TEO Course comments, Jan 2009

The following are the comments from the post-course survey as well as a few from a journal assignment given during the course. Overall themes [Hope] noticed:

* experiencing the course is very helpful both to see how navigation and structure play an important role, and to determine the types and amount of assignments that should be included;
* wikis are confusing: what are they, how can they be made to work well
* “makework” seems even more apparent in an online course than in a f2f course
* giving workshops attendee space and time to talk is important

A few general comments drawn from the blog assignment

0.1. As far as the wiki – this is the one tool whose uses I can’t quite fathom right now. (Mimi, journal)

0.2. I’ve also been having lots of problems with Firefox, and finally gave up and switched to Explorer. (Kevin, journal)

0.3. Honestly, I know that this journal entry is going to be held against me, but there is a great deal to the structure of this experience that feels more like "busy work" than truly productive activity. (Cameron, journal)

Comments from the survey:

1. As a result of participating in this course, I feel better prepared to teach online.

1-1. I am much better prepared and also realize I don't think I have even scraped the tip of the information I will need to know to teach online.

1-2. I think the experience of navigating through the course was the most helpful thing for me, and found that more important than the content. Many of the assignments were makework, but that's (relatively) OK, because the aim for me was getting used to the format.

1-3. The initial material, F2F session, and practice were very helpful. Also, being a student helps with understanding how it works and "feels." I think it was also useful that everything in the course was not planned out to be absolutely clear. I don't know if this was intentional, but having trouble finding the "journal" ... which might have really been a blog tool, or getting confused about how to get to the "wine tasting" all re-emphasized how important clarity and consistency is... because you don't have a F2F session to answer questions.

1-4. Although I have already taught on-line courses, I learned about new resources, including how wiki's can be used.

1-5. I think, considering the length of the course, that I feel more prepared but also that I feel like I have a lot more to learn! Perhaps a longer course might help, but, then again, the only way to really learn how to facilitate a discussion is to try it.

2. The course objectives and topics were relevant.

2-1. I intensely disliked the jargon-laden and content-thin articles from the education journals, and had to force myself through them. I would have greatly preferred articles about practical advice for setting up the course.

2-2. It's hard to design the course for the mix of "tools" available as we all have different visions of which we want to use and how. I think the basic principles are critical to think about and practice.

3. The workload and pace was appropriate.

3-1. It wasn't bad, a fair amount I think given all the other responsibilities of everyone taking the course. And it got easier as time went on, and I became more comfortable navigating around the site.

3-2. I do wish, however, that the course coincided with the winter break a bit more; perhaps starting immediately after Jan 1 and finishing by the beginning of the spring semester. While the workload and pace was appropriate, I felt like I could have put more effort into it if I had not been prepping for and teaching 5 F2F classes.

4. The combination of one day face-to-face workshop and online course was an effective way for me to learn.

4-1. I found the workshop helpful and would have had a much more difficult time without it.

4-2. I liked how we all got to meet F2F first and really see how the dynamics of our interactions changed from that day to the online portion - there is definitely a difference in the amount and type of interaction each environment allows for.

4-3. I felt that the online course was more beneficial than the workshop, however it was nice to meet everyone beforehand.

5. Please indicate what sessions during our Jan. 6th workshop you found valuable. Please check all that apply and use the comment box (below) for additional information that would help us in future planning.

5-1. The Chickering article is clear and a very useful set up for the f2f session.

5-2. I've already forgotten what "Chickering" means.

5-3. Paul Martin's talk was helpful, as were the readings ahead of times and the sideline conversation I had with colleagues while we were supposed to be "jumping through the hoops" of the workshop. The presentation on Web 2.0 and the "wine tasting" was helpful if one was spared the gimmicky aspects which cut off the meaningful information just as we were getting into it and forced us to move to another topic that was obvious or not helpful. Listening to your audience/class and their needs more rather than being so focused on being creative would likely result in better learning.

5-4. I so appreciated that the workshop was set up in a dialogue education format and that we had multiple opportunities to converse with each other. I loved the poetry slam idea for the resources because even though it was lecture oriented it was totally fun to see how quickly you could move through each of the resources without dragging us down.

5-5. I liked these two the best and only wish that we had been able to visit all four tables! The most confusing presentation perhaps was the very very quick run-through of online resources that are available - I felt overwhelmed. In future, while you may want to list them all, I think it might be best to focus on a few of them and go a bit more in depth in terms of how one might use the resource.

5-6. I think that it would be helpful to replace the opening session with a different activity, as well the small group task was rather rushed.

6. The instructor effectively facilitated the online course.

6-1. I had some real issues this last week and directly asked for help and didn't feel it came as quickly as I would have liked it. Also, the help came to the whole group and I didn't feel my personal frustration/stress was acknowledged by Elaine. I very much wanted to have a more direct acknowledgement of the situation I was experiencing

6-2. I think once it was set up the course largely facilitated itself, which was fine. The real work was obviously in thinking it through beforehand, which again was a good lesson for me to consider when setting up my own course.

6-3. Despite the moving, she did a great job with social presence - I really enjoyed the audio and video feeds she did and hope to try them some day.

6-4. The instructor was very friendly, helpful, and the comments were beneficial.

7. The readings for Week 1 ("Facilitating Collaboration in Online Learning" and "Online Collaboration Principles") added to my overall learning about online teaching.

7-1. I felt that the "Online Collaboration Principles" article really helped build the framework for online learning.

7-2. Hated them.

8. Using the "course wiki knowledge base" added to my understanding how how wikis can be used in an online course.

8-1. Honestly, I had trouble navigating the layout of the wikis once the text started to accumulate. Perhaps users should be given the option to create individual entries?

8-2. I don't think I learned much about whether wikis are valuable or ways they can be used, but I did learn how they worked, which is good.

8-3. I've already been using wikis extensively... so it was less useful. That's the mixed audience problem in designing this curriculum.

9. The readings for Week 2 ("If You Build It They Will Come: Building Learning Communities Through Threaded Discussion" and "Evaluating Online Discussions") contributed to my overall learning about online teaching.

9-1. Both readings were quite helpful, especially the "Evaluating Online Discussions". That reading helped me think more critically about how to evaluate discussion threads.

9-2. Hated them.

9-3. The discussion board tool needs lots of experience in making it effective. I'm still struggling with online discussion as an effective pedagogy.

10. The discussion assignments in Week 2 helped me clarify the role that discussion will have in my online course.

10-1. Discussion is something that everybody who took the course obviously cares about and has thought about for years, so it was worthwhile to read their opinions and about their experiences. And I think it was useful to experience the ways in which online discussion is different. But I don't think I learned much about how to conduct an online discussion.

11. The readings for Week 3 ("Move Over Socrates: Online Discussion is Here" and "Facilitating Online Learning: Tips and Suggestions") contributed to my overall learning about online teaching.

11-1. While "Move Over Socrates" contains some useful material, the title perpetuates an opposition between virtual teaching and in-class teaching that is problematic. The irony is that all the things Trufant describes are also good classroom practices as well.

11-2. I particularly liked the "Move Over Socrates" reading, as it provided nice examples of discussion prompts that lead to critical thinking.

11-3. Hated them. For me, the readings distracted from the good things about the course. I dreaded them and considered them wastes of time.

12. After completing the readings and assignments regarding online discussion, I feel better prepared to facilitate in my own course.

12-1. Still unsure here, but better than three weeks ago.

12-2. I'm "neutral" because I strongly disagree that the readings did me any good whatsoever, but I'm certain that experiencing the course did. I'd certainly like to see different, more practical readings, though.

12-3. Specifically the readings. The assignments were largely a waste of my time, except that I now know which colleagues would be likely be interested in discussing this further if I run into problems.

12-4. I cannot strongly agree because I still feel very nervous about getting the right balance!

13. The readings for Week 4 ('Uses and Potentials of Wikis in the Classroom" and "My Brilliant Failure: Wikis in the Classroom") contributed to my understanding of wikis.

13-1. I liked the "My Brilliant Failure" reading. It was nice to hear the feedback of someone that had utilized wikkis and to gain from that person's experiences.

14. The final wiki assignment helped me understand how to structure collaborative writing assignments.

14-1. I have added to my understanding, but don't trust I can actually use them effectively. Some simple instructions would have been very helpful. I found some on the fairy tale wiki, but not in the small group wiki....of course, they could have been there and I just didn't find them, but that's another issue too. I also don't think our group really negotiated how we would do the assignment. We talked a bit, but no final decision on who would edit them was clearly made.

14-2. I also found that this activity, particularly in a small group, helped me understand the differences in collaborative work outside of the F2F environment, which is so familiar to me.

14-3. I don't think we did anything "collaborative" with this. I got the impression that people were completing the assignment more than anything else.

14-4. again... I already understood this to some basic extent. Getting a deeper experience would require a more significant assignment and experience... maybe one that started from day 1.

15. The elements of this course that contributed to my learning were:

15-1. The day long tutorial: particularly the group discussion activities and the invited speaker. 2.

15-2. Excellent readings! Good opportunities to try out different pieces of Bb Assignment expectations were clear.

15-3. everything

15-4. Readings and practice with tools. The journal was a nice reflective practice as well.

15-5. 1) The first day. 2) Learning to navigate through the course.

15-6. F2F discussions with colleagues as we met in passing and commented what a pain the class was....then we actually talked about what are concerns are. Realizing how irritating a class can be when it detracts from my knowledge and goals. I will be much more sensitive to making it clear to my students how the assignments are useful and not creating assignments that can be perceived as "make work" exercises.

15-7. Readings The opportunity to journal The links to other web-sites within the course Some of the assignments.

15-8. What made this course most effective was the combination of readings and then having to actually use the technology to "do" it: discussion board, wikis, and the journal. The peer comments were also enlightening. The instructor feedback was informative and prompt.

15-9. The articles and the hands-on applications.

15-10. The overall exposure to being online everyday in this course made me a lot more comfortable to begin structuring more online courses for this summer. I also found the discussion threads interesting and most helpful.