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Student Web Publishing in Psychology

by Jennifer Freyd

Introductory Note: The material below is based on email sent to all faculty and GTFs in the Psychology Department on March 11, 1997. It models ways to increase collegial communication about teaching. I believe email and WWW afford some possibilities. Specific issues involve course structure combining cooperative learning and ed tech features to achieve teaching goals.

Dear Teaching Colleagues,

I often wish we had efficient ways of learning more about what each of us is doing in the classroom. Some of you have asked me individually about how I manage final project presentations and student web publishing, so I thought I would provide some more information about structure and

pedagogical goals to the department in case it is of interest to others.

The Copsy Convention Web Page

<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/~jfreyd/copsy/copsycon/>

presents the abstracts for the final group projects in Psychology 435/535, Cognition. The web page contains links to the full student-published text for most of the students' projects. In addition, in the psychology department mailroom, a poster is on display showing photographs of the students in each group with their names, project titles, and project abstracts.

lazer insights, zany alternatives and riveting dialogue on teaching and learning

The final-project structure: Students in this course (70-75 students) were required to work in small groups throughout the quarter for both weekly 20-minute in-class problem-solving activities and discussion, and outside class for their final projects. Final projects (worth about 1/3 of the course grade) consist of both a written project and an in-class presentation during the final week of the quarter. For more on other course requirements, you can visit the course home page at :<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/~jfreyd/copsy/>

From there select the syllabus. Final projects involve library research and the design of an experiment. Some groups collect data, but that is not required. In-class presentations may be live, video, or mixed media. Each presentation is followed by a question period. Web publication of the final project is an extra-credit option.



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The pedagogical goals for this final project include:

Core Content & Academic Skill Acquisition

Students learn more in depth about a selected topic in cognition and translate that knowledge and interest into an experimental design, an APA-style final written product, and clear presentation.

Small Learning Community

A group cooperative learning experience allows both the creation of a small learning community and experience creating a high quality group product. Students are often initially resistant to working in groups. However, after the course is over, they tell me how valuable the experience was for them, even when the groups were high in conflict, and certainly when the groups bonded well.

Students are graded for group work based on a shared grade for group products and an individual component based on peer and self-evaluation for group contribution.

Internet Literacy

Students are exposed to the benefits and limits of using the WWW for the final dissemination of projects (an extra credit option) and reading classmates' projects. (Earlier in the quarter each student had to complete an exercise requiring finding and then critically evaluating a WWW resource.)

Respecting Peers & Professional Conduct

Students experience learning from peers, attending a "convention," asking appropriate questions after presentations, and treating fellow students with respect for their specialized expertise in a particular topic area.

Students as Experts and Personal Growth

They accomplish something significant, personally relevant, and empowering. They come to appreciate cognition as a topic and gain experience presenting quality material to peers. Students complete the course with themselves as the knowledge holders and knowledge makers, playing the role of teachers (with the professor and teaching aids sitting in the audience).

First day student surveys consistently indicate that most students take 435 because it satisfies a major requirement, not because they are eager to learn about cognition. Students are not necessarily eager to work in groups or to learn to use the Internet. Past experience indicates that the structure described above does not decrease enthusiasm for cognition, groups, or the Internet, and in some cases significantly increases enthusiasm. I believe significant learning occurs. Managing initial resistance to the topic area, small groups, web publication, and organizing a final convention are labor intensive for the teacher, and I am indebted to the assistance of JQ Johnson, and the three volunteer teaching aids for this course: Kevin Cadman, Spark Campbell, and Cindy Veldhuis.

I hope this information is valuable to others. Additional course home pages are indexed at:
<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/~jfreyd/>