Course Design Examples and Best Practices
How should I structure my course so students can find their way?

INSIGHTS
Course Menus should have consistent options between each course. This way items are predictably found. Identify what students will need in every course, such as syllabus and discussions. Course information is a great place for instructor bios, and expectations, do’s and don’ts, timelines, and checklists.

Your Turn
What are some other areas that you think should be consistent from course to course? Brainstorm some now….then we will look at why this is important for students.
The Hanover Research Council’s Best Practices in Online Teaching Strategies contains a Checklist for Online Interactive Learning. They state (page 7) that course designers should:

• present course content in a manner that hierarchically structures the sequence of information
• organize web site (or the LMS, such as Moodle) to enable student to interact with the content, other students, and instructor
What is Active Learning? How can I make my content more engaging?

PDF: Turnaround and Transformation: Leadership and Risk at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art
Review this case study by Cate Reavis. This case study is used for your final project.

Article: What Is Leadership?
This is an article by Kevin Kruse on the definition of leadership. This resource will help students complete task 1–1.

PDF: Asking the Right Questions About Leadership: Discussion and Conclusions
This PDF gives answers to relevant questions in the study of leadership psychology. This resource will help students complete task 1–1.

PDF: Developing Strengths or Weaknesses
This is a PDF article on taking a practical approach to your strengths and weaknesses. This resource will help students complete task 1–3.

Your Turn
Can you think of a current assignment in your own course that you could revise to make it more active? Think of at least one way to improve the level of active learning in your course and share.

INSIGHTS
Each resource is allocated to be used for a particular task. Students can pull from these to DO their activity. Assignments such as Case Studies and Discussions are considered better alternatives than more passive options such as quizzes, or extensive lectures in an online format.
Active Learning (Continued)

Your Turn
Can you think of some other ways to use resources in your course as tools instead of as downloads of information?

INSIGHTS
In this example, students are given a series of resources to pull from and are asked to synthesize this information with their own personal experience and share their thoughts. To make this even better, they might be asked to provide specific evidence to support their opinions. Tying this activity to a specific rubric sets expectations for what is required in their discussions so they are clear on the process and how they will be evaluated.

Read Understanding Change from a Systems Perspective
Watch Mallika Sarabhai: Dance to Change the World
Watch Omar Ahmad: Political Change with Pen and Paper

After completing the reading and watching the videos, please share your thoughts about change and one or two meaningful personal and professional experiences of it.

Read your peers' posts and provide feedback. This activity will be accessed using the Discussion Rubric.

Due Date: Post your initial thoughts by March 8, 2013. Respond to your peers' posts by March 11, 2013.

Add a new discussion topic
1-1 Creative Writing: Discovery Script

1. Watch the shorts listed in the resources folder for inspiration on what can be accomplished in a very short film.
2. Do the “Le Menu” exercise from Chapter 2 of Crafting Short Screenplays That Connect to help clarify your point of view and generate story ideas that resonate with you. You do not need to submit the story ideas.
3. Follow the instructions in Chapter 7 of Crafting Short Screenplays That Connect to write a three–page screenplay about a character making a discovery that makes a difference to the character. Because you are writing this script based on an idea generated from the Le Menu exercise, this script should also be about something important to you. Before you begin writing the script, write a scene–by–scene, which you will hand in along with your script.

The objectives for this assignment are:

- Apply industry–standard formatting to a short script
- Write a scene–by–scene outline of the script
- Write a three–page script where a character makes a discovery that is important to the character
- Create an identifiable moment of change for the character that occurs on screen

Submit via Turnitin and post it to the Workshop Wiki for critique in Module Two.

For additional details, please refer to the Screenwriting Rubric document in the Assignment Guidelines and Rubrics section of the course.

**INSIGHTS**

This example demonstrates several best practices for online learning. The students are provided with clear step by step instructions. The assignment is very active - asking the students to demonstrate their understanding of the course concepts. The objectives are clearly stated so the student knows what is expected of them. Also, the resources are incorporated into the task providing a strong connection between them.

**Your Turn**

List the ways this assignment differs from what you are currently doing in your courses?
The Hanover Research Council’s Best Practices in Online Teaching Strategies (page 15) lists findings that two top forms of interactivity in an online “classroom” are online discussion forums and student collaboration on assignments. They also remind us to:

1) Pose a stimulating question,
2) Brainstorm answers to the question,
3) Compare ideas, and
4) Fuse to the curriculum.
In The Hanover Research Council’s Best Practices in Online Teaching Strategies, on page 20, instructors should:

- Emphasize to students the importance of learning by playing an active role in the learning process, a role which differs from the direct instruction or lecture in traditional classrooms.

- Provide opportunities for students to critique and reflect upon certain course topics.

- Encourage students to use the Internet for researching course topics, but remind them to be critical about the information they find and share.

- Encourage students to be proactive learners by regularly logging into the course site, submitting assignments on-time, participating in discussions, and cooperating with teammates.

- Provide opportunities for active problem solving and for team work.

- Encourage the active participation in online discussion by designing provocative questions, encouraging students to respond to questions at a deeper level, and by pointing out any opposing perspectives.

- Use multiple discussion formats, including small group discussions, —buzz groups (two people discuss topic for short period of time), case studies, team debates, —jigsaw groups (where subgroups discuss parts of a topic and then collaborate on their findings, and role play.)
How do students demonstrate their competency? How can we assess them? How does this fit into “active learning?”

**8–1 Final Project Milestone Two: Ethics Debate**

For this assignment, your instructor has divided your group from the Workshop Wiki assignment into two debate teams. Each team will debate either pro or con the assigned topic. Refer to the announcement about team composition and topics.

This week, groups will participate in a debate about their assigned topic. Each debate team will work together to draft an argument. Within the team, you may assign one person to write each component and have another person serve as editor. Alternatively, you may pass a draft back and forth until you are happy with the results. You are required to make the following posts:

- Statement of opinion, maximum 250 words
- Rebuttal to the opposing side’s opinion, maximum 250 words
- Summary of your argument and its main points, addressing your opponents’ key arguments, maximum 250 words

Each post must be a maximum of 250 words.

**Please note:** You will also download and fill out the group evaluation form when this assignment is completed. The feedback provided by your team members will affect your grade under the Teamwork critical element in the rubric.

For additional details, please refer to the Final Project Rubric document in the Assignment Guidelines and Rubrics section of the course.

**Your Turn**

Read the assignment above. It’s from an online course in non-fiction writing. What are some of the good characteristics of this assignment? Can you think of an authentic assessment for your course? Share your ideas.

**INSIGHTS**

Authentic assessments ask students to apply their understanding. Authentic assessments might be scenario or project-based and often have multiple steps, where students can practice what they are learning and receive feedback along the way.
In The Hanover Research Council’s Best Practices in Online Teaching Strategies, on pages 24-25, assessment best practices include:

- Assessment through an evaluation process that uses several methods and applies specific standards for student learning.

- The regular review of intended learning outcomes to ensure clarity, utility, and appropriateness.

- Timely evaluations at regular intervals to increase course flexibility for students.

- The assurance that monitoring/proctoring policies are in place during assessments of student learning.

- The integration of some sort of verification method to ensure academic integrity.

- Assessment strategies are integral to the learning experience, enabling learners to assess their progress, identify areas for review, and re-establish immediate learning or lessons goals.

- Strategies are varied (self-tests, quizzes, journals, writing assignments, projects, exams, etc.) and aligned to instructional goals.

- Assessment criteria are clearly articulated.
>How do I create a learning community in my online course?

**Icebreaker**
Introduce yourself and describe your background, particularly as it relates to your education, your work experience, and any leadership roles you have held.

**General Questions**
If you have questions or concerns about the course, information related to the course, or something that relates to the current module but not necessarily related to a current discussion, please post it in this forum.

In order to manage time effectively, it is suggested that instructors use the following guidelines: Set limits,

- Do not always be available to learners,
- Establish clear priorities for dealing with messages,
- Put time limits on discussion,
- Provide learners with predetermined answers to frequently asked questions,
- Encourage learners to find local tutors and mentors,
- If possible, hire a TA to respond to students,
- Try to immediately acknowledge the receipt of a student's question, and set a period of time in which feedback will be returned. (page 26)

**Your Turn**
What else can you think of to provide structure, or a level of comfort to students in your online course? How can you learn more about this? Try this….

http://jolt.merlot.org/vol3no3/vesely.htm

**INSIGHTS**
Every interaction with your students offers an opportunity to build community. Setting limits and expectations with them upfront will also help build trust and respect.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Ranking Order</th>
<th>Faculty Ranking Order</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Instructor Modeling</td>
<td>1. Interaction and Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• professor participated in discussions</td>
<td>• create rich setting for student involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• professor answered questions quickly</td>
<td>• use deliberate instructional design strategies (role-plays, debates, interactive peer introduction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• professor communicates frequently by email</td>
<td>• instructor must design and facilitate activities that promote community building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• professor offers online chats for difficult material</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Student’s interest and priority for the class</td>
<td>2. Student’s interest and priority for the class</td>
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<tr>
<td>• must have self-discipline</td>
<td>• large portion is devoted to participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• focus on learning material</td>
<td>• students who don’t participate detract from community building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sufficient time for discussion and interaction</td>
<td>3. Sufficient time for discussion and interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interaction and Dialogue</td>
<td>4. Instructor modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have learned so much from classmates”</td>
<td>“Instructor can not model what has not been designed and embedded into the course.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
>What is Backwards Design? How can this be helpful to me?

**Identify Desired Results**
- What should students know, understand, and be able to do?
- Consider state standards, Curriculum expectations, teacher/student interests

**Determine Evidence**
- How will it be determined if students have achieved results and met standards?
- What is acceptable evidence of student understanding and proficiency?
  - Consider both informal and formal assessment.

**Plan learning experiences and instruction.**
- What must students know (knowledge and skills) to perform effectively and achieve desired results?
- What activities will equip students with the needed knowledge and skills?
- What will need to be taught and how should it best be taught given performance goals?
- What materials and resources are best suited to accomplish these goals?
- Is the overall design coherent and effective?

> Your Turn
What do you think are the advantages of this approach of course design?

Excerpt from:
Advantages

Backward Design is a strategy that turns most unit planning on its head, and emphasizes key ideas that affect the way students view their world. Advantages include:

• Students are less likely to become so immersed in the factual detail of a unit that they miss the whole point for studying the topic.
• Instruction focuses on global understandings and not on daily activities; daily lessons are constructed with a clear vision of what the overall "gain" from the unit is to be.
• Assessment is designed before lesson planning, so that instruction drives students toward the essence of what they need to know.

Wrap up

- Suggest some topics that are of interest to you as follow up discussions?