

Steps for Online Course Design & Development

Renee Shaffer, Instructional Designer,
UTS-Teaching and Technology
Services



Trends

- 3.9 million students took online courses in 2007- an increase of 12 percent
- Recent economic factors have increased online enrollments
- At USC, a large percentage of classes are hybrid courses- part F2F and part online

- Societal shift in education- Faculty are no longer keepers of knowledge
- New role of faculty- facilitator that presents information that is “relevant, memorable, and useful”
- New types of students- Net Generation -
Social, group activities, outside classroom learning activities

- Definition- Online instruction is any formal educational process in which the instruction occurs when the learner and the instructor are not in the same place and Internet technology is used to provide a communication link among the instructor and students.
- “Anytime, anywhere” model

Variations

- Communicating via Blackboard, email, chats, discussion forums, Twitter, Facebook, Adobe Connect, course website, texting
- Use of varied online activities such as tests, quizzes, peer review, simulations and games
- Delivering course materials- charts, PPT, links

Simple or Complex

- Online course design can be complex or simple.
- What should students to get out of the class?
- What do you want them to know?
- What do you want them to be able to do?

Major Components of Online Course Design

- I. Overview of Course
- II. Learning Outcomes
- III. Assessment
- IV. Materials and Resources
- V. The Learner and Interaction
- VI. Course technology- bb, twitter, Facebook

Course Overview

- The overall design of the course, as well as the instructor and student information, should be transparent.



Where Am I?

- Students don't have verbal/visual clues
- Incorporate navigation instructions to make the course easier to understand
- Examples include:
 - **Clear** statements on how to get started
 - Use of Course Orientation game
 - Use of "Read this First" button

What are we doing?

- Explain how the learning process is structured. Let students know what is expected and how they can succeed in the course.
- Examples include:
 - Syllabus (Map), schedule and calendar
 - Types of activities required to complete
 - Preferred** method of communication

◀ PROFANITY TRAIL

BAD WEATHER
BYPASS

Netiquette

- Sometimes students need direction about proper course participation.
- Clearly state the netiquette expectations along with the consequences.
- Examples include:
 - Rules of Conduct
 - Spelling and grammar expectations
 - Texting- OMG, RU4 Real?, LOL, WUZ UP?

Self Introduction

- Build a sense of community with the students by including some information about you
- Be approachable
- Provide more than just the essentials
- Examples include information about your teaching philosophy, your past experiences, personal information, photograph.

Student Introductions

- Request that students introduce themselves to the class- 1st assignment (**ungraded**)
- Give them guidance as to how and where they should introduce themselves- discussion forum, student webpage, course facebook page, blog, wiki, twitter
- Provide an example of an introduction

Technology requirements

- Students might be hesitant about online course
- Provide detailed instructions, skills and technology requirements
- Examples: students must be able to use email with attachments, have a Facebook account or high speed internet capabilities to watch course videos

Learning Outcomes (Competencies)

- Use outcomes that are **specific, measureable,** and **clearly stated**
- Make outcomes address content mastery, critical thinking skills and core learning skills
- Make instructions easy to follow and understand, i.e. weekly assignments will be posted in **red** on the assignment page

What Do You Want Students to Do?

- **Engage** students in various ways
 - Practice quizzes
 - Research assignments
 - Group projects
 - Case studies
 - Non-graded reflections
 - Audio/video presentations

Faculty and Students

- Active role in the learning process
- What is good behavior?
 - Regularly logging in
 - Reading and participating in discussions
 - Working effectively in groups
 - Keeping up with assignments

Assessment

- Assessments, learning outcomes and activities align in a clear and direct way
- Assessment strategies should be used **throughout** the course term and measure learning in relation to the stated learning outcomes.
- Good way to “check in” on students

Keys to Assessment

- Beware of inconsistencies, i.e. giving a T/F quiz when the outcome was “write an essay”
- Provide an easy to understand grading policy
- Use frequent, rapid and meaningful feedback
- Allow students to measure their own learning

Continued....

- Incorporate assessments that make use of online technologies- tests, surveys, quizzes, wikis, discussions forums on BB or Facebook, twitter responses or proctored tests.
- Utilize a mixture of (secure and unsecured) sites, so that you can become familiar with individual students' work on many fronts.

What have you learned?

- Assessment is a 2-way street - Have students assess **their** own performance
 - What have you learned in this module?
 - What is the “muddiest” point?
 - Mid semester evaluation
 - Suggestion boxes and online polling

Resources and Materials

- Be sure to have a purpose for the materials. For example, **clearly** state whether or not students need to read your listed articles or are they simply for personal enrichment?
- Be consistent in your course organization. Students need to see how the materials relate to each other and to the learning outcomes.

- Provide meaningful content in a variety of ways including textbook, PPT, websites, lecture notes, outlines, multimedia and social media.
- Present materials that are easily accessible to the online community of learners. Students get angry if they can't find or access important materials.

Less is more

- Students have busy lives and should be able to work on course incrementally.
- Divide the materials up into manageable segments or modules. These should be stand alone.
- Use the “chunk it” method

Examples

- Don't videotape your entire lecture. No one will listen to all of it.
- People have short attention spans
- Use short snippets like interviews.
- Don't overdo voice over PPT.
- Today's students are highly stimulated, don't bore them
- Get to the point!

Organize Your Materials

- Use a template to organize your materials online such as:
 - Lecture notes
 - Textbook or required readings
 - View video segment or PPT slides
 - Practice quiz
 - Participate in discussion forum
 - Send in assignment electronically

Learner Information

- Today's students are social. It is essential to provide **meaningful** instructor-student interaction, **positive** student cooperation and student-content interaction in the online environment.
- Know your students!



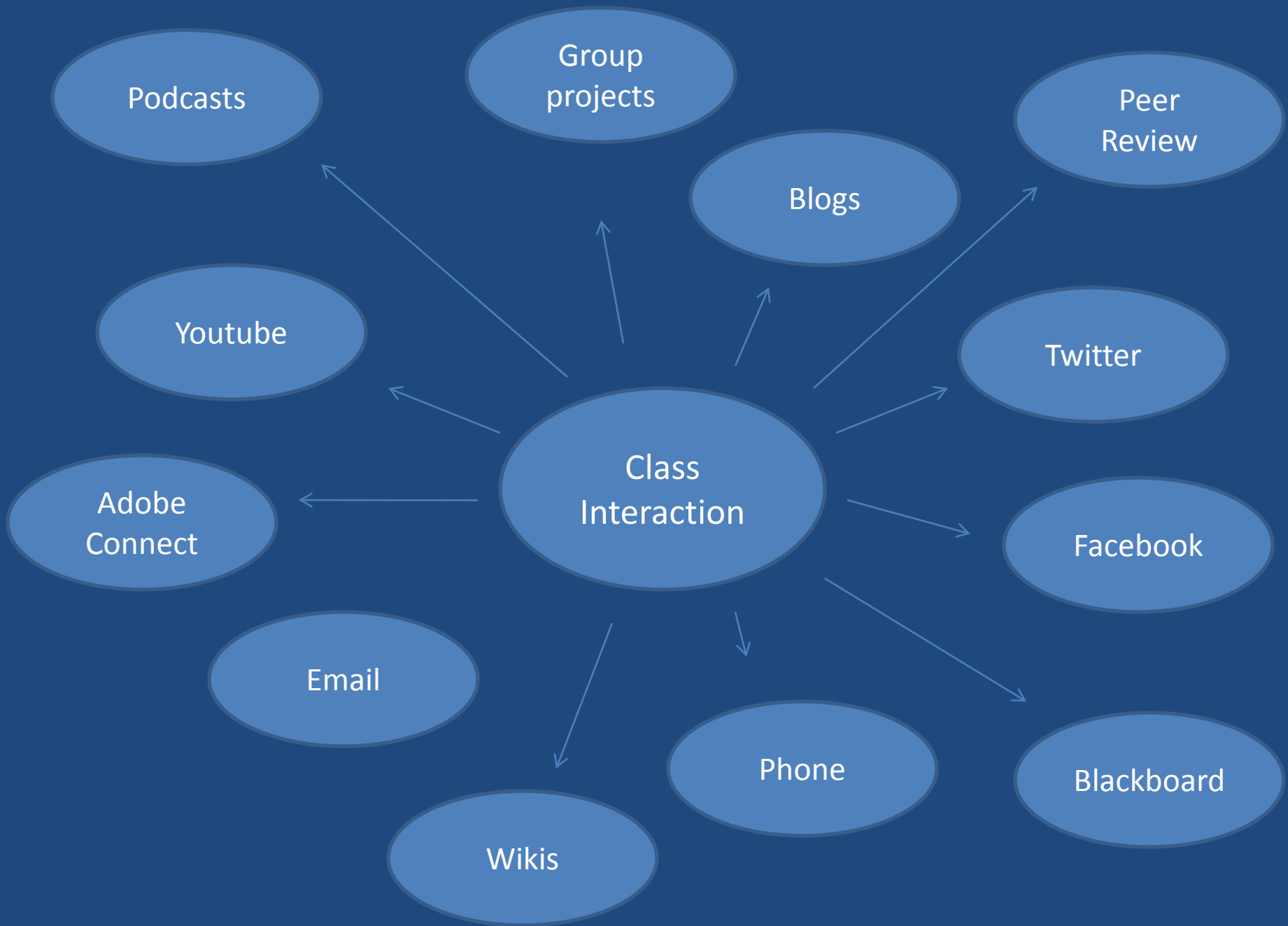
- Choose learning activities which promote the achievement of the objectives and outcomes.
- Encourage engagement and student interaction with content, peers and instructor.
- State clearly how and when you will respond to students
- Give student criteria about interactions on discussions boards, wikis, blogs or emails.

- Be present and engaged for the students
- Actively use an instructor-facilitated discussion board, class Facebook page, twitter “tweets”
- Post electronic office hours
- Update current announcements
- Allow students to use their creativity in producing assignments

Course technology

- Course technology should enrich instruction and foster student interactivity.





Course technology

- Tools and media shouldn't be used for the sake of using technology
- Integrate technology into the course to support and promote learning outcomes
- Done correctly, tools and media can actively ENGAGE students in the learning process

- Provide **instructions** on how to use software or upload needed files for your course
- Encourage them to use campus technical support- Provide access to university helpdesk for questions regarding **tech support**
- Guide them to **academic support** areas on campus such a disability students services, the writing center, library for online research assistance or tutoring services

Challenges

- Faculty need time upfront
- Change in attitude toward being facilitator
- No one is perfect and things don't always work

Advantages

- Preview of class materials provides students with a deeper level of analysis in class
- Student have 24/7 access to materials
- Creates a virtual learning community and sense of belonging
- Constant access to instructor and peers

Opportunities

- Be prepared
- Know thyself
- Know your students
- Make it relevant
- Make it interesting to the Net Generation-
highly technologically stimulated students

Best Practices

- Be meaningful and relevant
- Give students checklists along the way to insure completion
- Use frequent assessments
- Use important articles not “filler”
- Ask students for their ideas on course
- Have fun!

Chickering and Gamson's Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

Encourage contact between students and faculty

Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students

Encourage active learning

Give prompt feedback

Emphasize time on task

Communicate high expectations

Respect diverse talents and ways of learning

Sources and my thanks to:

- Chickering , Arthur W. and Gamson, Zelda F. Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. Retrieved from-
<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/7princip.htm>
 - Palloff, Rena M. and Keith Pratt. (2007) Building Online Learning Communities: Effective Strategies for the Virtual Classroom, Jossey-Bass.
 - Quality Matters, Maryland Online ,Inc. (2002-2006), public domain version
 - Smith, Robin M. (2008) Conquering the Content: A Step by Step Guide to Online Course Design, Jossey-Bass.
 - Staying the Course: Online Education in the United States, 2008. The Sloan Consortium.
- All pictures were obtained through flickr and are presented with the CC (creative commons) license for fair use.