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A Tale of Two Courses: Renovating Courses for Significant Learning

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Using L. Dee Fink’s model of backward course design for integrated learning (2003), nine members of a year-long faculty learning community (FLC) designed and redesigned a course. Participants initially focused on critically examining what they wanted students to know, do, think and feel five years after taking their respective courses. Once participants established and refined course goals, they designed teaching and learning activities and assessments to help students meet those goals.

Fink’s model of course design and development provided the framework for creating and implementing these courses. (redesigns across disciplines). This model integrates the relationships between learning goals, assessment and feedback, and teaching and learning activities to ensure that these components are integrated and support the others. Fink’s conceptual model includes a taxonomy of “significant learning” that expands the definition of significant learning outcomes (for example, those traditionally championed by Bloom) to include goals of foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn.

This poster presents the results of two of the (re)designed courses, one on American literature and one on nutrition education. Highlighting the goals of the (re)designed courses with an example of teaching and learning activities, and feedback and assessment that support those learning goals.

**Redesigned Courses**

**Paul Quick, CTL/English**

**American Literature from 1865-Present**

- **Purpose:** Years after graduating, when my students walk into a bookstore, I want them to turn left to the fiction section instead of immediately turning right to the magazine racks.
- **Most significant changes:**
  - Refined and broadened learning goals
  - Included, increased, and refined learning activities for Fink’s significant learning goals.
  - Included more critical reflection as part of the portfolio project as a means of assessing student progress.
- **Provided additional and more systematic peer review process for formal papers to improve learning to learn goals.
- **Decreased overall reading load to focus on closer, more sustained learning activities.

**Rebecca Mullis, Foods & Nutrition**

**Course: Nutrition Education Methods**

- **Purpose:** This course is designed to provide students with a strong preparation for their future role as nutrition educators for individuals, groups and populations. The purpose of the redesign was to integrate more applied activities into the course materials.
- **Most significant changes:**
  - More student involvement in every class session through class activities, short papers, class presentations, and the use of rubrics to assist students in evaluating their own and others’ work.

**Teaching & Learning Activities**

**Learning Goals**

- Caring

**Assessment**

- Understanding foundational knowledge

- Developing critical thinking and practical research skills

- Critical reflections

**Feedback & Assessment**

- Understanding foundational knowledge

- Developing critical thinking and practical research skills

- Critical reflections

**Learning Goals Specific To Needs Assessment Assignment**

**Assessment**

- Identify the need and importance of a needs assessment.

- Develop a protocol to assess the target audience.

- Collect data from appropriate sources.

- Analyze data to determine the needs and interests of the target audience.

- Prepare a needs assessment report that includes findings and recommendations.

**Feedback & Assessment**

- Identify the need and importance of a needs assessment.

- Develop a protocol to assess the target audience.

- Collect data from appropriate sources.

- Analyze data to determine the needs and interests of the target audience.

- Prepare a needs assessment report that includes findings and recommendations.

**Summary:** The biggest mistake in implementing the portfolio was making it worth 25%. Given that these artifacts in the portfolio were previously submitted work, the only new work in the portfolio were the “Chosen” project materials (e.g., materials, the project, the reflection) and the general reflection essay on the entire portfolio. Added to the fact that there were a variety of different kinds of projects, assessing the portfolios largely became a matter of checking to see if required documents were present and giving a holistic grade on the project and the reflections pieces given the degree to which they addressed the stated goals for the course.

Reflective comment from student who did interpretive dance project and critical essay:

Throughout the course of English 2380, our class discussions have often focused on an application of the themes found in literature to our own lives. People, whether they be literary characters, Michael Jackson, or college-aged students, are texts in their own right, ready to be analyzed and understood on a deeper level. This project allowed me to analyze not only Laura Ellis, a fictional character, but some of my best friends. Characters in literature usually have motives behind their actions. Lily Bart shares her looks and personality because she wants an upper-class lifestyle. T.S. Eliot’s close relationship is motivated by fear to remain intact. Millenium Dead begins a quest because of his need to find identity. People also have motives, as is evidenced in the interviews done in this project. By analyzing the writing I interviewed, I was better able to understand their fears, beliefs, and other motives, and the effects those causes had on them.