

## 2007-2008 Online Course Development Grants

During 2007-2008, twenty-six faculty members were awarded Online Course Development Grants to move existing courses online. After teaching the course online for the first semester, each grant recipient submitted a report summarizing the online course design and teaching experience. Here is a summary of experiences of the grant recipients.

Grant recipients recommend that **faculty**...

- Allow ample time for the detailed planning involved in moving a course online.
- Start with a well-organized, clear, concise, detailed syllabus.
- Set clear expectations for student participation in course website and use statistics/dashboard tools to monitor student “attendance”.
- Employ a variety of strategies and assessments to prompt active student participation in online discussions and group activities.
- Need to include in the scheduling information any dates/times during which students are all expected to be online for a lecture, chat, or other synchronous communication.
- Utilize library resources and services for online learners.
- Be alert to copyright and fair use issues with regard to resources posted on the course website.
- May find textbook publisher materials helpful, but there are technical/pedagogical drawbacks.
- May find it helpful to teach the course face-to-face before teaching it online for the first time.
- Shouldn't be afraid to infuse a bit of personality into the online course, in the same way an instructor would in a face-to-face classroom.
- Consider the course organization, clarity of directions, technical skill required, workload, time commitment from students' point of view.
- Use multiple forms of communication with students, including Blackboard or Moodle tools, email, telephone and face to face office hours.
- Plan ahead to work with Teaching and Technology Center (TTC) staff to create and post multimedia content on course website.
- Balance technical sophistication of content delivery with students' skills and Internet access.
- Test content modules, tests, and other interactive course materials in advance of student use.
- Take advantage of TTC workshops and individualized support.
- Use face-to-face class meetings at outset of semester to solve any technical problems, especially those that are specific to a course, e.g. phonetic symbols or mathematical notation.
- Can reduce the workload by referring students, when appropriate, to User Support help desk and Blackboard tutorials for technical questions.
- Need to anticipate complex obstacles when teaching online across international boundaries.
- Accept that technical problems are inevitable and maintain flexibility when problems arise.
- Ask other instructors for their ideas and realize that you are not alone.

- Keep it simple starting out.

Grant recipients found that **students**...

- Have anxiety about and resistance to change.
- Need strong time management skills to succeed in online courses.
- Sometimes assume that online courses will be easy.
- Do feel connected in online venues—they use email, text messaging and other online social networking tools all the time.
- In face-to-face sections benefit, too, when the instructor posts materials on the course website for an online section.
- Gain confidence by using Blackboard/Moodle tools for low-stakes assessments early in the semester.
- Manage time better with frequent assessment and assignments divided up into smaller “chunks” with frequent due dates.
- Are increasingly likely to have prior online learning experience and a better understanding of what they need to do to succeed online when they start the course.

Here is a sampling of the courses that have been moved online during the first year of the Online Course Development Grants:

## **Business**

### **ACFI 490 Investments**

#### **Dr. Shannon Donovan**

In this highly interactive course, students use an online trading simulator to gain “real life” experience by trading a simulated portfolio of \$100,000. Dr. Donovan used Captivate to develop learning objects that students can use to complete the tasks and problems. She recorded lectures using Power Point with Adobe Connect and recorded exam solutions and study guides with Adobe Connect. Other course resources include study notes, online homework and quizzes, and discussion board use for questions. Face-to-face class the other meetings were used mainly for exams. Dr. Donovan is also available to her students via online office hours using Adobe connect. Two students who could not be at the last of the three class meetings used PowerPoint with audio overlay to present their final projects. Dr. Donovan noted, “These actually turned out to be very professional presentations and the students learned the technology on their own. I may try more of this in the future as it could be a valuable skill for the workplace. “

## **Arts & Sciences**

### **COMM 345 Writing for Radio and Television**

#### **Dr. Lisa Zinsius Supka**

This course discusses the basic principles of writing for radio, television, and convergent media. Dr. Zinsius Supka recommends letting students take control of their learning by giving them choices of topics and due dates. “Students put more effort into items that they feel passionate about,” she says. Each student, based on career goals/interests, chose a direction for specific

assignments within the course learning objectives. Student submissions were posted on Blackboard. The discussion board and critiques using the Survey function allowed peer to peer interaction. In moving the course online, Dr. Zinsius Supka was apprehensive about the lack of face-to-face communication with students. But she found that students, who are constantly using email, instant messaging and text messaging outside the classroom, were quick to form relationships without face-to-face classroom contact. Discussion board use for individual and group project helped to build a sense of community in the course. With regard to the lack of face-to-face contact, she comments, "Don't be afraid that there isn't a connection...Above all, realize that students probably aren't as worried as you are!" Links to media websites, email, and BSC services assisted students in learning about production techniques. Students were offered the option for face-to-face meetings; and employment/training opportunities were arranged through the radio conference attended.

### **COMM 365 Introduction to Intercultural Communication**

**Dr. Arthur Lizie**

The goals of this course are to teach students about both the relationship between cultural background and communication style and the means by which to best promote engaged, empathetic, and fair cross-cultural communication. The course challenges students to question many of their typical, daily activities and ask themselves, "Am I doing this activity because I choose to, or because I've been culturally trained to do it?" Dr. Lizie's primary purpose in moving the course online was to team-teach the course with an instructor at a foreign school or, at least, pair students with international partners to develop stronger interpersonal relationships and more culturally specific learning. Unfortunately, Dr. Lizie encountered unanticipated obstacles that prevented him from meeting this goal. These ranged from differences in academic calendars to pedagogical differences that placed less value on student-centered learning. Instead, Dr. Lizie developed individual assignments that required students to use online technologies (e-mail, Facebook, instant messaging) to contact non-American individuals to gather information. The online learning environment afforded an immediacy and fluidity that is not generally available in the traditional classroom, allowed students to use visual means of argument (e.g. video) to complete assignments, and provided the relative anonymity that fostered a more honest exchange of ideas on sensitive topics, e.g. race, immigration, sex, than in the face-to-face classroom. Dr. Lizie's future plans include incorporating the use of blogs, social networking and other Web-based tools to encourage students to make better use of their learning as a means of teaching others.

### **COMP 105 Introduction to Computer Applications**

**Drs. Abdul Sattar and Toby Lorenzen**

The goal of this course is for the students to become proficient in using the Microsoft Office suite (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, and optionally FrontPage). For each learning module, Drs. Sattar and Lorenzen used Adobe Captivate II to create a step-by-step audio and visual demonstration of the MS application. These tutorials play in the bottom half of a computer screen, allowing the student to run the actual application in the top half of the monitor. The student pauses the tutorial every few minutes and imitates the steps on the actual MS software. By the end of the tutorial, the student has prepared a work sample using the MS application. The student then repeats this process, without the help of the tutorial. The class meetings are used to test students

for mastery of MS Office. Drs. Sattar and Lorenzen found that it was very time consuming to create the tutorials; each one hour of tutorial required approximately 20 hours preparation. Testing the tutorials in a fully face-to-face course section prior to use online proved useful in identifying segments that needed revision. Fitting all of the assessments (14 demonstrations and 4 tests) into the face-to-face class meetings proved to be an additional challenge. Overall, however, the online tutorials have improved student learning, as evidenced by higher final grades.

### **CRJU 201-W01 Introduction to Criminal Justice**

**Francis M. Williams, PhD**

This course examines the past, present, and future of the American criminal justice system. Topics include how laws are created; history and types of law enforcement; structure of the court system; and the changing philosophies of the American correctional system. Dr. Williams supplemented his own content with a textbook publisher-developed course pack that includes audio, visual and graphical presentation of course material and provides students with supplementary learning activities. Each week, students completed reading, graded quizzes, writing assignments and online discussion related to a specific course topic. In addition, students used the publisher-provided supplements, which included self quizzes, flashcards, key terms, Internet activities, and online learning links. Dr. Williams decided to use the publisher supplements because he felt that the multimedia and interactive components would engage students in the course content. However, he experienced technical challenges integrating his own course content with the publisher-created materials. Another challenge was that many of his students lacked basic online learning skills. One possible solution to this is to shift from 100% online to an 80/20 hybrid and include an initial course orientation meeting for students.

### **ENGL 102 Writing II**

**Dr. Jennifer Fallas**

This course examines the existence of bias (gender, racial, age, sexuality) as it exists in American pop-culture and is divided into five thematic units and also by type of essay/writing. Students were required to complete various types of writing for each unit. After completing the unit reading, students formulated an immediate, informal response to what they read and posted it in their Response Blogs. The most salient points of each student's blog were then posted by the instructor to the class website so that students could "collaborate" and view how their peers were interpreting the information/readings. From the blogs, students then found additional sources that might be used as secondary sources for that particular unit's essay. Students were required to respond to or summarize their sources in Reading Journals in order to ensure that they fully understood the ideas presented. Based on the informal writings of the Blogs & Research Exercises/Reading Journals, students would then construct drafts of their essays and then final versions.

### **GEOG 122 The Physical World**

**Darcy Boellstorff**

In GEOG122: The Physical World, Dr. Boellstorff utilizes a wide set of learning and assessment strategies to engage students in meeting learning objectives. The course is organized into weekly learning modules that had a lecture (PowerPoint slides and audio files), discussion board, self-assessment quiz, and written assignment. The biggest challenge in moving this course online has

been finding activities that take the place of hands-on activities done in a live class, such as examining rock specimens or viewing stereo pairs of aerial photographs. Dr. Boellstorf has begun building a database of online activities that take advantage of Internet resources for applying course material using real-world data and information. For example, weekly discussion board topics link lecture material with hands-on activities that require students to use resources from sites such as the USGS and National Weather Service. Dr. Boellstorf's experience has been that, "Carefully-designed web activities can be just as effective as activities we do in a live class, and perhaps even more so." Her future plans include using Adobe Captivate to combine PowerPoint slides and audio narration into a single, downloadable file and also breaking lectures up into multiple, smaller, single-theme files of 10-12 minute length.

### **GEOG 171 Geography of the Global South** **James Hayes-Bohanan**

This course introduces geography through a survey of regions in the Global South (formerly known as the Third World). Throughout the course, students learn about the tension between unique characteristics that differentiate places and common characteristics that unite regions. The advantage of online learning in this kind of course is that, with support from the instructor, students can work with materials that originate in the regions being studied. Dr. Hayes-Bohanan used a world regional geography text commonly used at BSC, along with WileyPLUS online supplements. A combination of instructor-prepared notes on each chapter and WileyPLUS supplemental quizzes was used to ensure that students came to the online discussion forums with a common foundation in the readings. Dr. Hayes-Bohanan commented that although he has taught at least ten course sections in an 80/20 hybrid mode, he was not fully prepared for some of the logistical challenges in a 100% online course. For example, since the Wiley website did not replace the Blackboard course website, students needed to register for user accounts for both WileyPLUS and Blackboard. Assisting students in this process and troubleshooting registration problems via email required an inordinate amount of instructor time.

### **LASP 290-Y01 Spanish Phonetics and Dialectology** **Dr. Fernanda L. Ferreira**

This course, which provides a comprehensive description of the sound system of Spanish, presented unique learning opportunities and challenges in an online format. The course includes a brief discussion of the major phonetic characteristics of regional and social varieties of the Spanish of Spain and Latin America. Special attention is given to pronunciation problems of non-native speakers, with an emphasis on English pronunciation patterns. Students in the Web-based section are required to post digitally recorded speech samples on Blackboard's 'Digital Drop Box'; research various online sites and listen to authentic Spanish speech samples; "check-in" electronically with regularity; and complete textbook assignments. The English language discussion forums and MS Word files were helpful to students. Posting Spanish language text proved challenging, however, for instructor and students alike. Although the Blackboard framework can be changed to Spanish, the text editor does not include the Spanish orthographic symbols. Creating text in MS Word and then copying and pasting into Blackboard became very time consuming. More critical, phonetic symbols were not available on Blackboard, and downloading this font from another source was not successful during the course. Students also had difficulty making distinctions between the Audacity audio files used for the course and the more popularly

used wav. and MP3 formats. These technical problems prevented the use of fully online tests; instead, students printed out the tests, completed them in a pencil/paper mode, and then delivered the completed hard copy to the instructor's campus office. These obstacles necessitated more frequent face-to-face class meetings than originally planned.

### **MATH 105 Selected Topics in Mathematics** **Dr. Mahmoud El-Hashash**

MATH 105 fulfills all Mathematics requirements for non-majors who are not required to take pre-calculus or calculus, but students tend to postpone taking this course until just before graduation. Offering the course online helps students to fit it into their schedules, especially during the summer. In his syllabus, Dr. El-Hashash includes a weekly schedule of assignments, quizzes, and exams, so that students know exactly what they need to do to complete the course. Dr. El-Hashash found his strategy of presenting content in multiple ways to be particularly successful. Examples include PowerPoint slides with examples and detailed solutions for each mathematical concept, instructor-created audio lectures on each chapter, and links to the textbook publisher's online resources (e.g. problem sets with step-by-step solutions, practice exams, and video lectures.) One drawback of this approach was that some students used only the online course content and neglected to read the assigned textbook chapters, an approach which Dr. El-Hashash says fails to give students adequate practice using the mathematical concepts.

### **PSYC 342 Biopsychology** **Dr. Susan Todd**

Dr. Todd organized this course around Flash videos incorporating course lecture audio. The value of lecture is to do what the text cannot—create a frame of reference and context that makes the material immediate and interesting to students—the equivalent of writing a text about the text. The current availability of both the hardware and software resources in conjunction with Blackboard has made it feasible to accomplish this in an online venue. For two semesters, Dr. Todd videotaped her PSYC 342 classroom lectures and then used a variety of technical tools to create digital versions of her lectures, which include PowerPoint slides and textbook graphics (with publisher's permission.) The students have responded very well to this format and the level of engagement continues to be both stimulating and exciting—students participate far more actively than is typical in a face-to-face classroom. This project is consistent with a departmental initiative for making the psychology major available to students online.

### **SCWK 270 Social Work Issues of Diversity and Oppression** **Dr. Jude Gonsalvez**

This course introduces students to the concepts of diversity and oppression from a social work perspective. Online teaching strategies included use of daily announcements to maintain communication with students; use of Blackboard groups for students who needed extra help on specific topics; using BSC's streaming video service to allow students to view course videos online; and use of Adobe Connect for weekly online chat sessions. Dr. Gonsalvez found that, initially, many of his students were uncomfortable in the online course environment. Dr. Gonsalvez, who was himself a first-time online instructor, found that, "Being honest with students about my own comfort level worked well." He addressed students' anxiety in almost every class meeting. Future plans include using a collaborative feature in Adobe Acrobat Connect which

makes students co-presenters in the Web-conferencing room and allows them to present their papers online. Dr. Gonsalvez also plans to use Adobe Captivate to create desktop video recordings of his lectures, so that students can access the lectures at their convenience.

**SOCI 330: Women's Roles**  
**Jodi Cohen, PhD**

This course is primarily taken by upper-level Sociology students interested in studying gender and typically centers on discussion of course readings, many of which are intensely person to students in the class. Dr. Cohen's biggest concern in moving the course online was to ensure that a safe space for respectful discussion. Another goal was to create a sense of ongoing discussion, even though it was not "real-time". Each week, students were provided with folders of readings and assigned to write in depth on one or two important ideas from the readings and their personal feelings or questions about these constructs. Each student then read and responded on the Blackboard discussion board to the writing of at least two classmates. This method worked well and led to some wonderful conversations. Dr. Cohen observed, "I feel that students may have felt more comfortable voicing their opinions from a distance, where they are not subject to the immediate reaction of classmates, and this distance allowed them to stretch themselves to consider the opinions of others with time to ruminate over what was written instead of being forced to respond immediately."

**THEA 110 Theater Appreciation**  
**Thomas Kee**

A key objective of this course is for students to experience live theatre and discuss shared theatrical experiences as a vehicle for understanding the theatre of the past. This writing-intensive course includes multiple, writing-based learning activities, such as guided discussion, contextual analysis, and short answer exams into the course. In designing the course, Professor Kee focused on providing content in a variety of media, in order to meet students' diverse learning needs. Using audio lectures, films available through the digital delivery system, web-tours, play attendance, as well as traditional text-based sources, is essential to this course, especially since students need to read a lot of instructions in order to use the Blackboard interface. Using a variety of formats allows students to witness first-hand some fine acting and directing, reduces reading fatigue, and aids visually centered learners. In contrast to test-centered learning, this course utilizes frequent, incremental, deadline-sensitive assignments. The steps leading up to the end of a unit are valued along with summary projects. This strategy requires frequent student participation red-flags students who are falling behind, and discourages plagiarism. Immediate, short-term assignments that carry less weight than later projects and have rigidly enforced deadlines help to establish expectations early on in the course, when the stakes are low.

**Education & Allied Studies**

**EDHM 558 The Reflective Middle/High School Practitioner**  
**Dr. Phyllis Gimbel**

This post-baccalaureate capstone course focuses on beginning teachers and student teachers meeting all the competencies required for the Massachusetts initial license for teaching. Graduate students closely examined their own classroom learning and teaching practices that are consistent

with the constructivist theory of learning. They reflected upon and demonstrated their knowledge of the best practices that address the high standards and expectations, effective instruction, assessment, and classroom management. Student feedback suggested that writing biweekly reflective logs was effective in helping students to reflect on their own teaching practice. Students also found the wiki and discussion board postings about what makes an effective teacher to be a successful teaching/learning strategy. The face-to-face class meetings afforded students time to share workplace experiences. Dr. Gimbel recommends that online instructors be available daily, especially on weekends when graduate students tend to do their work.

**HEAL 405 Drug in Society**  
**Dr. Amos Nwosu**

HEAL 405 focuses on environmental and cultural values affecting the drug using population. Topics include subculture and alternative lifestyles, modern treatment facilities and rehabilitation, health promotion, and alternative lifestyles to drug use. Dr. Nwosu employed a variety of strategies to ensure the success of this course. These included: creating a positive first impression through course description, clarification of goals and expectations; whetting students' appetite for the course materials; reassuring students of the value of the course; and reassuring them of the quality of planning invested by the course professor. Projects and assignment were presented graphically and visually. Course materials were posted as lecture notes with annotated online activities. Sample tests that emphasized individual testing with multiple choice, true/false, matching and critical thinking questions, with model answers were provided. Students received periodic feedback throughout the course. Dr. Nwosu emphasizes that online teaching is time consuming and requires ample advance planning.

**READ 570-007 New Literacies**  
**Nancy J. Hines**

The nature of reading comprehension on the Internet differs from traditional text reading. This course uses research based instruction and web inquiry to equip educators to guide youth through the challenges of reading comprehension in an age of online information. Educators develop an in-depth understanding of the role of the Internet in literacy development and the impact of the historical connections between literacy, learning, technology, and culture. This course embraces a social-constructivist learning paradigm linking constructivism, literacy, and computers. Each week, students read about new literacies from traditional, linear textbook print, online journals, websites, and self-selected readings from the Internet. Students work in groups to analyze, synthesize, and share their findings with the rest of the class. Throughout the course, students use tools including blogs, wikis, YouTube, and threaded discussions. In addition, students developed and presented lesson plans which incorporated new literacies. Throughout this course, students were required to use the new literacies about which they were learning. One challenge specific to working with elementary and secondary school teachers is helping teachers balance educators' concerns about children's Internet safety with the need to keep pace with Internet technologies, particularly those associated with social networking that are so heavily used by children and teens outside school.

## **SPED 505 Applied Curriculum Development for Learners with Special Needs**

**Dr. Jeri Katz**

This course, intended for students pursuing an initial teaching license in Special Education, is devoted to understanding curriculum design, planning instruction, writing Individual Education Programs (IEP's), and curriculum-based assessments. SPED 505 focuses specifically on the issues faced by middle and high school teachers preparing older students with special needs for the workforce, college or other post-secondary programs. Dr. Katz engaged students in course topics through the use of self-study units from the IRIS center at Vanderbilt University and Special Connections at the University of Kansas, both collaborative projects of the US Office of Special Education. In addition, students each read a designated chapter in the textbook, created a brief PowerPoint presentation highlighting key points for classmates, and developed a related question for the online class discussion. Other strategies Dr. Katz employed to facilitate students' learning included pairing streaming video with discussion assignments and providing assessment rubrics for major assignments. One challenge Dr. Katz encountered was the need to provide frequent feedback and reassurance to graduate students who were new to Blackboard.

## **SPED 594 Practicum: Moderate Disabilities (PreK-8)**

**Dr. Ken Dobush**

During practicum experiences, students practice teach in public schools throughout Southeastern Massachusetts. Historically, interaction among practicum students and instructor has been limited by geographical and time constraints. Offering this course online enabled Dr. Dobush to provide students with a forum for discussion, as well as opportunities to share assignments, experiences, and ideas with the professor and fellow students, all without having to travel long distances. The teaching strategy that proved most effective was the online chat session using Adobe Connect for real time communication. The students shared their successes and frustrations with each other. The instructor guided these conversations and added feedback based on research and experience. Although this was a required assignment, finding a common time when students could all be online was difficult. In the future, this requirement will be explained to the students in advance. Participation will be mandatory, and will be part of their final grade.

## **SPED 560: Teaching Students with Special Needs through Direct/Explicit Instruction**

**Dr. Bob MacMillan**

SPED 560 Direct and Explicit Instruction is designed to introduce course participants to appropriate methodology for teaching academic skills to students with and without learning handicaps (e.g., learning disabilities and/or intellectual impairments). The majority of the course deals with best practices for designing and delivering academic instruction to students who do not learn optimally under current conditions within their general and/or special education classes. The emphasis is on direct or explicit instruction, a highly structured and systematic approach to teaching. Teaching this course online during the summer presented challenges. In the face-to-face version of the course, participants each script three instructional lessons grounded in Direct Instruction theory and then teach them in small groups of their peers. Course participants videotape their in-class teaching and then evaluate their own efforts. With the course online, course participants needed to teach the lessons to students in their own settings (preferably their

own classrooms) and then send the instructor their tapes for review. Dr. MacMillan notes that, "Getting the script, self-evaluation, and video to the instructor was not easy. I received lots of mail!" Providing feedback to course participants was equally challenging, compared to the immediate feedback provided in the face to face classroom. Dr. MacMillan posted a discussion forum to encouraged students to provide their perspectives on how this problem could be resolved. One possibility Dr. MacMillan mentioned is moving to a hybrid format, so that the videotaped teaching and feedback can take place in a face-to-face class meeting.