A Self-Directed Guide to

Designing Courses for Significant Learning

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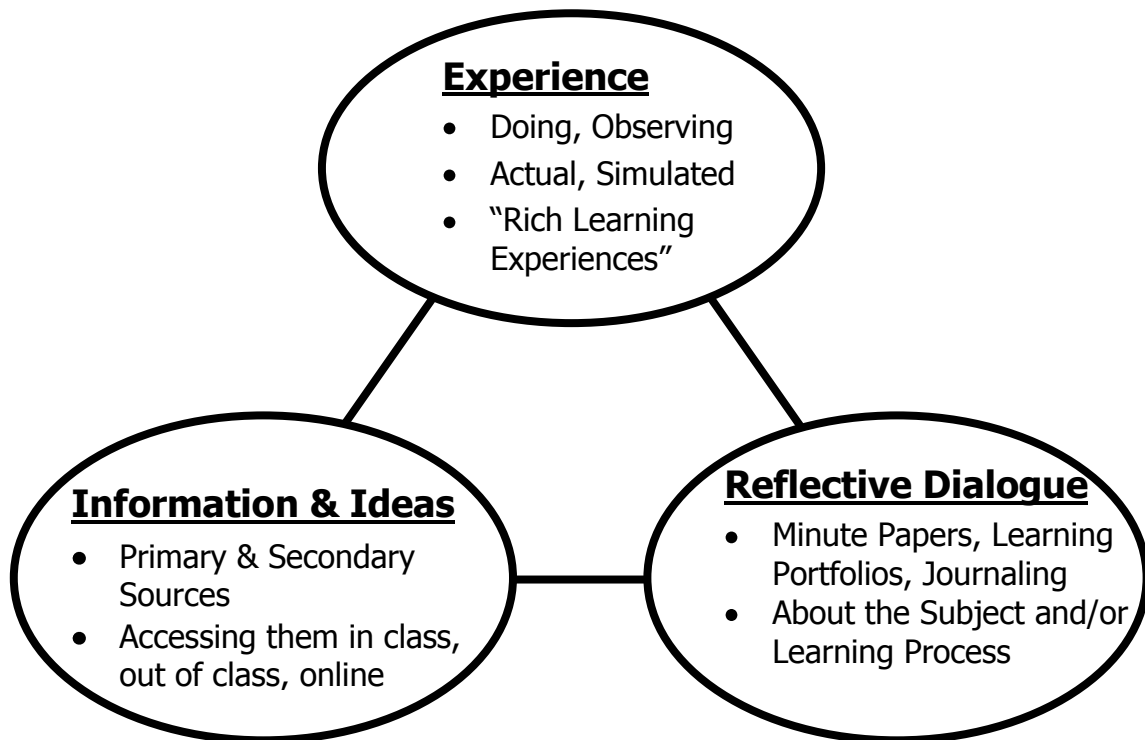University of Oklahoma

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Creating Significant Learning Experiences:
An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses

(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003)

An Enlarged View of "Active Learning." In order to create a complete set of learning activities capable of achieving significant learning, we need an enlarged and more holistic view of active learning—one that includes "getting information and ideas" as well as "experience" and "reflection." Figure 5 illustrates a new conceptualization of active learning, one that makes all three modes of learning an integral part of a more complete set of learning activities.

Figure 5

A HOLISTIC VIEW OF ACTIVE LEARNING

Experience
- Doing, Observing
- Actual, Simulated
- "Rich Learning Experiences"

Information & Ideas
- Primary & Secondary Sources
- Accessing them in class, out of class, online

Reflective Dialogue
- Minute Papers, Learning Portfolios, Journaling
- About the Subject and/or Learning Process

Two principles should guide our choice of learning activities. First, an effective set of learning activities is one that includes activities from each of the following three components of active learning: information and ideas, experience, and reflective dialogue. Second, we should try to find *direct* kinds of learning activities, whenever possible. *Indirect,* or vicarious, forms may be necessary in some cases. But when we can find *direct* ways of providing active learning, the quality of student learning expands.

From my own experience and from reading the literature on what effective teachers actually do in terms of this holistic view of active learning, I have found that good teachers incorporate all three components of active learning in a variety of ways. As shown in Table 1, sometimes teachers provide information and ideas, experience, and reflective dialogue directly; at other times it is done indirectly or even online.

Table 1

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR HOLISTIC, ACTIVE LEARNING

	GETTING INFORMATION & IDEAS	EXPERIENCE		REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE, with:	
		"Doing"	"Observing"	Self	Others
DIRECT	• Primary data • Primary sources	• "Real Doing," in authentic settings	• Direct observation of phenomena	• Reflective thinking • Journaling	• Dialogue (in or out of class)
INDIRECT, VICARIOUS	• Secondary data and sources • Lectures, textbooks	• Case Studies • Gaming, Simulations • Role Play	• Stories (can be accessed *via:* film, oral history, literature)		
ONLINE	• Course website • Internet	• Teacher can assign students to "directly experience _____." • Students can engage in "indirect" kinds of experience online.		• Students can reflect and then engage in various kinds of dialogue online.	