

A Collection of gifts



Issue 9 Fall 2010

Great Ideas For Teaching

9.1 Special Online Teaching Issue: Pedagogy First

Lisa M. Lane

Teaching online is about teaching, not technology. The technology must always serve the needs of the instructor, who knows best how to teach the discipline. But the web can seem an alien world, and it's easy to let the technology guide us. We do the tasks we understand, like uploading a file or writing an announcement, and worry about getting lost in a system or doing things wrong.

In this issue of Great Ideas for Teaching, we focus on ways to teach online that derive from our pedagogy, and make the best use of technology. To keep pedagogical concerns at the forefront, we can consider [Chickering and Gamson's model of Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education](#) (1987)¹. When we teach online, we can keep these goals in mind.

Good practice encourages contact between students and faculty. In addition to being required by state mandates, "regular and effective" contact between faculty and students is what most of us love about teaching in the classroom. It is no different online. All the articles in this issue demonstrate ways to make this a reality in a web-based environment.

Good practice develops reciprocity and cooperation among students, and good practice uses active learning techniques. Group work, through discussion, activities or projects, can be one aspect of an online class, or the heart of it. In Building Community, **Pilar Hernández** shows how she creates an environment of reciprocity and cooperation in her classes. **Louisa Moon** shows us how encouraging, and even grading discussion, can support this goal, and **Donna Marqués** does

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In the online-edition of this issue, we have included hyperlinks to referenced sources which can be accessed by clicking on the blue text. Web addresses are included in a Notes section following each article.

Submissions

Submissions are always welcome. There is rolling on-line publication and print distribution during FLEX week.

Please submit work to M/S 9 or dstephenson@miracosta.edu



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www.miracosta.edu/StudentServices/WritingCenter

the same with wikis, which engage students in creating content. **Jim Sullivan** demonstrates how social media can create active learning that we can see and assess.

Good practice gives prompt feedback, and good practice emphasizes time on task. Providing guidance and demonstrations, as **Robert Kelley** explains, can be part of providing quick feedback to students. As in a physical classroom, students expect response to the tasks they are asked to complete. This can be done in many ways while assuring students the instructor is really there, as I argue in my article on instructor presence.

Good practice communicates high expectations, and good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning. In every article here, the expectations for student engagement and performance are set to a high standard. Online classes are not the place where content or pedagogy gets “dumbed down.” Instead, teaching at a distance creates an opportunity to provide quality education and diverse ways of presenting and learning material.

In this special issue of MiraCosta’s GIFTs, we invite you to explore ways to teach successfully online. 🎁

Notes

1. See <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/7princip.htm>

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9.2 Online Community Building Organizing Principles

Pilar Hernández, International Languages

It's the first day of class; the students are feeling a full range of emotions. The instructor may be feeling nervous and excited too, but it is her class, she planned it, so she has a better idea of what to expect from that first day. The students know that they are walking into a classroom like so many they have seen before with desks, a teacher, an overhead, a chalkboard, and maybe a computer. This familiarity gives them some comfort. The instructor greets her students with a smile; she has her name written on the board along with the class name and outline so that the students know they are in the right place. She leads an icebreaker activity so that students can get to know her and their classmates; she walks around throughout the class able to observe if students are engaged by their actions, body language, and facial expressions. When she notices that someone looks lost, nervous or left out, she takes steps to reintegrate them by asking them if they need help or by presenting, contextualizing or demonstrating what was just covered in a different way. Verbally, she summarizes all of the important course policies that are also written for them on their syllabi and often repeats herself throughout the class to make sure students understand and remember what is expected of them. The students can see that she cares.

As you develop or update your online course, ask yourself:

- How can I provide my online students

with these same attentions?

- What is the online equivalent of a smile, a verbally summarized syllabus, verbal clarifications/repetition or a student's confused face?
- How can I make my online classroom feel comfortable to the students, a place where they feel safe and will want to stay engaged and learn?

You could begin answering these questions by brainstorming about the following:

- 1) What makes any community—the neighborhoods, the resources and public spaces—attractive and inviting to you; a place where you would like to visit or live?
- 2) How does this translate to an online class? How do you make an online class feel like a safe place where students would want to stay and explore, instead of just a page of information to visit?

As you read through this working list of online community building organizing principles, please keep the emphasis on the word “building.” Community building is ongoing and doesn't happen with just one activity. Approach community building as something you nurture every day. Approach this list as something to modify, improve and share with others.

Timeliness: Start Early

Your students are entering *your* online world, which is very different from the classroom with desks and the teacher at the front greeting them with a smile. Naturally, they are apprehensive

about what to expect. One way to calm them is to provide information about the class and yourself before the first day. You could send out a voice email one week before the class starts to welcome students to your class and to get them excited and motivated about the class. An early message makes them more likely to login and get acquainted with the setup of your class so that they can hit the ground running once the class starts. A couple of tools you can use for this are [Wimba](#)¹ Voice Email in Blackboard (Bb) and Moodle or [Eyejot](#)² (a free online video email tool).

Relationship Building: Make it Personal

Who are you? Your students want to know! In addition to telling them a little about yourself in the welcome email or voicemail, a webpage or page inside your CMS telling them about yourself helps students feel more comfortable and makes you more approachable. Who is in the class? How do you duplicate your on-site ice breaker activity? On or before the first day of class, a survey of the students to see who they are, what their interests are and what they have in common with you can help students get to know each other. A survey can also help tie their interests to the content of the course for future community-building activities. Examples of tools you could use for online icebreaker activities include [Voicethread](#)³, [Wimba](#) (in Bb or Moodle) or a polling or survey tool in your Course Management System (CMS). Take community building to the next level with a social networking site for educational purposes such as [Ning](#)⁴ or [Spruz](#)⁵, where students are able to create their own personal space in the class with a profile, pictures and information about themselves. Whichever tool suits your teaching style and goals, rev up your community by encouraging students to listen or view other students' contributions and respond to others, either because they have something in common or by explaining why a contribution caught their attention. Remember to always give guidelines on what to look for and how to respond appropriately.

Environment: Keep it Clean

Quality over quantity! If your class is drowning in menu items/choices, unnecessary features, fancy design, colors and photos, these serve as visual distractions and can confuse the student as to what is really important in the course. In short, they make an online classroom feel like a noisy, hectic community and most people desire a quiet community. What is the first impression you want students to have and what is the first thing you want them to see? It is okay to include some visual interest on your pages to make them more appealing, but remove all unnecessary features and content in favor of perhaps one visual organizer per unit. Everything should have a reason for being, so visuals should somehow be related to the material to be explored. Release content on a “need to know” or “need to see” basis. Presenting one learning unit at a time makes for a quiet, clean, and peaceful community where members are more likely to stay. If you have students link out of your course, make registration clear and easy, and keep that space clean as well.

Be an Active Member of Your Own Community

You can't expect students to be active in your community if you won't get involved. Your input is crucial, particularly in the early stages: you need to be visible for your community to get off the ground. Be accessible, attentive, and show concern. Like our on-site students, online students who do not get a response to their questions or contributions feel left out, alienated and are at risk of dropping out. Keep the dialogue going (in public and in private, since some students may be shy to start participating in public).

Ownership: Let Them Invest

Students perform better when they feel invested in their own learning. Find ways to get them involved in developing learning content for the course by encouraging them to share material from other communities, answer each other's

questions, participate in asynchronous textual or audio discussions, and share photos, links or [YouTube](#)⁶ videos. Discussions can take place in your CMS discussion feature, with [Wimba](#) or [Voicethread](#). Students can feel a greater sense of ownership with a social networking site (like [Ning](#) or [Spruz](#)) where they can create their own page with a profile and pictures, participate in discussion forums, post blogs, share material and chat. By the end of the course, all of their personal contributions to the community will appear on their page and are the equivalent of an electronic portfolio.

Information Dissemination: Make a 'Dummies' Guide

No matter how easy you think your community is to use, some people will still be confused. You need to cater to everyone! Ensure you have guides on how to use the community and make them easy to find. Have a section for frequently asked questions. Even better, create videos or screencasts so people can see how to use the community. Instead of answering questions with more text, answer it with a voice or video email. [Jing](#)⁷ is an easy to use screencasting tool that includes audio, so your voice can do the explaining.

Stay Connected

Remember that on-site students have the benefit of attending class, connecting with you visually and hearing you repeat and remind them of due dates, course policies, requirements, clarifications on assignments, etc. Most often, online students have only their syllabus and calendar and written instructions for assignments. Why not provide online students with email (or voice email) reminders and “check-ins” to keep them on track and connected? Instructors often think that if we provided the course policies and calendars to them in writing, students should just read these course materials and we shouldn't have to remind them. Why shouldn't we? It takes just a minute to make sure you don't have to deal with

unnecessary student emails, complaints, excuses and requests for permission to submit late work. Furthermore, it sends a strong message that you are there to support them and that you care. In the end, you aren't doing more for the online students than the equivalent of that quick verbal reminder we so often include in our on-site classes. Since most people read their inbox subject lines, not the actual emails, put the reminder in the email subject line. The email could be textual, voice or both and sent to students from your CMS, a copy of which could be included on your announcements page.

Add Voice

Text-based online interactions can build community through regular instructor announcements, interaction in discussions and individual feedback to students, but many online educators are moving beyond using only text and exploring how emerging technologies, specifically voice tools, can help in the development of a thriving community. A [2007 research survey](#)⁸ conducted at West Virginia University incorporated asynchronous audio feedback in addition to text-based feedback in an online class and evaluated the students' perceptions about how the text and audio comments affected them differently. The researchers were interested in identifying whether “the inclusion of an auditory element might strengthen both the sense of community and the instructor's ability to affect more personalized communication with students” ([Ice, Curtis, Phillips, Wells, 2007](#)). Out of the 27 students surveyed in the online class, 25 of them indicated that they preferred the audio feedback to the written feedback. They reported an increase in their comprehension of what was being explained to them, they felt more involved in the course, they perceived an improvement in their retention of the material and they believed that the instructor cared more about their learning when receiving feedback through audio ([Ice, Curtis, Phillips, Wells, 2007](#)).

Always Be Courteous

Since much of online communication is textual, one has to be extra careful not to be misinterpreted and alienate students. So many college resources are geared toward helping retain the on-site student, but a lot of work is still needed to address the retention of online students. On-site classrooms are all very similar and students know what to expect. In an online class, the environments are as varied as the personalities who manage them. Therefore, it is important for instructors to address all student confusion and questions about where to find information, and to view miscommunication not as a lack of attention on the student's part (even though this may sometimes be the case), but as a possible course design flaw that needs addressing. To address online students' needs and promote retention in a courteous manner, I recommend reading "[Go the](#)

[extra mile for members of your community](#)"⁹

by Martin Read, the manager of Community Spark.

Add a Light Touch

One final way to keep students interested, promote student autonomous exploration and give them additional insight into the real world applications of your discipline is by sprinkling fun facts, trivia or fact-finding missions into your class. Examples could include: chapter openers that relate a fun fact to the material they are about to explore, a "did you know" feature in which they could participate, trivia question competitions on a discussion forum. A sense of humor lightens the community without detracting from the seriousness of coursework, and makes it a more friendly place to learn. ❄️

Notes

1. See http://www.wimba.com/solutions/higher-education/wimba_voice_for_higher_education
2. See <http://www.eyejot.com/about.html>
3. See <http://voicethread.com/#home>
4. See <http://www.ning.com>
5. See <http://www.spruz.com>
6. See <http://youtube.com>
7. See <http://www.jingproject.com>
8. See http://www.adobe.com/education/resources/hed/articles/pdfs/v11n2_ice.pdf
9. *Building Online Communities* is a blog that shares tips and advice on how to build and manage successful online communities whether they are forums, blogs, chat sites, or social networks. See <http://www.communityspark.com/go-the-extra-mile-for-members-of-your-community>

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9.3 Midwifery: Encouraging and Grading Discussion in the Online Class

Louisa Moon, Social Sciences

Pretty much every educator knows something about the pedagogical technique known as “the Socratic method.” In the Socratic method, rather than professing the truth to the student, the teacher uses questions to help the student realize the truth. In modern education lingo, Socrates was “the guide on the side,” rather than the “sage on the stage,” but Socrates was more than that. Not only did he guide people to knowledge they wanted to find, he also goaded them into realizations they never wanted to have.

Socrates compared the role of the teacher to that of a midwife. The midwife has had no part in forming the baby. When the midwife gets to the woman, the baby is already there inside her. Nor does the midwife give birth to the baby; only the pregnant woman can do that. The actual, painful, arduous job of pushing the baby out belongs to the mother alone. What the midwife does is to sit with the expectant mother, and help her to get comfortable. Then, when the baby is ready to be born, the midwife encourages, cajoles, and pushes the woman into giving birth.

Since Socrates believed that the knowledge was already in his students, he thought that the job of the teacher was to “educate” or “bring out” the knowledge, and this is the origin of our term “education.” In the Socratic method, the educator asks questions that encourage, cajole and goad the student into giving birth to the knowledge that is already inside. The midwife and the educator both need to start by making a safe and comfortable

place for giving birth, but when the time comes to give birth, a little discomfort, and sometimes a great deal of discomfort, inevitably accompany the process. This is why the Socratic method is most effective at the point when the questioning causes the greatest discomfort as the student realizes the size and implications of what’s about to emerge, and begins to resist it. This is also why Socrates was made to drink hemlock.

Part of the common wisdom is that you cannot or should not grade discussion. The function of discussion is to make the student comfortable. Many online teachers use discussion solely to set students at ease and encourage them. Like a conversation between contractions, online discussion boards are primarily used to help students relax and build a sense of community with others in the class and rapport with the teacher that will help them through the tough pushing stage. When grades are given for online discussions that fulfill these goals, they will usually reflect the quantity of contributions rather than the quality.

The discussion board can also function as the transition and pushing stages, too. In my online class, I try to start the student out with sharing questions that help him or her to establish rapport and feel comfortable within the community. Later, when the students have established rapport, I begin to have them interact on less of a personal level and more of a critical level. At first they feel disconcerted, expecting the teacher to come in and apply all corrections, and getting angry with other students when questions and challenges are too pointed. To get them to push past their comfort zone, the incentive of a grade that’s not based on number of contributions alone is needed. For that reason, I have developed and implemented rubrics like the one included here (for a Critical Thinking course).

Discussion topics grow from an initial introduction and discussion of a time when the student or a friend exercised poor critical thinking skills (a topic to which everyone can relate without much research), to a more complex analysis of rhetorical devices in the media, to analysis of examples of different types of arguments as found in the letters to the editor, surveys, or causal studies.

Since students cannot receive full points unless they are willing to post corrections, challenges and insightful questions, and to raise objections, they are pushed to become midwives to one another's learning.

As they take on more of this role with one another, I remove myself from their direct line of

sight more and more. This is easier in an online class because the visual cues to my authority aren't there. I'm not at the front of the room during an online discussion. As far as students can tell, I'm not really in the room at all during some of their conversations. I start by posting a friendly response to every contribution. From there I move to modeling the discussion assignment and giving spot corrections and initial encouragement, as well as asking some insightful questions. Then, I move to commenting only after all students have commented. Finally, students initiate their own discussions as they prepare for the group project. The projects that they give birth to are larger and more complex organisms than they could have produced on their own. ☺

CRITERIA	Full Points	Most Points	Partial Points	No Points
Timeliness and Frequency of Posts	Student posts three or more times, including initial post and responses, according to deadlines.	Student posts only twice.	Student posts once before the final deadline for the section.	Student does not post within the section deadline.
Relevancy and Completeness	Student's initial post thoroughly addresses all aspects of the question(s), and responses to other students directly address their initial postings with augmentation, correction, challenges, and insightful questions.	Student's initial post addresses most aspects of the question(s), and responses to other students address their initial postings.	Student's initial post addresses some aspects or questions, but is incomplete or off-topic, and responses to other students are mostly unsupported agreement, disagreement, or encouragement.	Student's initial post is off-topic and doesn't address questions, and responses are "me toos" or discouragement.
Knowledge of Class Materials	Student's postings show thorough knowledge of the section's textbook and websites readings.	Student's postings show general knowledge of readings and websites.	Student's postings show vague knowledge of topic.	Student's postings show no knowledge of topic or convey serious misunderstandings about the topic that should have been corrected in study of the topic.
Contribution to Learning Community	Student's postings support the creation of knowledge by going beyond what was in the readings to add insights taken from personal experience, other classes, outside readings, and research. Student's responses to other students support their pursuit of greater knowledge, and are respectful, helpful and encouraging, even when providing correction or raising objections.	Student's postings ask and answer insightful questions and add to the course knowledge base through information taken from personal experience and understanding of the class readings. Student responses to other students are polite.	Student's postings answer questions and do not intentionally insult classmates or their opinions.	Student's postings deliberately show disrespect for other class members.

A sample rubric created for a Critical Thinking course.

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9.4 Using a Wiki for Group Presentations

Donna Marqués, International Languages

What is a “Wiki?” you ask. No, it is not Wikipedia. Rather, it is an interactive website that allows students to view pages, edit pages, upload files, upload videos, upload pictures, upload almost anything! Please see a short [YouTube video](#)¹ that explains wikis in plain English.

The use of a wiki has been particularly successful for me with group presentations. It not only allows me to monitor student progress, but it also allows me to see how much each student is contributing to the group’s work. It allows me to be a fly on a “cyber wall.”

Each group gets their own folder with three pages in it. The first page is the homepage where students have an interactive calendar that allows them to set up dates to meet with each other. It also contains deadlines & due dates for class. There is also a livechat on this page. If two or more students are on the site at the same time, they can have an asynchronous voice or text chat. Students can upload any Google gadget, as well as other tools to this page.

The second page I put in each folder is a collaboration page. This is the page where I expect to see collaboration amongst the group about the presentation topic. Each student

identifies himself by color.

The final page is the dialog page. This is the page where the students write out their dialog. I teach Spanish, so students are simulating a real world experience in which they speak in the target language. One example would be that they are American students studying in Spain; they experience the culture, food and university life. This interaction must take place in Spanish. This is the page where they write out the exchange of language.

My students have responded very positively to the wiki. They appreciate the ease of use: edit & save! That is all you have to do. It is as easy as using a word processing document for all to see and edit. They also appreciate the convenience. They can work on their presentations any time of the day or night. They can send links to their group members to let them know they have made edits.

Another great feature is that there is no way to make a mistake. There is a page history button, which allows the student (or the instructor) to go back and find the original version. Therefore, if a student accidentally erases another student’s work, it is easily recoverable. Another built in feature is the “lock.” If one student is editing a page, another cannot edit at the same time.

The best thing about wikis is that they are *free* to educators. Just google “wiki” and you will find a link to a plethora of free wiki sites. Good luck and happy wiki to you! 🎁

Notes

1. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmLY>

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9.5 Teaching, Learning, and Social Networking

Jim Sullivan, Letters

“Bree, are you facebooking from your iPhone during my class? Wow...that’s a bummer...and you are not even visiting my page!”

If those words bring a chill to your teacherly heart, then I welcome you to the ambivalent world of teaching and social networking tools. While its power to mesmerize and distract our students can make social networking feel like an enemy, I have come to view Web 2.0 social networks as an invaluable supplement to both onsite and online teaching. Beyond giving me new ways to share my ideas and materials, social networking tools help students emerge as collectors, evaluators, and generators of knowledge. In short, they can shift a class from a teacher-centered orientation toward a more student-centered ethos.

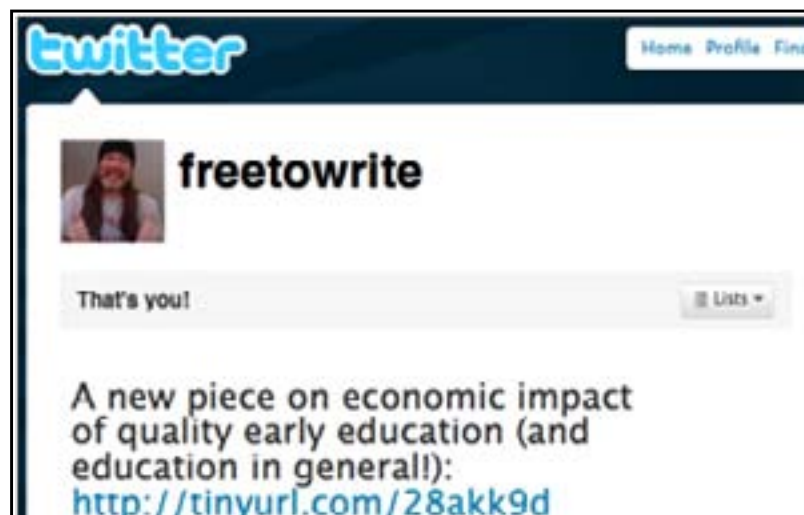
Twitter

Rightfully, [Twitter](#)¹ has earned broad mockery for the orientation of some of its most counterproductive practitioners—excessive self-regard, flippant and divisive social mockery, and a view of the world flattened by its immediacy. I see all of those problems with Twitter, but as a teaching

tool Twitter has helped me connect students to the wide range of resources that emerge in whatever course I am teaching during the semester. As I find articles and web pages that connect to our work during the semester, I can send out short posts (140 word characters or less) on [my Twitter account](#)². I can then feed these “tweets” to a course blog, Ning, Moodle, or Blackboard site.

But I can also hand this role of knowledge disseminator and evaluator over to students. For those who wish to enrich their learning and their classmates, I invite them to set up Twitter accounts focused on a specific aspect of the course and post regular “tweets” over the semester. A composition course focused on writing about art in California may have a collection of Twitter feeds by students ranging from California music and California architecture to the vicissitudes of grammar, MLA formatting, or even writing style. Because social networking tools make it easy

for students to share what they find, I can share with them some of the responsibility for generating knowledge and resources for the course through Twitter. And the art of briefly presenting and/or commenting on a resource



A tweet featuring an article about education.

in 140 characters opens up some very productive conversations about prose style that have all sorts of crossover potential to professional and academic writing in general.

Facebook / Ning / and other Similar Social Networks

When I facilitate workshops or read web discussion boards, I frequently encounter anxiety about [Facebook](#)³ as a teaching tool because most of us see Facebook as something personal or private that we share with friends and family. Certainly Facebook can play those roles, but as recent news stories make clear, Facebook is in many ways also a public space. For this reason, I treat [my Facebook page](#)⁴ as a vehicle for staying in touch with former students but will “friend” current students if they ask me to do so. Because I consider it a public presentation of myself, I limit my postings there to things that I would want colleagues and students to see, and I generally avoid visiting my students’ pages unless they ask me to. I have not used a Facebook page as a host for a course yet, mostly because I felt students would be uncomfortable linking their existing pages to it. But I have had students create Facebook and MySpace pages as alternatives to traditional papers in my American Studies courses (students have created pages for social or artistic movements, Native American tribes and other topics) and students and their classmates enjoyed this option. In this case, once again, social networking seems a better tool for helping students create and distribute their own research, thinking, and writing than it does as a vehicle for my more formally structured teaching resources like web lectures, powerpoints, etc.

As far as using Facebook or other social networks to create a teaching/learning space goes, I have had success using [Ning](#)⁵ (which has been



Jim Sullivan's Facebook page.

free—if you do not mind ads—until recently; a pending change in “pricing structure” may mean I and others will have to [explore new options](#)⁶) because it incorporates social networking functions like “walls” and “friending.” Most importantly, Ning allows students to have their own pages connected to the main course page and contribute photos, videos, and other resources to libraries I create on the course home page. In short, [my Ning site](#)⁷ facilitates my delivery of material to students in a more appealing format as it allows the students to play a larger role

in generating course materials, resources, and shared knowledge. Its ability to combine blogs, comment walls, multimedia libraries, and other goodies in a social network structure has made Ning especially effective for me as a supplement to onsite and hybrid classes. The absence of gradebook and quizzing functions limit its use for online instruction for those of us who view those pieces as essential—but you can also combine a course Ning with a traditional course management system and have the best of both worlds (students seem completely comfortable jumping between multiple systems like these).

Social Bookmarking

Our MiraCosta colleague [Lisa Lane](#)⁸ introduced me to social bookmarking—sites that allow you and your students to bookmark and evaluate sites and resources related to the material you are teaching/learning in your class. Over the past year, I have come to see this as a superb tool for drawing students and colleagues into the world of research and scholarship.

For a few years now, I have been using a [Delicious](#)⁹ account to find and save links to key resources for my students. I then push these resources into course sites such as my [English 202 Signs Abound](#)¹⁰ blog by using RSS feeds (which I can copy and paste from inside

Delicious). On the course/blog home page, students can find links to the goodies I have saved for them on Delicious related to the material we study in that class (composition, semiotics, etc.).

But a recent experience facilitating our [Program for Online Teaching](#)¹¹ blog ([Pedagogy First](#)¹²) has opened my eyes to the power social bookmarking can have as a tool for students to create resources for each other

as they think critically about those resources and share with their instructors and classmates. As the blog conversation advanced over the semester, contributing faculty kept saying “we need a cool place to keep all of these links we are finding,” and Lisa Lane would remind us that “we should use a social bookmarking site for this.” Eventually, we acted on Lisa’s suggestion and set up a [group Diigo site](#)¹³ where each of the contributing authors could post the links they were finding (often including their narrative posts on the blog) in one central location.

While I found the entire blog process with my colleagues inspiring and enlightening, the biggest “takeaway” for me was the potential for my own classes. I am now asking students to create annotated bibliographies using Diigo to collect resources in every class I teach—something that blogs and social networks can do but not with the same efficiency and rapid search capability as social bookmarking tools. Via Diigo students can connect not only with the web resources

but also academic resources at MiraCosta’s and other libraries. Through this one tool, students think critically and evaluate sites, texts, and other learning tools for an audience of their peers while

discovering resources for research and other writing projects that they would not have discovered working alone. In short, social bookmarking is contributing to better thinking, reading, and writing in my classes.



English 202 course blog.

Explore, Dabble, and Share (Please!)

I encourage you to explore what colleagues in your discipline are doing with Web 2.0 and social networking tools. In my experience, these technologies are hot topics in most professional journals, web sites, and other forums, so you will not have to look far to find interesting discussions and potentially rewarding applications in your field (I use a tool called [netvibes](#)¹⁴ to pull together some of the resources I monitor most regularly). Once you find something you like, I recommend working incrementally. Try something small in one class first and see how you and your students like it. From there you can build on what works in ways that will not overwhelm you or your students.

And please let me know about the networked teaching and learning masterpieces that you and your students create: <jimsullivan@miracosta.edu>. ☺

Notes

1. See <http://twitter.com>
2. See <http://twitter.com/freetowrite>
3. See <http://www.facebook.com>
4. See <http://www.facebook.com/freetowrite>
5. See <http://www.ning.com>
6. See <http://www.masternewmedia.org/ning-alternatives-guide-to-the-best-social-networking-platforms-and-online-group-services>
7. See <http://signsabound.ning.com>
8. See <http://lisahistory.net/wordpress>
9. See <http://delicious.com/freetowrite>
10. See <http://signsabound.com>
11. See <http://mccpot.org/wp>
12. See <http://www.freetowrite.com/pedagogyfirst>
13. See <http://groups.diigo.com/group/mccpot>
14. See http://www.netvibes.com/freetowrite#Launch_Pad

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Issue 9 Fall 2010

Great Ideas For Teaching

9.6 Screencasting for Educators: Possibilities

Robert Kelley, Behavioral Sciences

Screencasting is the recording of material presented on your computer screen—plus your narration—and then sharing it with others. A screencast is essentially “show and tell.” To help you conceptualize screencasting, imagine that a student is in the room with you, and you are both looking at your computer screen. The student can see what you have displayed on your computer screen, and hear what you wish to share about it. In addition, you can use your mouse as a pointer on your screen to focus the student’s attention. The screencast that you create is essentially a video recording of what you presented on your computer screen plus your narration.

Screencasting is quick, effortless, and effective. With a screencasting application (e.g., [Jing](#)¹ or [Screenr](#)²) you can create, post, and share a screencast within minutes. Importantly, screencasting is a great way to increase your teaching options, enhance your online social presence, utilize a richer communication medium (both visual and auditory), and encourage new forms of student participation. Once posted, students can refer to your screencasts 24/7, as often as needed.

Students often share that while watching a screencast they feel as if they are actually “in the classroom with the instructor.” That is high praise indeed—indicating that screencasting is both a rich medium for instruction and that it conveys to the students the instructor’s presence. In some courses, students are asked to create their own screencasts—which can result in a wealth of instructional tutorials and presentations. Think

about how you might use screencasting in your class.

Instructional Uses for Screencasting

A lecturette is a short presentation of 4 - 7 minutes. Typically a lecturette is focused on a single topic. To create a screencasting of your lecturette, first open the computer or web application that you wish to show your students. The application could be a slide show presentation, a drawing application (that you would treat as a whiteboard), an online resource (e.g., a website or online demonstration), or video that you wish to discuss (e.g., a [YouTube](#)³ video). If your lecturette is a slide show presentation, you’ll need to create the slide show ahead of time. Then you start the screencasting program, add your narration, use your pointer to focus attention, and interact with the applications (e.g., drawing, advancing to the next slide, starting an online demonstration, etc.).

Lecturette Possibilities:

- Slide presentation (e.g., MS PowerPoint, [SlideShare](#)⁴)
- White board (e.g., a Web 2.0 whiteboard, MS Paint)
- Video (e.g., as you record a [YouTube](#) video, discuss the action as it occurs)
- Electronic/Internet resource (e.g., Art Images, Websites, Demonstration Applet)

A tutorial teaches students a process, such as using an application, how to solve a problem (e.g., math), navigating a particular resource, etc. When covering a complex topic, consider breaking it down into several short, focused tutorials. Students can refer to the tutorials as needed, watching it as many times as needed, when they need it.

Tutorial Possibilities

- How to use an application (e.g., statistical package, drafting program, web 2.0 app, etc.)
- How to navigate the course online ([CMS/LMS](#)⁵/Website)
- How to use a web resource (e.g., how to do a library search, use [Google Docs](#)⁶, etc.)

Primarily because screencasting is quick and easy, it can be used to enhance “regular” online communication. Screencasting adds both a visual and auditory component, thereby greatly increasing the richness of the communication. Discussing a document? Bring up the document, and then use your mouse arrow to focus attention while you provide your verbal feedback. Wish to use a whiteboard to walk a student through a process (e.g., solving a math problem)? Open a drawing program, then use your mouse (or drawing tablet) to draw on the “whiteboard” as you verbally describe the needed steps. Student having trouble navigating a site or using an application? Bring up the website or application, and while recording it with the screencast program, walk the student through navigating and using the site. Wish the student to “hear” the message (e.g., helpful with foreign languages, music, etc.)? Use screencasting primarily for recording the auditory component.

Personal Communication (e.g., Responding to a Student Question) Possibilities:

- Create a personalized lecturette to answer a question
- Discuss an image or document
- Open a drawing program and use it as a whiteboard
- Walk a student through using an application (e.g., drafting software)
- Describe relevant material (e.g., website, student work, electronic resource)
- When the emphasis is on “hearing” the communication (e.g., foreign language,

music, ESL)

Note: Personalize the response by including the student’s name, or perhaps instead save your response (without student identifying information) to later add to your FAQ section, teaching materials, or when responding in the future to similar questions.

Similar to personal communication, screencasting can be used to provide feedback on student work. In this case, you would open the electronic version of the student’s work (e.g., document, slide show presentation, posting, etc.), and then use the mouse arrow to focus the student’s attention while you provide verbal feedback on the assignment. A screencast can also be used to provide general feedback on an assignment, such as a solution guide or discussing commonly missed problems or difficulties experienced.

Feedback on Student Work Possibilities:

- Papers submitted electronically. Consider bringing up the document on your screen and going over it with the student (perhaps reviewing the written annotations you’ve already provided using Word, [Crocodoc](#)⁷, or [Adobe Acrobat Pro](#)⁸)
- Exams (visually bring up the exam to show the student as you discuss it, or highlight a small unchanging part of your screen, and basically just provide auditory feedback)
- A solution guide to an exam or assignment
- Individual or Group Slide Presentations submitted electronically to the instructor (e.g., MS PowerPoint, Google Presentation, [SlideShare](#), [VoiceThread](#)⁹)
- Art work submitted electronically to the instructor (e.g., photo, video)

Creating a Social Presence In an Online Course

For online courses especially, screencasting can help to project an instructor’s presence—to

motivate, encourage, connect, share, and excite students about what they are learning. Some screencasting programs also enable you to use your webcam (e.g., [Jing Pro](#)¹⁰). When you switch to a webcam, students can both hear and see you. If your weekly online announcements include using the webcam, your online students will experience a much greater connection with you. If you stick with just screencasting, they will know your voice, and appreciate the greater use of intonation available with “hearing” versus reading. Consider exploring the possibilities of screencasting for connecting more closely with your students. You may find your online students later approaching you on campus and thanking you for being their online instructor.

Enhancing Your Online Presence Possibilities:

- Provide a “Welcome to the Course” announcement/email/text messages

- Introduce yourself to your students
- Share weekly announcements or updates with the students (personalized to the class activities and students)
- Comment on student posts, blogs, work (in the screencast, you can directly point out what you liked about the students’ contributions)

Conclusion

Screencasting is an excellent pedagogical tool. With screencasting applications like [Jing](#), instructors can quickly, easily, and effectively provide students with instruction and feedback. The screencasts are then available 24/7 to the students, and can be reviewed as often as needed. Additionally, students often report that in watching the screencast, they feel as if “they are right there with the instructor in the classroom.” 🎁

Notes

1. See <http://www.jingproject.com>
2. See <http://screenr.com>
3. See <http://youtube.com>
4. See <http://www.slideshare.net>
5. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_Management_System
6. See <http://docs.google.com>
7. See <http://crocodoc.com>
8. See <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatpro>
9. See <http://voicethread.com>
10. See <http://www.jingproject.com/pro>

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Great Ideas For Teaching

9.7 Instructor Presence and Communication with Students

Lisa M. Lane, Social Science

One of my central objectives in developing and teaching an online class is to make sure the students feel that I am really there. Notice I said “feel” not “think.” The affective domain is crucial in online classes, where alienation is a very common problem. Online instructors tend to feel isolated, and fear that their students do too. The computer at each end, and the possible miles in between them, makes the environment for online teaching feel somehow sterile. Instinctively we know that this isolation is a bad thing, that it must lead to some students dropping the class. We want to help, bring them in, let them know we’re there.

The “distance” in Distance Education can be surmounted. Studies have shown that when an instructor has a strong, encouraging online presence, students experience greater feelings of motivation and inclusion. Instead of just posting files for students to read, I find it exciting that I can truly inhabit my online classroom, and invite students to join me. At the same time, I don’t want students to think they are in [MySpace](#)¹ or playing a game. I want them to know they’re in a college classroom.

I start with my writing. Writing style is important in establishing a professional yet approachable online presence. I shoot for something between *Formal Pedagogue* and *Facebook Friend*. When posting announcements or responding to students individually (by chat, email or messages), I use a more informal style. In these exchanges, students will be comforted

by informal language, exclamation points for enthusiasm, emoticons for delight or sadness. I do not use this colloquial style in my “formal” writing for the class, such as written lectures or instructions and policies. I think these should be more professional, to indicate that these parts of the site are in the “classroom,” where classroom standards of behavior apply. Although some instructors post rules of “netiquette,” I no longer find it necessary if I model respect and thoughtfulness in my own communication with students.

I also use my voice. My voice is distinctive, and I’m pretty good at reading aloud, especially my own work! Years ago, my online lectures were written out as web pages, with illustrations. I had a blind student who used a screen reader to hear these lectures, and when I heard a screen reader reading my work, I was appalled. It sounded robotic. So I began audio recording my lectures, and found out that not only visually impaired students, but everyone from new mothers up in the night to students with long commutes appreciated the sound files. Other voice options available to us include [Wimba Voice](#)², which can leave audio messages for students in Blackboard or Moodle. And of course, screencasting is nothing without a voice!

Part of appearing to be present is actually being there, in real time. For this, I use [Google Talk](#)³. It produces a bit of code I can put on any web page, showing whether I’m available for text chat. I put it as a permanent box on the front page of my online class. Students can click the link and an anonymous chat window opens up. It’s great for private chat with a student, any time I’m on the computer. They ask questions about the class and about materials. Some of my former students continue to use it to keep in touch, telling me how they’re doing at university. Oddly, I’ve never had

anyone abuse it. Other real-time options might include [Facebook](#)⁴ or [Stinto](#)⁵, or the increasingly popular [Skype](#)⁶. We also all have access to [Elluminate](#)⁷, a real-time program that includes a whiteboard, chat window, and the ability to show presentations.

Many chat and communications sites now include video. Yes, I'm shy in front of a camera. But in [Elluminate](#), it is so easy to just show a little webcam box with my face, talking. Video makes things more personal—I am there and students can see me.

But these are just the tools. My goal is to create an approachable, yet professional, online persona, just like I do in a physical classroom. In my every communication, I try to model what I want students to accomplish. That includes demonstrating not only how to work in my

discipline (such as how to write a thesis), but how to conduct oneself online.

Last, I keep in mind that I can't expect them to pay attention to my input if I don't pay attention to theirs. That's one of the simple facts about the web today—it is automatically levelling. I may be the teacher and they the students, but it's not like a classroom where I'm standing and they're sitting, where I'm at the front controlling everything. There is an equality that is encouraged by the online environment, and I don't want to fight that. So when they post in a discussion forum, I use their names when I cite examples, and quote their posts whenever I can in my own posts.

What I've achieved is a tone I like for my classes. I have created places where students know I'm there. ☺

Notes

1. See <http://www.myspace.com>
2. See http://www.wimba.com/products/wimba_voice
3. See <http://www.google.com/talk/>
4. See <http://www.facebook.com>
5. See <http://www.stinto.net>
6. See <http://www.skype.com>
7. See <http://www.illuminate.com>