

CHAPTER SAMPLER

Online Course Design

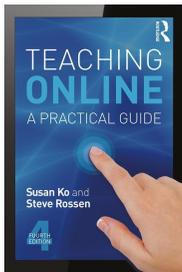


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Essentials of Online Teaching



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Elements of an Online Course: A Tour

This chapter covers the basic features available within most learning management systems (LMSs). The names of the tools/features may vary across LMSs. We try to cover the most common alternatives.

While it is certainly possible to teach an online course without an LMS, their use is so widespread that we felt it was necessary to provide a general overview of LMS features.

The illustrations in this chapter are taken from an online course in Macroeconomics at NYU. The course “introduces the methods and disciplines of economics through an examination of the American system. Topics include: national income analysis, business fluctuations, fiscal policies, principles of money and banking, the economics of the corporation, and resource allocation” (New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies, 2010). Epsilon was the LMS used.

Note: We did not modify the screenshots for print readability in this chapter. We did this to give you a sense of the authentic look of an LMS.

Table 2.1 (see page 41) presents the elements you normally need to build your online course. It lists all of the features of the LMS that need to be set up before the course goes live. We’ve also referenced the chapters that are most appropriate for you to review for each item.

2.1 Meet the Teacher

We'll begin by introducing you to the teacher who designed the content we are using in this section.



Joelle Scally, Adjunct Instructor, NYU, School of Continuing and Professional Studies. Joelle teaches an undergraduate online course in **Macroeconomics** to adult learners. She works as an economic analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

In her course, Joelle uses many forms of online assessment, including midterm and final exams, problem sets, and collaborative projects and activities using wikis and blogs. In addition, Joelle holds weekly discussions with her students via the **forum** around current issues in macroeconomics such as fiscal policy.

Personal Perspective

Joelle Scally

Kristen: Joelle, can you describe any challenges you encountered teaching a quantitative subject online and how you overcame them?

Joelle: Teaching a quantitative subject online poses its own set of challenges. First, students join the course with a wide range of math ability. This challenge can be even more striking in adult learners, since, in some cases, many years have passed since a student's last math class. Without the ability to monitor students' facial expressions and questions in real time, it isn't always easy to know if the class work is within the students' ability level. Providing examples, sample questions, and very specific, step-by-step guidance to complicated quantitative questions on both problem sets and sample exams for students is very helpful, and creates a more instructive experience for students.

Another challenge in teaching quantitative courses online is that students submit assignments electronically. If graphing or any complicated notation is necessary, completing the problem can become extremely onerous without a scanner. While access to a scanner was required, minimizing these types of problems and instead assigning problems where students were asked to evaluate and analyze provided graphs was helpful.

We selected Joelle Scally’s course as an example for this book because she used various features of the LMS to teach and design her online course. Also, we wanted readers to see examples of how a quantitative course can be designed for online.

2.2

A Course Tour

There are many features available in LMSs to allow you to create a rich and dynamic course. These features are only as good as the content and pedagogical approaches that are employed (see Figure 2.1).

Some of the **basic features in an LMS** toolbar are:

- announcements
- syllabus
- lessons
- discussion forums
- drop boxes/assignment upload
- resources
- grade book
- course email, and
- resources.

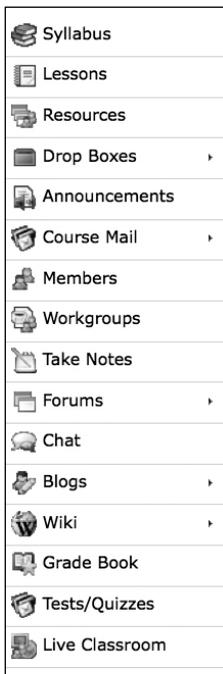


Figure 2.1

LMS course toolbar

These features should be standard to any LMS and teachers should plan to use them in their online courses.

Many LMSs are equipped with **more advanced features** that facilitate student-centered learning and communication. These may include:

- blogs
- wikis
- tests and quizzes
- workgroups, and
- portfolios.

We'll introduce you to the basic features and some of the advanced features to orient you to your new teaching space! Let's review these features and explore how they are used.

Announcements

Teacher announcements are usually the first thing students see when entering an online course within an LMS.

Welcome to the course!

My name is Joelle Scally—I will be the instructor for this course. If you'd like to read more about me, my bio can be found at: www.epsilon.com/jwm2106.

This is an asynchronous online course, which means we won't often have an official meeting time or place (actual or virtual). Instead, the success of this course depends on you keeping up with the syllabus, your level of involvement with this site and the online activities that I've planned.

Even though it is asynchronous, it does not mean that there is no time component—in fact, the success of many of the activities depends on your participation in a timely manner.

Let's get to know one another. If you have not already done so, please post a message in the "Introduce Yourself" forum, describing your background, expectations for this course, and any concerns you may have about online learning or macroeconomics.

I am looking forward to the course. Macroeconomics is a passion of mine, and I hope it will be a passion of yours as well!

Best regards,

Joelle

Figure 2.2

An online welcome announcement

The announcements feature is the place where the teacher communicates important updates to the class.

When the teacher posts an announcement, it will be waiting for

students to read it whenever they enter the online course environment. See Figure 2.2 for Joelle's "welcome announcement" to students.

Syllabus

After reading the course announcements, the students review the course syllabus.

The **syllabus** feature is an essential component of the course environment. It **provides structure for the course and outlines course expectations**. When students enter your course for the first time, they should review the syllabus to familiarize themselves with the course requirements. See Figure 2.3 for an example.



Instructor Joelle Scally
Email jwm2106@nyu.edu
Course Number Y10.0301, Semester Fall 2010, Office Hours Email is preferred, and I will answer emails within 24 hours.

Course Description

This course will introduce the discipline of economics through a study of the American and global system. Topics will include national accounting, employment, unemployment, interest rates, and inflation. We will also discuss economic policy (monetary and fiscal), international trade and exchange rates, and some of the major macroeconomic models.

Additionally, given the current financial crisis and "uncharted waters" that the economy is currently in, it is absolutely critical that students finish the course with some understanding of this crisis.

Communication Strategy

Because asynchronous online courses are so disconnected, there are other requirements for this course to connect us more closely:

- 1) You must have a clear photo set for your Epsilon profile photo!
- 2) I expect you to be responsive to my emails -- if I email you, please write me back within 48 hours. Because of the nature of the course, if you do not respond to my emails, this is like being absent from class.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, all students should understand:

- the difference between micro and macroeconomics
- the concept of supply and demand
- fiscal and monetary policy
- the role of money and the Federal Reserve system
- important economic data (National Income and Product Accounts, price index, etc) and be able to read and understand news reports on this data

Required Readings

Required Textbook:

Brief Principles of Macroeconomics, 5th Ed.
by N. Gregory Mankiw

Figure 2.3 An online course syllabus (only a partial syllabus is shown)

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Lessons

Students review the week-by-week (or unit-by-unit) course lessons.

Online lessons replace the **lectures, discussions,** and **activities** that may take place in an onsite classroom.

The lessons are the core instructional containers for your course. You may post a lesson for each unit of instruction. The lessons should lead the students through the course’s learning outcomes. See Figure 2.4 for a partial listing of lessons. The students click on the lesson title (i.e. “WEEK 01: 09/08 to 09/14—Introducing Economics”) to see (in this case) the lesson outcome and summary (see Figure 2.5).

Course Lessons	
Select a lesson from the list below.	
Title	Start Date
WEEK 01: 09/07 to 09/13 - Introducing Economics Chapters 1 & 2	08/29/2010
WEEK 02: 09/14 to 09/20 - Trade, Consumption, & Production Chapter 3	09/14/2010
WEEK 03: 09/21 to 09/26 - Supply & Demand Chapter 4	09/21/2010
WEEK 04: 09/28 to 10/04 - Measurements: National Income Chapter 5	09/28/2010
WEEK 05: 10/05 to 10/11 - Measurements: The Cost of Living Chapter 6	10/05/2010
WEEK 06: 10/12 to 10/18 - Productivity & Growth Chapter 7	10/12/2010

Figure 2.4 A (partial) listing of the lessons for each week of the online course

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Each lesson is broken down into sections. Figure 2.5 presents the sections of a weekly lesson. Students click on each section to get to the content.

Week 1 - 9/7 to 9/13 - Introducing Economics	
Lesson Sections (Click below section to view details)	
What is economics?	
Forum Discussion: Schelling -- DUE FRIDAY 9/10	
Reading: Mankiw Chapter 1	
Reading: Mankiw Chapter 2	
Problem Set 1 -- DUE MONDAY 9/13 11:59p	
Prev	Next
<p>This lesson intends on introducing economics, establishing a connection between macro and microeconomics, and a discussion of an economist's approach.</p> <p>Economics is a subject which many people love to hate. It can be dry, difficult, and overwhelming to those starting to study it. I've been working in economics for over 10 years, and when people ask me about what I do, a large part of the time they follow up with how much they hated economics back in college, when it was a required course. That is, until recently!</p> <p>The past few years have really changed the public's level of interest in economics. Many of us have been affected either directly by "The Great Recession", be it in the form of lost jobs, lost money, lost housing wealth. There are fewer jobs</p>	

Figure 2.5 The course content sections for a weekly lesson

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Discussion Forums

Students go to the discussion forums to participate in the online class discussion. They are directed to the forum from the lesson (see Figure 2.5).

The forums feature is an asynchronous communication tool that allows for the exchange of ideas through the use of a message board format. The structure of most discussion forums is based on a participant's ability to post messages or reply to messages posted by other participants.

Communication between participants is initiated when someone, usually the moderator, posts a topic or question for discussion. Based upon this first post, participants begin to communicate with one another by responding to the original post or to the posts of other participants. Discussion forums are used to promote conversations between students and the teacher. Figure 2.6 is an example of a discussion forum topic posted by Joelle for the students to discuss.

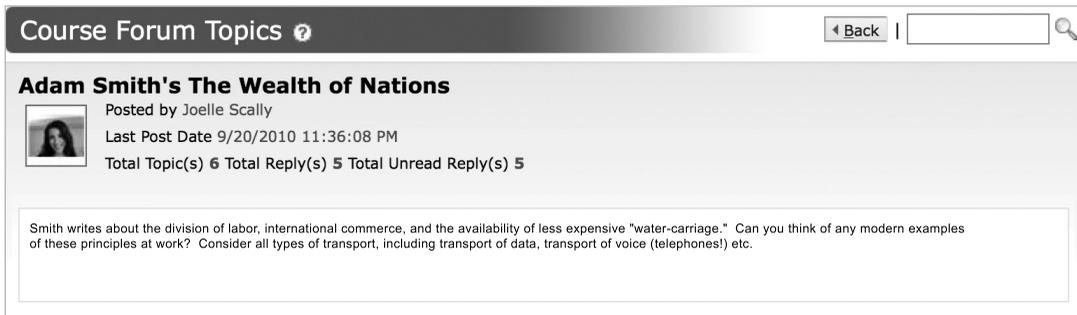


Figure 2.6 An online class discussion topic posted by the teacher in the discussion forum
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Drop Boxes/Assignment Upload

To submit assignments, the teacher may require the students to upload their documents to an online drop box or the assignments section of the LMS.

A drop box is a digital space in which documents, presentations, links to websites, and more can be uploaded by the students and accessed by the teacher.

You may create and use a drop box to have students submit and store assignments and projects for group or instructor review. Figure 2.7 is an example of four drop boxes that Joelle set up for students to upload their problem-set assignments.

Drop Box	Description	Files
Problem Set 1 - Due 9/13 11:59p	Please upload problem set 1 here.	13
Problem Set 2 - Due 09/20 11:59p	Please upload problem set 2 here	6
Problem Set 3 - Due 09/27 11:59p	Please upload problem set 3 here.	0
Problem Set 4 - Due 10/04 11:59p	Please upload problem set 4 here.	0

Figure 2.7 Drop boxes set up by the teacher to collect problem-set assignments from students

Assignment	Points
Problem Set 1 1.44% of Final Grade	<input type="text" value="78"/> / 100.00
Problem Set 2 1.44% of Final Grade	<input type="text" value="80"/> / 100.00
Problem Set 3 1.44% of Final Grade	<input type="text" value="95"/> / 100.00
Problem Set 4 1.44% of Final Grade	<input type="text" value="88"/> / 100.00
Problem Set 5 1.44% of Final Grade	<input type="text" value="100"/> / 100.00

Figure 2.8

The online grade book in an LMS

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Grade Book

The teacher uses the online grade book to communicate grades and feedback to learners.

The **grade book** feature is a tool that displays students' attendance, participation, readings, assignments, and project grades. This feature **enables the teacher and the students to review and track academic progress throughout the semester.**

See Figure 2.8 for Joelle's online grade book. Notice how the problem-set assignment titles correspond to those in the drop box in Figure 2.7.



For more examples of grade books, see the website.

Course Mail

The teacher may use the course mail feature to send out important messages to students. This is similar to course announcements. Mail can be sent to individual students or the entire class. It can be more time-sensitive than announcements since students probably check their email more frequently than they go into their online class.

The course email feature is an asynchronous communication tool that enables the teacher to send messages to class members and also view received, archived, or sent course-related messages. Course email uses the same features as other email systems in that it allows users to send messages to single or multiple users, which are then stored in their mailbox until deleted. See Figure 2.9 for Joelle's course mail, which archives all her sent messages to students regarding the final exam.

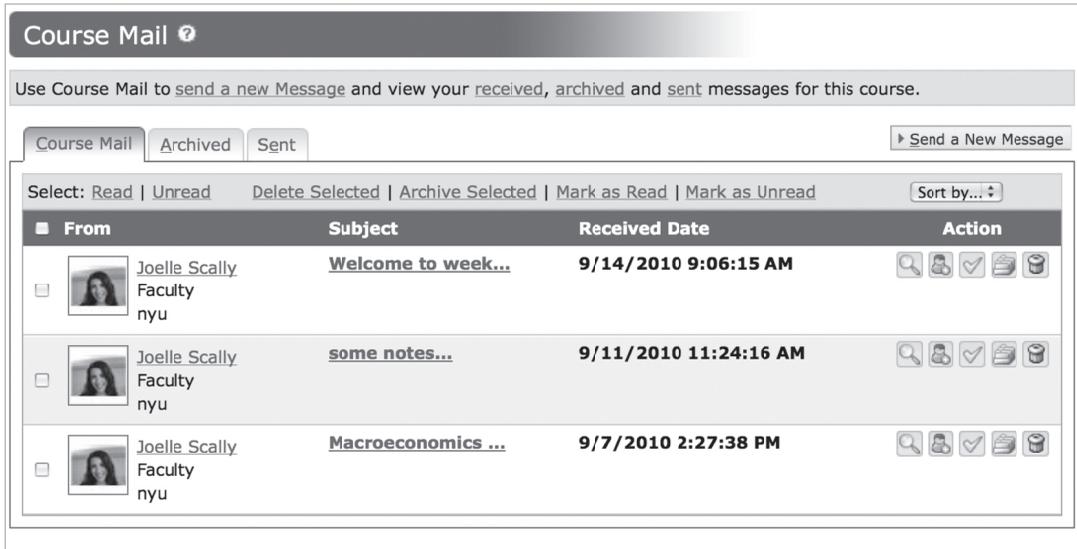


Figure 2.9

The course mail feature of an LMS

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Resources

In an online course, digital course readings and references are organized in a section commonly referred to as “resources.”

The **“resources” feature stores all types of digital and online materials that students are required to review**, including readings, websites, games, images, sound recordings, and video. To enable easy access to these resources, the teacher may provide links to them within the lessons. In addition, other resources may just appear within the lessons themselves. This is especially true for short video and audio clips, and images.

Joelle uses the resources section to post answers to problem sets, provide practice mid-term and final exam questions, and multimedia resources (see Figure 2.10).

Blogs

The **blogs feature is an online journal that enables the teacher and the students to post commentary on course questions, topics, and projects**. A single writer serves as the administrator of the blog and is usually the only editor of its content.

Resources ?			
Category	Title	Description	File/Url
Audios / Videos	Explanation of Production Possibilities Frontier	This YouTube video has a very nice, clear explanat... Read more about This YouTube..	 http://www.youtube.c...
Publications	Micromotives & Macrobehavior	This is the reading for the first week, in PDF for.. Read more about This is..	 Schellingor CH1...
Presentations	A Word on the Economy: Why Is the Country Facing a Financial Crisis?	Presentation from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. ... Read more about Presentation from..	 http://www.stlouisfe...

Figure 2.10
The resources section of an LMS
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(Spelling error in original.)

Users are able to set up and edit their blogs for the course, and also post comments on other blogs attached to the course. Entries are displayed in reverse chronological order, and include a time and date stamp that enables readers to see when a new comment has been posted.

Blogs offer teachers and students the ability to add commentary to the general course discussion and assignments. Figure 2.11 is an example of a blog posted by Joelle illustrating price increases since 1995.



See the website for examples of blogs and explanations of how they are used.

Wikis

The **wiki feature is a communal space in which the teacher and the students are able to post and edit content in order to create a collaborative information resource.** A wiki works upon the premise that users will add, edit, and structure content.

A wiki does not require that users employ a fixed structure for edits and format. Instead, through collaboration, users generate guidelines to structure the content, which may change as the wiki is developed. Ensuring that the structure

View Blog Entry
◀ Back |

★ **Price Increases since 1995 [Sample CPI Blog]**

Posted by [Joelle Scally](#)

Posted on MON 10/5/2009 11:14:58 PM

Since I graduated from high school in 1995, I thought it would be interesting to find out the prices of items compare now to then. **So, let's imagine (dream) that I received a very luxurious watch as a graduation gift.** This watch currently retails for \$6,050. How much did my benefactor pay for this watch? We know that:

$$\text{amount in today's dollars} = \text{amount in year T dollars} * (\text{price level today} / \text{price level in year T})$$

So, to fill in the variables:

$$2009_watch_price = 1995_watch_price * (2009cpi / 1995cpi)$$

But, we don't know the 1995_watch_price, so we have to get that by itself with a little algebra. Just solve for 1995_watch_price:

$$(1995cpi / 2009cpi) * 2009_watch_price = 1995_watch_price$$

Here's a table with the relevant data:

Time	Watch Price	CPI for Watches
June 1995	???	127.000
August 2009	\$6,050.00	114.603

Notice that the CPI has actually decreased, implying that the price for watches has actually gone done in the past 14 years! To find out how much my gifter may have paid: $(127.000 / 114.603) * 6050 = \$6,704.45$

Figure 2.11 A teacher-led blog illustrating price increases since 1995

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View Course Wiki
◀ Back |

Gains from Trade

Joelle Scally, Administrator Created On 9/14/2010 9:00:33 AM

Collaborative document about comparative advantage and gains from trade.

Comparative Advantage/Gains from Trade

Definition:

<fill in here>

Who Benefits?:

<fill in here>

Examples of agricultural gains from intrastate trade:

California is blessed with fertile soil and an excellent climate, and consequently produces a huge amount of the nation's produce, including certain items which cannot be grown in other states. According to the Agricultural Statistical Review of the California Agricultural Resource Directory 2008-2009, California is the largest producer of a dizzying number of crops in the US, including Artichokes, Celery, Lemons, Strawberries, among 75 others! When you look at the growing season for these, it's easy to understand how they lead, with in many cases a growing season which lasts year-round. California grows 99% of the artichokes in the United States, so chances are, an artichcke craving in New York is likely to be satisfied by a California artichoke -- artichokes do not grow in New York.

Figure 2.12 An example of a course assignment using a wiki

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of the wiki does not become too unwieldy depends upon the goals of the wiki assignment. See Figure 2.12 for an example of an activity Joelle devised using the course wiki.



See the website for examples of wikis and explanations of how they are used.

Tests and Quizzes

Many LMSs are equipped with assessment tools for creating online tests. Typically these tests provide computer-generated feedback to the learners. Figure 2.13 is a partial midterm example in Joelle's course. Notice how you can include various question types and formats. See Chapter 5 for additional examples.

Test :MIDTERM EXAM

1. Scarcity means that there is less of a good or resource than people would like to have.

true

false

2.

Point	Coffee Tables (X)	Sofas (Y)
Start	0	20
A	40	15
B	40	10
C	50	15
D	50	10
End	60	0

Using the graph, if this economy uses all its resources in the sofa industry, it produces 20 sofas and no coffee tables

true

false

Figure 2.13 An online midterm exam

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Workgroups

The **workgroups feature is a space in which the teacher can assign the students to different groups for course discussions, development and presentation of assignments, and projects.** This is a shared class space in which students are able to post updates and information to other group members, upload and store project files, and create interactive and collaborative projects. See Figure 2.14 for the features of an online workgroup.

Note: Joelle did not use workgroups in her online course.

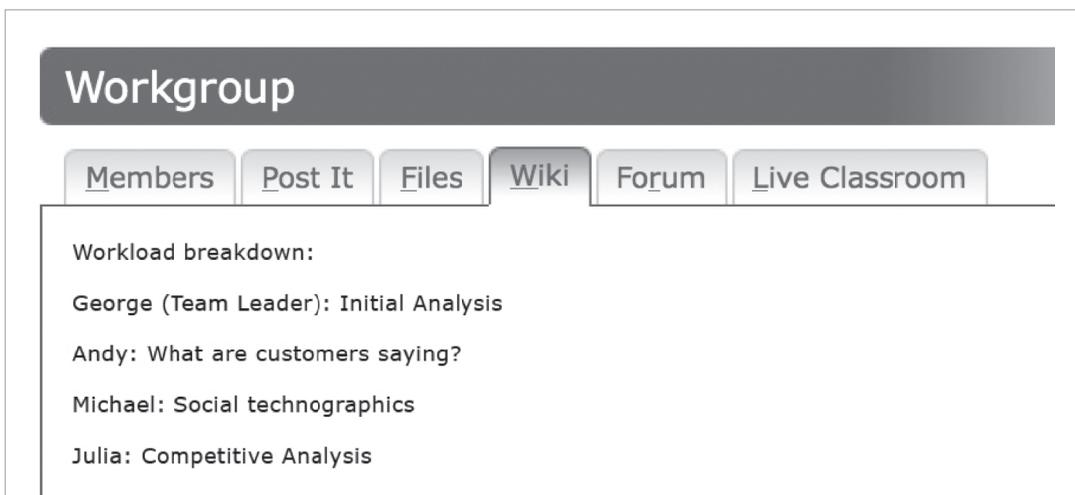


Figure 2.14 The features of an online workgroup from another online class

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2.3

Summary

The features introduced in this chapter are only a sampling of the tools found within many LMSs. While you are becoming acquainted with your institution's system, you should also review the documentation available. Refer to Table 2.1 for an easy-to-use checklist of the main features of the LMS that the teacher can use to create and set up an online course.

Table 2.1 LMS features that are commonly used for an online course

LMS Feature	Item	Description	Chapters
Announcements	Welcome announcement	Create an announcement that welcomes students to the course in a conversational tone, briefly describes the course, directs students to read the syllabus, describes the course format, and how the course is organized in the LMS, and directs students to the “Introduce Yourself” forum.	2, 10, App. B
Forums	Discussions	Set up the discussion forum threads for your online discussions. These should be organized by lesson.	2, 5, 7, App. B
Syllabus	Syllabus components (see Table 9.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic course information • Communication strategy • Course time frame and format • Assignments • Activity grade percentages • Criteria for class participation • Technical requirements and support • Course outline 	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, App. B
Various Lessons	1 or more lessons created for each unit of the course	<p>A lesson should be created for each week of the course. The lesson should at least include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson title with start and end dates • Introduction with learning outcomes • Required and recommended readings • Assignments with due dates and times • Summary 	5, 6, 8, 9, 10, App. B
Resources	Linked online material and uploaded files	The online readings and relevant materials are linked and/or uploaded to the resources section of the site. Link the relevant resources to each module.	6, 8, 10
Drop Boxes/ Assignment Submission Area	Drop box for submission of student assignments	For assignments that require students to submit papers or projects, create a drop box for each assignment.	7, 10
Blogs, Wikis, and Workgroups	Collaboration tools	For activities that rely on the use of collaborative tools, such as blogs, wikis, and workgroups, set up those spaces in the LMS.	3, 5, 7, 10

5



Creating an Effective Online Syllabus

Whether working alone or as part of a team to develop a course, the syllabus is an important part of course development, regardless of delivery format—online, in blended format, or face to face. Defining syllabus broadly here, we assume the traditional syllabus should include not only a schedule of topics, readings, activities, and assignments, but also such elements as goals, objectives, or expected outcomes for the course, grading policies, procedures, and any other information necessary for students to succeed.

Some instructors separate these various elements and call them “Course Information,” “Course Requirements,” “Grading,” “Schedule,” and so on. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we’ll cover all these essentials with the term syllabus.

Although the details of course requirements, expected outcomes, schedule, grading, and procedures are staple elements of any course syllabus, they are perhaps even more important for an online class. Students tend to feel somewhat disoriented without the familiar first-day speeches from the instructor, and they may wonder if any of the same old rules will apply in this new online territory.

It’s typical for first-time online instructors to include too little detail in their syllabi. One instructor we know changed nothing in his regular on-the-ground course syllabus except to add the words, “This course is delivered completely online.” Unfortunately, students had a hard time even finding his syllabus, as he posted no welcome at the “entrance” to his online course, and then they were puzzled by his schedule, which still listed “class sessions” as once a week. Some students reasonably thought this phrase

referred to online, real-time chat. Others wondered if the phrase meant that their asynchronous communications should be posted only once a week, on the particular day named in the schedule. As a result of this lack of clarity, the first week's discussion forum was dominated entirely by questions about where, when, and how to do the assignments, and the main topics for that week were nearly forgotten in the confusion.

Even after the instructor's hurried explanations, students continued to experience confusion about dates and times, procedures, and grading. They could refer back to the first week's forum and search through the various discussion threads in which these questions had been raised, but they had no clear reference document to which they could turn. One student even had a grade dispute with the instructor that arose from an ambiguity in the syllabus. In the syllabus, the instructor had declared that all late assignments would be penalized at the rate of one-quarter grade point each day, but hadn't clearly specified that the due dates for assignments were based on the instructor's time zone, not the student's. Thus, the student claimed that, when he posted an assignment at 11:00 p.m. Pacific time, on the due date, he was unfairly penalized because the server on which the course was housed, located (like the instructor) on the East Coast of the United States, had recorded the time as 2:00 a.m. the following day. These examples, both serious and trivial, illustrate some of the problems that can ensue if online syllabi (and, naturally, subsequent directions) aren't thorough and detailed.

In blended courses clear directions are equally vital. It's important, for instance, to explain to students how the mixture of different venues will be integrated. Which course activities will take place in the on-campus classroom, which in the online classroom, and what's the sequence of procedures students should follow each week? Imagine that, before the face-to-face class meeting on Wednesday, you want students to read the online lecture and post a preliminary report, but you want them to wait until after the class meeting to take part in that week's online discussion. In many cases, they won't understand that sequence unless it's carefully explained to them.

There are three aspects of an online syllabus we want to emphasize in particular: the contract, the map, and the schedule.



The Contract

Increasingly, the syllabus has come to be the contract between students and instructor, laying out the terms of the class interaction—the expected responsibilities and duties, the grading criteria, the musts and don'ts of behavior. Let's look at some features of the contract that are especially important for an online course.

Class Participation and Grading Criteria

What's meant by "participation" in the online setting won't be obvious to students. Participation should be defined. For example, is it posting, that is, sending messages to the classroom discussion board? Or is it just logging on and reading (an activity revealed to an instructor only when course management software has the capacity to track students' movements online)? Perhaps participation includes taking part in an online group presentation or showing up for a real-time chat.

 **Important!** *Whatever kind of participation you expect in your course, you should make that explicit in the syllabus.*

If you're going to count participation toward the final grade, you should define how that will be calculated. We recommend, in fact, that you always give a grade for active participation in the class, that is, for contributing to discussions and asking or answering questions. The plain fact is that if students aren't graded, the great majority won't actively participate. For a blended class, you will want to decide whether students are given participation grades for both face-to-face meetings as well as online participation, and how the grade for one, the other, or both should be divided up. Besides judging the quality of students' contributions in the class, you may want to set a minimum level for quantity of participation or require that a portion of postings be responses to classmates.

Another consideration in asynchronous courses is the degree of self-pacing allowed. Must students follow a chronological order of topics in their participation, or can they go back and respond to previous weeks' topics?

Can they complete assignments at different times during the course? The answers to these questions really depend on the nature of your course. For example, if your course has a set number of tasks, which can be completed at any time or in any order within the twelve weeks of the course, then you may not be concerned about students skipping about or restarting conversations about previous weeks' topics.

Managing Student Expectations

The task of managing student expectations is very important in the online classroom. Some students enroll in an online course expecting it to be much easier than a regular course. Others imagine that the course will be something like independent study. Still others think the instructor should be available for twenty-four real-time hours a day. Your syllabus as well as your introductory comments can help manage such expectations, correct false impressions, and set the stage for the smooth unfolding of your course.

It's also helpful if your institution has a general student orientation (or at least a student handbook or web tutorial) that explains how the online course will work, how much student-instructor interaction can be expected, and so forth. If your institution doesn't have such an orientation, or your class has a unique approach that goes beyond the typical online offerings at your institution, you may need to supply some of this information in your own syllabus. Michelle Pacansky-Brock, currently serving as Teaching and Learning Innovation Specialist at CSU Channel Islands previously taught an online Art Appreciation class for Sierra College that was unusually rich in its use of technology and multimedia. In her syllabus she cautioned students about that fact, "Important!!! This online class is image intensive. Due to the visual nature of the content of this class, you will regularly download large files containing high resolution images and movies..."

A continuing-education instructor we know, who has a busy professional practice, complained after a few weeks of her online class that students had "unrealistic expectations." When pressed to explain this remark, she commented that if she didn't reply to each and every student comment in the discussion forum or if she appeared not to be in the online classroom every day, she would receive plaintive email queries or even classroom postings

inquiring about whether she had read a particular message. She further explained that she had expected students to work on their own during the first part of each week and only then to post their thoughts in the discussion forum. Unfortunately, neither her syllabus nor her introductory comments ever mentioned these teacher expectations.

This case shows that managing student expectations can also require an instructor to communicate her expectations for herself to the students. This type of problem can be handled by a simple statement in the syllabus to the effect that the instructor will look in frequently during the week but may not be in the classroom every day, or that students should work on the week's assignments during the first part of the week (say, Monday through Wednesday) and then post their responses later in the week (Thursday through Sunday).

For her blended class, Isabel Simões de Carvalho, teaching at Lisbon's Instituto Superior de Engenharia, expressed her availability online in the following manner:

Your teacher will be online with all of you at least every two days and will provide feedback within forty-eight hours maximum. However, if you have an urgent subject that you need to discuss with your teacher ... then you should send an email to the instructor and in this case, do not forget to fill in the course name within the subject line.

Other information of a “contractual” nature that you might want to incorporate in your syllabus includes the following:

- your policy on late assignments;
- whether due dates are calculated by your time zone or the student's (or the server's, as that might actually be in a third time zone);
- your availability for real-time chat appointments (which some call “virtual office hours”);
- overall specifications for writing assignments (Formal essay? Informal journal? Of how many total words? MLA or APA style?);
- your institution's policy on plagiarism and cheating.



The Map

In this new territory of the online classroom, students will seize upon your syllabus as if it were a map. Students will want to know how to proceed and where everything is located. So, one of the first things you must do, whether through the syllabus or in an introductory message, is to explain the “geography” of the course.

In fact, if the syllabus isn’t visible on the first level of the course, but instead can be arrived at only by one or two clicks of the mouse, then this introductory set of directions must be given in an announcement area or even delivered prior to the course, by email. For example, an announcement with explicit directions to the syllabus might say:

Welcome, please click on the Class Information tab at the upper left hand corner of this web page to find the links labeled syllabus, and weekly schedule. These will guide your work in this course, so I recommend that you print these sections out for handy reference. If you have any questions about these documents, please post a question in the Q&A forum portion of the discussion area.

What else does “explaining the geography” mean? If your course consists of various web pages plus a discussion forum, you’ll need to let the students know where to find the component parts of the course and under what headings: “Lectures will be on the page whose link says ‘Lectures,’ and these are arranged by weeks.” If the discussion forum, a blog, or other software is hosted on an outside site, students need to be told that this link will take them off the university server, or that they must use a password given to them, and so on. If you’ve created a discussion forum dedicated to casual communications and socializing for students, let them know that the area you have imaginatively labeled “Café Truckstop” is intended to be the online equivalent of a student lounge.

This is particularly important when using learning management software that has its own unique and not easily customizable category headings or when your institution or department does not have a common classroom template. Students will need to know what you have stored behind each of the online classroom headings or where a particular link might lead.

While not essential, a narrated guide or video tour to the syllabus can be created by an instructor to reinforce the importance of the syllabus and to draw attention to it from the very first day of the course. You can use a simple series of screen shots within a PowerPoint narration or use screencasting video software to capture your movements as you click about the syllabus to point out the various sections of the document.

In a blended course that combines face-to-face and online components, it's essential that you specify where to do each activity. For example, in Isabel Carvalho's blended course syllabus she clearly stated, "Besides the weekly face-to-face sessions, this course has an online learning environment. The face-to-face and online components are not independent but instead are considered to be complementary." She added,

We will be together face-to-face 4.5 hours per week and I will expect you all to spend at least 2 hours a week online using the discussion forum, viewing and downloading course resources and materials, and interacting with your peers.

Such general statements are then further detailed in the class schedule.

Other procedural and "geographical" issues you might want to cover in the syllabus include these:

- the URL for your home page, the companion website for a text, or other resources;
- where to access and how additional technology tools will be used in the class;
- how emailed assignments or those submitted via the LMS are to be labeled in the subject line;
- which file types you'll accept for attached documents (for instance, Microsoft Word, Rich Text Format, PowerPoint, PDF, Excel);
- any contact information for technical and administrative support;
- the proper sequence for accomplishing weekly activities and assignments (for example, do the exercises before taking the quiz, post a message in discussion before emailing the assignment).



The Schedule

The course should be laid out by weeks for students, because this is commonly the unit by which students gauge their own participation and work. If your class starts on a Wednesday, then Tuesday will become the last day of your week unless you state otherwise. If your first week of class is a shorter than usual one, say, starting on a Thursday, you can, if otherwise allowed by your department, let students know that the first week is a shorter than usual one, running Thursday through Sunday, and that subsequent weeks will all run Monday through Sunday. Arranging for weeks to end over a weekend can be very helpful for adult students in particular.

We recommend that you think in terms of subdivisions of two- or three-day spreads. For example, if you post your lecture on Monday, allow students through Wednesday to read and comment on it rather than asking them to do so by Tuesday. Students can be told to log on every single day, but it is perhaps wiser to take advantage of the asynchronous flexibility of the online environment. Assume that some students will log on and read on Monday night, some on Tuesday morning, and others at midnight. The Monday reader may return on Tuesday night to reread and post. The Tuesday reader may respond with comments at once. This scheduling flexibility is even more important for those who have students in different time zones or in foreign countries.

It's also good to gauge your students' access to computers or mobile devices and their probable work schedules. This goes back to what we discussed in earlier chapters. If your students are accessing the course website from a campus lab, the dorms, or branch campus libraries, then they'll follow a different pattern than will typical working adults or continuing-education students, who may want to use the weekends to do most of the time-intensive assignments. A Monday or Tuesday due date for assignments will allow working adults to make the most of their study time out of the office.

Using Specific Dates

Instead of simply listing the course schedule for "Week One" and "Week Two," your schedule should include the specific dates for

A Checklist for Your Online Syllabus

Here, in summary form, is a checklist for creating your online syllabus. You needn't include all of these items (some may be more appropriate for your class than others), nor do you have to include them all in one document called a "syllabus." You can distribute this information among several documents if desired.

- Course title, authors' and instructor's names, registration number, and term information; syllabus web pages should bear creation or "last revised" dates if the term date isn't included at the top.
- Course instructor's contact information, indication of instructor availability in classroom, for "office hours" and private communications. Contact information for technical support.
- Course description, perhaps the same as the description used for a course catalog listing, but probably more detailed; should list any prerequisites or special technical requirements for the course; if blended course, define what is meant by blended in regard to face-to-face class meetings and required online work.
- Course objectives or expected outcomes; what students can expect to learn by completion of the course.
- Required texts or materials: any books or other materials, such as software, not made available in the course but required for the course.
- Explanation of grading criteria and components of total grade: a list of all quizzes, exams, graded assignments, and forms of class participation, with grade percentages or points; criteria for a passing grade; policies on late assignments. More detailed instructions for assignments should be included elsewhere but at the very least, the outlines and due dates of each major assignment should be listed first in the syllabus.
- Participation standard: minimum number of postings per week in discussion and any standards for quality of participation. If a rubric will be used to evaluate participation, reference to the rubric and where it may be found can be provided rather than including the whole rubric in the syllabus.
- Explanation of course geography and procedures: how the online classroom is organized; how students should proceed each week for class activities; how to label assignments sent by email; where to post materials in the classroom; any special instructions.
- Week-by-week schedule: topics, assignments, readings, quizzes, activities, and internet resources for each week, with specific dates.

- Any relevant institutional or program policies, procedures, or resources not mentioned above. These may be available as links to institutional web pages.

Sometimes it's difficult to anticipate every issue that may arise during the class and to include that in your syllabus. There's obviously a balance between readable brevity and a syllabus so voluminous as to be intimidating. Whatever you do not include in your initial documents can be referenced for further examination—for example, "Discussion Participation is worth 20 percent of the grade. See the rubric for participation posted in the Major Assignments section of the online classroom"—or may still be introduced by means of announcements, weekly emails sent to all students, or postings in an appropriate forum. You will also want to use these means to reinforce important elements of your syllabus as the course progresses.

each unit, week, or topic area covered. This is particularly important for asynchronous courses in which students may be logging on at diverse times and days during the week. It's quite common for students to lose track of the weeks in the term when following an asynchronous online schedule. (And it's not unheard of for instructors to forget the dates, either!)

If you don't want to include dates on the main syllabus web pages because you want to reuse it for subsequent terms, and worry about making mistakes in updating it, then send students an email version of the syllabus or post a downloadable document version with the relevant dates inserted. Some learning management software includes a calendar feature that you may use to reinforce the dates for each segment of the course. However, don't assume that all students will check the calendar, especially if it is only available when they are inside the LMS. It is generally more effective to include the dates in a downloadable syllabus schedule if you want to ensure that students will have something at hand that they can consult with relatively greater frequency.

Schedule Format It is vital that your schedule is readable and easily scanned by the eye. That means you need to have clear and consistent headings and spacing that allow one to grasp the *what* and the *when* and how of each week, task, or assignment. If your schedule is complicated, with many contingent tasks or contains many different readings or activities, a table is often the best

solution. Tabular format is particularly helpful for blended classes in which the coordination of face-to-face meetings and activities and those performed online requires clarity and precision. We have provided examples of two display formats here, with the list view for the online syllabus example and the tabular view for the blended syllabus example.

Supplying Information More than Once

It's easy to lose track of where and when something was said in threaded discussions or by email. When you give directions, it may not be possible for students to simply link back to them at a later date. For that reason, you should provide important instructions in more than one location. However, to maintain consistency and accuracy, you will either need to repeat that information in full or refer students back to the complete directions in the syllabus or other central document. Be very careful not to truncate your instructions for an assignment—in posting reminders, always refer students back to the most detailed version. For example, an announcement can note an upcoming due date for an assignment mentioned elsewhere, “Remember, papers are due this week and must be a minimum of 1,000 words and based on at least three scholarly resources. Please review the assignment details for this paper found in the syllabus and under Major Projects.” Or you may respond to a question in the discussion area, “John, your paper must be on one of the topics listed and Wikipedia may not be one of the three scholarly resources. Please refer to the Major Projects area for full details on topics and resources for this assignment.”

 **Important!** *In an online environment, redundancy is often better than elegant succinctness.*

Although students in some learning management platforms may be able to use a search function to find your instructions, in many cases students will have to waste energy and time to sift through materials before they can locate that one crucial sentence of direction. Therefore, even if you intend to explain assignments and procedures later in the course, it's best to state them up front in the syllabus as well. Then, if your course is laid out entirely in web pages, make sure that each page permits students to link back easily to essential information in the syllabus.



Sample Syllabi: Online and Blended Course Versions

The following is a composite syllabus based on courses in Modern China taught by Susan Ko at a variety of institutions. The first is a syllabus for the fully online version, followed by one representing a blended version of the same course. Both are designed as ten-week courses, but only the first five weeks of the course are provided here in the schedule portions.

Modern China: History and Culture

HISTORY 415

Delivered online, SomeUniversity Spring term, **** year

Course Description

This online course provides a survey approach to the history and culture of China in the modern period, from the mid-nineteenth century through the year 1990.

Contacts and Communications

Instructor: Dr. Susan Ko, sko@someuniversity.edu

See my instructor's bio in the classroom link under my name. Please contact me via the email address above or feel free to use the classroom instant message (IM) tool when you see me among the names of those currently logged in. I am also available by appointment on Skype.

I will log on to the classroom nearly every day and the discussion area Q&A forum is generally the best place to ask most questions. But if you need to contact me on an individual basis, please use email and I will try to reply within twenty-four hours. Your communication is important to me! To ensure that I see your message among my email, please use the class name and number HIST 415 in your subject line. For those of you halfway across the world from the instructor's eastern US location, given the time differences you may have to allow up to thirty-six hours for a "prompt reply."

Technical support is available 24/7 by contacting tech24@7help.edu or calling 1-800-TECHELP.

Your Online Classroom and Procedures

Each class week begins on Monday and ends on Sunday. Although all students will have taken the software orientation, at any point you may review the learning management software features by clicking on the Guide link.

The Announcements area of the classroom that you see each time you log in will be used on at least a weekly basis to post updates and comments on class matters. The instructor will also email the class to remind students of important due dates. (If you prefer to receive text message versions of these emails, please let the instructor know by following the instructions posted in the classroom.)

The **Course Materials** area, arranged in folders by week, houses the content for the course. All materials for the course are posted and can be reviewed from the start of the class. There is also a folder within Course Materials labeled **Detailed Assignment Instructions** that provides full information, criteria, rubrics, and samples for completing each assignment.

The **Discussion area** contains at least one discussion forum for each week of the course. Each discussion forum will be opened for posting on the Saturday before each new week begins. There is a forum labeled “Student Lounge” for casual conversations as well as a general “Q&A” forum where questions about class requirements or other questions that do not fit into a weekly discussion may be asked. It is recommended that you “subscribe” to the Q&A forum so that you can receive notification via email each time a question is posed or answered.

The **Assignment area** is the place to submit individual assignments unless otherwise indicated in assignment instructions.

Click on the link for each assignment to submit your work. Remember that our classroom server is set to US Eastern time. Therefore all due dates are noted as of US Eastern time. Use the World Time Clock link available in the classroom to convert all times and dates.

Introduction

This ten-week course provides a general survey of Chinese history and culture in the modern period, from the Qing dynastic period through the founding of the People’s Republic and post-Mao China

through 1990. We will try to trace the continuing themes as well as changing conditions that mark China's tumultuous modern history.

This course is conducted completely online. To do your best in this course, it is recommended that you download or print out this syllabus to keep as a reference, log on frequently (at least 3–4 times a week) to the online classroom and keep up with all assigned readings and internet work.

Course Objectives

- Describe the major cultural, political, and social elements of traditional China.
- Trace recurring themes and concepts in Chinese history.
- Identify the major historical figures and events that have shaped modern Chinese history.
- Analyze the underlying themes and issues in the modernization process, including those in the economic, political, and social spheres.
- Differentiate the characteristics of the Chinese state in the Mao and post-Mao era.
- Demonstrate an appreciation for Chinese arts or literature as a reflection of Chinese society and values in different historical periods.

Course Textbook and Materials

Main textbook: J. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd edition only. See the link to **Buy Textbooks** in the classroom if you have not already obtained your book or check on Amazon.com for used copies.

If you are not already familiar with Chinese names and their pronunciation, you may find that in the beginning, you may have a little trouble remembering and identifying the names of people, places, and events.

I recommend that you take notes while you read and refer often to the Glossary contained at the end of the textbook. When referring to Chinese names, places, and events, I will try to include short identifications whenever possible. If you are ever in doubt about what I am referring to in my commentary or in the conference discussions, please don't hesitate to ask!

We will be using many internet resource readings as well as periodical articles available through our electronic reserves of the library. The latter are labeled Library Electronic Reserve Readings and are also found under Course Materials for the week indicated. The instructor will also introduce numerous multimedia resources from the internet, especially during the last half of the course. (There will be alternative assignments for those who are unable to access any of the third-party multimedia resources.)

Finally, the instructor will provide short commentary on a weekly basis to help elucidate the issues from our readings and provide additional perspectives. These commentaries are posted in the Course Materials area of our classroom.

Grading Information

Grades are based on a scale of 100 points and are distributed among major assignments as follows:

- Participation on a weekly basis: 30 points
- Group summary and question based on reading: 10 points for group work, 5 for individual contribution
- Short essay paper: 10 points
- Proctored exam: 25 points
- Final analytic paper or project: 20 points
- Grading scale:
 - A: 90–100
 - B: 80–89
 - C: 70–79
 - D: 60–69
 - F: 59 points or below

Timelines

Participation in discussions must be completed within the week assigned.

Other assignments are due according to the posted dates and as described in instructions, either submitted via the assignment submission link or posted in a designated discussion forum.

Unless otherwise noted, grades will be posted in the Gradebook no later than the end of the week following the due date of the assignment.

This university maintains a strict academic integrity policy. Please follow [this link](#) to read the policy related to plagiarism.

Assignment Descriptions

1. Participation

Students are expected to participate by responding to the instructor's questions as well as to ask questions or comment on the responses of their classmates. A good question is as valuable as a comment. See the Participation Rubric posted under Course Materials to understand grading criteria and expectations. There are ten graded weeks of participation. **Please make your first posting in each week's forum by Thursday.**

2. Group summary and question based on reading

Each student will be assigned to a group by the beginning of the third week of class and group postings will begin in Week 5. You will work within groups of four or five inside your group wiki to prepare a weekly summary ending in one or more discussion questions based on one of the weekly chapter reading assignments from the Spence text. The group will post the summary as pasted-in text and discussion question(s) in the weekly conference, creating a thread with the subject line, *Reading Summary, Chapter ____*. The group members will then be in charge of conducting the discussion.

Up to **ten points** will be awarded based on the criteria posted under "Group Summary" in the Course Materials, Detailed Assignments Instructions folder. This also includes some tips for organizing your group.

The summary and question must be posted in the online classroom no later than each Wednesday of the week assigned to your group. This will allow for sufficient discussion time. You will receive a grade of up to **five points** for your individual contribution. This grade will be based on the instructor's observation of your work in the group wiki as well as a peer evaluation. See under Course Materials for the Peer Evaluation Rubric. You will be asked to evaluate yourself as well as your peers.

3. *Short essay paper*

This is a short essay, 2–4 pages in length, due at the end of Week 4, February 20 of this course. Submit your assignment through the Dropbox and label the file **Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE**.

The choice of topic questions and some guidelines are posted under the Course Materials area, Detailed Assignments Instructions folder. The style of this paper will be very much like the type of essay questions you will encounter in the proctored final exam.

4. *Proctored exam*

There is a mandatory proctored exam that must be completed no later than April 23. To schedule your proctored exam on campus or with an approved proctor near you, see the classroom link for “Exam Appointments.”

Our exam will be short-essay and identification questions. Short-essay questions will ask you to reflect on what we have learned and draw connections between different events, themes, and facts. Identification questions require a short paragraph to explain the who, what, when, or importance of something we have studied. My own philosophy is that students shouldn’t be surprised or “tricked” by what they encounter on the exam—if you have paid attention and kept up with your reading, discussion, and assignments, the questions should not be unexpected.

5. *Final analytic paper or project*

This assignment is an analysis of a continuing issue or theme that you have followed since the beginning of the course. For example, you may want to concentrate on economic development in China, the status of women, local officials versus central party control, China’s relationships with its neighbors in East Asia, role of intellectuals and artists, etc. A full list of possible topics and issues as well as format and other requirements is contained under the detailed instructions for this assignment in Course Materials. This paper is due the end of the ninth week of this class but you must submit your topic for approval at the end of Week 5. There is a multimedia option for those students who may prefer to work in audio or video. See detailed instructions under Course Materials, Detailed Assignments Instructions folder for more information. Once you have

submitted your project or paper, you are invited to share it online with your classmates during Week 10.

Other Resources

Need Some Review of Skills or Assistance?

For help in navigating the various types of writing assignments, follow the link to the Writing tutorial center in the resource list at the top right of the online classroom.

See the links in the classroom to **Library** and **Student Advising** for additional support if needed.

Schedule

Week 1, January 24–January 30

Traditional China under the Qing

Readings:

- Spence, Chapter 3, bottom page 53–top page 69, Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 96–137
- Instructor commentary under Course Materials for Week 1
- Visit web resources indicated under Course Materials for Week 1

Discussion forum:

Introduce yourself in the Introductions forum, then participate in Week 1 discussion forum.

Week 2, January 31–February 6

China's Dual Crises, External and Internal

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 141–191, and pp. 202–214
- Instructor commentary for Week 2

See list of topic questions for Short Essay assignment under Course Materials, Detailed Assignment Instructions folder.

Participate in Week 2 discussion forum.

Week 3, February 7–February 13

The End of Dynastic China

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 10 and 11, pp. 215–263
- Instructor commentary for Week 3
- Library electronic reserve reading #1

Participate in Week 3 discussion forum.

Locate and check in with your group in the designated Group area.

Week 4, February 14–February 20

The New Chinese Republic

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 12 and 13, pp. 267–313
- Instructor commentary for Week 4
- Visit web resources for this week

Participate in Week 4 discussion forum.

Short essay due end of this week, via assignment submission link. Label the file Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE.

Week 5, February 21–27

Union and Disunion

Readings:

Topics under Course Content

- Spence, Chapters 14, pp. 314–341 and Chapter 15, pp. 342–374
- Instructor commentary for Week 5
- Library electronic reserve reading #2

Participate in Week 5 conference discussion. Group presentations begin.

Submit your final paper/project topic choice to instructor via email for approval by the end of this week.

Put HIST 415 and Final Topic in the subject line of your email.

Modern China: History and Culture

HISTORY 415

Delivered in blended format, Some University Spring term, **** year

Contacts

Instructor: Dr. Susan Ko, sko@someuniversity.edu

Office hours, Tuesdays 3–5p.m. in Room 210 of Miller Building. Phone: 321–568–3987

Please contact the instructor via the email address above, or by phone, or feel free to use the online classroom instant message feature when you see the instructor among the names of those currently logged in to our online classroom.

The instructor will log on to the online classroom nearly every day, whether or not the class is meeting face to face in a particular week. The Q&A discussion forum is generally the best place to ask most questions. But if you need to contact me on an individual basis, please use email and I will try to reply within twenty-four hours. Your communication is important to me! To ensure that I see your message among my email, please use the class name and number HIST 415 in your subject line.

Technical support is available 24/7 by contacting tech24@7help.edu or calling 1–800-TECHELP.

Course Description

A survey approach to the history and culture of China in the modern period, from the mid-nineteenth century through the year 1990.

Introduction

This is a **blended** course. That means we will meet face to face every other week and for the last class meeting in Week 10, but that we will meet online only during the other weeks. Attendance at the face-to-face meetings and participation in all online activities is required. You will find that the online and face-to-face elements of this course are interdependent and integrated. Online participation is required every week, even in weeks when we are meeting face to face—you will be expected to go online, preferably within seventy-two hours of a face-to-face meeting, to continue discussion or complete other activities.

The dates during which we meet face to face are clearly indicated in bold font on the syllabus schedule.

This course provides a general survey of Chinese history and culture in the modern period, from the Qing dynastic period through the founding of the People's Republic and post-Mao China through 1990. We will try to trace the continuing themes as well as changing conditions that mark China's tumultuous modern history.

Course Objectives

- Describe the major cultural, political, and social elements of traditional China.
- Trace recurring themes and concepts in Chinese history.
- Identify the major historical figures and events that have shaped modern Chinese history.
- Analyze the underlying themes and issues in the modernization process, including those in the economic, political, and social spheres.
- Differentiate the characteristics of the Chinese state in the Mao and post-Mao eras.
- Demonstrate an appreciation for Chinese arts or literature as a reflection of Chinese society and values in different historical periods.

Information and Procedures

Each class week begins online on Monday and ends on Sunday. Our face-to-face on-campus meetings all take place on

Tuesday evenings, 6:30–9:30 p.m. in the Seely Center, room 2009. The Center is equipped with wifi and you are welcome to bring your laptop to class.

Face-to-face meetings will be a combination of instructor lecture, discussion, and student presentations. If you miss a face-to-face meeting you will be required to do additional makeup work online.

Online Classroom

A brief overview of the online classroom will be given at the first class meeting. At any point you may review the learning management software features by clicking on the Guide link. Here is a quick guide:

The **Announcements** area of the classroom that you see each time you log in will be used on at least a weekly basis to post updates and comments on class matters. The instructor will also email the class to remind students of important due dates. (If you prefer to receive text message versions of these emails, please let the instructor know by following the instructions posted in the classroom.)

The **Course Materials** area, arranged in folders by week, houses the content for the course. All materials for the course are posted and can be reviewed from the start of the class. There is also a folder labeled **Detailed Assignment Instructions** that provides full information, criteria, rubrics, and samples for completing each assignment. As noted below, read the instructor commentary before attending the face-to-face class.

The **Discussion area** contains at least one discussion forum for each week of the course, whether or not we are meeting face to face in a particular week. Each discussion forum will be opened on the Saturday before each new week begins. There is a forum labeled “Student Lounge” for casual conversations as well as a general “Q&A” forum where questions about class requirements or other questions that do not fit into a weekly discussion may be asked.

Important: Do not wait till the class meets face to face to ask a question! Post it online!

It is recommended that you subscribe to the Q&A forum so that you can receive notifications by email whenever a new question has been posed or a question answered.

The **Assignment area** is the place to submit individual assignments unless otherwise indicated in assignment instructions. Click

on the link for each assignment to submit your work. *Please do not bring assignments to the face-to-face class meetings to hand in to the instructor.*

Course Textbook and Materials

Main text: J. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd edition only. See the link to Buy Textbooks in the classroom if you have not already obtained your book, or check on Amazon.com for used copies.

If you are not already familiar with Chinese names and their pronunciation, you may find that in the beginning, you may have a little trouble remembering and identifying the names of people, places, and events.

I recommend that you take notes while you read and refer often to the Glossary contained at the end of the textbook. When referring to Chinese names, places, and events, I will try to include short identifications whenever possible. If you are ever in doubt about what I am referring to in my commentary or in the conference discussions, please don't hesitate to ask!

We will be using many internet resource readings as well as periodical articles available through our electronic reserves of the library. The instructor will also introduce numerous multimedia resources from the internet, especially during the last half of the course. If you are unable to access the multimedia resources from home, you are expected to use the campus labs to complete this work.

Finally, the instructor will provide short commentary on a weekly basis to help elucidate the issues from our readings and provide additional perspectives. These commentaries are posted in the Course Materials area of our classroom. During weeks that the class meets face to face, it is recommended that you read the instructor commentary **before** coming to class.

Grading Information

Grades are based on a scale of 100 points and are distributed among major assignments as follows:

- Participation on a weekly basis: 30 points
- Group summary and question based on reading: 10 points for group work, 5 for individual contribution

- Short essay paper: 10 points
- Proctored exam: 25 points
- Final analytic paper: 20 points
- Grading scale:
 - A: 90–100
 - B: 80–89
 - C: 70–79
 - D: 60–69
 - F: 59 points or below

Timeliness

Participation in online discussions must be completed within the week assigned.

Other assignments are due according to the posted dates and as described in instructions, either submitted via the assignment Dropbox or posted in a designated discussion forum.

Unless otherwise noted, grades will be posted in the online gradebook no later than the end of the week following the due date of the assignment. This university maintains a strict academic integrity policy. Please follow [this link](#) to read the policy related to plagiarism.

Assignment Descriptions

1. Participation

Students are expected to participate by responding to the instructor's questions as well as to ask questions or comment on the responses of their classmates in the online classroom. A good question is as valued as a comment. See the Participation Rubric posted under Course Materials to understand grading criteria and expectations.

Additionally, during weeks in which we meet face to face, you may receive credit for participation in either the face-to-face class and/or the online classroom. This is detailed in the Participation rubric.

2. Group presentation and facilitated discussion

Each student will be assigned to a group during the face-to-face class meeting of the third week of class and will be able to hold their first organizational meeting face to face. Students will work online in the Groups area within a group wiki to prepare a five-minute presentation and at least three discussion questions based on an assigned topic from one of the weekly chapter readings from the Spence text, a Library reserved reading, or an internet resource site. The group will present and facilitate a discussion (with help from the instructor) during a fifteen-minute period at each face-to-face meeting, starting with Week 5.

Up to **10 points** will be awarded to each group for their live presentation, facilitation of discussion, and online preparation based on the criteria posted under “Group Summary” in Course Materials which also includes some tips for organizing your group. You will also receive a grade of up to 5 points for your individual contribution. This grade will be based on the instructor’s observation of your preparatory work online, the presentation and discussion on-campus, as well as a peer evaluation. See under Course Materials for the peer-evaluation rubric. You will be asked to evaluate yourself as well as your group peers.

3. Short essay paper

This is a short essay, 2–4 pages in length, due at the end of Week 4, February 20, of this course. Submit your assignment via the Dropbox and label the file **Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE**.

The choice of topic questions and some guidelines are posted under the Course Materials, Detailed Assignment Instructions folder. The style of this paper will be very much like the type of essay questions you will encounter in the proctored final exam.

4. Proctored exam

In Week 11 there is a mandatory proctored exam on campus in our regular meeting room. See the university website in February for the examination schedule for this course.

Our exam will be short essay and identification questions. Short essay questions will ask you to reflect on what we have learned and draw connections between different events, themes, and facts.

Identification questions require a short paragraph to explain the who, what, when, or importance of something we have studied. My own philosophy is that students shouldn't be surprised or "tricked" by what they encounter on the exam—if you have paid attention and kept up with your reading, discussion, and assignments, the questions should not be unexpected.

5. Final analytic paper/project

This paper is an analysis of a continuing issue or theme that you have followed since the beginning of the course. For example, you may want to concentrate on economic development in China, the status of women, local officials versus central party control, China's relationships with its neighbors in East Asia, role of intellectuals and artists, etc. A full list of possible topics and issues as well as format and other requirements is contained under the detailed instructions for this assignment in Course Materials. This paper is due at the end of the ninth week, April 10, of this class but you must submit your topic for approval by the end of Week 4. Final projects will be shared with the class at the last face-to-face meeting. There is a multimedia option for those students who prefer to work in audio or video. See detailed instructions for more information.

Other Resources

Need some review of skills or assistance?

For help in navigating the various types of writing assignments, follow the link to the Writing Tutorial Center in the resource list at the top right of the online classroom.

See the links in the online classroom to **Library** and **Student Advising** for additional support if needed.

Schedule

Due dates are end of week unless otherwise noted. F2F meeting dates and assignments due are in bold font.



This chapter is available as a downloadable eResource from:
www.routledge.com/9780415832434

Table 5.1 Syllabus Schedule in Tabular Format

<i>Week/Topics</i>	<i>F2F Meeting</i>	<i>Online Activity and Assignments Due</i>	<i>Readings and Materials</i>
Week 1, January 24–30, <i>Traditional China under the Qing</i>	Tuesday, January 25, 6:30–9p.m., Seely Center, Room 2009 In-class intro to our LMS class site	Introduce yourself in Introductions forum, first posting in Week 1 forum by January 28	Spence, Chapter 3, bottom page 53–top page 69; Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 96–137 Instructor commentary under Course Materials
Week 2, January 31–February 6, <i>China’s Dual Crises</i>	No face-to-face meeting	Participate in Week 2 discussion forum and make first posting no later than February 4	Visit web resources under Course Materials for Week 1 Spence, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 141–191 and 202–214
Week 3, February 7–February 13, <i>The End of Dynastic China</i>	Tuesday, February 8, 6:30–9p.m. Assemble with your group, receive your topic and date for presenting	Review list of topic questions for Short essay assignment under Course Materials Participate in Week 3 discussion forum and make first posting no later than February 11	Instructor commentary for Week 2 Spence, Chapters 10 and 11, pp. 215–263; Library electronic reserve reading #1
Week 4, February 14–20, <i>The New Chinese Republic</i>		Start work in group wiki after February 8 meeting Participate in Week 4 discussion forum and make first posting no later than February 18 Continue work in group wiki	Instructor’s commentary for Week 3 Spence, Chapters 12 and 13, pp. 267–313; Instructor’s commentary for Week 4; Visit web resources for Week 4
Week 5, February 21–27, <i>Union and Disunion</i>	Tuesday, February 22, 3–5p.m. <i>Groups 1 and 2 to present and lead discussion</i>	Short essay due end of this week via Assignment link. Label file submitted Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE Participate in Week 5 discussion forum, first posting no later than February 25 Groups 1 and 2 be prepared to respond to questions after F2F presentation Submit your final topic choice to instructor via email for approval by end of this week. Put HIST 415 and Final Topic in your subject line	Spence, Chapter 14, pp. 314–341 and Chapter 15, pp. 342–374; Library electronic reserve reading #2 Instructor commentary for Week 5

Plan Out Your Course with OER

Planning out a course is not a new concept to either faculty or instructional designers, who are both accustomed to developing online courses. However, online course design principles might be somewhat new to those working with OER. It's important to point out that those who teach online in particular might be more familiar with course planning tools, mainly because teaching online and building out a course in a learning management system (LMS) goes beyond developing a traditional course outline or a syllabus. Generally speaking, all the elements and structure of an online course need to be outlined or “story-boarded.” When it comes to developing a course with OER, it's like lesson planning on steroids. It requires not only the knowledge of the subject at hand or details of the lesson agenda but also a profound understanding of teaching and learning and the pedagogy for online.

The Essentials and Backward Design

An experienced instructional designer or a course developer can point out the essential elements of course planning, which include but are not limited to the following: course learning outcomes and unit-specific learning objectives (what students are expected to be able to do upon course and unit completion); teaching strategies or methods (activities students will engage in to meet course outcomes and unit objectives); assessment measures (activities to demonstrate proficiency and attainment of the outlined outcomes and objectives); and last but not least—content, content, and content!

Wiggins and McTighe (1998) outline three elements of backward design: identifying the desired results, determining acceptable

evidence, and planning learning experiences and instruction (that also involves selection of instructional materials). While these elements might seem intuitive and easy to follow in course planning, in fact, faculty can often benefit from the support, guidance, and feedback of an instructional designer.

Some faculty start with choosing a textbook and then plan the course around it. For example, a business school faculty member specializing in corporate finance and investment banking might simply start by selecting the best textbook she can find for her students. But after teaching for several years, she might start to question her textbook selection, as she notices that students are not performing as well on assignments as she would have expected. She then might contact an instructional designer who could help her review, refine, and revise her course. Subsequently, she discovers that she can be more deliberate, objective driven, and student centered in her course planning. She might conclude that the textbook should not drive her decisions about pedagogy. Vee Herrington, Adjunct Associate Professor and OER Librarian, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, provided an example from instructors she worked with in Criminal Justice:

Instructors often cannot find the “perfect” textbook. I explain to them that there are other ways to meet course learning outcomes. You can use several chapters from one book or multiple chapters from a different book. To supplement or fill in the gaps, I also help faculty look for articles, e-books or videos. With this approach, a commercial textbook is not driving the instruction, but the learning outcomes are.

Kim Grewe, Associate Professor of English and Instructional Technologist at Eastern Shore Community College, outlined the value added by utilizing the backward design process to support course planning with OER:

Instructional designers are trained to use backward design. Faculty usually know what they want students to learn. But many times, faculty look to the outcomes and objectives as they are already laid out in a textbook, instead of thinking more deeply about their own students’ experiences and needs. Backward design is really a student-centered design.

Through a process of deep analysis, which focuses on students and their learning—not just the teacher and textbook—instructional designers strive to create meaningful learning experiences. The first question to ask is what do we want students to be able to know or do after experiencing this course? How will students demonstrate that they reached the desired outcomes? How will students interact with the content? How can we guide their learning? What are we doing to help students be more active participants and less passive recipients? After we think about that, THEN we think about the content. This approach works particularly well with OER.

There are many types of course planning documents, and some institutions or units have developed their own templates. In this chapter we present an OER course planning document developed by the authors that can be downloaded from the authors' website. This planning document was first used in a two-week, asynchronous, instructor-facilitated workshop developed by the authors and discussed in Chapter 9. The document enables one to approach course planning systematically with OER in mind. You can review the accompanying course planning document (Figure 4.1). We would also like to share an example of the course planning document with one week of a hypothetical course completely filled out (Figure 4.2), demonstrating that it might be easier than you think to use this planning document. Such a template can be used during the implementation and the build-out of the course itself in the LMS or other hosting platform.

In addition to the standard course planning elements, like unit/week/module, and the learning outcomes, learning activities, and/or assignments, the sections in this document that address course content are very specific. The content-related sections guide the user through the careful review process for evaluating and selecting learning materials, examining the specific attributes of the content, as well as aligning the content with the appropriate areas of the course.

Following through each part of the document allows one to refresh, renew, or revise an existing course or build a completely new course, for which content is carefully selected and aligned with outcomes to support all learning activities. In the careful examination and planning of each individual module, one might discover that there need to be some major changes to the course structure, activities or assignments,

YOUR NAME AND NAME OF YOUR COURSE:	PROVIDE A BRIEF RATIONALE FOR SELECTING YOUR OER:
<input type="text"/>	
YOUR SELECTED OER (ONE OR MORE):	
<input type="text"/>	
UNIT / WEEK / MODULE OF COURSE:	
<input type="text"/>	
LEARNING OUTCOME(S) THAT APPLY:	
<input type="text"/>	
LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND/OR ASSIGNMENTS THAT APPLY:	
<input type="text"/>	
CURRENT CONTENT (IF NOT NEW COURSE): READING, RESOURCE, VIDEO, ETC.	
<input type="text"/>	
OER REPLACING OLD CONTENT OR OER FOR NEW COURSE(IF FREE BUT NOT OER, PLEASE IDENTIFY):	
<input type="text"/>	
OER LICENSING CONDITIONS (BE SPECIFIC):	
<input type="text"/>	
ADOPTING AS IS OR NEEDS MODIFYING OR SUPPLEMENTING:	
<input type="text"/>	
IF MODIFYING OR SUPPLEMENTING, WHERE WILL NEW CONTENT COME FROM:	
INSTRUCTOR, ANOTHER OER, ERRESERVE, ETC.	
<input type="text"/>	
NOTES:	
Zhadko, O. & Ko, S. (2017, 2019). An OER Course Planning Document: Define, Evaluate, Select and Integrate!	

Figure 4.1 OER Course Planning Document

UNIT / WEEK / MODULE OF COURSE:

LEARNING OUTCOME(S) THAT APPLY:

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND/OR ASSIGNMENTS THAT APPLY:

CURRENT CONTENT: READING, RESOURCE, VIDEO, ETC.

OER REPLACING OLD CONTENT (IF YOU CHOOSE FREE BUT NOT OER, PLEASE IDENTIFY AS SUCH):

OER LICENSING CONDITIONS (BE SPECIFIC):

ADOPTING AS IS OR NEEDS MODIFYING OR SUPPLEMENTING:

IF MODIFYING OR SUPPLEMENTING, WHERE WILL NEW CONTENT COME FROM:
INSTRUCTOR, ANOTHER OER, ERESERVE, ETC.

NOTES:
Zhadko, O. & Ko, S. (2017, 2019). An OER Course Planning Document: Define, Evaluate, Select and Integrate!



Figure 4.1 (Continued)

YOUR NAME AND NAME OF YOUR COURSE:

Professor Maxine Weber
Introduction to Sociology

YOUR SELECTED OER (ONE OR MORE):

OpenStax Sociology Text
<https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-sociology-2e>

PROVIDE A BRIEF RATIONALE FOR SELECTING YOUR OER:

The open textbook provide content on most of the essential course topics. The book reflects the latest research and provides current examples. The text is a collective work from multiple faculty. The book has handy student and instructor supplemental resources.

UNIT / WEEK / MODULE OF COURSE:

Week 1

LEARNING OUTCOME(S) THAT APPLY:

Identify major principles of Sociology

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND/OR ASSIGNMENTS THAT APPLY:

Group discussion and a reflective journal entry

CURRENT CONTENT (IF NOT NEW COURSE): READING, RESOURCE, VIDEO, ETC.

Jones text, chapter 1-2

OER REPLACING OLD CONTENT OR OER FOR NEW COURSE(IF FREE BUT NOT OER, PLEASE IDENTIFY):

OpenStax Sociology Text, Chapter 2

OER LICENSING CONDITIONS (BE SPECIFIC):

Attribution Non Commercial CC BY-NC

ADOPTING AS IS OR NEEDS MODIFYING OR SUPPLEMENTING:

Need to add some commentary to introduce chapter and add an article

IF MODIFYING OR SUPPLEMENTING, WHERE WILL NEW CONTENT COME FROM:
INSTRUCTOR, ANOTHER OER, ERESERVE, ETC.

Instructor to write commentary; an article XXX from an Open Journal of Society

NOTES:

Zhadko, O. & Ko, S. (2017, 2019). An OER Course Planning Document: Define, Evaluate, Select and Integrate!



Figure 4.2 Sample OER Course Planning Document

or that some new content such as instructor commentary or lectures needs to be developed.

While it might be challenging to replace all learning materials with OER for your course at once, consider starting with supplementing the existing learning materials with OER or replacing the learning materials that are the most costly for students with OER or other materials that are free or low cost to students.

Kenneth R. Weisshaar, who teaches Business Ethics at Lehman College online, has started to enhance his course with OER using an *OpenStax* textbook, and shared his experience:

I started by using the course planning document provided in the Lehman faculty development workshop. It was pretty straightforward and there was no difficulty. I searched the web for open textbooks and, surprisingly, found one at OpenStax called Business Ethics. I've evaluated the textbook by reading the relevant chapters and comparing them to the ones in the textbook I had used the last two semesters, and the course planning document guided me through that process. The content met my course needs, and the book had a list of reputable contributors. I'm replacing the first three chapters that introduce ethics and teach several well-known ethical theories. The biggest issue will be making sure the rest of the course is consistent in its use of these theories as foundational materials. I plan to see how it works in the course and what, if any, reactions the students have to not being able to get a hard copy of the book. At this point, I am partially integrating an open textbook into my course to determine whether to fully replace my current textbook with OER.

Danielle S. Apfelbaum, Farmingdale State College's Scholarly Communication Librarian and OER lead at her campus, advises, "Start with a single lesson, or start by using OER as supplementary materials. You don't have to feel pressured to go OER all at once."

Getting Started with the OER Course Planning Document

No matter whether faculty are working on their own or with the support of an instructional designer, course development should involve

an intentional and practical step-by-step (modular) process. If you are repurposing an existing course outline, filling out this sort of blueprint should be fairly easy. However, if this is the first time you are revising an existing course with OER, take careful inventory week by week of your current/past course and note what you already have in the way of main content, such as textbook readings, instructor lectures, articles, and websites, as well as learning activities. These are the areas that will need attention, changes, and revisions for developing a course with OER.

If you teach two different courses using the same text, we do recommend that you focus on just one course at a time as you fill out the course planning document. You may choose to jot down some notes for the second course while working on the first.

If you already have a few OER or learning materials that you thought could be great candidates for your course, add those to your document first. If you did a quick search of OER for your course and came up with a few sources that look like solid choices, add them to the document under the appropriate heading. You can examine them in more detail when you review each of the modules/units of your course.

Note that you will likely not be able to complete this document in one sitting. It is best to break down your work into several sessions. It can take anywhere between 5 and 20 hours to fully complete this course planning document. For a successful experience, fill out the document to the extent you are able and include as much detail as possible. Although some elements might seem redundant or too simplistic at first sight, such as the names or topics of units/modules/weeks, these might prove very helpful later on as you might decide to change the order or adjust the pacing of the course. Once you actually begin to revise your course, you will want to create a more complete project plan, adding details such as due dates or the person responsible for a particular task (if you happen to be working with a colleague and/or have additional support).

Start with providing a brief rationale for using the OER you have selected. You might be using different OER for different reasons. For example, you may have selected an open textbook because of its high quality and its coverage of most of your topics. But you may have also chosen a podcast that is authored by an expert in the field or that covers some specialized and current topics. Or it may be that it simply

fulfills the learning outcomes or is the best available OER in your discipline. Stating the rationale will help you stay focused on what this OER is intended to accomplish and will keep you on track as you spell out the details for each individual module.

For example, in Susan Ko's *East Asia in the Modern World* online history course for Lehman College, she found a good tutorial defining the concept of "modern" in the context of East Asia. However, because the website was not current, while the text and images were still available, many of the video links no longer worked. Nonetheless, the tutorial still seemed a valuable introductory resource for her students. Therefore, she decided to use the tutorial but let the students know how to maneuver around its limitations, providing the following instructions: "*Please note that many of the video resources on this site are old and may no longer be playable, but there is a transcript available for each video that you can read, and the text and images are all still accessible.*"

Define the course learning outcome(s) that apply to each week of the course—if your course is a new one and you are responsible for creating learning outcomes, you may wish to consult some guidelines on writing learning outcomes or Bloom's Taxonomy for choosing the action verbs. In a nutshell, learning outcomes are statements that describe student behavior and provide context in which that behavior takes place as well as specify how that behavior will be measured or observed. It is important that learning outcomes are learner-centered and can communicate instructor expectations for that unit/module/week. If it happens that you only have course-level outcomes, and don't actually want to compose weekly learning outcomes, you can simply note which outcomes apply in the case of each week.

Before you start carefully planning content for each unit/week/module, specify the learning activities and assignments that students will engage in—for example, a discussion, a group presentation, a quiz, etc. Consider how you will recognize that students are successful—what tasks or assignments would students be responsible for? Depending on some of the decisions you made on authoring or assembling your OER (as per Chapter 3 of this book) and how those OER materials will be delivered, you may want to add some notes to your course planning document to indicate where everything is going to be placed. For example, if you are replacing a textbook reading with some OER material, you may want to note where in the LMS that

material will appear—is it going to be a part of a discussion, an assignment, or in a module content folder? For example, do you envision embedding content into an activity or the assignment itself, or will you add it as a learning resource, linked to from within the module?

As you take inventory of your existing course (unless you are developing a new course with OER), list all learning materials you currently use, including videos, podcasts, articles, etc. Now, after carefully searching for, evaluating, and selecting your content (refer to Chapter 2 for more details and for the authors' OER evaluation and selection criteria), list your selected OER content for that module.

If you choose free-to-students but not OER, please identify the content as such. It might be that you choose several resources to replace what was previously a single, non-OER resource—don't be surprised by that. What you might want to do is glance at the course learning outcomes (or the learning outcomes that pertain to that particular week) and see if the learning materials you are choosing will support and align with those. If you are lucky enough to find copious resources for the learning unit, be selective to ensure quality and to avoid overloading students.

Unless you are keeping a local copy of all OER content on your computer, it is important to record all the hyperlinks to content in your course planning document, as this will make it rather easy for you to quickly review the status of all the links and then update them within the document or within the course itself. However, you should also list the title or subject matter of the linked-to material so that if the link becomes broken, you may more easily relocate or replace it. For example, if you had a link to Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" on a public domain website, and that link later became unavailable, if you had initially titled it correctly in the planning document, you would then be able to try to locate the same poem on another site.

OER Licensing Conditions

Next is to note the OER licensing conditions and to specify the licensing conditions of the selected OER. This is something that could be more complicated than expected. First and foremost, the ease of being able to identify licensing conditions for your select OER will depend on the OER type and how it is being published. If it is a resource for

which the conditions of copyright or licensing are unclear, you can consult the library, or if it is on the internet, simply link to it rather than downloading or posting it.

J. Bret Maney, Assistant Professor of English at Lehman College, CUNY, commented on his initial course planning process with OER:

The Lehman OER faculty development workshop I took, sponsored by the Office of Online Education, provided a great opportunity to evaluate a large number of OER and find suitable substitutes for different course activities and units that still rely on a proprietary textbook. Given that I intend to draw from multiple OER, permission to adapt or remix the resources is very important to me. The extensive course planning document I created has given me an agenda and way forward as I prepare to teach this course again as a “zero textbook cost” course.

Adopting As Is or Needs Modifying or Supplementing

Next is to decide whether you plan to adopt the selected OER (or free-to-students but not OER learning materials) as is, or whether you will modify or supplement them. One of the challenges that many OER enthusiasts face is that when they have to piece together several learning sources, the results don't necessarily form a coherent whole. You may need to provide some commentary to help students make the connections or supply the missing context. Depending on your discipline and existing OER for your course, you might be able to simply use an OER as is, especially if you are lucky to find a comprehensive, high-quality open textbook.

Consider how each content item fits into the course structure, and note areas that will need attention, changes, or revisions. Helen Chang, Adjunct Assistant Professor at Lehman College, CUNY, commented on how helpful the OER course planning document was in organizing her course revision:

I used the planning document provided by the online workshop and it was really helpful in seeing what exactly I was replacing with new OER sources. By doing a side by side comparison, I was able to figure out gaps in what I needed. I wanted to include a new module on media and information

literacy, and the planning document helped me figure out where to place it. It also showed me I was missing some videos that illustrate the importance of the module's topic.

If Modifying or Supplementing, Where Will New Content Come From?

Things will get a bit more demanding when you have to piece together several resources. Thus, the last item on the course planning document is to add in the details for the planned modifications. For some, it might mean that the instructor will create additional resources, like a video or audio lecture or notes. It might also come in the form of another OER or, in some cases, non-OER resources placed on library reserve, or it might be a video offered through an institutional subscription service. Some faculty might feel strongly about creating their own content, such as lectures and slides, thinking that this is how they can best serve their students. Still others will gladly reuse or slightly modify existing resources and focus their energies on facilitating the learning process, providing feedback, and engaging with their students.

As you select OER, pay close attention to not only the licensing conditions of the resources you select but also to whether they are accessible. Though not explicitly indicated on the planning document, this consideration should be part of the OER selection process, as was indicated in Chapter 2, addressing criteria to evaluate and select OER. While accessibility and inclusive design are not new concepts in higher education, accessibility is central to the mission of openness. If you end up creating your own learning materials, remember to make them accessible to all learners. It is worth mentioning that it's not just a best practice but also conforms with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (<https://adata.org/learn-about-ada>), regulations with which academic institutions need to comply.

If you have the support of an instructional designer or instructional technologist with expertise in accessibility, do consult with them. They might be able to advise you on how to make content accessible to all students, so take advantage of this help and ask that person to review your work. If you are largely on your own when it comes to evaluating the accessibility of OER, simply start with looking for an accessibility statement from the OER creator—often there will be such a statement.

If the OER does not have any indications as to its accessibility, depending on the subject and the type of OER, you may want to look for the following:

- File type—Is the content provided in just one format type, or are there alternatives? Does that format enable you to access the materials easily, without major obstacles?
- Formatting—If the OER is in Word, does it use the Headings feature instead of just indicating size by picking fonts and size of fonts? Do images have alternative text and descriptors? Do videos have captions or transcripts?
- Delivery method—Can the content be accessed on any device? Does it need to have special software to use it? Is the software freely available and accessible (enables voice controls—speech-to-text, or text-to-speech, zoom), compatible with assistive devices?

In the case where you are authoring your own OER, consider these principles as well. For example, while a PDF document might be a default file format for many users, it could be the least accessible document type, depending on how it was produced. While it might sound hard to believe, the original document type, such as the Word or PowerPoint, or a simple webpage might be more accessible for some users than a PDF. However, if you initially start with a Word document that is made accessible—using proper headings, styles, tagging, and formatting—when you do convert it into a PDF, the PDF should be accessible as well.

In conclusion, after you complete an OER course planning document, you might want to share it with someone who can provide you with feedback. You can consult with an instructional designer, an OER coordinator, a librarian, a colleague, or simply anyone who might have expertise in OER (and perhaps your subject area) to serve as a sounding board. Such a person may directly assist you or just offer a different perspective on your course planning. As you seek out feedback, you might want to specify what kind of feedback you are looking for and where you could use some help, assistance or expertise. As we point out in Chapter 9, the authors use this course planning document in a faculty professional development workshop. Faculty fill it out and receive detailed feedback from workshop facilitators.

This OER course planning document is truly a blueprint for helping faculty implement OER. As you can see by the Creative Commons license on this document, you can make changes (modify and improve it!) to the document to meet your own needs or for use in a faculty development program.

Reference

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). Backward design. In *Understanding by design* (pp. 13–34). Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reconfiguring the lecture

COLLEGE TEACHERS TODAY MAY PUT more focus on student centered-learning in the form of cooperative learning and discussion than previous generations of instructors, but the time honored, and often effective, practice of lecturing remains a staple of the traditional history classroom. It is easy to see why. Lectures can be an efficient way to deliver information, to provoke discussion, and to explain concepts that are difficult for students to grasp. A passionate, well-organized, interactive lecture inspires students and engages them with the study of history. The excitement that is induced from interacting with a live audience, however, is impossible to reproduce online. Lecturing can still be used in an online classroom, but it is de-emphasized and students spend more time conducting their own research. Indeed, online teaching forces all instructors to be more inventive in delivering information and to come up with alternatives to the lecture. Many online teachers assign a readable textbook or post lecture notes, but more creative ways can be utilized to deliver a lecture online. Podcasts, videos or PowerPoint presentations can be employed in the online environment, or information can be imbedded in announcements or in course material.

Books

Textbooks, or selected history monographs, are excellent vehicles to deliver information to online students. Books can be viewed anywhere, which offers students more flexibility than they would have sitting in front of a computer to watch a video-taped lecture. Books are often easier to read than large amounts of text on a computer screen. Text for a computer screen can be reformatted to make it easier to read, but viewing a computer is often still less comfortable than reading a book. The structure and periodization of a textbook can also help the instructor—especially those teaching a course for the first time—to

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organize the course. Books may be used to form the basis of online discussions, or they may be used for background reading. To encourage students to read the books, instructors can assign quizzes on their contents.

There are, however, problems with using textbooks in an online class. New editions of textbooks are often published every two or three years, but publishers do not always update the supplementary material, such as the test banks. This can mean that course content no longer matches the new edition of the textbook and needs to be revised. To overcome this problem, several publishers are offering customized online textbooks, which do not have to be updated and can be used forever.

There are many types of history textbooks available for instructors to choose from. Choice depends on the academic interests of the instructor and the academic level of the students. To make it easier to read for online students studying on their own, the textbook in an online class needs to be well written with a strong narrative structure. It may also be best to adopt a concise or brief edition of a text rather than the comprehensive edition even though there is a tendency in some brief editions of texts to skim over major issues. Textbooks are often poorly designed visually and are often cluttered with minimally relevant illustrations. With so many visual images available on the Internet, it seems that a glossy highly visual text that contains large numbers of maps, artwork and graphics is not needed for an online class. Likewise, there is little need for a text that contains primary sources when so many are available online. The choice of textbook supplements is also a factor to consider. The inclusion of an instructor manual and a test bank could save teachers time and enhance the learning experience for the students. In the end, supplements are useful, but the quality and readability of the text are the most important factors to consider when choosing a textbook for an online class.

Posting lecture notes

One way to move a traditional classroom lecture to an online environment is to post lecture notes online. Lecture notes can replace the textbook or supplement it by going into greater detail on key issues. Either way, posted lectures should be mini-lectures that do not overwhelm the student with too much information. For students, written lectures are dry in comparison to a live lecture and hardly a suitable alternative. A less time-consuming and more visually appealing method is to provide links to information from websites. Then again, students can be directed to full-text online journal articles that are available through library databases. In both cases, however, the students are not able to hear an instructor's tone of voice, or see expressions or gestures, nor are they able to ask and receive immediate answers to questions concerning the lecture

material. Instructors may therefore want to offer online students alternative ways of receiving information in the online environment.

Podcasting

Instead of posting the text of a lecture, instructors can post audio files online. A podcast, which is a contraction of the terms “iPod” and “broadcasting,” is an audio file that can be downloaded from the Internet to a computer. Students can then listen to the podcast on the computer, transfer the broadcast to a portable digital audio player, or connect the audio player to a home entertainment center or a car radio. Students can listen to the lectures at any time and they can jump ahead if the material is too easy, or listen again if it is too difficult. Podcasting can be a great tool for instructors to record their own lectures or an interview with a guest speaker. By hearing the voice of the instructor, a podcast helps students establish a more personal connection to the instructor, and to the course. Most CMSs have recording capabilities for podcasts but there are other options as well. To create a podcast, you need a microphone and a software program to record the lecture and turn it into a digital recording. Audacity is one such program that records and edits sound—see <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>. Textbook publishers are increasingly providing narrated podcasts, and videos, of the textbooks for the students.

There are some drawbacks to using podcasts to replace the classroom lecture. Podcasts do not always keep the online student’s attention. Podcasts exclude important visuals, are not interactive, and lack the excitement of a dynamic classroom lecture. Some teachers may be self-conscious or uncomfortable recording their voice. Because of the average attention span, podcasts should probably be no more than fifteen minutes long. Listening to audio is slow to some listeners who prefer the speed of reading text rather than listening closely to a whole MP3 file. Many students listen to podcasts while doing other things such as driving, so they are unable to take notes. Therefore subject matter with a lot of detail should be avoided. Examples of ready-made history podcasts are provided in Box 2.1.

Video

It is, of course, possible to videotape a lecture. Instructors can create the video with a camcorder, digital camera or webcam and transfer it to the computer. The video can then be uploaded from the computer to a CMS, to the website *YouTube*, or another website that hosts video podcasts or vidcasts. There are some readymade videotaped lectures of leading historians available on the Web.

Box 2.1 Lesson plan: history podcasts

There are a number of readymade history podcasts available online that can be used in the online classroom. *Historical Podcasts* at <http://historicalpodcasts.googlepages.com/> lists many of these. These podcasts are often a better option for instructors than recording their own lecture because they are often professionally produced and include interviews and discussions as well as lectures. A single episode of these podcasts could be used to replace a lecture. Here is a selection of history podcasts that I recommend:

- *BBC History Magazine* at www.bbchistorymagazine.com/podcast.asp: This is really an advert for the upcoming edition of the magazine. However, the podcast, which contains interviews with historians whose articles appear in the magazine, is informative and covers all areas of history.
- *Great Speeches in History* at www.learnoutloud.com/Catalog/History/Speeches/Great-Speeches-in-History-Podcast/21306: Some of the speeches are original and some are narrated renditions. The quality of the speeches vary: a number of the narrations are rather dry while others are extremely moving. Selective use of this podcast could really enhance a history course.
- *History according to Bob* at www.summahistorica.com: Historian Bob Packett presents a series of short, and very entertaining, lectures that focuses on a wide array of topics.
- *History @ 33 1/3* at www.history3313.com/iWeb/History3313.com/Home.html: This is presented by a professor of Middle Eastern History at Long Island University who interviews historians about their work. The interviews are very enlightening but tend to be a little too long. Still, a graduate class in history would find much of interest here.
- *In Our Time* at www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime: this is a radio program on the history of ideas presented by Melvyn Bragg and broadcast by the BBC. Each program is a roundtable discussion on a wide range of topics. Some of the programs focus on rather obscure topics but the discussions is always of the highest quality.
- *Talking History on Newstalk 106-108 fm* at www.newstalk.ie/newstalk/podcasts.html: This is an excellent Irish radio broadcast. Like *In Our Time*, each episode is a roundtable discussion on historical topics but the topics are often more popular than those featured in the *In Our Time* broadcast but just as informative.

Princeton University, for example, has a large archive of lectures available at www.princeton.edu/WebMedia/lectures. In contrast to a podcast, instructors can use their body language to convey information on film and the ability to see the instructor creates a more direct connection between the instructor and the students. Another visual alternative is Tegrity Campus 2.0 available from www.tegrity.com, which allows the instructor to capture screen activity. With just a computer and a microphone, the instructor can record his or her own voice and demonstrate a concept or activity on the computer screen.

In spite of this, videoed lecturers often look stilted and videos lack the interactive nature of a real lecture. The attention span of students will probably be short when viewing video on a computer screen and it is best to show short clips. A video lecture also means that students are more tied to a screen to view the video and they do not have the flexibility of an audio broadcast. Because of this, video lectures should probably be used sparingly in an online course.

PowerPoint presentations

Presentation software that includes text and visuals are another powerful way to convey information. The most commonly used presentation software is Microsoft PowerPoint, but Apple has more recently introduced its own presentation software, called Keynote. The ease with which instructors can obtain cartoons, photos and paintings from the Internet, and the speed with which instructors can then have them incorporated into a presentation, makes presentation software very attractive. It is also possible to produce presentations with video and audio commentaries. Presentations are often best when instructors keep the number of slides to a minimum and the presentation relatively short with many visuals and little text. It is better to use high-quality photographs rather than clip art, which often looks gimmicky.

Articulate Presenter, available at www.articulate.com, is an excellent program if an instructor wants to make a lot of information available to students. Instructors can add audio narration to an Articulate presentation with the aid of a microphone. It reduces the size of the presentation so that it downloads faster and adds interactivity to a standard PowerPoint presentation. There is a list of slides in the Articulate navigation panel that makes it possible for students to move around the presentation. In addition, if students are unable to watch a presentation in one sitting, Articulate will ask them when they return to the computer whether they want to recommence the presentation where they left off (see Figure 2.1).

There are some problems with PowerPoint presentations, whether used in the traditional or the online class. Some images can be blurry and difficult to

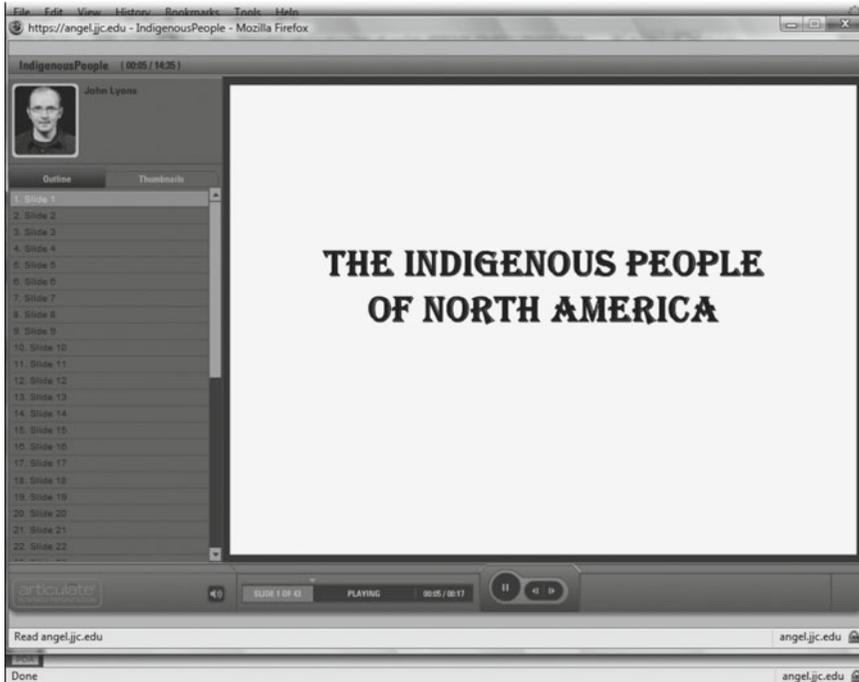


Figure 2.1 Articulate presentation

see. PowerPoint presentations with audio and text can often distract students. Too often students are furiously writing down the information on the slide and not listening to the presentation. PowerPoint presentations, like podcasts and video lectures, lack the dynamic character of a real interactive classroom lecture where the instructor responds to students' questions and comments. Like videotaped lectures, PowerPoint presentations have to be viewed on a computer and don't have the flexibility of podcasts.

Synchronous communication

Some instructors use synchronous technology to provide a live interactive lecture. Skype, for example, is a free program that offers audio and visual communication on the computer screen to those students who have a webcam, microphone and headphones or speakers. Skype also features instant messaging, file transfer and video conferencing. Some other programs combine synchronous with asynchronous communication and allow for audio, text, and visuals simultaneously. With Elluminate, for example, you can listen to a live presentation and view a whiteboard while communicating with the instructor and the other

students. Elluminate allows the instructor to explain a concept while students see a visual representation and have the ability to ask questions through the microphone or through written text. It is beneficial to hear the voice of the instructor and hear or read the views of the other students. Elluminate personalizes interaction that is often depersonalized in text-based communication. Both Elluminate and Skype can be used for lectures or for the inclusion of guest speakers in the class. It is best to archive the presentations so that those who miss the live session can view it at a later date. Elluminate and Skype can also be useful for conducting office hours.

There are a number of issues that need to be considered before instructors incorporate tools such as Skype or Elluminate into online classes. As with a PowerPoint presentation, participants can be distracted from the Elluminate presentation because they have to read the text messages from other students or have to write their own contributions. The various buttons on Elluminate (leaving the room, hands up, smiley faces) also make the experience a little complicated. If students want to ask the presenter a question, of course, they have to listen live rather than to a recording from an archive. Students are attracted to online classes because they want a flexible schedule and resent being forced to be at the computer at a certain time. To schedule a time (or times if the instructor wants to offer multiple synchronous sessions) that is convenient for the teacher and all the students makes synchronous discussions difficult to organize. Finally, there are possible technical problems with these technologies. Students might need plug-ins and players to use Flash or audio, and students will need to know where to find them on the Internet. Students lead busy lives and make mistakes with technology when they are rushed, and many could be frustrated if they find they are unable to connect to the live lecture on time.

Announcements

It is possible to provide information to students without posting or recording a formal lecture. A weekly announcement is one way to do this. Announcements can be used to introduce a new topic or module. An announcement can put the weekly readings and discussions into context, summarize the major points of the previous week's work and clarify any misconceptions. These announcements can become, in effect, mini-lectures. Written communication such as this has another advantage compared to the more high-tech means of adding lectures. Podcasts, videos, PowerPoint presentations, Skype and Elluminate all require a high-speed Internet connection, but text in an announcement can be seen by those students who only operate on a dial-up connection.

Box 2.2 Quiz feedback

Here are five typical quiz questions I assign in my US history class together with the explanatory feedback to each of the five questions:

1 Which of the following Constitutional amendments abolished slavery?

- A 13
- B 14
- C 15
- D 16

The 13th, 14th and 15th amendments were all passed during Reconstruction. It was the 13th amendment that abolished slavery, the 14th amendment that allowed the federal government, not the states, to protect the rights of citizens, and the 15th amendment that granted the vote to African-American men. The 16th amendment had nothing to do with Reconstruction, but allowed the federal government to collect income tax.

2 Which region of the country was the most industrialized in 1865?

- A the North
- B the South
- C the West
- D all of it evenly

The US was very regionally distinct after the Civil War. The North was the most industrialized, and the South and the West were still agrarian.

3 In 1865 the Senate was chosen:

- A directly by the voters
- B by the state legislators
- C by the president
- D by the House of Representatives

Senators were chosen by state legislators until the 17th amendment was ratified in 1913. Initially, the House of Representatives was directly elected by the voters but the president was elected by an electoral college, chosen by the state legislators.

4 In 1865 the House of Representatives was chosen:

- A directly by the voters
- B by the state legislators
- C by the president
- D by the Senate

The House of Representatives has always been chosen directly by the voters.

5 The Civil War resulted in:

- A the death of more than 600,000 people
- B the political triumph of the North for generations
- C a growth in the power of the federal government
- D all of the above

The Civil War fundamentally changed the country. The war resulted in the deaths of more than 600,000 people, Northern domination of the country, and the diminished power of the states compared to the federal government.

Quiz feedback

The feedback section of online quizzes is another less obvious way to deliver information in the online environment. Instructors can embed a lot of “lecture” material in the feedback section of an online quiz. When a student accesses the answers to the quiz questions, he or she is confronted with explanatory information. The explanatory feedback should be the same regardless of whether a student answers correctly or incorrectly. Students can access the quiz questions, their answers, the correct answers, and feedback throughout the whole semester. This is a good resource when they study for exams or have to write papers. See Box 2.2 for examples.

Other ways to replicate the lecture

Information can also be conveyed throughout the course site. Instructors can add information to the study guides for an assignment. Written comments on returned essays can also be extensive and provide a focused way to transmit information. It is also possible to imbed lecture material in the discussion board when the teacher clarifies or expands on a student’s contribution.

Classroom lectures are effective for providing basic information and often essential for explaining and giving context to assignments. Before students can analyze websites or discuss historical issues, they must have some basic background knowledge of the subject. There are a number of ways to provide basic information and reconfigure the lecture in the online environment. To reach the different learning styles of the students, it is probably best to include a number of the options mentioned here and to mix synchronous and asynchronous communication and audio, video, and text-based lectures. Nonetheless, online instructors need to rely less on the teacher’s input via classroom lectures and more on engaging students in independent discovery and in student-to-student interaction. The next chapter considers one of the best ways to do both of these: the online discussion board.

Further reading

“Alternatives to the Online Lecture” (no date). Accessed June 15, 2008 at: www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/alternative.asp. A wonderful article that offers online instructors many alternatives to the lecture.

Brittain, Sarah, Pietrek Glowacki, Jared Van Ittersum and Lynn Johnson (2006) “Podcasting Lectures: Formative Evaluation Strategies Helped Identify a Solution to a Learning Dilemma,” *Educause Quarterly* 29. Accessed June 15, 2008 at:

30 RECONFIGURING THE LECTURE

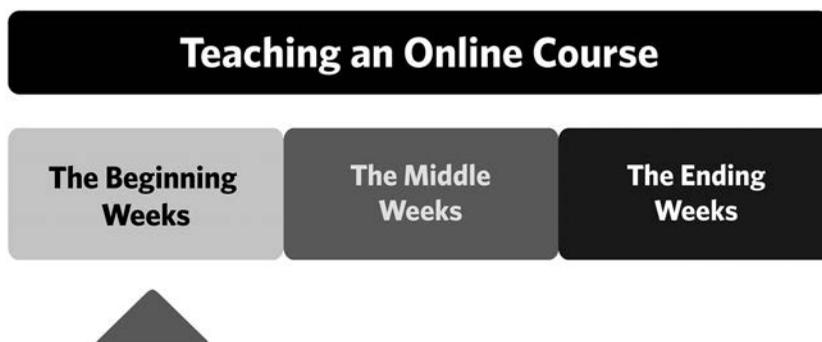
<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/EQM0634.pdf>. In an informative article that has enormous consequences for those reconfiguring lectures online, Brittain *et al.* surveyed a group of first-year dental students at the University of Michigan and found that they preferred audio-only lectures over video and PowerPoint lectures because of the mobility associated with podcasting.

Deitz, Corey (no date) "How to Create Your Own Podcast—A Step-by-Step Tutorial." Accessed June 15, 2008 at: http://radio.about.com/od/podcastin1/a/aa030805a_2.htm. As it says, a step-by-step guide to making a podcast.

Finkelstein, Jonathan (2006) *Learning in Real Time: Synchronous Teaching and Learning Online*, San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass. Everything you will ever want to know about using synchronous activities in the online classroom.

Fullmer-Umari, Marilyn (2000) "The Syllabus and Other Online Indispensables" in Ken W. White and Bob H. Weight (eds), *The Online Teaching Guide: A Handbook of Attitudes, Strategies, and Techniques for the Virtual Classroom*, Boston MA: Allyn & Bacon: 95–111. An excellent article that discusses the mechanics of producing a text-based online lecture.

The Beginning Weeks: Launching an Online Course



Imagine that it's the first day of the online semester and your course is ready for students. You've uploaded all the resource materials and prepared the weekly assignments and discussions. You've posted a welcome announcement on the LMS for students to see as they log on.

Now it's time to meet your students and begin teaching. It's an exciting time that unfolds over a few days as students log on and find their way to the course. One by one, students enter and introduce themselves to you and each other. What was once just a course design and a collection of digital tools and resources is now a shared experience. The online course has begun!

Teachers fulfill many important roles during the beginning weeks of a course. The first one is to help students understand how the course works. The syllabus and introductory information provide detailed information explaining this to students. However, they often need a tour through the course to understand how it all fits together. The teacher serves as the tour guide.

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Teachers also act as hosts, welcoming students and getting them excited about the adventure ahead. You share your enthusiasm about the course and your interest in what the students bring to the experience. Students see right away that the course is interactive and requires personal investment and active participation.

The teacher is also a living resource for the students. You are the one participant in the class who knows the intricacies and rationale for the course design and has expertise in the subject matter. You are there to clarify, amplify, and extend students' learning as opportunities arise.

For many students, this may be their first online course. So **the first weeks must provide students with an orientation to online learning, as well as the start of the actual course**. Instruction:

- helps students to work effectively in the online course environment;
- motivates them to engage in the course activities and reach the learning objectives; and
- encourages them to develop work habits that will serve them well throughout the semester.

This chapter emphasizes teaching strategies to get students on board and moving in the right direction.

5.1

Helping Students to Work in the Environment

As the course tour guide, you walk students through the first week's activities. You demonstrate how to communicate in the LMS and make sure they know how to perform all the different kinds of tasks required. You model the use of digital tools. You also point students toward the various types of resources and workspaces they will use and answer their questions along the way.

Familiarize Students with the Learning Environment

There are just a few basic things students need to understand to be able to work in the LMS, and it is important they do so as early as possible. They need to know how to:

- log on to the course and review lessons;
- access and use online resources (texts, video, audio, presentations);
- communicate online (discussions, announcements, email);
- create products with digital tools (wiki, blog, word processor, etc.);
- take quizzes or exams;
- upload assignments; and
- check their grades and review the teacher's feedback.

Many teachers use the opening learning activities to teach and test the students' mastery of competencies required to perform the course activities. For example, Tom Geary of Tidewater Community College begins his online course with a scavenger hunt. To earn full credit for the scavenger hunt exercise, students need to:

- locate learning resources within the LMS;
- find a resource on the Internet;
- post a comment to the discussion board;
- take a (non-graded) quiz; and
- submit a writing sample using the dropbox.

If students have trouble with any of these activities, Tom is able to help them or direct them to the institution's tech support for help.

During the first week of a course, learning the technology can demand a lot of the students' time and attention. Give students ungraded or low-stake opportunities to gain mastery in these competencies. Gauge the students' technical

performance and help them feel comfortable and confident navigating the online environment before grades become an issue. A key task for you as a teacher is to make sure that students focus on learning the content and don't get bogged down with the technology.



Teaching Tip

Call or email your students

Remember that if students have problems understanding how to work in the LMS, you can reach them through more familiar forms of communication—telephone or personal email.

- Introductory activities help students master technical competencies required to participate in the course.**

Review the Course Syllabus

Make sure students review the course syllabus and other introductory material carefully. The course design and your welcome announcement should point them to these materials. Some teachers give a low-stakes or ungraded assignment that asks students to answer questions about information found in the syllabus to check students' comprehension of the plan, such as:

- Name the three learning resources you are to read/view next week.
- How many times a week are you supposed to post comments on the discussion board?
- What is the title of the first assignment? And when is it due?
- How does the first assignment relate to the “Learning Outcome” identified for Week 1 on the syllabus?

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- How many points is the 1st assignment worth toward your final grade?
- Name three ways you can get help in this course.

Keep a close eye on students' progress through the first week's activities to see if they understand the procedures.

- Information on the syllabus and introductory course material is reviewed with students at the beginning of the course.

Establish Ways to Communicate with Students

In Chapter 3, we described how the different communication tools of the LMS function. During the first weeks, it's a good idea to use all, or most, of the communication tools you will use throughout the semester so students get a full picture of how course interaction works. Here are some ways teachers use communication tools in the first weeks:

- **Announcements** are used to post messages for students to see as they log on to the course. Your first announcement is a welcome message (see p. 62). A couple of days into the first week, you may want to post a second message, pointing students to some important course information. This will let students know that announcements change and they should always read them on their way into the course. Figure 5.1 shows an example.



Mid-week issues
Nanette Bristol

Sep 2 at 9: 32 am

Hello Psychology 101 Students. I have a few issues that need your attention:

1. I will use this Announcement feature to communicate important course information throughout the weeks. Please check here each time you log on.
2. I just opened our first content discussion, "Biology of the Mind." The discussion prompt included there explains what to do.
3. Let's finish up our introductions by tomorrow (Thursday) to move on to Unit 1.

Figure 5.1 An Example of a Second Announcement a Teacher Posts During the First Week of a Course

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- **Discussion forums** are used to interact with the whole class. Your first discussion is likely to be an icebreaker or some other kind of introductory activity. We provide some suggestions for facilitating the opening discussion in the next sections below. Chapter 8 offers more about facilitating different kinds of discussions for different purposes.
- **Email** is used to have private interactions with students. LMS mail services have an option to do an email “blast,” meaning you can write one email and send it to each student. This is an easy way to introduce email as an option for students to communicate with you. Figure 5.2 shows an example.

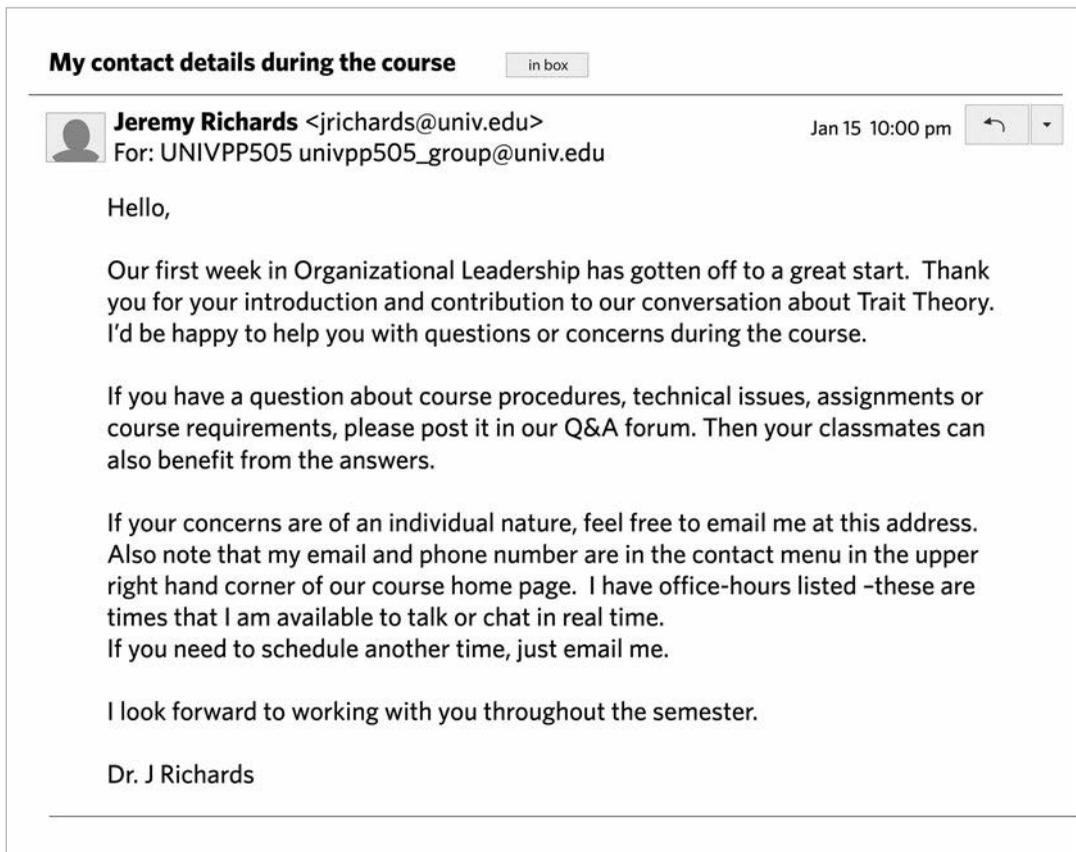


Figure 5.2 A Teacher's Initial Email to Students

- **The feedback tool in gradebook** provides another option for you to communicate with each student individually. When students turn in work online, the LMS feedback tool allows you to post comments in the margins (look for suggestions on offering feedback in Chapter 9, pp. 254–258). Some teachers use this tool extensively to provide individual feedback and open a dialogue with students about their progress over time. Offering feedback on students' first assignment will establish this tool as another avenue for communication between you and your students.

Using all these tools during the first weeks establishes different pathways for group and individual communications. It lets students know what to expect from you and how to reach you and each other.

- Teachers use a variety of means to communicate with students throughout the course.**

Offer Support

As mentioned in Chapter 4 (p. 117), many teachers create a Question & Answer (Q&A) discussion to provide a space for students to ask procedural questions and seek advice from the teacher and fellow students about assignments. This online space can be left open throughout the semester.

Some students may be too shy or feel that their questions are too obvious to post in the Q&A forum. We suggest that you post a notice during the first few weeks of the semester reminding students that they can contact you with any questions or concerns about the class. You may choose to send this invitation out to students as an announcement on the course home page or as an email (see Figure 4.4 on p. 115 for an example).

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If advising and tech support services are available at your institution, remind students that the contact information is in the syllabus. Also mention all other resources that may support their learning (digital library, digital tools such as plagiarism and grammar checkers, learning communities, etc.).

- ☑ **Students are provided with several options to receive support for procedural, technical, and content-related issues.**

Track Students' Participation

At the end of the first week online, check to see if all the students who have enrolled in your course have logged on successfully. **If students have not logged on, email them to inquire about their absence.** They may not be aware of the procedure to join the course, or may be experiencing technical difficulties. It is best to address nonparticipation issues during the beginning weeks of a course, before students fall too far behind to catch up.

Some LMSs can be configured to send teachers notifications when a student has not logged on to the course for a period of time.

There may be students who have logged on but have not posted comments. Email these students to let them know that in an online course, no one can see or benefit from their presence unless they contribute. In many courses, students are required to contribute three or more times a week. Share with them grading criteria for participation (in Chapter 6, pp. 166–170, we describe how to track students' progress; Figure 6.6 shows a detailed report of student logins).

Most LMSs have tracking software that allows you to see who has logged on to the course. Figure 5.3 shows an example.

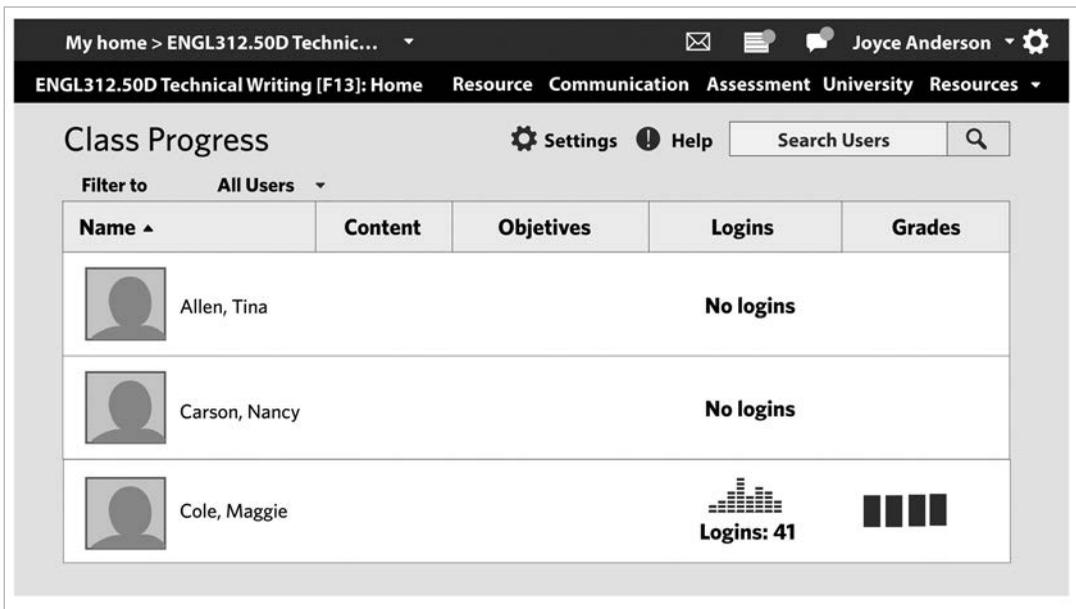


Figure 5.3 The Class Progress Report in Desire2Learn. The fourth column shows that two students have not logged in.

- Enrolled students who have not participated in the course during the first weeks are contacted.

5.2 Encouraging Communication

At the onset of the course, some students may be apprehensive about joining the discussion. Or, they may add a comment with minimal information because they are uncertain about expectations. It's natural for them to want to dip their toe in the water before jumping in. So it's important that you are there when they do, affirming their efforts and encouraging them to take the plunge.

Once the students have joined in the introductory discussion, welcome them and ask them follow-up questions. Help them become more comfortable by letting them know about your teaching and your expectations for their participation in the course. And promote students' interaction with one another.

Respond to Students' Initial Postings

When students introduce themselves online, give them feedback as soon as you can. This will show them that you are present during the course—guiding and supporting their learning—and that personal interaction is an important element of the online environment.

The following excerpt from a course on *Global Issues* illustrates how a teacher's response can be reassuring, initiate connection, and invite further input. The teacher encourages other students to respond to the first student's introduction.

Student: Hello everyone. My name is Sarah and this is my second online course. I'm a sophomore and my major is International Relations. I've studied music most of my life and have always found it interesting how artistic movements are shared and influenced by one another throughout the world and throughout history. The question I'd like to pose to the class is: Do you think globalization promotes diversity or homogeneity across cultures?

Teacher: Welcome Sarah! Congratulations on being the first to jump in. What kind of music do you study? I studied art history as an undergraduate and have found it immensely helpful as way to learn about world history. Economic interdependencies, struggles for power and resistance, and evolving perceptions of value are expressed through artistic movements. They map out an interconnected global history. We will trace several current artistic trends backwards over the next few weeks. I look forward to your input.

Great question about diversity vs. homogeneity—I'll let your classmates answer that.

The Beginning Weeks

Notice in the example above how the teacher:

- Uses the student's name, and refers to specifics within her response. These kinds of connections let students know that online interaction is personal and responsive.
- Asks a question to invite a follow-up comment from other students. The challenge is to open the discussion with the whole group.

A teacher may respond to the first one or two students promptly and then allow time for others to interject before posting again. This gives an opportunity for students to interact with each other and promotes a group dialogue rather than a back-and-forth conversation between the teacher and an individual student. Here's an example from a writing course that shows how a teacher greets students while encouraging group interaction.

Student 1: Hi! I'm Amy and I signed up for this course to fulfill my writing requirement. I'm a computer science major, so I haven't done much writing except papers and stuff like that. I hope to get better at it. How many people will be in this class?

Teacher: Welcome Amy. Glad to have you on board. There are 24 students enrolled in this course (and I'm looking forward to getting to know you all).
Writing skills are increasingly important in all fields because email, text, and shared documents have become the norm for communicating ideas. We'll consider the best uses and practices for different writing tasks.

Student 2: Hello Prof. Heinz, Amy, and other students who follow. My name is Brook and I'm in the Honors College, with double majors in Biology and Chemistry. I enjoy reading and find writing to be a good way to organize my thoughts.

This is my first online class, so I look forward to the experience.

Student 3: My name's Carter and I'm in the same boat as Amy. I don't really enjoy writing, but I understand how important it is (and required to graduate). One thing I've noticed is that people often use text to plan things when a simple telephone call would be so much more efficient. Does this bother anyone else?

Student 4: Hello everybody. This is Alex. Yes, Carter—it drives me crazy! Text should be used for quick messages—not long back-and-forths. Sometimes I think people just want to control the discussion and leave it whenever they want. Text is good for that—but it leaves a lot of room for misinterpretation.

Brook—I also find writing to be the best way for me to understand my own ideas. Sometimes I don't know what I think about something until I sit at a keyboard and begin to type. It's like the ideas come through my fingers. Did I mention that I am a media student?

Teacher: Welcome, Brook, Carter, and Alex. I love the conversations that have started. Writing involves a certain kind of thinking that combines logical, creative, and organizational skills. I agree with Brook and Alex, that writing can produce different ideas than other forms of communication.

And Carter and Alex have hit on an important theme of this course: finding the right form of communication for a particular purpose and audience.

Note: You'll find that we develop our own style of writing in this discussion forum. Let's keep it conversational without worrying too much about grammatical rules. Just be your (respectful) self and "talk" directly to others.

Notice how the teacher mentions individual students by name while addressing the whole class. This technique personalizes the dialogue without making the exchange between the teacher and a particular student exclusive. Everyone is invited to join in and comment on all that has been said (see Chapter 8 for more tips on facilitating online discussions).

Personal Reflection

Margaret Foley McCabe



The icebreaker exercise sets the tone for group communication. As a teacher, I tend to the interactions that take place in this initial exercise very carefully to make sure that each student is recognized by me or another student. I usually check in on my course two or three times a day during the first week to welcome students into the fold. Students may feel a little vulnerable after posting their introductory comment—unsure about what others will think of them. Students have told me that they feel reassured once someone has addressed them. It's like being invited into a circle of conversation. After I get the first few students interacting, I can sit back and let the students take over. They tend to mimic what I have started—greeting each other and asking follow-up questions. I usually jump in once a day with brief comments and general remarks to show that I am present. I often conclude the icebreaker activity with a roundup of information we have learned about each other. I try to do this in a fun, light-hearted way that highlights personal connections.

- Initial course activities provide an opportunity for students to interact with their teacher and peers.
- Teacher feedback is provided in a timely fashion.

Share Your Approach to Teaching

Online students want to know what kind of teacher you are. They are curious about your background and what you offer them. They want to know what you value and what you expect in the online interactions. They look to you for clues about the underlying criteria that will shape the course experience.

In Chapter 4, we suggested that you prepare and upload a personal statement or video introducing yourself to your students. This helps students connect to you as a person. But don't leave it there. Weave information about you and your teaching through your interactions with students during the first weeks of the semester. It helps them understand how you teach and what you expect from them. The following sections offer examples and suggestions for helping students understand how you teach and what you expect from them.

Lend Your Expertise

Ken Brain's research for his book *What the Best College Teachers Do* (2004) suggests that subject matter expertise is an important factor in engaging students:

Without exception, outstanding teachers know their subjects extremely well . . . They know how to simplify and clarify complex subjects, to cut to the heart of the matter with provocative insights, and they can think about their own thinking in the discipline, analyzing its nature and evaluating its quality. That capacity to think metacognitively drives much of what we observed in the best teaching.

(pp. 15–16)

Your subject knowledge and work within your discipline makes you a valuable asset to online discourse. You see connections between students' efforts and new territory that lies ahead for their exploration. Posting follow-up questions to students' responses and adding insightful comments within online discussions or in response to students' blogs challenges learners to go further and to press their inquiry into new territory. Your informed intervention can elevate a closed exchange (question/answer) into an open dialogue that inspires new layers of thought.

Personal Reflection

Allen Stairs

Every discipline has its own body of research and professional practices. A teacher's online contributions can demonstrate discipline-based thinking for students.

For example, on the discussion board, I try to respond to each person at least once a week, adding on to his or her comments in a way that frames it in philosophical terms. I'm trying to model for them what it is to think like a philosopher. There are some real advantages for doing this online because the exchange is there [online] for study. You can slow down, read the students' responses again, and analyze what is behind a comment or a question. You can find the teachable moments—it's like threading a needle.



Whether you have designed your online course or you are teaching from a predesigned course, it is important for you to own your expertise in its subject matter. Your willingness to share that knowledge will help to keep them engaged in the process.

Share Your Teaching Values

In addition to the course requirements (described in the syllabus), students are curious about the teacher's expectations and preferences. How formal and strict are you as a teacher? What is the relationship that you invite between you and your students? What are your teaching priorities and preferences? As students log on to the course, they are looking for answers to these kinds of underlying questions. Let them know:

- **What should students call you?** When you post online, your first and last name appears on the message. Students may not know what to call you. Do they use your title? First or last name? Your choice in this matter—along with the tone and language you use—helps to establish the kind of relationship you want to have with your students.

Example 1

Tom Geary's students at Tidewater Community College call him Tom. He explains why:

I want to encourage the whole group to become a community of learners rather than me as the teacher at the front of the class. I like to keep it informal and want students to feel comfortable just conversing with me online rather than composing answers to the teacher's questions.

Example 2

Joyce Anderson of the University of Maryland asks her students to refer to her as Prof. Anderson. She explains her choice:

Because this course is designed to help students become better professional writers, I model openness with a sense of professionalism. Calling me Prof. Anderson reinforces my relationship to the student as a mentor, editor, and professional writer.

- **What are the firm and negotiable course rules?**
Asynchronous online learning has a certain amount of flexibility built into the design to allow for different schedules and styles of participation. But students need to know the limits of that flexibility. Let students know where there is “wiggle room” and what guidelines need to be followed precisely. Every teacher puts emphasis on different aspects of the plan. Let your students know where you stand. In the following examples, two teachers post comments that help students to understand their expectations about online participation.

Example 1

Teacher: I want to emphasize that **it is a course requirement to log on and participate in the discussions three or more times throughout a week.**

This allows your classmates and me to respond back to you and build a conversation together. Logging on once a week and posting three comments is not the same. Your grade will reflect timing as well as content. See the participation rubric included in the syllabus and contact me if you have any questions.

Example 2

Teacher: A few students have asked me about my expectations for your weekly reflection blogs. Don't worry too much about length and format for this assignment. The point is for you to reflect on and respond to the questions I post in a way that captures your experience and thoughts. I will award 2 points each week for addressing the questions in any way you see fit.

- **What do you value in students' participation?** Students tend to want to please teachers. This goes beyond grades—they want you to think of them as capable people. It can be hard for students to gauge teachers' expectations online. Take the guessing game out of it by naming the attributes you value in online participation. This will lessen students' anxiety and encourage them to contribute effectively. Here is an example from a teacher's post in a weekly (content) discussion.

Teacher: I'm pleased to see students discussing controversial issues with such respect and honesty. This shows a desire to learn—not just to prove a point. I appreciate when students:

- Summarize issues raised and ask for confirmation that they have characterized their peers' points of view correctly. This is a powerful way to help us all focus on the salient issues and gives the original author a chance to clarify if needed.

- Back up their positions with support from the learning resources and personal experience.
- Take risks in expressing personal perspectives.
- Build on what others have added to the conversation and tie ideas together.
- Ask authentic questions.

Keep up the good work!

Model Participation

Teachers' online comments carry considerable weight with students. They look to you as a model of how to participate online. If you want students to participate three or more times a week, log on and contribute at least that many times.

Personal Reflection

Scott Thornbury

I can't overemphasize the importance of teachers being present online. In course evaluations, this is the one area that students consistently value most. They want their teacher there and they want to hear from him or her.

You can't just sit back and watch; you have to actively participate by posting comments, otherwise students don't know you are there. This may seem obvious, but you can't make assumptions about such things. For instance, we had one teacher in our program that was new to online teaching. She's a very conscientious and attentive teacher. She logged on every day and read the students' posts on the discussion board, but didn't add any comments. Her students complained that their teacher was never online and this upset them. We [the administration] had to tell this teacher that she needed to post comments every time she logged on to the discussion for students to know that she was there with them. It wasn't her fault—no one explained this to her. But this is something that is critical to online teaching.



If you want them to be inquisitive about other students' remarks, model asking follow-up questions.

Participating frequently in online discussion forums, through email, and through other feedback loops lets students know that you are there learning with them. Your constant involvement in the course sends students a very clear message of your commitment to their learning.

Write to Connect

Academics often use formal language when writing that can seem stiff in online conversation. Try to work against this tendency and write to connect with students when interacting with them online.

- **Use a conversational tone and informal language in online interactions.** Don't be afraid to relax the academic standards of writing a bit when interacting with your students online. While you model intellectual inquiry through your participation, you also want to make the online dialogue inviting and easy for students to enter. The goal is to achieve the kind of relaxed, conversational tone that comes naturally when face-to-face with students and colleagues.

Teacher: OK, Josh . . . I'm glad you brought up the Higgs boson controversy. As a philosopher, it's been fun for me to see how the media's coverage of this scientific breakthrough has sparked a public debate about determinism and free will. So what do you think? Does the discovery of the "God particle" change the balance of the arguments?

- **Show your personality and share your reactions to students' comments.**

Teacher: That's fantastic! Where did you learn that poem? I haven't heard that reference since I was a kid.

The Beginning Weeks

These kinds of interjections are directed toward the student as a person. They invite personal and genuine dialogue.

- **Convey the emotional content of your comments.**

Without physical cues, the sentiment of our communication can get lost.

Teacher: Theresa, it's great to have you back in the conversation. Thanks for letting us know about the accident. Very scary! I'm so relieved to know that everything's OK now.

- **Make posts visually easy to read by using the following conventions:**

- Break up long blocks of text. Write succinctly and use short paragraphs with space in between.
- Divide comments that cover multiple issues into different posts. That way students can attach a response that relates to a specific point.
- Use bullets or numbers when listing items.

As you teach, you fulfill many roles and will probably use a different tone in different contexts. You may use a supportive, second-person conversational tone in discussions and more academic writing in delivering content. Announcements and emails will have their own style, depending on the message. It's a good idea to discuss writing conventions with your students. Let them know how your expectations for written assignments may differ from conventions used for online interactions.

- A supportive conversational tone is used throughout the course.

Encourage Student-to-Student Interaction

Student-to-student interaction is one of the great advantages of online learning. The lack of time constraints in asynchronous courses allows all students to contribute to all conversations and activities, and take their time to compose their comments. It's not practical or beneficial for the teacher to respond to all of it. It's better to encourage students to learn with and from each other—right from the start.

Students can support and motivate each other, as shown in the students' exchange in Figure 5.4.

Student 1: My name is Maggie. This is my first class in over 10 years since I dropped out of college with only a few credits to go. I'm finally back to finish, but feel like I don't know what I'm doing. It's been a long time since I've written a paper—let alone studied for a test. I chose this course because I need the credit and the *Sociology of Work* seems like something that may tap into my more recent experience.

Student 2: Hi. I'm Louis and I'm a sophomore psychology major. Maggie, welcome back to school. I've thought about taking a gap year but worry that I would never come back. You may not have written a paper in a while, but I bet you have more interesting work experiences than many of us (myself included) to write about. What's the funniest job you've ever had?

Student 1: (Maggie) Thanks, Louis. I can't tell you how nice it was to read your comment. I have had some pretty funny jobs over the years. I was a professional princess for kids' parties for a while. Not sure if this counts. 😊

Figure 5.4 An Example of a Student-to-Student Supportive Exchange Online

These are the kind of simple responses that build camaraderie and encourage students to come back for more.

Teaching Dilemma

When do I respond in discussions?

As a teacher, finding the right points to interject in students' conversations and knowing when to hold back is a delicate balance. You want students to know that you are present online, reading their contributions, answering questions, and providing insight as the situations warrant. But you don't want to be overbearing, robbing the students of the opportunity to figure things out together. Every teacher will have a different idea about what the optimum level of his or her participation is. It will depend upon your particular course and your teaching style.

Our advice is to provide feedback and support frequently at the beginning of the course and then taper off as students begin to respond to one another (see Chapter 8 for more on this topic).

Here are some strategies that can encourage student-to-student interaction:

- Don't take every other turn in the online discussions. Give time and space for students to respond to each other's comments and questions.
- Include instructions for students to post follow-up responses as part of the discussion prompt.

Teacher: This week we will discuss [topic and questions inserted here]. Please respond to these questions as an original post and then comment on at least two of your classmates' posts. Think the problem through and ask each other substantive questions and build on each other's comments.

Some teachers include "follow-up" responses as a graded category within online participation assessment (see Chapter 8, p. 215, for an example participation rubric).

The Beginning Weeks

- Open students' questions and comments up for the whole group to consider.

Teacher: Good questions, Peter. I'd like to hear what others have to say about this issue.

- Give positive feedback about students' interaction.

Teacher: Karen, great response to Ronan's question. I encourage everyone to jump in, answer each other's questions, and offer your insights to us all. This is what our discussions are all about.

- Learners are encouraged to interact with others (classmates, guest speakers, etc.) and benefit from their experience and expertise.**

5.3

Building Self-Directed Learning Skills

Online learning requires many of the skills attributed to self-directed learning. The flexible time frame of asynchronous courses and the independent nature of online participation requires students to:

- establish a personal work schedule;
- stick to it;
- take initiative to solve problems and seek support as needed;
- collaborate with others;
- plan and manage long term projects; and
- assess their progress and make adjustments as needed.

This can be challenging for many people—especially for less mature students.

The Beginning Weeks

In the first weeks, teachers set up guidelines and structures to help students establish effective work routines. Students need to know what kind of time they should devote to:

- participating online;
- reading and viewing the learning resources;
- completing assignments;
- studying; and
- working on long-term projects.

Provide Structure for Learning

With support and practice, students will need less direction over time and will be able to handle more leadership responsibilities and open-ended tasks in the middle and ending weeks of the semester. **More structure at the beginning will allow for more freedom and creative options later.**



Teaching Tip

Support the development of self-directed learning skills

“Scaffolding” refers to the support that a teacher provides to students in order to help them learn. The term is borrowed from the temporary frame used around a building during construction.

Cognitive scaffolding allows learners to reach places that they would otherwise be unable to reach . . . And when the building is finished or the renovation complete, the scaffolding is removed, it is not seen in the final product.

(Holton & Clarke, 2006, p. 129)

Consistent weekly course routines, defined due dates, and clear instructions about how and when to complete tasks provides the scaffolding for students to create their own work habits. It’s important to establish these routines from the first week of the semester so students don’t fall behind and lose motivation. Over time, students will rely less on the external structures and more on their own work habits.

Help Students Plan a Weekly Routine

Most online courses are designed to have fairly consistent work routines from week to week. It's helpful to point this out to students. Students need to know what order to move through the course activities and how much time they have to dedicate to each. Figure 5.5 offers an example of a "worksheet" a teacher gives to her students to help them establish a personal work routine.

Suggestions for Planning Your Learning Routine

Online learning offers a great deal of flexibility within our schedules. But each of us must find time to complete all the learning activities each week. The schedule below represents the tasks you will need to do to fulfill the course requirements and succeed.

I've included a rough estimate of the time I expect each of these tasks will take. However, recognize that learning is a highly individualized sport. Some people may need more time reviewing resources and others more time for participation or assignments. Plan your schedule so it reflects the time you need.

Weekly Tasks

- Read the assigned chapters and articles and view the lecture. (2–3 hours)

You will need to review the learning resources BEFORE participating in the discussions or completing the assignments.

Suggestion: Do this on Monday or Tuesday.

- **Participate in the weekly discussion forum.** (2–3 hours spread out throughout the week)

Participating in a discussion means reading what everyone has said, as well as contributing thoughtfully throughout the week. Plan to spend about 30 minutes to one hour composing your first response to the prompt (taking into consideration the week's resources and other students' comments). As the week progresses, there will be more comments to read. Plan on checking in and adding comments at least two more times. See the participation rubric in the syllabus for guidance.

Suggestion: Begin posting in the discussion on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Figure 5.5 A Worksheet Distributed to Students to Help them Plan their Online Course Routines

The Beginning Weeks

- **Complete weekly assignment.** ($\frac{1}{2}$ –3 hours due by Sunday at midnight)

The assignments vary in length and complexity. The first three are independent writing tasks that can be done when you are ready to do it. Later assignments are collaborative and will require coordination of timing with your peers.

Suggestion: Read the instructions for the assignment at the beginning of the week. Then do the assignment after you have read the material and participated in the discussion for a few days.

- **Miscellaneous tasks.** (1 hour)

Allow time for other course-related tasks such as: keeping track of your course progress and upcoming assignment; interacting with classmates outside of the discussions; exploring optional course resources and researching related interest on the Internet; and getting help as needed.

Suggestion: Allow about an hour each week for miscellaneous course activity.

Note: This course is worth three credit hours. It is equal in content, quality, and rigor with an on-site course. That means **you are expected to spend approximately nine hours a week** completing the course requirements (this is equivalent to three in-class hours plus six hours of homework expected of students for a three-credit on-site course).

Here's a sample of how your time may be distributed. Plan and track your actual time to determine a schedule that will work for you.

Sample Schedule							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Review Resources	1.5 hrs	30 min	30 min				
Discussion		45 min	30 min		15 min	15 min	30 min
Assignment		15 min			2 hrs		45 min
Miscellaneous Task	30 min		15 min		15 min	15 min	

Figure 5.5 continued

- ✓ Learning activities and course requirements are clearly defined and explained to students.
- ✓ A consistent routine of weekly course activities is established to help online learners organize their schedules.

5.4

Reflective Teaching: Learning as You Go

At the end of each week, review your online teaching experience and reflect on the achievements and difficulties. We recommend formalizing this practice by keeping an online teaching journal. You may choose to create a personal blog within the LMS or in another form that works for you. It's important to keep notes as you go through each week to capture your impressions, questions, and concerns as they arise. Writing a brief review of the week online will help you to identify situations that may require attention or a change in your instruction.

Journaling does not need to be extensive to be effective. Consider the following questions:

1. What has occurred online throughout a week?
 - Describe the students' pattern and quality of participation in each of the online activities and the coursework completed.
 - Which students are excelling? Which students are struggling? Characterize their online participation and work habits.
 - Describe your participation. How are you supporting the students online?
2. What aspects of the online course are going well? Are there areas that concern you?
 - Why do you think those aspects are going well? What do you think is contributing to the problem areas?

3. How you can build upon success? What can be done to improve areas of concern?

Tracking your journal notes from week to week will help you recognize patterns that are emerging. By the end of the first third of the semester, you will have enough information to take targeted action to improve your online teaching.



Refer to the book's website to view sample teacher journal entries: www.essentialsofonlineteaching.com.

- Reflection on teaching provides information for course improvement.
- Course evaluation and improvement is an ongoing process.

5.5

Summary and Standards

During the first weeks of an online semester, the teacher serves as a host, a tour guide, and a resource, for students' learning. They help students learn how to work with the tools and dynamics of the LMS. They review the course design with the students and make sure they understand how it works and how it all fits together.

Teachers actively help students engage in the course by sharing their knowledge, enthusiasm, and expertise as facilitators of learning. They help students establish effective and efficient work routines that are important for learning throughout the online semester.

Teaching is a process of continual evaluation and improvement of students' progress and one's own practice. It is recommended that teachers keep track of their impressions about the course in progress in a journal. Such self-reflective practice provides a means to understand and improve online instruction and student learning.

The following standards were identified in connection with instructional issues that are commonly the focus of the first weeks of an online course:

The Beginning Weeks

- Introductory activities help students master technical competencies required to participate in the course.
- Information on the syllabus and introductory course material is reviewed with students at the beginning of the course.
- Teachers use a variety of means to communicate with students throughout the course.
- Students are provided with several options to receive support for procedural, technical, and content-related issues.
- Enrolled students who have not participated in the course during the first weeks are contacted.
- Initial course activities provide an opportunity for students to interact with their teacher and peers.
- Teacher feedback is provided in a timely fashion.
- A supportive conversational tone is used throughout the course.
- Learners are encouraged to interact with others (classmates, guest speakers, etc.) and benefit from their experience and expertise.
- Learning activities and course requirements are clearly defined and explained to students.
- A consistent routine of weekly course activities is established to help online learners organize their schedules.
- Reflection on teaching provides information for course improvement.
- Course evaluation and improvement is an ongoing process.

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