

COURSE EVALUATION

The following report outlines the overall course evaluation.

Personal Observations

From an outsider's perspective, derived from the experience of having taken upwards of 40 academic online courses, I have five different observations:

- A) The course is well led. Trish is there every step of the way, not only giving feedback, but also creating original instruction in the form of videos and Ppt presentations via VoiceThread.
- B) The course is well liked. Survey results indicate that most students are happy with most every aspect of the course.
- C) Cognitive overload. The course is overwhelming. There is too much content being attempted to absorb in 8 short weeks. By trying to absorb so much, you absorb little. It's difficult to see the forest through the trees.
- D) Course navigation is cumbersome, taking up valuable time just trying to understand the myriad of assignments. It takes one week just to find your way around the course and with the final week as a wrap up, which leaves 6 weeks of intensity, difficult to handle by any working adult.
- E) Aside from VoiceThread, and the real world exercises, the course does not utilize any type of technology enabled "experiential learning."

There are no corrections to be made for A and B.

C: Suggest paring down material to the most essential assignments, readings, Discussion Board prompts and presentations. Presently, DQs are presented twice per week. Consider condensing to once per week, with two prompts if you feel it is absolutely necessary. I feel it is better to have one discussion build than to have two barely get out of the block.

D: Many of the course navigation errors could have been tested and eliminated before the course was made live. Emails can be eliminated by checking links prior to launch:

E: Experiential learning will be better described at the end of this document.

COURSE PROBLEMS AND CORRECTIONS

NAVIGATION

The lack of linking has been somewhat resolved with the newly built Course Schedule and Syllabus plan, yet pay close attention in future courses to place a

link wherever possible. Suggesting that students should not have to search through layers of information.

Don't use PDF files. Import the Word Docs for linking and copy/paste ease, and then thoroughly test all links. Many emails contain this type of message:

"The syllabus says that WIDA ACCESS test, ISTEP+ academic exam, Indiana Dept of Ed, and Gottlieb (2016) (Ch7) are on bb but I cannot find them. There are two WIDA resources, one is restricted and the other gives the error message of Oops the page cannot be found."

With properly aligned and checked linking, this will eliminate a great deal of emails. Some programs don't allow copy and paste from a PDF file. Another example of an instance where a student's life would be made easier if they could copy and paste is below:

"Is there a Word Doc version or a non-PDF version of the lesson plan format that we could work from? It would really be helpful to insert my own lesson right onto the format you have for us. (I tried copy and paste and the format didn't transfer...)"

The left Navigation bar should display the essential elements of the course, including:

- Announcements
- Professor's Office

- Modules (Or Assignments. Course content is too general of a term)
- Syllabus
- Course Readings
- Assignment Rubrics
- My Grades

- Course Schedule
- Course Calendar
- Discussion Board
 - Week _
 - Groups
- VoiceThread
- My Grades

- Student Help
- Student Resources
- Library Course Guide
- FAQ

Syllabus, Course Organization

There is nothing I remember seeing in the Syllabus explaining that Module numbers do not match up to weeks. No Module explanation at all currently. It would make better sense to have modules match up to weeks. Very confusing otherwise. Here are student comments from the evaluation supporting this idea:

“Make modules weekly. For example, have week 3 be module 3 which would include 3a and 3b. Don't include 4a or 4b in module 3. It can be a bit confusing.”

“I am loving the course!! The one improvement would be consistency in times and dates. There have been several occasions where the dates and times were different in different postings or sources. As someone with a full time job and other commitments this can be very frustrating. After the getting the times down it has been very easy, but the first week was very confusing now knowing exactly what was actually expected.”

“I have trouble figuring out what is due when and what is expected of me often because the syllabus is vague and I have to search pretty hard to find the expectations for a given assignment. After three weeks, I have it down I think, but it could be laid out more concisely.”

With the new Syllabus in place for the next course iteration, these complaints should not occur again.

Intergroup Interaction

While Group Discussion is a great use of constructivism through social learning, with careful attention paid to diversify the members of each group, I feel that if I was a student I may grow weary of interacting with the same group for every assignment. It would, in my opinion, give a broader experience if learners were required to respond to at least one post within their group, and one outside of their group. By condensing the DQ to one rather than two, this would allow for more meaningful learning.

Live Virtual Office Hours

Offer at least two live Group sessions via Skype, Google Hangout, or whatever will support six students and professor for live virtual meetings.

“Maybe if there was an opportunity to have a group chat or something in real time as opposed to logging on whenever convenient and commenting on someone's post then never having time to come back and see if they commented back because we've already moved on to new content.”

Condensed Readings for Relevance

Pare down readings to the most essential gains in learning. Some student's were wondering if they had to read an entire manuscript. I believe this was simply an instruction error, but if not, consider paring down that reading to only the relevant pages by making a separated PDF file. While I understand the philosophy of pushing a student beyond their comfort zone, cognitive overload combined with

time restrictions will transfer to a mere skimming of material, lack of engagement, and less critical thinking.

VoiceThread Organization

I am uncertain about the technical aspects of VT, but it seems there could be some organization by Bins, or perhaps a method of titling the thread subjects so that they automatically organize for easy navigation. The longer a student has to search through threads to find their assigned thread, the less time they have for learning.

"When I respond, I literally only see the option for the lock icon. I don't see the arrow thing. Can I just make a new post and say that I'm replying to whoever it is I am replying to?"

Lots of VT confusion. Suggest using Camtasia to make illustrated videos zeroing in on specific details.

VoiceThread Presentation Graphics

Consider breaking up the graphics. Many of them are eye charts, and while you can expect a learner to pause the video, they often, due to time constraints, try to comprehend all of what is on a slide, while listening to the audio. This can result in diminished comprehension. For learning to "stick," you should focus the learner on what you are saying, which means less presented to comprehend visually. Again, keep the presentation as relevant as possible. Eliminate the extra curricular learning.

"I also really dislike Voice Thread but that is mainly because I would much prefer to discuss content in person, so perhaps I just dislike online classes in general, which is no one's fault, obviously."

Condense Resources

Create one place for all resources, linked to the side Navbar, rather than – or in addition to – listing separately in Assignment Modules. In that one place, you can organize it by module, but students appreciate the ability to look ahead.

"When you refer to "Classroom Based Assessments-(Gottlieb)," are you referring to the chart on page 49? If so, how is this different from MPIs? I'm just wanting to make sure that I include the correct information in this section but am a little confused."

More assignment confusion! Clear instructions, and perhaps a video would help.

Resource Forms

"I need to get the official parents permission form soon as the teacher I am working with asked me to bring it before I will conduct the lesson 2 recording. Even if students won't be on the video, she claimed that Cumberland has a policy so that I need to follow it if I want to record my teaching."

Note: Photo release form was posted mid-course, but for next iteration, should be posted and linked to in Course Resources from launch.

Mobility

Having the convenience to do one's homework while mobile is beneficial to most students. This reinforces my philosophy to keep imagery simple. Eye charts don't transfer well to mobile devices. It seems like VT doesn't work at all for mobile yet, and it would be difficult to mine through all of the threads to get to the desired. Survey says:

"Availability for some of the software to work on mobile devices (iPhone) would help me use my time more wisely. For example, if I could listen to classmate responses from my phone or even watch the voice thread while waiting to pick up my child or on lunch break where my laptop isn't convenient to have."

Audio-Visual Elements (Video)

Picture-in-picture for VT and stand alone videos should pay special attention to audio clarity (lav mic or headset), soft even lighting on face (not reflecting in glasses), no spot lights in background, no distractions from learning. Green screen dress should be dark solids, earth tones. Avoid light blue, certainly any shade of green, patterns.

Experiential Learning

Though the classroom exercises are one of if not the best form of experiential learning designed for this course, I suggest working with your Purdue Instructional Design team to craft some form of simulation, whether it be branched narratives, gamification, or what comes next. The bulk of instruction is through reading and Powerpoint lectures. This does not take full advantage of the electronic medium; it merely transfers what could be done in a classroom to a desktop. Though extra effort has been made to create a virtual Sage-on-the-stage environment, and the opportunity for VT comments are indeed implementing technology, so much more is being done in the evolving field of Instructional Design that is not being taken advantage of. This is not necessarily a reflection on the design of this course, but on the Purdue curriculum as a whole. This course is more advanced than most I have taken, and as I have stated, comes with a much higher level of professor participation. But as I've been told by my hi-tech managers, "It's better to work smarter than work harder." That said, the typical University professor does not have the capacity to create a techno-embellished course. There is not enough time, nor resources. Experiential learning, pardon the buzz word, is buzz for good reason. It is more than using your mouse to click on arrow, to advance the page forward.

Assistant Grader

I did not have or utilize a great window into judging the TA other than their participation in some discussions. This participation was excellent, and seemed knowledgeable from my limited background in ELL. The only problem I see is the constant misuse of plurals common with someone whose English is their second language.

“So basically, from the first task, **teacher** start to have the responsibility to help them make better **argument**...
So how **teacher** help the Els **become** significant for their success.”

This seems to diminish the authoritative voice, however the added diversity is vogue in education, so I’m not one to judge if poor English in an ELL course is a problem, or if there is adequate knowledge behind the misuse to grade.

Mid-Term Evaluation

Due to the fact that only 50% of the class took the evaluation, you have to take into account why 50% did not. Did they not have the time to take the survey, or were they in fear of getting a bad grade for their honesty? With a paper hand-out evaluation, the opportunity to remain anonymous is concrete; however, online surveys are easily tracked to their owner, even if the survey says it is anonymous. Students know that one can even be exposed through writing style. That said, while most survey questions received very positive marks, the ones that were moderately marked should receive the most attention.

1) The reading resources were helpful in building comprehension.

16 agree, 7 strongly agree.

Seems nothing is wrong here. Perhaps more attention can still be paid to reading workload, thus most relevant readings only. Make sure page numbers are listed for all readings. JW

2) The video resources are helpful in building comprehension.

12 agree, 11 strongly agree.

Videos could still use more attention paid to chunking out graphics. More slides are better than one eye chart. JW

3) I would like to see more videos to help build my comprehension of course content.

12 neutral, 7 agree, 4 strongly agree.

I believe the large number of neutral responses are due to cognitive overload. This is referring to content, not explainer videos. JW

7) Course resources are relevant for my current educational context (ie, teacher, graduate student).

3 neutral, 13 agree, 7 strongly agree.

Difficult to match every student's relevancy. Good here. JW

8) Learning objectives are augmented by supporting materials.

1 neutral, 15 agree, 7 strongly agree.

Good here. JW

11) Audio feedback furnished by my instructor is helpful in understanding my current performance.

1 neutral, 11 agree, 11 strongly agree

Good here. JW

12) The assessments promote my understanding of course content.

7 neutral, 12 agree, 4 strongly agree

Somewhat more neutrals here. JW

13) The frequency of assessment feedback is adequate and informs my performance in this course.

3 neutral, 11 agree, 9 strongly agree

Good here. From my eLearning experience, better than most. JW

15) Navigation of the course is efficient.

1 strongly disagree, 3 disagree, 5 neutral, 10 agree, 4 strongly agree.

Here is our first negatory. Hopefully my improvements will change this response for the next iteration. JW

16) The Syllabus is easy to follow.

1 disagree, 5 neutral, 13 agree, 4 strongly agree.

Again, you should be good here next time around. JW

17) Resources are easy to find.

1 disagree, 6 neutral, 14 agree, 2 strongly agree.

Ditto. Links and better organization will prevail. JW

19) The medium of VoiceThread is an effective instructional tool.

2 disagree, 2 neutral, 10 agree, 9 strongly agree

The jury is still out on this one! JW

20) Discussion Board in My Groups to be an effective instructional tool.

1 somewhat disagree, 1 disagree, 1 neutral, 17 agree, 3 strongly agree.

The Discussion Board has proven effective for most online courses. The split discussions, however, do not allow a discussion to play out. Combine to one. JW

22) Objectives of the course were clearly stated.

2 neutral, 10 agree, 11 strongly agree.

Room for improvement. They were clear, but not concrete objectives. Hopefully they are now! JW

23) The material is presented in an interesting and engaging way.

4 neutral, 16 agree, 6 strongly agree.

Instructor is engaging, Powerpoints are not. With resources, presentations could be much more impactful. JW

24) The main instructor is an effective communicator.

11 agree, 12 strongly agree.

Agreed, to the point that the instructor is a good presenter and oral communicator. Disagreed, that the tools used, basically a Ppt, are not the most effective. JW

25) Communication is timely and helpful in addressing my questions.

12 agree, 11 strongly agree.

Agree. JW

26) How satisfied are you with this course at this time?

1 somewhat dissatisfied, 3 neutral, 11 satisfied, 7 very satisfied.

Room for improvement. Be most relevant! JW

30) Course “explainer” videos build my understanding of course requirements.

3 neutral, 9 agree, 11 strongly agree.

Use Camtasia. More explainer videos for each difficult assignment, segment, technology, examples, examples, examples. JW

SURVEY COMMENTS

Support for VT, and asynchronous learning:

“I believe that this course has been very beneficial for me thus far. I enjoy the interaction of VT the most. I love the way that we are able to connect with each other on our own time and not feel rushed to respond the same day.”

Good honest statements

“One thing that I feel about the course that could be improved is the amount of work that is done. I am not sure how leading a VT or discussion question is helping with our ELL students. It feels like it’s just an assignment to complete. I do enjoy the lessons and classroom observations because I can connect them to my classroom.”

What the first sentence above confirms is my observation of cognitive overload. I disagree with the second question as this is standard fare for online courses. The last statement confirms the positive impact of experiential learning.

"I would like to see the course differentiated for the situations for the different types of learners. We have teachers, students, coordinators, administrators, etc. and not all are able to teach a lesson in their current position due to other obligations so an alternate assignment would be nice."

Alternate assignments might target the audience better, though may add more confusion. Relevancy is key to teaching a course according to andragogical principles.

"I love having conversations through VT! It is a great way to respond to each other and grasp a deeper understanding of the content. While I enjoy doing the assessments, I feel that doing a write up and making connections to the reading is not very beneficial to my understanding of the content. I would rather have strategies/suggestions to try in my classroom to help improve my instruction for my ELL students, then reflect on that."

Strategies and suggestions to try in the classroom align to experiential learning. It seems that teachers feel they don't need to be "exercised," they've gone through enough education for this to be effective. What they need again, are relevant, experiential exercises to lead to meaningful, impactful learning. This would translate to Level 3 achieved learning. In other words, they could apply what they learn here directly to their job. Otherwise, what's the point?

Summary

In my short time working with and evaluating the course, I hope that I made headway in my main objective to cut down on the amount of emails to the professor. Through better navigation, simplified Syllabus, linked Course Schedule, new Calendar, and innovative FAQ, there should be some elimination of questions from learners. The additional suggestions of implementing further technology, videos, and course helpers will add to the rich and streamlined experience to further meaningful learning. Most importantly, I believe that some aspects of this course do not directly benefit ELL teaching relevancy, while many aspects do. There is room for improvement, though a great foundation has been laid. Thank

you for the opportunity to express my evaluative opinion, and participate in my practicum.

To end on a positive note:

“Our professors are excellent in every possible area- great communicators, excellent confidence-builders, and extremely knowledgeable.”

“Professor Morita is a gifted teacher, and I'm so grateful for this course!”

Agreed!