsworth2.net/activelearning/ecacdiscustips.htm>

3.5.3 Why Do It?

When instructors grade discussions in an online course, students tend to participate in the discussions actively and thus have higher levels of sense of community (Rovai, 2003). However, too much emphasis on solely quantitative analysis of postings/messages can only result in coerced participation, poor quality of learning and student contributions to the online discussion (Garrison & Anderson, 2003).

Thomas (2002) suggests that three factors account for the lack of “normal discussion” that is necessary for learning to take place: “isolated mode of participation, the structural organization of messages, and the conflict between the written form and oral function of technology-mediated interpersonal communication” (p.362); good facilitation by a tutor or moderator is important to creating coherent online discussions.

3.5.4 References:

Dringus, L.P. & Ellis, T. (2005). Using data mining as a strategy assessing asynchronous discussion forums. **Computers & Education**, **45**, 141-160

Edelstein, S., and Edwards, J. (2002). If you build it, they will come: Building learning communities through threaded discussions. **The Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration**, **5(1)**. Available Online: <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdl/spring51/edelstein51.html>¹⁰

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., and Archer, W. (2001). Critical thinking, cognitive presence, and computer conferencing in distance education. **The American Journal of Distance Education**, **15(1)**, pp 7-23

Garrison, D.R. & Anderson, T. (2003). **E-learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice**. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Kleinman, S. (2005). Strategies for encouraging active learning, interaction, and academic integrity in online courses. **Communication Teacher**, **19(1)**, 13-18

Rovai, A. P. (2003). Strategies for grading online discussions: Effects on discussions and classroom community in Internet-based university courses. **Journal of Computing in Higher Education**, **15(1)**, 89-107.

Thomas, M.J.W. (2002). Learning within incoherent structures: the space of online discussion forums. **Journal of Computer Assisted Learning**, **18**, 351-366

¹⁰<http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdl/spring51/edelstein51.html>

3.6 Sustain Students' Motivation ¹¹

3.6.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.9: Photo Coaches talking strategy, Photo by and Used with Permission of Julie Elliott, Photo #195275, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/195275>

Effective online instructors use appropriate teaching strategies to support, guide, and motivate students to learn actively in the online environment.

3.6.2 How to Do It?

- Provide opportunities for student collaboration and facilitate their collaborative learning processes.
- Provide opportunities for students to collaborate through online collaboration tools such as Breeze¹².
- Choose the right tone of conversation in online communication to make students feel comfortable with the learning environment, to establish trust in communication, and to reduce feelings of isolation and enhance a sense of community
- Provide meaningful feedback on graded assignments with recognition of good work as well as specific suggestions for improvement (See Example (Example 3.8: Feedback to Students) and Provide Feedback and Support Module (Section 3.7))
- Provide a weekly “wrap up” before the next lesson begins
- Take an active role in helping your students think and learn actively through careful task structuring, questioning, and scaffolding.
- In online discussions, consider:

¹¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15040/1.1/>>.

¹²<http://www.adobe.com/products/breeze/>

- Designing thought-provoking questions to elicit student discussions on the topics of your focus: see Crafting Questions for Online Discussions¹³ from Instructional Technology Services at Penn State
- Providing a weekly summary of discussion topics to demonstrate your participation
- Redirecting off-topic discussion through gentle reminders or a recast of the question
- Assessing messages by both quantity and quality (For more information about assessing online messages, please see Assessing Messages in Online Discussion module (Section 3.5))

Example 3.8: Feedback to Students

ANGEL email sent to class, ESL 015, Fall 06

Hi class,

Here's my feedback in your work on the summary of Lean's article.

What I was looking at:

1. if you have explicitly and clearly summarized the points as to why numerical grading system is not appropriate. Don't just say it's bad because it's unfair: Lean explained why it is unfair and how it can be detrimental to the students.
2. if you sum up the points as to why descriptive reports on the students might be a better way to replace the numerical grading. You need to include claims and assumptions about why this system would work better. His claim might be "descriptive way works better", but his assumption can be the reasons why that would work better. Let me see, as your reader, why Lean was supporting the descriptive way.
3. how you cited his examples in your own words to support points 1) and 2).

Please review your summary and see if you have stated all of these three points. Again, I would welcome your further revision on your summary.

Thank you, K. Park

3.6.3 Why Do It?

Instructors use external strategies to support and promote learners' internal motivation to learn effectively (Conrad, Donaldson, 2004, p.8).

The technological tools in a course management system do not necessarily ensure students' learning; therefore, Lao & Gonzales (2005) suggest that faculty of online courses know how to motivate their students in an online environment.

Beaudin's (1999) study about online asynchronous discussions finds the following strategies can help keep asynchronous discussions on topic: carefully-designed questions, guidelines for helping learners prepare responses, rewording questions when necessary, and discussion summaries.

3.6.4 References:

Beaudin, B.P. (1999). Keeping online asynchronous discussions on topic. **Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks**, 3(2), 41-53

Conrad, R.M. & Donaldson, J.A. (2004). **Engaging the online learning: Activities and resources for creative instruction**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lao, T. & Gonzales, C. (2005). Understanding online learning through a qualitative description of professors and students' experiences. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, 13(3), 459-474

¹³http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/online_questions/

3.7 Provide Feedback and Support¹⁴

3.7.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.10: Photo, Guitar lesson at the University of Brasilia., Photo by Henrique Pinheiro, Photo #393670, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/393670>

Effective online instructors provide timely, quality, and appropriate feedback to support and facilitate students' learning process.

3.7.2 How to Do It?

- Encourage students to articulate their confusion or difficulty with course content, projects, requirements, or instructions for activities
- Provide meaningful feedback on graded assignments with recognition of good work as well as specific suggestions for improvement (See Example (Example 3.9: Feedback to Students))
- Respond to students' concerns or technical difficulties quickly and provide contact information of tech support
- Peer assessment can provide additional feedback opportunity while reducing faculty workload (Ko & Rossen, 2004, p.122).
- In online discussions, your students will feel motivated to participate and learn when you:
 - Encourage openness in online discussions or collaborative assignment and allow different opinions to exist
 - Diagnose misconception without delay to avoid further misunderstanding or confusion, but explain with background information
 - Provide timely feedback to comment, confirm, evaluate, or to question
 - Provide additional important resources for further study
 - Use gentle reminders to carry the discussion further or redirect discussions

¹⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15038/1.4/>>.

- Encourage your students to use examples, real cases, or literature to support their views
- See Anderson et. al (2001) Coding Scheme for Facilitating Discussions for more suggestions

Example 3.9: Feedback to Students**Email sent to class, ESL 015, Fall 06**

Hi class,

Here's my feedback in your work on the summary of Lean's article.

What I was looking at:

a) if you have explicitly and clearly summarized the points as to why numerical grading system is not appropriate. Don't just say it's bad because it's unfair: Lean explained why it is unfair and how it can be detrimental to the students.

b) if you sum up the points as to why descriptive reports on the students might be a better way to replace the numerical grading. You need to include claims and assumptions about why this system would work better. His claim might be "descriptive way works better", but his assumption can be the reasons why that would work better. Let me see, as your reader, why Lean was supporting the descriptive way.

c) how you cited his examples in your own words to support points a) and b).

Please review your summary and see if you have stated all of these three points. Again, I would welcome your further revision on your summary.

Thank you. K. Park

3.7.3 Voice of Experience

To hear insights from experienced online instructors about preparing for online teaching, access any or all of the following interviews. Please make sure your audio is enabled.

Alfred Turgeon

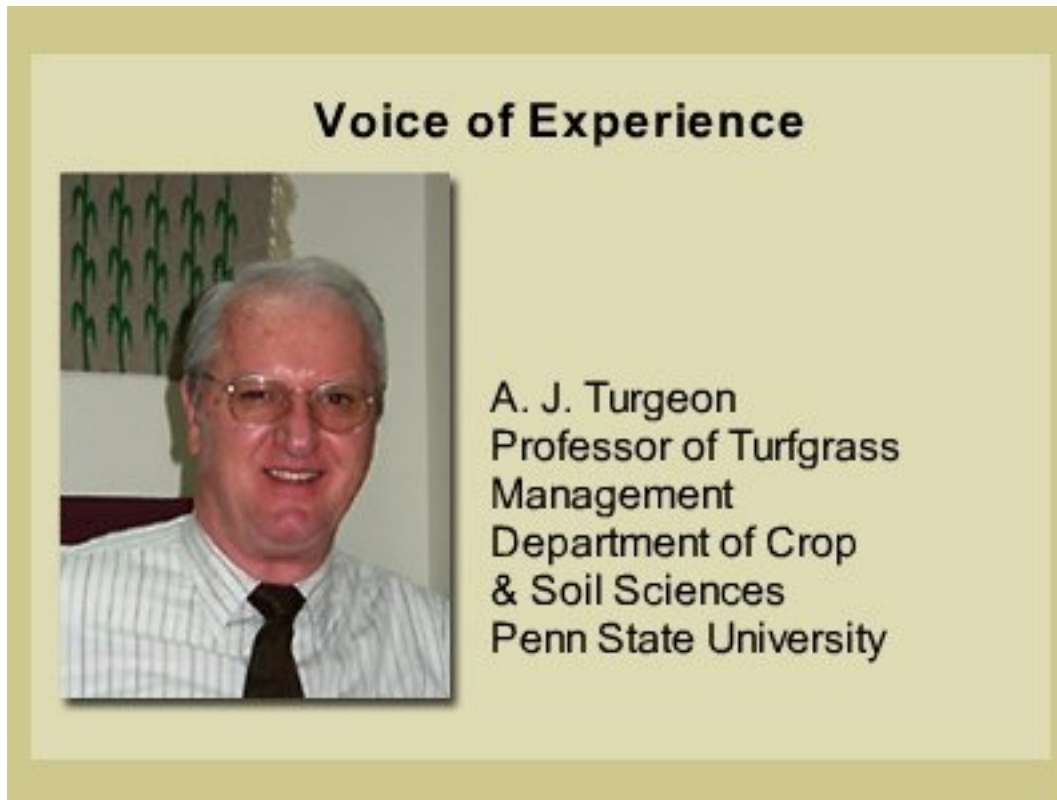


Figure 3.11

Alfred Turgeon - Evolution of Teaching Style(Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15038/latest/TurgeonTeachingStyle.mp3>

Figure 3.12

Alfred Turgeon - Adapting Content to Course Level (Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15038/latest/TurgeonCourseLevel.mp3>

Figure 3.13**3.7.4 Why Do It?**

Anderson, T. et al. (2001) suggests that a common problem in computer conferencing is the difficulty of focusing and refining discussions, which are typically limited to information sharing instead of knowledge construction, application, and integration. Such problems are attributed to the absence of a teaching presence.

Thomas (2002) suggests that three factors account for the lack of “normal discussion” necessary for learning to take place: “isolated mode of participation, the structural organization of messages, and the conflict between the written form and oral function of technology-mediated interpersonal communication” (p.362); good facilitation by a tutor or moderator is important to creating coherent online discussions.

Direct instruction still plays an important role in online learning, but it may take different forms than in traditional face-to-face settings. See Anderson, et al. (2001) for examples (see Anderson, et al. (2001, table page 10):

3.7.5 References:

Anderson, T., Rourke, L., Garrison, D.R., Archer, W. (2001). Assessing teaching presence in a computer conferencing context. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 5(2), 1-17

Ko, S. & Rossen, S. (2004). **Teaching Online: A practical guide**. 2nd Ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Thomas, M.J.W. (2002). Learning within incoherent structures: the space of online discussion forums. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 18, 351-366

3.8 Encourage Students to Regulate Their Own Learning¹⁵

3.8.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.14: Photo, Write 2 by Steve Woods, Photo #840308, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/840308>

Effective online instructors provide support and guidance to encourage students to become self-regulated learners.

3.8.2 How to Do It?

- Encourage students to become “process managers” in the online course by giving up some traditional power role as teachers (Palloff & Pratt, 2001)
- Include an introductory survey with questions on student expectations for the course. (See Example 1) (Example 3.10: Example Student Survey Questions - Student Expectations)
- Direct students to take turns leading/moderating online discussions.
- Demonstrate support for student learning by engaging them to reflect on their online learning experiences.
- Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning as well as their peers’ by completing readings and posting meaningful course-related discussions.

¹⁵This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14970/1.1/>>.

- Ask students to self-assess their learning and progress and to post questions to discussion forums or seek help when necessary.
- Provide an opportunity for peer review.

Example 3.10: Example Student Survey Questions - Student Expectations
Part of "About You" introductory student survey for UKR 100.

9. Are you apprehensive about the class material being online?
 - Yes very much
 - Yes
 - Maybe
 - No
 - Not at all
10. I expect to put in the effort to achieve at least a(n) __ grade.
 - A
 - B
 - C
 - D
11. How much control over the pace of the course would you like?
 - I would like total control
 - I would like some control
 - No opinion
 - I need deadlines to ensure my compliance
 - I would like you (Ms. Shchur) to control my learning
12. How many hours a week do you expect to spend on this class?
 - 1 hour
 - 2 hours
 - 3 hours
 - 4 hours
 - 5 hours
 - 6 hours
 - 7 hours
13. Will you have a part time job during the semester?
 - Yes
 - Don't Know
 - No

3.8.3 Voice of Experience

To hear insights from experienced online instructors about preparing for online teaching, access any or all of the following interviews. Please make sure your audio is enabled.

Alfred Turgeon

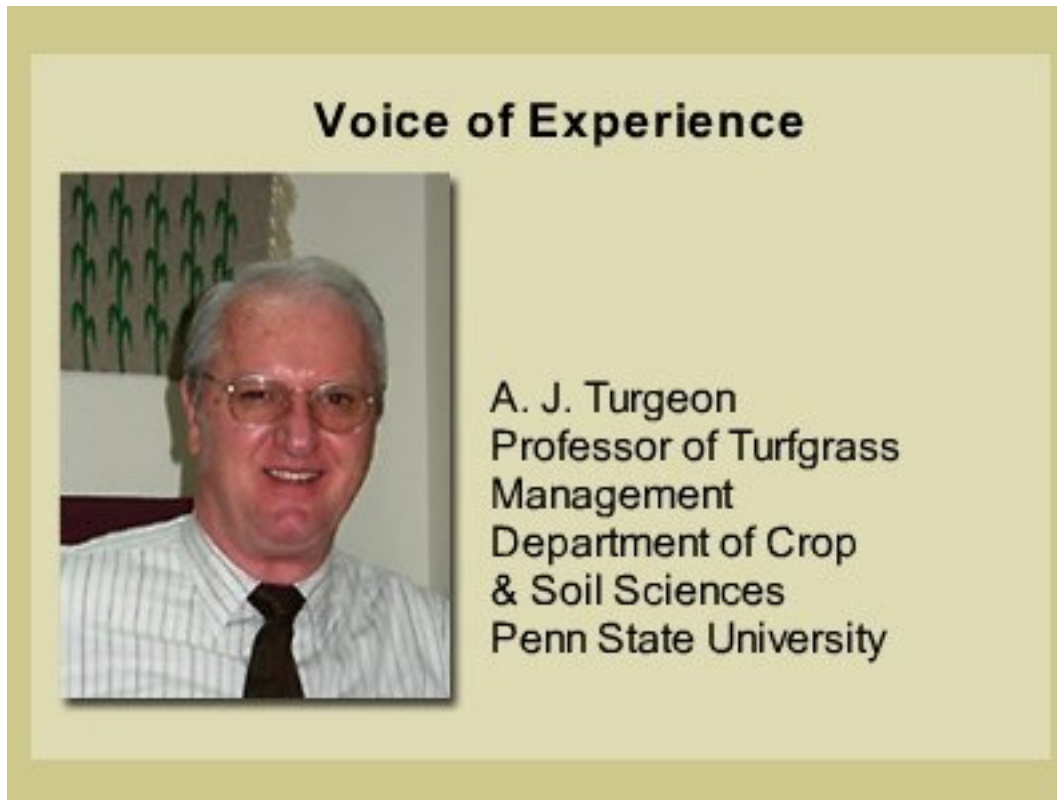


Figure 3.15

Alfred Turgeon - Encouraging Student Involvement (Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m14970/latest/TurgeonStudentInvolvement.mp3>

Figure 3.16

3.8.4 Why Do It?

Online learners should be self-regulated learners, who know how to learn and who actively explore learning strategies and resources (Vonderwell & Turner, 2005).

"Social actions might include instructor empathy, interpersonal outreach (welcoming statements, invitations, and apologies), discussion of one's own online experiences and humor" (Bonk et al., 2001, p. 80).

3.8.5 References

Bonk, C.J., Kirkley, J., Hara, N., & Dennen, V.P. (2001). Finding the instructor in post-secondary online learning: Pedagogical, social, managerial and technological locations. In Stephenson, J. (Ed.), **Teaching and Learning Online: Pedagogies for New Technologies (pp.76-97)**. London: Routledge/Falmer.

Pallott, R.M., & Pratt, K. (2001). **Lessons from the cyberspace classroom: The realities of online teaching**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Vonderwell, S. & Turner, S. (2005). Active learning and preservice teachers' experiences in an online course: A case study. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, **13**(1), 65-84

3.9 Understand the Impact of Multiculturalism¹⁶

3.9.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.17: Figure 1 Graphic, Diversity 5 by B S K, Photo #840316, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/840316>

Cultural inhibitions that we may experience when personally interacting with people are mostly absent in the text-based communication of online education. However, effective online instructors should manage the cultural-based differences in online classrooms, and cultivate cultural sensitivity and awareness in a globalized e-learning system through the appropriate uses of various learning technologies.

3.9.2 How to Do It?

- Use non-discriminatory language and avoid words that may cause adverse reactions.

¹⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15041/1.1/>>.

- Be aware that multiculturalism/cultural diversity does not only exist in nationality or ethnicity, but in other aspects as well, such as generation, religion or political belief, or regions within one country. (See Tapcott's discussion of Characteristics of the Net Generation)
- When teaching topics in social studies, global education, or any learning about the world and its peoples, Merryfield (2003) finds these online teaching strategies useful:
 - Reflect on one's cultural background and experience
 - For difficult, emotional, or controversial topics, use chats or threaded discussions and make the discussion activities optional
 - Provide updated knowledge about the world and its people
 - For topics that you want the whole class to think about, use listserv discussions and do not require length or depth
 - Use threaded discussions to invite extended feedback, suggestions, new resources that help students to improve their posted work
- If possible, mix students from different countries/areas or those with different backgrounds when forming student teams to encourage better cross-cultural exchanges and diverse perspectives (Ko & Rossen, 2004).
- Provide selected high-quality resources for conflicting perspectives.
- Attend to the learning differences (such as motivation or perceptions of interaction and/or team collaboration) demonstrated by students from different cultural backgrounds; provide appropriate supports when you suspect any culture-related factor may have negatively affected your students' online learning experience. (see McGee's discussion of differences between Collective and Individualistic Cultures - http://www.usdla.org/html/journal/MAR02_Issue/article03.html¹⁷ .)
- When necessary, use your teaching assistants as cultural consultants if they share the same cultural backgrounds with some of the students.
- Join professional communities or conferences to experience diverse experiences, backgrounds, and connections to a global society directly.

3.9.3 Why Do It?

The promise of a global e-learning system depends on a better understanding of the impact of cultural differences on students' learning experiences (Moore, Shattuck, & Ai-Harhi, 2006).

"The online discussions are like a veil that protects me and Yang; I feel safe enough to ask the hard questions I could never say to her face – by a social studies teacher in a global education course" (Merryfield, 2003, p.146).

"Closed online environments provide a secure place for people to take risks, share personal experiences, admit to the realities of prejudice and discrimination (a family member's racist acts, a colleague's bias against gays, one's own prejudices) or ask politically incorrect questions ('Why do Asians stick to themselves?' was asked in one online class). When people feel safe and comfortable, they tackle topics that often lead to information that counters stereotypes, ignorance, or misunderstandings. Important learning takes place that often is inhibited in a face-to-face classroom". (Merryfield, 2003).

Hills (2003) suggests that cultural diversity is another source of difference to consider in online learning environment; however, "it is a mistake to assume that cultural diversity is only based on ethnic or national differences. Within any one country, there will be regional differences, differences of upbringing and differences of age" (p.64). And naturally we have stereotypes for each of these different groups.

3.9.4 References:

Hills, H. (2003). **Individual preferences in e-learning**. VT: Gower Publishing Company.

¹⁷http://www.usdla.org/html/journal/MAR02_Issue/article03.html

Ko, S. & Rossen, S. (2004). **Teaching online: A practical guide**. 2nd Ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

McGee, P. (2002). Web-based learning design: Planning for diversity. **USDLA Journal**, 16(3). Available Online: http://www.usdla.org/html/journal/MAR02_Issue/article03.html¹⁸

Merryfield, M. (2003). Like a veil: Cross-cultural experiential learning online. **Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education**, 3(2), 146-171.

Moore, M., Shattuck, K., & Ai-Harhi, A. (2006). Cultures meeting cultures in online distance education. **Journal of E-learning and Knowledge Society**, 2(1).

Taspcott, D. (1999). **The rise of the Net generation: Growing up digital**. New York: McGraw Hill.

3.10 Deal With Conflicts Promptly¹⁹

3.10.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.18: Photo big confusion, by jorge vicente, Photo #406953, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/406953>

Effective online instructors deal with conflicts promptly to minimize student distractions.

3.10.2 How to Do It?

- Provide Netiquette guidelines (See Example 1 (Example 3.11: Example - Netiquette Guidelines))
- Observe but avoid initial involvement early in a conflict; intervene only when the conflicts intensify to allow students to work through the issues on their own (Palloff & Pratt, 2001)
- When a conflict surfaces, welcome it and view it as a sign that a group is developing (Palloff & Pratt, 2001)

¹⁸http://www.usdla.org/html/journal/MAR02_Issue/article03.html

¹⁹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15042/1.2/>>.

- Communicate privately with students who are posting inappropriately
- Include a regular mechanism for peer evaluation for group projects so students can communicate to you the group's functioning (See Example 2 (Example 3.12: Example - Peer Review Evaluation))
- Contact your college or administrative staff when you suspect any student's violation of academic integrity; Make sure not to assign any academic sanctions before going through the formal academic integrity process, so they do not violate the student's due process and University policy
- For serious student problems, contact your college or institution for institutional support

Example 3.11: Example - Netiquette Guidelines

Requirements for Good Discussion Forum Postings

From PSY 231, Summer 06

Requirements for good discussion forum postings:

1. Postings will ideally include your own thoughts and a reaction to what others have already posted (this is called building a thread). This will require you to visit the discussion board more than once to check on what others have contributed.
2. Postings should be a minimum of 1 short (2 or 3 sentences) paragraph and a maximum of 2 longer (6 or more sentences) paragraphs
3. Avoid posting simple statements, such as "I agree" or "great idea." Explain WHY you agree or disagree. For example, is their statement consistent or inconsistent with your experience? How so?
4. Bring in concepts from readings. Include the author and title of the reading as well as a page number if possible. If you quote someone directly, you must include a page number.
5. Address the questions as much as possible; try not to let the discussion stray on a tangent.
6. Use good etiquette (e.g., proper language, etc.). Do not flame. If someone writes something that feels offensive to you, contact the instructor.

Example 3.12: Example - Peer Review Evaluation

Peer Evaluation Survey, PSY 231, Summer 06

Team Performance Appraisal (Using ANGEL survey tool)

Instructions: Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding your team member's performance for this project.

1= Strongly Disagree; 2=Moderately Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Moderately Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

1. Team Member Name:
2. This member of our team completed or helped to complete tasks in a timely manner
3. This team member completed his or her tasks within our project well.
4. This team member was readily available to collaborate with the team.
5. This team member was easy to work with.
6. Overall, this team member performed well on my team.
7. Add any further comments about this team member here:

Questions repeated for each team member.

3.10.3 Why Do It?

Unresolved conflicts may seriously decrease student participation in online courses while reducing faculty's sense of safety; faculty need to feel supported when dealing with course and student issues (Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

3.10.4 Reference:

Pallott, R.M., & Pratt, K. (2001). **Lessons from the cyberspace classroom: The realities of online teaching**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

3.10.5 Activity

Teaching online can also create a unique set of challenges that we may not have to deal with in the face-to-face classroom. Part of being successful online is recognizing and dealing with these frustrating aspects of online teaching. By sharing and discussing these frustrations, we may be able to identify strategies for reducing or even eliminating the issue.

If you are relatively new to online teaching, please describe an area of concern that you may anticipate will cause frustration. For example, “I feel that I will be frustrated that I can’t get to know my students since I cannot not see their smiling faces.”

If you have some experience as an online instructor please describe a frustrating situation or area of concern where you may appreciate additional insights or suggestions. If you have some experience as an online instructor please describe a frustrating situation or area of concern where you may appreciate additional insights or suggestions. If you wish, please post your experience to the discussion board for this page.

3.11 Use Evaluation Data²⁰

3.11.1 What to Do?



Figure 3.19: Survey Results, Photo by sanja gjenero, Photo #783758, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/783758>

Effective online instructors conduct course evaluation during teaching and use the evaluation data to improve their teaching or for future course improvement.

²⁰This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15043/1.1/>>.

3.11.2 How to Do It?

- Set aside a discussion board in the course site soliciting (anonymous) feedback on the course and respond publicly to feedback (See Kleinman (2005) for examples)
- Incorporate student course evaluation data into your teaching
- Encourage and reward students to report substantive errors in the course (Ragan & Terheggen, 2003) (See Example 1 (Example 3.13: Reward Students for Reporting Errors in Course))
- Complete faculty evaluations to provide feedback for future course redesign if there is any (See Example 2 (Example 3.14: Faculty End of Course Survey from the College of Liberal Arts))

Example 3.13: Reward Students for Reporting Errors in Course

Explanation

To ensure that courses are responsive to rapidly changing technologies and applications, challenge students to discover substantive errors, and award a modest (i.e., 10 points out of 500 total) “finder’s fee” to those who discover and report such errors.

Benefits

- Provides students with an incentive to aid in the improvement of course material
- Enhances student self-esteem and sense of appreciation and contribution

Limitations

- Faculty may resist rewarding students for locating errors
- Academic culture may be a barrier
- Strategy may trivialize the learning process and may be inappropriate for upper-level courses
- May create a bias judgment

Rating

- 2 (Faculty rated strategies on a 5 point scale, a rating of 5 is the highest for a strategy with excellent effectiveness)
- Soliciting the help of students in finding course errors and rewarding them for submission of errors reduces faculty workload in course review and updates.

Source: Ragan, L.C. & Terheggen, S.L. (2003). Effective workload management strategies for the online environment. Retrieved July 6, 2006, from Penn State World Campus Web site: http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pdf/fac/workload_strat.pdf²¹

Example 3.14: Faculty End of Course Survey from the College of Liberal Arts

1. How would you rate your overall experience in teaching your online course on a scale of 1 to 7?

1. ___ lowest
2. ___
3. ___
4. ___
5. ___
6. ___
7. ___ highest

2. How well do you think students liked this online version of the course in comparison to a resident version?

- They liked it much better

²¹ http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pdf/fac/workload_strat.pdf

- They liked it somewhat better
 - There was no difference in their satisfaction with the course
 - They liked it somewhat less
 - They liked it much less
3. Overall, how well did students in this course do in comparison to how students do in your resident sections? Why do you think that is?
4. Were there any specific tools or learning activities that you thought were particularly effective in this course? Please describe.
5. Were there any specific tools or learning activities that did not work as well as you had hoped in this course? Please describe.
6. What changes would you like to make to this course for the next offering? Please list in order of priority.
7. Teaching this course took: (don't include time spent developing the course)
- Substantially more time than teaching the same course in residence
 - Somewhat more time than teaching the same course in residence
 - About the same amount of time as teaching the same course in residence
 - Somewhat less time than teaching the same course in residence
 - Substantially less time than teaching the same course in residence
8. How well did the Course Management System perform for this class?
- Constant problems and frustrations
 - Occasional problems
 - Reasonably reliable
 - Worked well, few problems
 - Solid, no problems
9. As much as possible, we'd like to teach online courses without using in-person proctored exams. If your course currently has proctored exams, do you think this change would work for your course?
- Yes, definitely
 - Probably, I'd like to talk about some ideas
 - Not sure, but would like to discuss it
 - Probably not, but we can talk about it
 - Definitely not
 - Not applicable to my course
10. What one piece of advice would you give to a faculty member teaching online for the first time?
11. Would you recommend teaching online to another member of your department? Why or why not?

3.11.3 Voice of Experience

To hear insights from experienced online instructors about preparing for online teaching, access any or all of the following interviews. Please make sure your audio is enabled.

Jonathan Mathews

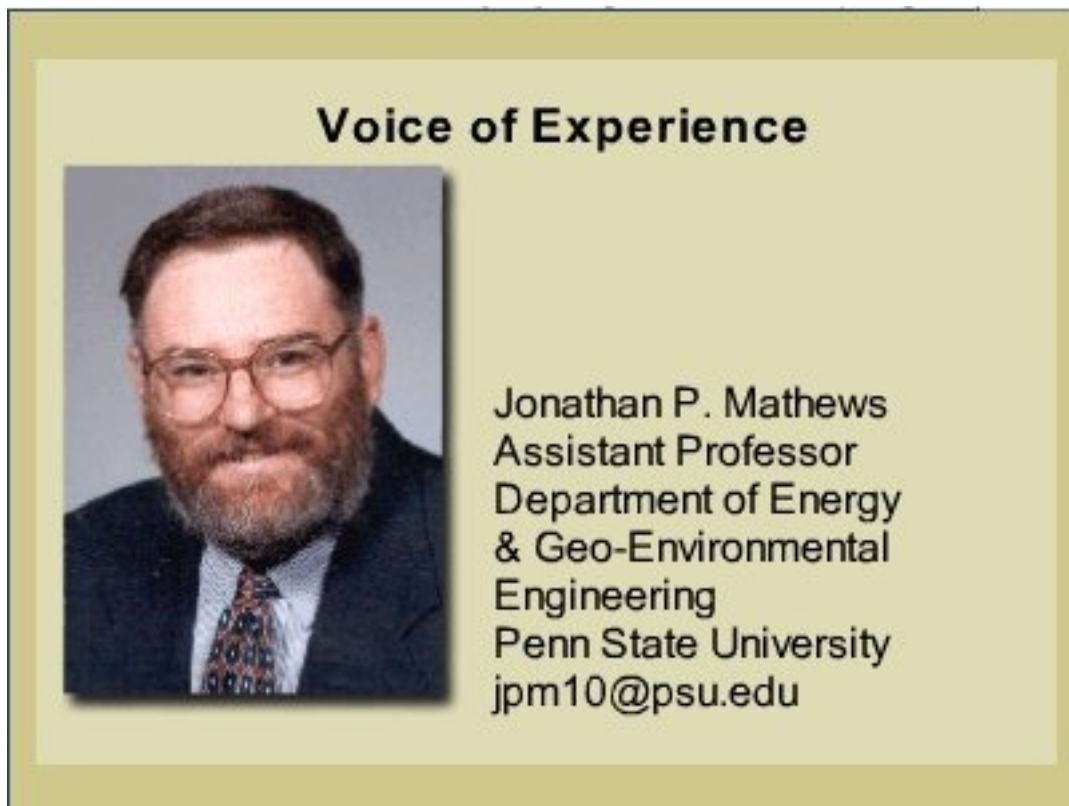


Figure 3.20

Mathews - Stress in Online Teaching (mp3)

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<http://cnx.org/content/m15043/latest/MathewsStress.mp3>

Figure 3.21

Alfred Turgeon

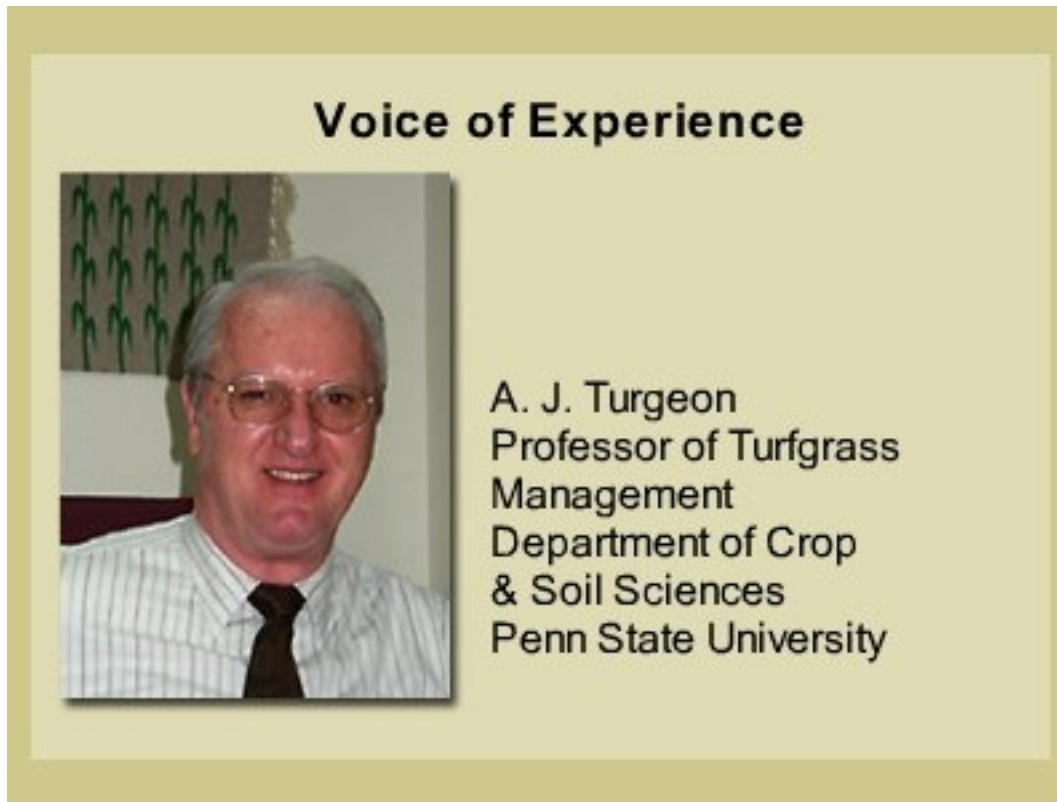


Figure 3.22

Alfred Turgeon - Rewarding Teaching Experiences (Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15043/latest/TurgeonExperience.mp3>

Figure 3.23

Alfred Turgeon - Challenges in Online Teaching (Interviewed by Larry Ragan) (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15043/latest/TurgeonChallenge.mp3>

Figure 3.24

3.11.4 Why Do It?

“Through careful instructional design, support, and guidance from the instructor, along with ongoing feedback from students to the instructor and from the instructor to the students, an online course can evolve into a robust, productive, and enjoyable learning community” (Kleinman, 2005, p.17).

3.11.5 Reference

Kleinman, S. (2005). Strategies for encouraging active learning, interaction, and academic integrity in online courses. **Communication Teacher**, 19(1), 13-18

Ragan, L.C. & Terheggen, S.L. (2003). **Effective workload management strategies for the online environment**. Retrieved July 6, 2006, from Penn State World Campus Web site: http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pdf/fac/workload_strat.pdf²²

3.11.6 Activity

Quality can be a difficult construct to define in the online classroom. What does quality look like to you online course? What might be the characteristics we can measure? How do you know when you see it? If you wish, post your response to the discussion board for this page.

²²http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pdf/fac/workload_strat.pdf

Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 3

Solution to Exercise 3.1 (p. 25)

No. Results from Woods' (2002) research study suggest that frequent delivery of personalized emails did not increase the amount of student participation in required class discussions; the study identified no significant differences between groups in perceived sense of community, satisfaction with learning experience, and personal relationship with the instructor.

Woods, R.H. (2002). How much communication is enough in online courses?—Exploring the relationship between frequency of instructor-initiated personal email and learners' perceptions of and participation in online learning. **International Journal of Instructional Media**, **29(4)**, 377-394

Solution to Exercise 3.2 (p. 25)

Yes. Even though learner-content interaction is described as the “defining characteristic of education” in Moore's (1989) Three Types of Interaction, content-driven online courses based on didactic teaching styles can certainly be frustrating for online learners. Learner interaction, collaboration, and good communication are all important motivators for learners to gain optimal learning experience.

Moore, M.G. (1989). Three types of interaction. **American Journal of Distance Education**, **3(2)**, pp.1-6

Solution to Exercise 3.3 (p. 25)

No. Only assessing the quantity of messages posted online can lead to poor quality of online discussions.

Solution to Exercise 3.4 (p. 25)

Yes. Instructors who participate in online discussions can promote students' deeper involvement by answering questions, providing confirmation, critiques, encouragement, or additional resources.

Chapter 4

Putting It All Together

4.1 Introduction¹

4.1.1 Introduction: Work smart and don't let a small detail ruin your work!

Online teaching is an art... just like oil painting, writing, or any other art.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15044/1.4/>>.



Figure 4.1: Painting by Artist Karl Leitzel, Photo by Karl Leitzel, Penn State University, World Campus

*Now you've nearly finished your painting! You need to be cautious about how to dry it because different oils in the paint have different drying times. Different oils and their different drying times create different effects. One small trick is to avoid drying your painting in the dark because a thin layer of oil floating up may give it a yellowish tint. ***

Similarly, small details in online teaching such as following intellectual property guidelines or handing your workload effectively can certainly affect your experience.

In this series of modules, we include some miscellaneous/administrative tips to make your online teaching effective. These tips are not directly about your teaching but are indispensable to your success.

- Manage Grades and Exams
- Follow Intellectual Property Guidelines
- Manage Time and Workload Effectively
- Communicate with an Expert

NOTE: ** The information about oil painting is referenced from:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_painting²

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_painting

4.1.2

Exercise 4.1

(Solution on p. 74.)

I log into my course three times a week to respond to online discussions and interact with my students. Would that be enough?

4.1.3

Exercise 4.2

(Solution on p. 74.)

During teaching, you may locate items such as articles, handouts, or diagrams for students enrolled in your course. Can I add these materials from outside sources to my course?

4.1.4 Activity

Teaching online can require a lot of time and energy on top of an already full set of activities (like teaching face-to-face classes and managing other dimensions of life). Read the discussion from Lazarus' (2003) case study, and then consider the following three questions (you may wish to put your responses on the discussion board for this page):

Resource: Sloan-C: Lazarus, B.D. (2003). Teaching courses online: How much time does it take? *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 7(3), 47-54 Available Online: http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/jaln/v7n3/v7n3_lazarus.asp³

1. What techniques, tips, or strategies can be used to help manage the online workload?
2. To what extent should an online instructor communicate with students to be effective?
3. How much time should an effective instructor commit to online teaching?

³http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/jaln/v7n3/v7n3_lazarus.asp

4.2 Manage Grades and Exams⁴

4.2.1 What to Do?



Figure 4.2: Photo, spreadsheet 1, photo #541349 , <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/541349>

The grading structure for the online course is established before the course begins. Effective online instructors understand the role of assessment in student learning, and follow the institution's policies and regulations in handling grades and exams.

4.2.2 How to Do It?

- Make sure the exams or other assessment activities are congruent with your course objectives; If possible, try to discuss this with your instructional designer before the course begins.
- Clearly communicate to students the grading policies in your course, either in the course syllabus, announcements, or in the assignment instructions.
- Specify grading policies in your syllabus. (Please see more at Tips for an Effective Syllabus⁵ by TLT⁶)

⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15045/1.2/>>.

⁵<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/syllabus/>

⁶<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/>

- Grade the assignment submissions in a timely fashion, especially those assignments that build on other assignments.
- Include flexibility in grading if possible:
 - Allow students to drop lowest grade
 - Give choices for when students can complete assignments (e.g. Pick 2 out of 5, etc.)
- Provide clear guidelines regarding your timeframe for responding to student questions and assignment grading. (For more information about grading policies and guidelines, please see module - Specify Course Goals, Expectations, and Policies (Section 2.4))
- Be aware that some of your students may need to submit their assignments and exams early to get grades prior to graduation, and this may affect some date availability restrictions that you set on drop boxes or other course components.
- Discuss changes in grading policies or course gradebook with your instructional designer before the course starts.
- Keep grades/exams related communications within the course management system (CMS) space.
- Effectively manage your students' grades by using the gradebook that is part of your course management system (CMS)
- TLT has some tips for managing grades⁷ using the ANGEL CMS. The site includes a sample file with grades, information about importing and exporting, and working with Excel. Even if you don't use ANGEL, this will give you some ideas about how you can use a CMS to manage grades.

4.2.3 Why Do It?

Tallent-Runnels, et al. (2006) suggests that "managing student assignments, providing feedback to students, and assessing students' learning are all key factors in any course, whether face-to-face or online." The research findings summarized in their review have shown that online instructors could have more options in teaching, learning, and assessment through various online learning technologies.

The differences between face-to-face and distance education context "require a refocus and repurposing of classroom-developed assessment and evaluation" (Garrison & Anderson, 2003, p.93).

4.2.4 Reference:

Garrison, D.R. & Anderson, T. (2003). **E-learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice**. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Tallent-Runnels, M., Thomas, J., Lan, W., Cooper, S., Ahern, T., Shaw, S., & Liu, X. (2006). Teaching courses online: A review of the research. **Review of Educational Research**, 76(1), 93-135

4.3 Follow Intellectual Property Guidelines⁸

4.3.1 What to Do?

Effective online instructors understand intellectual property guidelines for teaching online.

4.3.2 How to Do It?

- Follow your institution's Intellectual Property and TEACHAct Policies – (For Examples of policies - see Penn State's Intellectual Property/TEACH Act⁹ policies, list of university copyright policies¹⁰ ,

⁷<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/gradebook/index.html>

⁸This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14976/1.3/>>.

⁹<http://guru.psu.edu/policies/AD20.html#F>

¹⁰<http://www.adec.edu/user/ip-policies.html>

and North Carolina State's TEACH Act Toolkit¹¹).

- Post readings in Electronic Reserves (do not upload directly into the Course Management System).
- Investigate the process of reactivating reserves from previous semesters.
- Link to online readings or text rather than copying them and posting them directly in the Course Management System.
- Use public domain images¹² in course materials.
- Make sure the students follow copyright law when posting materials from other sources to the course Web site or their own Web pages.
- If you need to show your online course publicly, remove student data, such as name, address, major, telephone, email, assignment submissions, or course discussion forum postings to avoid violating students' rights.

4.3.3 Why Do It?

"Because electronic information is volatile and easily reproduced, respect for the work and personal expression of others is especially critical in computer environments" (Penn State Policy Manual).

"The new law offers many improvements over the previous version of Section 110(2), but in order to enjoy its advantages, colleges, universities, and other qualified educational institutions will need to meet the law's rigorous requirements. Educators will not be able to comply by either accidental circumstances or well-meaning intention. Instead, the law calls on each educational institution to undertake numerous procedures and involve the active participation of many individuals" (Crews, 2002).

4.3.4 References:

Penn State Policy Manual. (n.d.) Policy AD20: Computer and Network Security. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from Penn State University, Guru General University Reference Utility Web site: <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/AD20.html#F>¹³

Crews, K.D. (2002). New copyright law for distance education: The meaning and importance of the TEACH Act. Retrieved July 26, 2006, from American Library Association Web site: <http://www.ala.org/ala/washoff/WOissues/copyrightb/distanceed/distanceeducation.htm#newc>¹⁴

¹¹<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/scc/legislative/teachkit/notice.html>

¹²<http://www.csuchico.edu/lcmt/dmb2/imgfreephotos.html>

¹³<http://guru.psu.edu/policies/AD20.html#F>

¹⁴<http://www.ala.org/ala/washoff/WOissues/copyrightb/distanceed/distanceeducation.htm#newc>

4.4 Manage Time and Workload Effectively¹⁵

4.4.1 What to Do?



Figure 4.3: Photo, calendar, by Doru Lupeanu, Photo #543862, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/543862>

Effective online instructors use technology to manage their time and workload.

4.4.2 How to Do It?

- Use the right communication tool for the right task (Ragan & Terheggen, 2003) (See Example 1 (Example 4.1: Strategy: Establish Consistent, Effective Methods of Electronic Communication))
 - Post announcements to reach entire class
 - Use collaboration tools such as Elluminate Live! or Breeze for tasks requiring synchronous discussions and idea sharing in groups
- Use a gradebook to batch upload grades for an assignment, and then modify individuals as appropriate
- Create feedback rubrics to respond to common questions or issues. (Ragan & Terheggen, 2003) (See Example 2 (Example 4.2: Strategy: Create Feedback Rubrics))
- Post a student FAQ
- Establish a routine for regular and planned interaction within the course and with the students. (Ragan & Terheggen, 2003) (See Example 3 (Example 4.3: Strategy: Establish a Routine))
- Establish and notify students of accepted file formats for submitting assignments.
- Establish and notify students of reasonable response times so they know when to expect your answer
- Many Course Management Systems have tools to help you manage group assignments. In ANGEL, the Random Team Generator will allow you to divide students into teams, but make sure to set up groups after the course drop/add period and when the class roster stabilizes.

¹⁵This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15046/1.2/>>.

- Many Course Management Systems have tools to help you manage your course. For example, In ANGEL, the WhoDunIt Agent tool track who has completed assignments. The Learner Profile can be used to grade discussion postings. The What's New Agent can help you track events since you last logged in.
- Use peer assessment to provide an additional feedback opportunity while reducing faculty workload (Ko & Rossen, 2004, p. 122).

Example 4.1: Strategy: Establish Consistent, Effective Methods of Electronic Communication

1. Explanation: The use of public posting areas, discussion forums, and/or e-mail announcements for questions of general interest to the entire class reduces the need for individual e-mail responses to commonly asked questions. Students come to rely on accessing announcements posted in a general format if used consistently.

- Use the right communication tool for the right task. For example, if the question requires a simple announcement, use e-mail. If the question requires discussion between the students and faculty member, use a public discussion board.

2. Benefits

- Helps to build community or group awareness in the course
- Maximizes communication to group (i.e., students feel as though the faculty member is connecting with the course more frequently)
- Channels individual e-mails into group communication
- Models appropriate use of communications tools

3. Limitations

- Requires facilitation skills
- Requires understanding of media attributes
- Requires a balance or filter to determine efficient dissemination of information (don't overload students with information)

4. Ratings

- 3 (Strategies were rated 1-5, 5 being the most effective in reducing workload)
- Establishing effective use of electronic methods of communication reduces the workload generated by individual questions of a similar nature. Establishing effective communications models requires appropriate use of tools and eliminates redundant communications between participants.

Source - Ragan and Terheggen (2003)

Example 4.2: Strategy: Create Feedback Rubrics

1. Explanation: Feedback rubrics (formatted explanations or outlines) can be created during course development and they can be added during the

- Rubrics can cover administrative and orientation information
- Rubrics in the form of e-mail templates can direct students to appropriate resources (tech support, orientation tutorial, etc.)
- Feedback rubrics can be personalized for each use
- Rubrics can be used in the compilation of a Frequently Asked Questions archive from which to cut and paste responses to students

2. Benefits

- Rubrics save time, since they can be reused and shared between faculty
- Rubrics support consistency across groups of students
- Rubrics help in revision process as each element is discrete
- Rubrics can streamline various tasks (administration, facilitation, assessment, evaluation)
- Rubrics are especially useful for larger groups of students

3. Limitations

- Requires time in development but can also be constructed on an ongoing basis
- Relies on an understanding of content and student expectations
- Could discourage changes to content
- Database archiving or reuse between faculty may dilute individual customization
- May not be as effective with higher level courses requiring individual feedback and reflection
- Developing effective feedback rubrics depends upon the experience of the instructor
- Responses may seem impersonal if not carefully worded

4. Rating

- 4 (Strategies were rated 1-5, 5 being the most effective in reducing workload)
- Creating feedback rubrics requires time during the authoring process but saves faculty time during implementation, especially in the long term. This strategy has additional learning quality benefits, such as consistent feedback across students, clear expectations provided to students before assignments are due, and higher quality student output because students fully understand the assignment criteria beforehand.

Source - Ragan and Terheggen (2003)

Example 4.3: Strategy: Establish a Routine

1. Explanation: Establishing a routine for regular and planned interaction within the online course and with students helps faculty to remain in control of their workloads. Specifically, shorter but more frequent course interactions prevent an overwhelming backlog of activity. Faculty should attempt to conduct work that requires concentration (e.g., feedback on assessed activities) at times when they are at their performance peak. Using the full capabilities of the learning management system can assist in many of the tasks required to operate the online course.

2. Benefits

- Ability to make your own schedule and streamline personal effectiveness
- Easier to manage workload
- Physically healthier (i.e., ergonomics)
- Eliminates overwhelming backlog of activity
- Builds student confidence

3. Limitations

- Requires commitment and discipline
- Requires good time management

4. Rating

- 4 (Strategies were rated 1-5, 5 being the most effective in reducing workload)
- Establishing a routine regarding time and location assists in the management of the online workload and builds student confidence in the instructor.

Source - Ragan and Terheggen (2003)

4.4.3 Voice of Experience

To hear insights from experienced online instructors about preparing for online teaching, access any or all of the following interviews. Please make sure your audio is enabled.

Jonathan Mathews

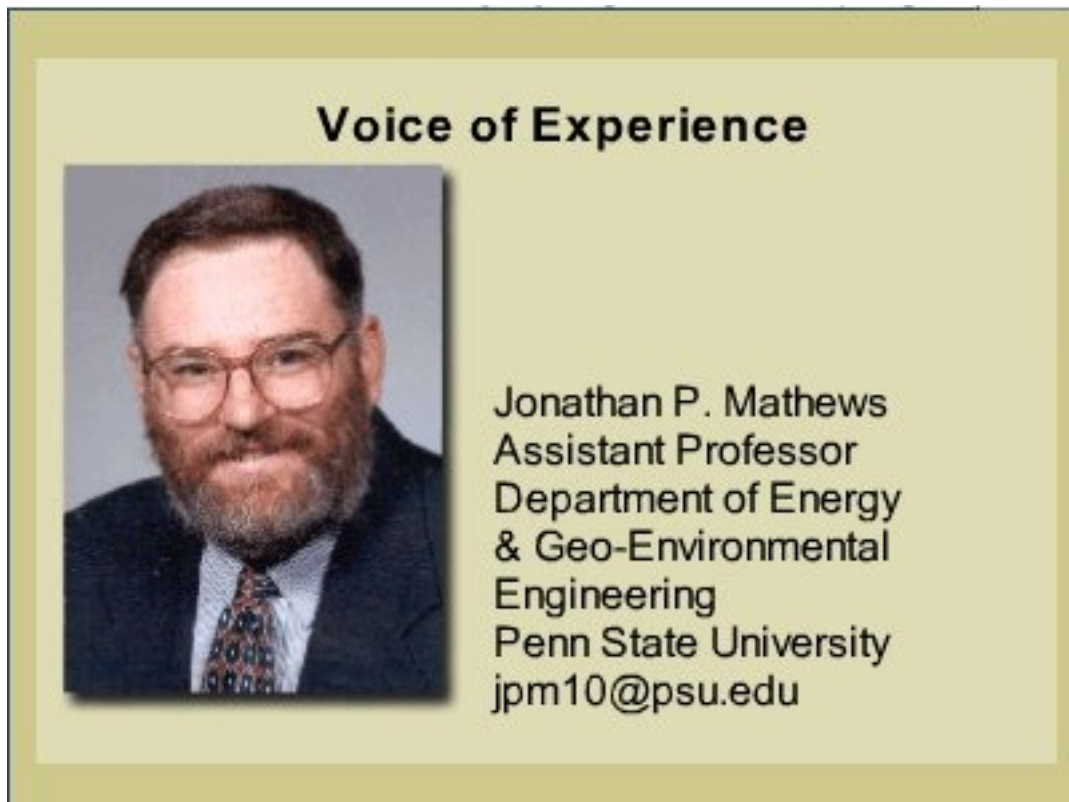


Figure 4.4

Mathews - Success Stories for Managing Online Workload (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15046/latest/MathewsSuccess.mp3>

Figure 4.5

Mathews - Managing Online Workload (mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15046/latest/MathewsWorkloadManagement.mp3>

Figure 4.6

4.4.4 Why Do It?

"Faculty workload remains a central concern. Several studies show that temporal factors like workload and lack of release time inhibit faculty participation in developing and teaching online courses, and instructors often express concerns regarding the amount of time needed to teach online courses" (Lazarus, 2003, p. 48).

"The use of public posting areas, discussion forums, and/or e-mail announcements for questions of general interest to the entire class reduces the need for individual e-mail responses to commonly asked questions. Students come to rely on accessing announcements posted in a general format if used consistently" (Ragan & Terheggen, 2003, p.27)

4.4.5 References:

Ko, S. & Rossen, S. (2004). **Teaching Online: A practical guide**. 2nd Ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company

Lazarus, B.D. (2003). Teaching courses online: How much time does it take? **Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks**, 7(3), 47-54

Ragan, L.C. & Terheggen, S.L. (2003). **Effective workload management strategies for the online environment**. Retrieved July 6, 2006, from Penn State World Campus Web site: http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pdf/fac/workload_strat.pdf¹⁶

¹⁶http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pdf/fac/workload_strat.pdf

4.5 Participate in an Online Teaching Community¹⁷

4.5.1 What to Do?



Figure 4.7: Photo: chairs and coffee by Muriel Miralles de Sawicki, Photo #732128, <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/732128>

Instructors may communicate with an external “expert,” someone who is familiar with online technology and pedagogy, to solicit advice, understanding, as well as psychological support, and to understand the changing concept of “quality teaching.”

4.5.2 How to Do It?

- Communicate with a colleague who has experience with or is teaching online to talk about the related challenges, successes, or other issues.
- Join a listserv or sign up for newsletters discussing teaching online.
- Participate in training courses, workshops, or seminars about teaching online.
- Talk with an instructional designer for teaching strategies/ideas
- Consult individually with instructional design staff at your institution
- Investigate institutional support provided by the college or online program.

4.5.3 Why Do It?

Faculty may not want to teach future online courses if adequate technical support was lacking in their first online teaching experience (Lao & Gonzales, 2005).

Koehler, Mishra, Hershey, & Peruski (2004) suggest that traditional workshops, tutorials, and technical support groups are over-simplified approaches to dealing with the complex relationships between content,

¹⁷This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15047/1.2/>>.

technology, and pedagogy. Their study proposes the use of design team approach and considers content, technology, and pedagogy as dependent on one another.

Faculty who teach online courses need to feel supported when dealing with course and student issues (Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

4.5.4 References:

Koehler, M.J., Mishra, P., Hershey, K., & Peruski, L. (2004). With a little help from your students: A new model for faculty development and online course design. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, **12**(1), 25-55

Lao, T. & Gonzales, C. (2005). Understanding online learning through a qualitative description of professors and students' experiences. **Journal of Technology and Teacher Education**, **13**(3), 459-474

Pallott, R.M., & Pratt, K. (2001). **Lessons from the cyberspace classroom: The realities of online teaching**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

4.6 Teaching Blended Learning Courses¹⁸

4.6.1 Introduction

This section about Blended Learning is available for faculty who will be teaching or designing blended learning courses. There are four topics covered in this section:

- What is blended learning? What are the formats?
- Why is blended learning growing?
- Teaching in a blended learning format: What to be aware of?
- Recommendations for Making the Most of Your Blended Course (Including Voice of Experience—Interview of Andrew Wiesner)

4.6.2 What is Blended Learning?

Blended Learning is an approach to course design that brings together the best of both face-to-face and online strategies. This combination aims to build from each approach to create an innovative and effective learning experience for students.

The notion behind a blended approach is the planned integration of online and face-to-face instructional approaches in a way that maximizes the positive features of each respective delivery mode. For example, online materials can provide students with flexibility and a way to access engaging multimedia content. However, one of the often-heard criticisms of online courses is that some may find them isolating or lacking in interpersonal contact. In the case of a blended learning course that contact could be provided in the form of face-to-face class sessions.

4.6.3 Blended Learning Formats

One of the initial questions that arise when first considering teaching in a blended format is what the exact make-up of the course should be; in other words, how much time should be spend in each of the two modes of instruction. The short answer is that there is not a single “right” ratio of face-to-face and online time. Each course is a unique case.

Blended courses show enormous variety in how the face-to-face ratio to online time is distributed. For example, some instructors might choose to replace one class per week with online assignments. Others might meet with their students in class for several weeks and then suspended class meetings for several weeks as the students worked independently or in teams on online assignments. What’s right for your course will

¹⁸This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m15048/1.2/>>.

be a decision you'll make after considering your course objectives, and weighing the benefits of each of the instructional modalities for reaching those objectives.

The courses described above, which move some instruction online and have a resulting reduction in the amount of time spent in a face to face classroom setting, follow the "replacement" model: the time previously spent in class has been shifted to online instructional time. It is possible to add online content to a face-to-face course without replacing any classroom time. Consider a situation in which a math instructor provides online practice problems to students, allowing them to work on problems at their convenience. This example could be seen as a "web-enhanced" course, because the online materials are supplemental to the face-to-face instruction. For the most part, blended learning courses aim to replace face-to-face time.

4.6.4 The Growth of Blended Learning

The blended approach to instruction has seen a steady increase in the past years, and survey data indicates that administrators in higher education expect that trend to continue. According to the Handbook of Blended Learning, a majority of respondents in a 2006 survey expect a dramatic rise in the use of blended learning as an instructional format, eventually encompassing 40% of course offerings within the next 6 years.

Research from the University of Central Florida has indicated that faculty and student satisfaction with BL is high, and that the majority of both students and instructors would be willing to participate in future blended courses based on their past experiences with the format.

4.6.5 The Appeal of Blended Learning

Why has a blended approach been welcomed by faculty and students?

From a pedagogical perspective, blended learning's aim to join the best of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with the best of online learning experiences allows for:

- An increase in learning outcome measures and lowering of attrition rates vs. fully online courses (Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal, 2004).
- An opportunity for students to practice technology skills in navigating online course materials and possibility creating digital content for assignments.
- An increase in student-instructor and student-student interaction through the use of course communication tools like discussion forums.
- The ability to reserve face-to-face time for interactive activities, such as higher-level discussions, small group work, debates, demonstrations, or lab activities.

From a student perspective, the appeal of blended learning includes:

- Flexibility of schedule: learn any-time, anywhere.
- Control: students have some level of control over the pacing of their learning. Difficult concepts can be reviewed as often as necessary.
- Convenience of an online class with many of the social aspects of a face-to-face class.

4.6.6 Teaching in a blended learning format: What to be aware of?

When choosing to explore blended learning as a course format, there are several dimensions to course planning and development that should be considered:

4.6.6.1 Technology

Just like online courses, hybrid/blended courses are dependent on several technologies to function. These can include:

- learning management systems

- digital libraries
- mobile technologies
- streaming audio and/or video media
- reusable learning objects and materials

4.6.6.2 Integration

Online materials are central to a blended course's success, and the students' work online must be relevant to the in-class activities. Aycock, Garnham, & Kaleta (2002) at the University of Wisconsin's blended learning effort revealed the importance of integration:

"The project's participants emphasized this point repeatedly. When asked, 'What would I do differently?' they were united in their response: 'I'd devote more attention to integrating what was going on in the classroom with the online work.' This was true even though the project's faculty development sessions repeatedly emphasized the importance of connecting in-class material with out-of-class assignments. One instructor responded emphatically, 'Integrate online with face-to-face, so there aren't two separate courses.' We found it impossible to stress integrating face-to-face and online learning too much."

Students can be critical of blended instruction if they felt the face-to-face and time-out-of-class components of the course were not well integrated.

4.6.6.3 Organization

For the most part, the blended format will be new to students, and they will benefit greatly from a clear rationale for its use. Instructors may need to explain the model and why it was chosen. A carefully constructed syllabus can provide much of the information about course structure for students; information like when and where the face-to-face meetings will be held, when and how assignments should be submitted, and what exactly will occur during the class meeting times are all critical aspects of the course that may not be obvious to those students new to blended learning.

4.6.6.4 Interaction

Research indicates that student satisfaction with the blended format is highly dependant on the level of interaction with instructors and other students. Instructors can address interaction issues by providing time during the face to face sessions for discussion, in addition to using available inline discussion tools such as ANGEL discussion forums.

4.6.6.5 Student Expectations

Blended learning students require a greater ability to regulate their work and manage their own time. This is because they have fewer in-class meetings, and thus may not realize that they are falling behind in the course. Many blended instructors report significant problems with students not taking responsibility for their courses and with students' poor time management skills.

In addition, some instructors have found that students occasionally assume that online and blended courses are inherently "easier" than traditional face-to-face courses. This can create problems when the rigors of the course surpass the expectations of some students. Again, a well-constructed syllabus can provide the essential details on what exactly is expected of students, thereby mitigating possible confusion on the part of students.

4.6.7 Recommendations for Making the Most of Your Blended Course

Over the past several years, faculty members at Penn State have been developing and teaching blended format courses in various colleges and departments. Below is a list of recommendations based on their experiences, using data collected from interviews and conversations with many of those faculty. These recommendations can be used as a guide for how to maximize the chances for a successful blended course:

- At a minimum, blended instructors should allow six months lead time for course development; one year is preferred. Several instructors voiced an opinion that the need for integration and organization necessitates a full course redesign; creating a blended course is not as simple as placing presentation slides or notes online.
- Mastering the technology necessary to administer the course can be a challenge, and instructors should set aside time to learn the requisite tools. Posting content to the course web site, creating discussion forums, and managing student grade books are examples of skills that might be useful to practice.
- Hold an initial face-to-face kick-off meeting. This first meeting can serve many roles, including a general orientation to the format of the course, a review of technology requirements, and an opportunity for the students to socialize and get to know their peers and their instructor.
- Make students aware of what a blended course entails. For many students, the blended format is a novelty. Use course documents like the syllabus or the class schedule to help guide students. Rely on course communication tools like email announcements to make sure that the students know what's coming up next.
- Provide information on time management skills. Because of the self-pacing elements of a blended course, students may benefit from improving their skills in managing their work and schedules. The University Learning Centers can direct students to resources. In addition, Penn State has developed an iStudy online module that contains information on improving time management: <http://istudy.psu.edu/FirstYearModules/Time/TimeManagementLesson.htm>¹⁹
- Be sure that the face-to-face class meetings are integrated into the course, and hold value to the educational experience that connects with the online coursework. Students may become frustrated if they feel that the face-to-face sessions are simply thrown into the course, with no thought given to the role that the classroom time plays within the course.

4.6.7.1 What are some examples of recommended uses for face-to-face meeting times?

- Intro/technology overview
- Collaborative small-group work
- Advanced discussions
- Project presentations
- Guest speakers
- Q&A sessions
- Demonstrations
- Lab work

4.6.8 Voice of Experience

To hear insights from an experienced online instructor about preparing for online teaching, access the following interview. Please make sure your audio is enabled.

Andrew Wiesner

¹⁹<http://istudy.psu.edu/FirstYearModules/Time/TimeManagementLesson.htm>

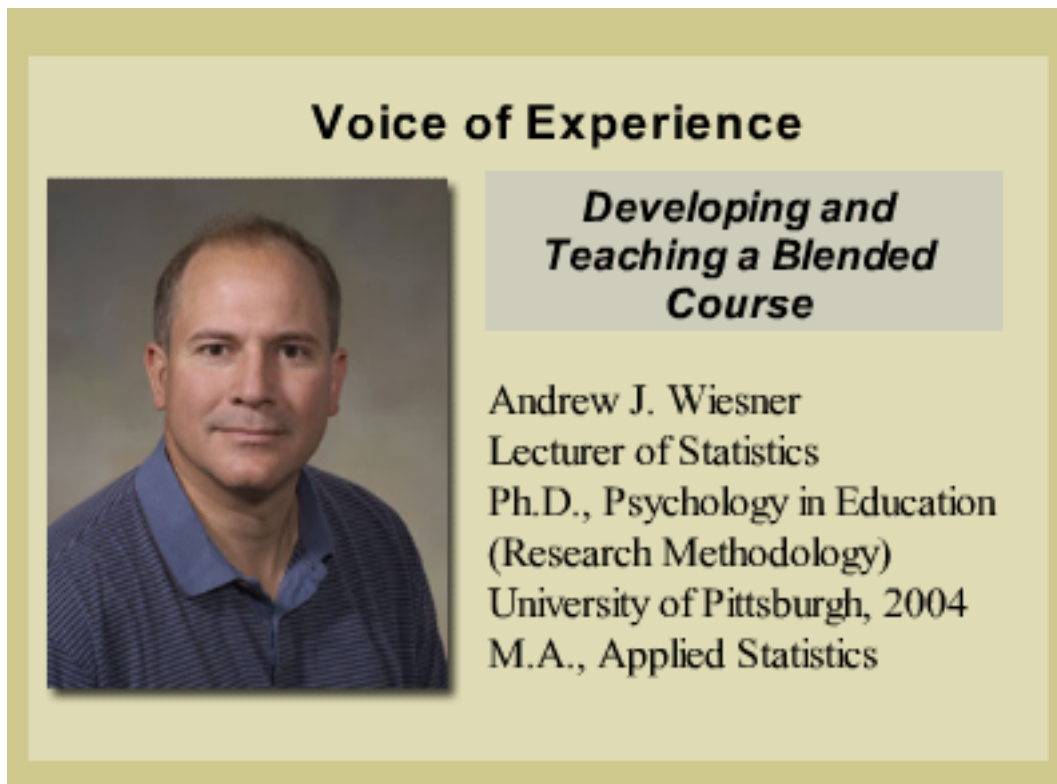


Figure 4.8

Andrew Wiesner - Developing and Teaching a Blended Course (Interviewed by Gary Chinn)
(mp3)

This is an unsupported media type. To view, please see
<http://cnx.org/content/m15048/latest/WiesnerBlendedLearning.mp3>

Figure 4.9

4.6.9 References

Aycock, A., Garnham, C., & Kaleta, R. (2002). Lessons learned from the hybrid course project. Teaching Scholars Forum, 8(6). <http://www.uwsa.edu/ttt/articles/garnham2.htm>²⁰

Dziuban, C. D., Hartman, J. L., & Moskal, P. D. (2004). Blended learning. Educause Center for Applied Research, Research Bulletin, 7. <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERB0407.pdf>²¹

²⁰<http://www.uwsa.edu/ttt/articles/garnham2.htm>

²¹<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERB0407.pdf>

Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 4

Solution to Exercise 4.1 (p. 59)

It depends. You should log-in to your course every day, if possible. This does not mean you must spend a lot of time or post a lot of messages. It does mean that if someone has a question or needs urgent help for a problem, you can respond within 24 hours. Also, the number of messages to read each session is much more manageable if done frequently. Plan on answering all outstanding questions each session. The most important thing is to communicate upfront to your students on how often you plan to log-in; they'll then know what to expect.

If you need to deviate from your plan, let students know in advance by dropping the class an email note or posting a message to your discussion forum.

Solution to Exercise 4.2 (p. 59)

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- B** Best Practices in Online Teaching Course,
 § 1.1(1), § 2.1(3), § 2.2(5), § 2.3(7), § 2.4(10),
 § 2.5(14), § 2.6(20), § 3.1(23), § 3.2(26),
 § 3.3(28), § 3.4(33), § 3.5(34), § 3.6(37),
 § 3.7(39), § 3.8(43), § 3.9(46), § 3.10(48),
 § 3.11(50), § 4.1(57), § 4.2(60), § 4.3(61),
 § 4.4(63), § 4.5(68), § 4.6(69)
 blended learning, § 1.1(1), § 2.1(3), § 2.2(5),
 § 2.3(7), § 2.4(10), § 2.5(14), § 2.6(20),
 § 3.1(23), § 3.2(26), § 3.3(28), § 3.4(33),
 § 3.5(34), § 3.6(37), § 3.7(39), § 3.8(43),
 § 3.9(46), § 3.10(48), § 3.11(50), § 4.1(57),
 § 4.2(60), § 4.3(61), § 4.4(63), § 4.5(68),
 § 4.6(69)
- D** distance education, § 1.1(1), § 2.1(3), § 2.2(5),
 § 2.3(7), § 2.4(10), § 2.5(14), § 2.6(20),
 § 3.1(23), § 3.2(26), § 3.3(28), § 3.4(33),
 § 3.5(34), § 3.6(37), § 3.7(39), § 3.8(43),
 § 3.9(46), § 3.10(48), § 3.11(50), § 4.1(57),
 § 4.2(60), § 4.3(61), § 4.4(63), § 4.5(68),
 § 4.6(69)
- I** instructional design, § 1.1(1), § 2.1(3),
 § 2.2(5), § 2.3(7), § 2.4(10), § 2.5(14),
 § 2.6(20), § 3.1(23), § 3.2(26), § 3.3(28),
 § 3.4(33), § 3.5(34), § 3.6(37), § 3.7(39),
 § 3.8(43), § 3.9(46), § 3.10(48), § 3.11(50),
 § 4.1(57), § 4.2(60), § 4.3(61), § 4.4(63),
 § 4.5(68), § 4.6(69)
- O** online learning, § 1.1(1), § 2.1(3), § 2.2(5),
 § 2.3(7), § 2.4(10), § 2.5(14), § 2.6(20),
 § 3.1(23), § 3.2(26), § 3.3(28), § 3.4(33),
 § 3.5(34), § 3.6(37), § 3.7(39), § 3.8(43),
 § 3.9(46), § 3.10(48), § 3.11(50), § 4.1(57),
 § 4.2(60), § 4.3(61), § 4.4(63), § 4.5(68),
 § 4.6(69)
 online pedagogy, § 1.1(1), § 2.1(3), § 2.2(5),
 § 2.3(7), § 2.4(10), § 2.5(14), § 2.6(20),
 § 3.1(23), § 3.2(26), § 3.3(28), § 3.4(33),
 § 3.5(34), § 3.6(37), § 3.7(39), § 3.8(43),
 § 3.9(46), § 3.10(48), § 3.11(50), § 4.1(57),
 § 4.2(60), § 4.3(61), § 4.4(63), § 4.5(68),
 § 4.6(69)
 online teaching, § 1.1(1), § 2.1(3), § 2.2(5),
 § 2.3(7), § 2.4(10), § 2.5(14), § 2.6(20),
 § 3.1(23), § 3.2(26), § 3.3(28), § 3.4(33),
 § 3.5(34), § 3.6(37), § 3.7(39), § 3.8(43),
 § 3.9(46), § 3.10(48), § 3.11(50), § 4.1(57),
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This course provides practical strategies and pedagogical advice for instructors teaching in an online environment. The course includes advice about: preparing to teach in an online environment, managing the teaching of a course, and addressing larger issues surrounding online teaching (e.g. workload, intellectual property, etc.) The course includes interviews from a number of teachers who have taught in an online environment. This course is based on a training session offered to faculty who teach at The World Campus at Penn State University.

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