

EDE 484

Online Teaching and Learning

Fall 2014

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Instructors' Contact Information and Availability

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Class meeting time: Thursdays, 4:50-7:30 pm (NOTE: several of these class meetings will be substituted with a synchronous online session or asynchronous online work – see Course Schedule for details)

Brief Course Description

This course's ultimate goal is to empower participants to design and implement effective online learning experiences for their students as called for in a variety of instructional contexts – including fully online, blended (or hybrid-online), and web-enhanced face-to-face courses in K-12 and higher education, as well as professional development programs, orientations, training sessions, etc. In the first part of the course, students will learn some fundamental principles of learning, motivation, assessment, teaching and instructional design relevant to online teaching and learning by engaging in a carefully designed series of learning activities including both in-class and online components. These experiences are intended not only to facilitate students' learning of this important content, but also enable them to "experience as learners" a number of online instructional tools and online teaching practices. Explicit reflections on these experiences (both in class and online) will take place in parallel to enable students to generalize from these concrete experiences and gain insights about best online teaching practices that can inform their own future teaching. In the second part of the course, students will mostly

engage in supported “online experiences as teachers,” where they first design and deliver to the rest of the class an online learning module on content related to online teaching and learning as part of a group, and then they individually design an online learning module on a topic and for an audience of their choice.

While this course has been designed as the first half of a two-course sequence on teaching and learning online (to be followed by EDE486: Designing and Facilitating Online Courses), it can also be taken as a stand-alone. Students will exit this course with a foundational understanding of the unique learning affordances of online spaces, as well as basic skills to design and facilitate “online learning modules” within the BlackBoard Learn learning management system (BB hereafter). Students interested in developing skills to design full online courses and develop vibrant learning communities in those courses, as well as use other online tools and platforms besides BB, should consider taking the second part of the sequence (EDE486).

This course is offered as a hybrid-online course, so as to enable students to personally experience several different types of online learning activities vis-à-vis traditional ones. The time slot of Thursday 4:50-7:30 pm should still be reserved for class activities – whether they will occur face-to-face in LeChase Hall or online.

No prior experience with online learning as a student or a teacher is required to participate in this course.

Technology Requirements

To make sure students have all the necessary technology to actively participate in all aspects of this online course, we have identified below all the hardware and software needed to fully participate in both synchronous and asynchronous course activities:

- *Access to Mac or PC-based Computer with:*
 - *High Speed Internet capability*
 - *Speakers and microphone (and a video cam is recommended but not required)*
 - *Adobe Reader*
 - *Plug-ins for your preferred browser to play videos*
 - *Latest version of Java installed for your preferred browser*

Please verify that you meet all these technology requirements (and test them to make sure they work) before our first class meeting.

Conceptual Framework Informing the Course

Online learning is becoming increasingly common in our society. This is happening not just in higher education, but also K-12 schools and other informal educational settings - as an online format is increasingly used for training in industry and orientations, webinars are substituting for or enhancing traditional conference presentations and workshops, and students as well as customers expect to be able to find information and tutorials on the

web so they can learn how to do all sort of things on their own. It is not surprising, then, that individuals seeking teaching positions, regardless of context and specialization, are increasingly expected to be able to teach online.

Online learning – as it occurs in a digital space rather than face-to-face, with most interactions taking place asynchronously (i.e., students can engage with the course materials at different times) – has some important differences from learning in traditional courses that meet regularly face-to-face, as well as many commonalities. Our position is that one modality is not necessarily better than the other, but rather that online and face-to-face learning each have different strengths and limitations. Therefore, online learning experiences may be more or less effective than face-to-face learning experiences depending on the type of content and instructional goals, on one hand, and the learning preferences and constraints of individual learners, on the other hand.

In practice, this means that to be a good online instructor, one needs first of all to understand and apply many of the same principles and best practices required to design any good learning experience. Yet, it is also important to be aware of the unique strengths and limitations of online learning, as well as the many powerful tools that can be used in an online space, in order to design the best possible online experiences for one’s students. Figuring out which kind of instructional goals or learning activities are most suited to an online versus traditional format is an important skill for all teachers to develop.

In particular, it is important for online teachers to realize the unique potential of specific Web 2.0 tools to encourage and support co-construction of knowledge – as pointed out by scholars in New Media Literacies, among others. Becoming aware of the unique affordances of a few of these powerful tools, and learning how to best capitalize on that potential to support learning in formal context, is also something this course aims to offer.

It is also important to note that, while every instructor has had extensive experience of traditional teaching as a student him/herself, not everyone has experienced learning online in a formal educational setting – although more and more people probably engage in some form of online learning in the course of their everyday practice. Therefore, we believe it is especially important for future online instructors to experiences as learners themselves the power and limitations of online learning, so they can fully appreciate its potential for their own teaching.

Course Goals

Informed by the previous considerations, the course has been designed to **empower students to design and implement effective “online learning modules” for their students in a variety of instructional contexts using BlackBoard.** *(NOTE: the understandings and skills developed in this course are necessary but not sufficient to design and implement full online courses, or to deliver online learning experiences using platforms and tools other than those available within BlackBoard; as mentioned earlier, these goals will be specifically addressed in the second course in our Online Teaching & Learning sequence – EDE486: Designing and Facilitating Online Courses).*

This translates in the following desired outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- a) Given a learning objective and the constraints of one's instructional context, decide whether it can be best achieved through face-to-face learning experiences, online learning experiences, or a combination of both.
- b) When designing online learning experiences, identify "high-level" learning objective(s) and design learning activities and assessments that are consistent with those learning objectives.
- c) Utilize best practices in designing and facilitating a few common types of online learning activities.
- d) Use basic tools and technologies within BlackBoard to implement these online learning activities.
- e) Design and implement high-quality online learning modules that capitalize on the affordances of online spaces and knowledge of how people learn best.

As stepping stones towards these outcomes, we have identified the following learning objectives:

1. Learn some fundamental principles about:
 - a) Motivation (*so as to develop learning experiences and online learning communities that can support students' sustained attention and engagement in an online environment*)
 - b) Learning and its implications for teaching – with special attention to online learning environments (*so as to be able to design online learning experiences that truly engage students in meaningful and effective ways*)
 - c) Student assessment (*so as to be able to measure what students learned as the result of a specific online learning modules and use this information to inform future instruction*)
 - d) Instructional design – with a focus on designing isolated learning modules (rather than an entire course) (*so as to be able to design online learning experiences that can lead to specific desired outcomes*)
2. Learn to use (as an instructor as well as a student) essential tools and technologies that are sufficient to implement most online learning activities, including:
 - a) Creating multi-media documents (using Panopto or PowerPoint)
 - b) Posting and accessing multi-media documents within BlackBoard Learn;
 - c) Using assignments, journals, quizzes, surveys, discussion boards, and wikis within BlackBoard Learn
 - d) Using Blackboard Collaborate for synchronous online sessions
 - e) Using a social media such as Facebook Secret Groups
 - f) Using Google docs

(*so as to be able to design creative online learning experiences, while taking advantage of only a minimum number of tools*)
3. Become aware of key decision points, options and "instructional tips" for the following common OTL practices:

- a. Introducing new online tools
- b. Providing directions for independent work
- c. Eliciting students' prior knowledge
- d. Conveying content online
- e. Sharing students' work online
- f. Orchestrating online discussions
- g. Managing Long-term Projects
- h. Synthesizing learning

(so as to be able to design online learning experiences that take full advantage of these practices, as most appropriate given the established learning goals)

4. Engage in scaffolded experiences of designing and implementing online learning experiences.

(so as to be able to design and facilitate high quality online learning modules by the end of the course)

Key Design Elements

As mentioned earlier, we think it is important to engage future teachers in “experiences as learners” of any innovative instructional approach they are asked to adopt. Therefore, this course was purposefully designed to “model” the use of a variety of online tools, learning activities and practices, that we believe future online teachers should consider. So, as students in this course will learn about principles of learning, motivation, instructional design, etc., we will make full use of many different online activities – and reflect on these experiences afterwards, to identify not only the extent to which these activities were successful in promoting learning, but also the diverse reactions of individual learners to the experience.

The literature on learning complex skills/practices (such as teaching online) suggests that individuals can learn such skills best by engaging in the following scaffolded sequence of experiences:

- a. Observing an expert engaged in the practice (possibly with the opportunity to ask questions about what is taking place and why).
- b. Participating in limited ways (“legitimate peripheral participation”) in the performance of the targeted practice in authentic contexts under the guidance of an expert.
- c. Engaging in the targeted practice independently, yet still benefiting from some support and feedback.

The online “experiences as learners” developed in the course, together with the critical analysis of several examples of online activities designed by various instructors for a variety of instructional contexts, will play the role of engaging our students in the observation of expert practice identified as the first critical step of this process. Given the constraints of a semester-long course, we are limited with respect to the extent we will be able to implement the other two components of this model. However, we have designed

two “scaffolded experiences as teachers” as part of this course, with different degrees of support. In the first of these experiences, students will work in groups in designing and implementing an online learning module for other students in the course, with significant support from the instructors. In the second experience, each student will design an online lesson independently, making their own decisions with respect to the topic, scope, goals, contents and audiences for their lesson, while the instructors will act as “consultants” providing feedback and suggestions for improvement at a few key points in the process.

Key Course Components

1. ***Getting the course started [Getting Started]:***

Before the first class, students will be asked to engage in a number of preliminary tasks online (intended to provide information about the course and its expectations, elicit prior knowledge, and get students to know each other) that we believe are beneficial to develop the foundations of a learning community in ANY course. At the same time, this preliminary assignment will allow students in this course to have a first “online experience as learners” and get familiar (in a low stake situation) with a few essential tools that will be used extensively in the course. These activities will be extended and complemented in the first face-to-face class session so as to provide students with a better understanding of what the course is about and develop clear expectations for it – along with a first demonstration of the power of “looking at models” and “experiences as learners” as means to learn about online teaching and learning (OTL hereafter).

2. ***Developing the foundations for OTL [OTL Foundations]:***

Over a period of about 7 weeks, students will learn some fundamental principles of learning, motivation, assessment, teaching and instructional design relevant to OTL by engaging in a carefully designed series of learning activities (including both in-class and online components) demonstrating the use of selected OTL tools and online learning practices. Explicit reflections on these experiences (both in class and online) will take place in parallel to enable students to generalize from these concrete experiences to inform their own future online teaching (*see OTL Practices component, as described below*).

3. ***Analyzing OTL best practices [OTL Practices]:***

As part of the *Getting Started* and *OTL Foundations* modules, students will have “experienced as learners” a number of online learning and teaching practices they may want to consider using in their own online teaching – as listed in goal #3. To learn how to set up for and effectively implement these OTL practices, we will engage in a systematic analysis of key decision points, options and “instructional tips” related to each practice. These insights will be recorded by an instructor an/or diverse students in “synthesis documents” that all students in the class can take with them after the course ends. *NOTE: This component of the course will take place throughout the course, in parallel to relevant experiences as learners and as teachers.*

4. ***Designing and implementing an online learning module for the rest of the class in a group [Group Project]:***

As their first “experience as online teachers”, students will be assigned to groups of 4-5 students each, and given the task to design and implement an online learning module for the rest of the class on an assigned topic related to OTL. This teaching experience will be supported by the instructors in various concrete ways, including some direct participation in the planning as well as providing “just in time instruction” about relevant BB tools as needed. Students will also participate as learners in at least two of these learning modules, and provide thoughtful feedback to the “teachers” (in a combination of online and face-to-face communications). The group who originally designed each learning module will then be expected to revise the design of their module taking this feedback into consideration.

5. ***Designing an online learning module for one’s own students (individual project) [Individual Project]:***

As their second “experience as online teachers”, and the culminating performance assessment for the course, each student will design an online self-contained learning module on a topic of their choice and for an audience of their choice. Each student will be expected to set up all the instructional materials required for their students to complete the learning module on Blackboard, as well as create an accompanying “lesson plan” that articulates their goals, why they think it is important for their students to achieve those goals, and the rationale for selecting that particular set of learning activities to achieve their stated goals. Each student will be supported throughout this process by a “thinking partner” – another student in the class with whom s/he can brainstorm ideas and request feedback throughout the planning process. Other students in the class will also have the opportunity to review the final learning module and provide feedback. Each student will also have the opportunity to revise their learning module based on this and the instructors’ feedback before receiving a final grade. *NOTE: This Individual Project will start concurrently with the Group Project, but will be due only after the Group Lesson has been completed – so as to enable students to benefit from the experience and insights gained from the previous group project, and yet give them enough time to think about the goals and content of their Individual Project.*

6. ***Synthesizing learning about OTL [Synthesis]:*** Each student will also be expected to synthesize what they are learning in the course in a number of complementary ways, culminating in a Final Reflection Project. More specifically, each student will be expected to contribute a reflective journal entry at the end of each “learning module”/major project in the course, synthesizing what learned from that module/project in response to prompts set by the instructors. At the end of the course, each student will also be asked to look back at their performance and growth throughout the course to write a narrative that will identify key take-aways from the course.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Weekly Independent Work

A variety of independent learning tasks (involving reading, writing as well as other kinds of activities) will need to be completed each week, with specific intermediate deadlines, as articulated in detail in the “Directions for Independent Work” posted at the beginning of each Learning Module in the course Blackboard site. These tasks must be completed on time, as the following class session and/or subsequent tasks will often assume and make use of them.

These tasks will be organized every week (or couple of weeks) in a “Learning Module” posted on BB, and will usually involve a combination of:

- **“Readings”** – where the documents to be read are not only traditional texts, but could also include videos, narrated PowerPoints, Panopto files, websites, etc. Except for a required textbook that students are expected to purchase, the rest of the required readings will be accessible online in the “Contents” section of each Learning Module.
- **Assignments** – these may involve writing as well as other kinds of tasks, and often result in a product that needs to be submitted online on BB – either privately as an *assignment* that will be accessible only to the instructor, or publicly by posting them on a specific *discussion board*, as directed in each case by the instructor. Unless they are part of one of the major projects (as described later), these assignments are not intended to result in finished nor polished reports. Therefore, students will not receive a letter grade for most assignments, although they will be assigned points for satisfactory completion that will affect the final grade in the course (as explained later in the Course Assessment section of this syllabus).
- **Unstructured online conversations** – students will also be expected to engage online with classmates on an on-going basis on issues related to OTL, by spontaneously contributing their reflections and insights in a more unstructured and student-centered way using a Facebook Secret Group.
- **Reflective Journal entries** – at the end of each learning module, students will also be asked to synthesize the key learning and insights gained from that week’s readings and other learning activities in a private journal, in response to an “essential question” posed by the instructor (although students are always encouraged to add additional observations and insights). Unlike contributions posted in Discussion Boards and social media, these journal entries will be accessible only to the student and the instructor. Students are expected to take advantage of and build on these journal entries in preparing their Final Reflection Paper at the end of the course.

Class Participation

The success of this course, and the extent of each student’s learning, will depend on his/her full and timely participation. Thus, we expect that students will attend all the synchronous as well as face-to-face class sessions, actively participate in discussion boards and other types on interactive online spaces, and meet the established deadlines for each assignment. In case you are unable to do so in a specific week, please let Dave

Miller know in advance and as soon as possible. Lack of participation in face-to-face classes, synchronous sessions, discussion boards or other interactive online assignments will result in missing class participation points, unless particular make-up arrangements have been made with the instructor ahead of time. Even more importantly, it will take away not only from your own learning in the course, but also from that of your classmates!

Major Projects

As culminating learning experiences and summative assessments, you will be expected to complete the following three “major projects” (as already described in the previous section entitled “Key Components of the Course”):

1. ***Group Project***
2. ***Independent Project.***
3. ***Final Reflection.***

Detailed directions for each of these projects can be found in the General Information Folder on BB.

Each of the “major projects” should show the student’s “best work” and will be graded according to a rubric, provided along with the detailed description of the assignment.

Required and recommended texts

In addition to articles and other documents accessible online, you will be assigned to read sections of the following textbook:

- Thormann, J., & Zimmerman, I.K. (2012). *Designing and Teaching Online Courses*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. (***to be purchased by each student***)

While not required for this course, students may also be interested in purchasing the following text, which is required for the second course in the sequence, and well complement the required readings for this course:

- Stavredes, T. (2011). *Effective Online Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. (***not required***)

Course Schedule/Timeline

An agenda for each week’s class session and a list of key tasks to be completed independently in-between each class session can be found in the Course Schedule section of BB (directly accessible on the left-side Menu). This document will be continuously updated to reflect any scheduling changes that may occur in the course of the semester (although we expect these changes, if any, to be minor and rare).

Workload expectations

According to New York State Education Department, a 3-credit course should include a total of about 35 “contact” hours, plus at least about twice as many hours of independent work on the part of each student, for a total commitment of over 100 hours on the part of each student. Although this course will not have the same number of face-to-face meetings, it is our expectation that it will require students the same effort as a traditional course and, thus, total number of hours overall. Therefore, it is important that students set aside a total of at least 8 hours each week for a combination of class time and independent work.

Additional considerations about online learning

Taking a course online requires somewhat different practices than traditional face-to-face courses in order to achieve the same learning goals and outcomes. Especially if you have never taken an online course before, we recommend that you read the “***Considerations for Student Success in Online Courses***” available within the ***General Information Folder on BB***.

One thing in particular that we would like students in this course to keep in mind is that, in order to ensure interactions among students as required by specific tasks assigned as part of their independent work each week, there may be multiple deadlines to submit assignments each week. To help you organize your time, we have tried to make these deadlines predictable throughout the semester, by using the following guidelines:

- **Saturday deadlines:** *Only occasionally used for tasks requiring written reflections or other follow-up of a class activity*
- **Monday deadlines:** *For first posts on Discussion Boards (or any other activity requiring other class members to respond)*
- **Wednesday at noon deadlines:** *For responses on Discussion Boards or other assignments that require instructors’ and/or classmates’ review before next class*
- **Thursday before class deadline:** *Synthesis journal and other “independent” activities*

Learning Assessment and Grading

Half of your grade in the course will be based on class participation and weekly assignments, and the other half on your performance on the three major projects. More specifically:

- **Class participation: 10%** (based on 2-4 points assigned to active participation in each face-to-face class/synchronous session attended, and 2 points assigned weekly to the on-going contributions to the “open” online conversations occurring through social media)
- **Weekly assignments** (including discussion boards and reflective journal entries): **40%** (based on points assigned for completing each assignment on time and satisfactorily, as indicated in the Directions for Independent Work for each learning module)
- **Group Project: 15%** (based on quality of the product, rubrics-based)

- **Individual Project: 20%** (based on quality of the product, rubrics-based)
- **Final Reflection: 15%** (based on quality of the product, rubrics-based)

For a complete and updated list of the maximum number of points associated to specific assignments and other components of the course, see the “Course grading scheme” document posted within the General Information Folder on BB.

Grading scheme:

A: 95-100%; **A-:** 90-94%; **B+:** 87-89%; **B:** 83-86%; **B-:** 80-82%; **C:** 70-79%; **E:** <70