

RETHINKING INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Best practice applied pedagogy for diverse eLearning cohorts

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Presentation for eLearning Showcase

11 November 2015

Why rethink independent learning?

What does independent learning mean in the context of eLearning?

How can we best facilitate it for fully online and for blended learning students?

Context in Faculty of Education & Arts:

- rollout of online delivery, teaching across multiple sites
- specific characteristics of Arts & Humanities courses
 - research & thinking skills,
 - discussion & argument based,
 - not about 'facts' or 'right answers'



Deliverables

develop and deliver a model for online and blended learning for the delivery of upper level (2/3) courses in the Bachelor of Arts

- informed by a 'best practice' pedagogical framework incorporating the principles:
 - constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang 2011)
 - fostering independent learning
- recognise the needs of two distinct cohorts
 - the wholly online (off-campus) student
 - the on-campus student
- make use of 'flipped classroom'



Learning from the literature review

- Challenges of designing learning environments and pedagogical approaches for courses with diverse cohorts
- What is an Independent Learner?
- How do we encourage independent learning?
- What learning theories and instructional design principles can inform our project?

Two key models in current literature:

- Community of Inquiry (Biggs 1996, Biggs & Tang 2007)
- Constructive Alignment (Arbaugh *et al.* 2008)

Constructive alignment

- **constructivism** in teaching
 - ‘learners use their own activity to construct knowledge of other outcome’ (Biggs & Tang 2007: 52)
- **alignment** in the design of teaching and assessment
 - the learning activity in the intended outcomes, expressed as a verb, needs to be activated in the teaching if the outcome is to be achieved and in the assessment task to verify that the outcome is to be achieved’ (Biggs & Tang 2007: 52)

Community of inquiry

- Social presence:
 - development of climate and interpersonal relationships
- Cognitive presence:
 - progressive phases of practical inquiry leading to resolution of a problem
- Teaching presence:
 - provides leadership throughout the course of study

(Akyol & Garrison, 2011:235)



ATSGC 3797 *Truth, Power and Structure:* *Understanding history and politics*

About this course:

- to be renamed *Researching History and Politics*
- individual research projects with progressive development (and assessment)
- Three stages or research projects:
 - identifying and developing a viable research topic
 - presenting a literature review
 - and developing a scholarly essay to present research findings



Project goals

Aim: to make better use of online learning opportunities for students to examine how different research designs and approaches suit specific topics and achieve different research outcomes

Approach: provide formative tasks and active learning for evaluating relative merits of approaches taken or not taken

Develop: series of learning activities that build capacities for utilising and evaluating disciplinary methodologies

SOCIO 2/3737 *Social Justice*

About this course:

- introduces a **sociological understanding** of social justice related issues
- provides a **comparative view of social justice** over a number of political and legal states and chronological periods
- consider social justice as a **theoretical concept** *and* what interventions may be drawn upon to address **social problems and social inequities**



Project goals

Aim: to make better use of online learning opportunities so that students may consolidate their learning of different theoretical approaches to social justice, and critically reflect upon the context of social justice issues

Approach: provide formative tasks and active learning in order to 'think sociologically' about social justice

Develop: series of learning activities that build capacities for utilising critical engagement with theoretical concepts and how these help our understanding of social problems and social inequities

FLMES 2/3450 *Contemporary Media Theory*

About this course:

- examines **developments in media theory** in response to new and changing media forms
- aims to **develop skills of critical engagement, theoretical application and analysis** in making sense of contemporary media technologies and environments



Project goals

Challenges: how to adapt a theoretical, reading-heavy course to the online environment in a way that fosters critical reading and thinking and engages real world issues and contexts. How to address the distinct learning needs of online and on-campus students.

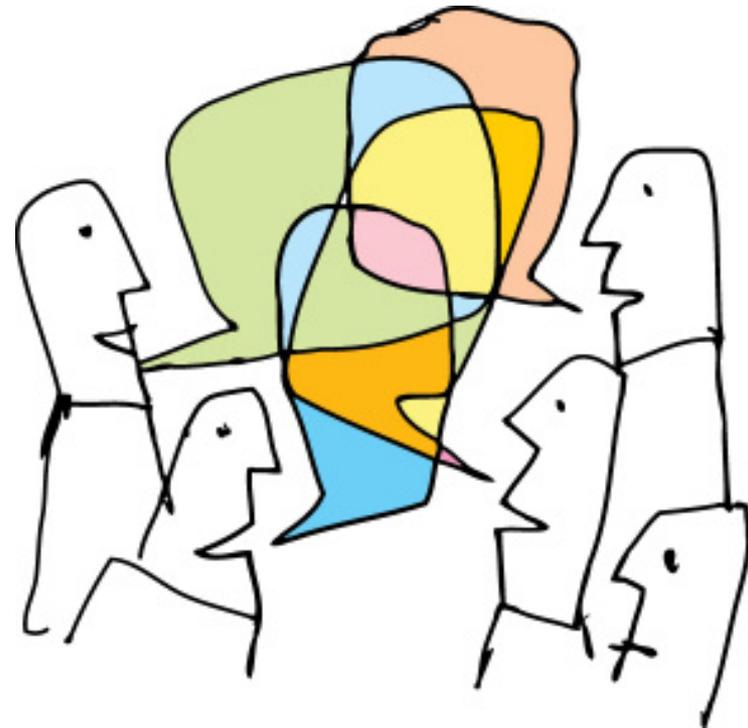
Project will utilise Moodle and its range of tools and applications to re-design course content for online delivery and differentiate tasks and activities according to the specific learning modes of each cohort.

Desired outcomes: make material more accessible and interactive for students; vary types of engagement, activity and assessment; provide equivalence in learning activities conducted either face-to-face or wholly online.

LITCI 2/3772 *English Language & Text*

About this course:

- introduces theories of sociolinguistics and social semiotics – connections between language and the social world
- aims to give provide skills in grammatical & linguistic analysis which can be applied to a range of literary and non-literary texts
- often the first time students have been exposed to learning formal grammar



Project goals

Challenges: course requires intensive introduction to grammar and close attention to analysing texts

Workshop/seminar style teaching – [how to translate this to online environment?](#)

Use of tablet to ink slides and record with audio for online students

Goals: Audit assessment and learning activities for constructive alignment

[Explore ways of enhancing cognitive presence and teaching presence for online learners](#)

RIL Milestones

Timeframe	Task
Semester 2, 2015	Literature review Overview of best practice models
Semester 1, 2016	Models devised and developed in 4 courses Models presented to FEA staff Models refined and feedback incorporated
Semester 2, 2016	Models embedded in online teaching