

Running Head: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR ONLINE LEARNING—CASE

Curriculum Development for Online Learning—Case Study and Reflection

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ED 7693

Curriculum Development for Online Learning

December, 2003

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### Abstract

Online courses will greatly benefit by incorporating insights gained during a review of pertinent available literature; articulation of desired outcomes, goals, objectives, and learner competencies; identification of appropriate exercises and learner products; design of appropriate assessment and feedback tools; assembling elements into a logical course structure; and communication of these and other elements to learners. The literature review should address general learning theory, learning styles, learner development, best practices in online course development, assessment, and evaluation, and subject matter content. The case study included herein illustrates this process and helps support findings that courses that promote active learning and enable students to construct their own meaning are useful, interesting, and probably will help minimize university retention issues.

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## Introduction

This paper summarizes the approach used to develop an online course and a representative lesson. The first section summarizes selected relevant literature covering learning styles, multicultural issues, learning theory, online course development, assessment, and evaluation. The second section and accompanying appendices comprise a case study outlining the rationale for the various components and activities in the course and lesson. The final section describes how this case study and related ED 7693 course experiences helped transform me into a scholar-practitioner.

## Literature Review

Considerable literature exists that addresses learning theory, learning styles, and learner development in face-to-face and online settings. This section presents a very limited review of some, but my no means all, of this literature.

### *General Learning Theory, Learning Styles, and Learner Development*

Smith (2003a) notes:

"Numerous instructional design theories and models offer guidance regarding how to better help people learn and develop. Rather than approaching instructional design from an "only theory one is correct" perspective that is common in many scientific fields, each theory or model should be viewed as but tools in a suite of options, addressing cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning domains. The ever-growing body of instructional design theories challenges knowledge producers to find effective delivery methods and knowledge users to identify, analyze, organize, and assimilate theories and models that they can effectively and efficiently use in real-world settings" (unnumbered abstract page).

Schuman (1996) defines three foundational learning theories:

1. Behaviorism—Based on behavioral changes. Behaviorism focuses on a new behavioral pattern being repeated until it becomes automatic.
2. Cognitivism—Based on the thought process behind the behavior. Changes in behavior are observed, but only as an indicator to what is going on in the learner's head.
3. Constructivism—Based on the premise that we all construct our own perspective of the world, based on individual experiences and schema. Constructivism focuses on preparing the learner to problem solve in ambiguous situations (¶ 1).

Many instructional design theories involve student control—meaning that students take charge of their own learning (e.g., deciding what to investigate, determining personal learning goals and objectives). In such settings, the instructor acts more as a facilitator than lecturer and focuses on enabling students to discover or develop knowledge. Hein (1991) describes this as a constructivist approach, referring to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves—each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning—as he or she learns" (¶2). He states that constructive learning methods mean that "we have to focus on the learner in thinking about learning (not on the subject/lesson to be taught)" (¶2).

Fleming (2001) acknowledges that learners learn in different ways—visual, aural, reading/writing, or doing (kinesthetic). He also recognizes that individual learners may (a) experience difficulty with some styles of learning, (b) prefer specific learning styles, or (c) both. Soloman and Felder (n.d.) identify four learning styles and strategies:

1. Active and reflective—Active learners learn best by doing something active with the information. "Reflective learners prefer to think quietly about it first."

2. Seeking and intuitive—Sensing learners tend to like learning facts and solving problems by well-established methods. Intuitive learners often prefer discovering possibilities and relationships.
3. Visual and verbal—Visual learners remember best what they see. Verbal learners get more out of written and spoken words.
4. Sequential and global—Sequential learners gain understanding in logical linear steps. Global learners can absorb information almost randomly without seeing connections, then suddenly "get it."

Ko and Rosen (2001) and Palloff and Pratt (2003) advocate a learner-centered, active-learning approach wherein learning communities are developed. In these communities, learners (a) cooperatively explore and add to information presented in assigned readings and (b) are encouraged to personalize content and make their own meanings.

Learning theories are constantly evolving. Marshall, Sears, and Schubert (2000) describe the evolution of American curriculum theory, using the ever-changing American culture as a backdrop. Curriculum theory experienced shifts almost as often as did popular music, styles of dress, social issues, and technology. This fact should not really be all that surprising because educators and local communities often influence curriculum by suggesting and, at times, demanding, that information being taught reflect current, important social issues (e.g., civil rights).

Our ever-changing demographics are superimposed on and impact these cultural changes, creating new challenges. For example, what can schools do to educate ESL (English as a second language) students who periodically move from the USA to their homelands and back? Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003) suggest that such learners are disadvantaged not only by the

frequent periodic disruptions in their education, but also by parents who communicate low expectations regarding acceptable grades. Furthermore, Thernstrom and Thernstrom note that many youth feel a need to be like their peers, valuing various cultural activities (e.g., watching specific television programs so they can discuss them with their friends the next day) more than education.

All of these variables combine to make learning—and associated instruction and instructional design—an ever-changing challenge.

### *Development of Online Courses*

Rosenberg (2002) states that effective e-learning strategies “must . . . focus on critical success factors that include building a learning culture, marshaling true leadership support, deploying a nurturing business model, and sustaining change throughout the organization” (p. xvi). Mager suggests that before choosing material or method, “it is important to be able to state clearly what your goals are as that will enable students to demonstrate their achievement of your instructional goals . . . . When clearly defined goals are lacking, it is impossible to evaluate a course or program efficiently, and there is no sound basis for selecting appropriate materials, content, or instructional methods (Marshall, Sears, and Schubert, 2000, p. 66).

Pond (2002) notes that western education has traditionally followed the “transmission model”—where (a) instructors are content experts and (b) “learners demonstrate, through some type of examination, a mastery of the information provided to them by the teacher” (§ 1). As the new field of online education developed, instructors often attempted to convert face-to-face instructional approaches for online use. Thus some courses become little more than online correspondence courses where students read, listened to, or watched lectures, answered questions or completed fill-in-the-blank questionnaires, and submitted these materials for grading.

Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) indicate that building an overall vision of curriculum involves pulling together the following:

1. Problems, issues, themes, or topics intended to focus student engagement and connect content over time
2. Content: Key ideas, perspectives, values, skills, and ways of knowing
3. Key forms of student inquiry, problem solving, and related learning activities
4. Supportive materials and equipment (p. 86)

According to Lynch (2002), McVay found that:

[When] students were made aware of their learning style in an orientation course, they improved their ability to learn and success rate in completing future courses by nearly 984 percent. Furthermore, they demonstrated the ability to discern their preferred learning styles and adjust them as needed to accommodate differences in the distance environment from one class experience to the next. Catering to a variety of learning styles is as important online as in the classroom; but offering students the means to shape their own learning is the most powerful tool an instructor can provide (p. 17).

Various workers (a) designed and implemented new approaches to online learning, (b) documented the results and (c) contributed, indirectly, to the list of competencies—abilities, knowledge, and skills—presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Many of these competencies encourage and enable a learner-centered, active-learning approach recommended by Ko and Rosen (2001) and Palloff and Pratt (2003) and that I have personally experienced at in this and other Capella University courses.

### *Assessment*

Accurately evaluating learner achievement is a critical aspect of any undergraduate course.

Traditionally, face-to-face courses have depended on tests and written assignments as tools in which learners demonstrate learning. Marshall et al. (2000) note that for tests and

Table 1

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 Instructor/facilitator competencies needed for successful delivery of online learning—Abilities
 

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Ability to:

1. Act like a learning facilitator rather than a professor (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 36)
2. Be clear about course requirements (Palloff and Pratt, 2001)
3. Be willing to contact students who are not participating (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 31)
4. Become a lifelong learner (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 292)
5. Communicate high expectations (Merisotis and Phipps, 1999, p. 17)
6. Construct questions at various intellectual levels and move among those levels during a questioning interlude (Cyr, 1997, p. 16)
7. Create a warm and inviting atmosphere that promotes the development of a sense of community among participants (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 32)
8. Create an effective online syllabus—one that lays out the terms of the class interaction—the expected responsibilities and duties, the grading criteria, the musts and don'ts of behavior, and explains the geography of the course (Ko and Rosen, 2001, pp. 67, 71).
9. Deal effectively with disruptive students (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 245-253)
10. Define participation and grading criteria (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 68).
11. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students (Merisotis and Phipps, 1999, p. 17)
12. Develop relationships (Palloff and Pratt, 2001)
13. Effectively and efficiently manage (administer) the course (Ko and Rosen, 2001, pp. 211-222)
14. Emphasize time on task (Merisotis and Phipps, 1999, p. 17)
15. Encourage contacts between students and faculty (Merisotis and Phipps, 1999, p. 17)
16. Encourage students to bring real-life examples into the online classroom (Palloff and Pratt, 2003)
17. Evaluate ourselves (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 34)
18. Evaluate students (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 34)
19. Foster learner-centeredness (Hootstein, 2002, ¶ 4)
20. Give prompt feedback (Merisotis and Phipps, 1999, p. 17) and use it to promote learning (Egan and Gibb, 1997, p. 37)
21. Harness the technology (Conrad, 1999, bullet 14) and effectively use it to support online learning (Palloff and Pratt, 2001)
22. Help students develop critical thinking skills (Pepicello and Rice, 2000)
23. Help students identify and use appropriate learning techniques (Pepicello and Rice, 2000)
24. Help students identify strengths and areas of needed improvement (Pepicello and Rice, 2000)
25. Identify examples, analogies, etc., within a given subject, that will support learning (Cyr, 1997, p. 17)
26. Keep informed of the latest trends and issues; continually improve your skills and knowledge (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 276)
27. Make the transition to the online learning environment (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 35)
28. Manage student expectations (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 69-70).
29. Mandate participation. Step in and set limits if participation wanes or if the conversation is headed in the wrong direction (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, pp. 31 & 36)
30. Model good participation (Palloff and Pratt, 2001)
31. Network with others involved in online education (Ko and Rosen, 2001, pp. 291-292)
32. Prepare students for online learning (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 194).
33. Promote collaborative learning (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 36)
34. Promote reflection (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 33)
35. Provide structure for learners but allow for flexibility and negotiation (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 36)
36. Remember that there are people attached to the words on the screen (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 31)
37. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning (Merisotis and Phipps, 1999, p. 17)
38. Respect privacy issues (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 238-239)
39. Set up a well-organized course site (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 36)
40. Suggest approachability and invite interaction (Egan and Gibb, 1997, p. 37)
41. Teach students about online learning (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 30)
42. Translate content for online delivery (Moore, Winograd, and Lange, 2001, p. 9.3)
43. Use active learning techniques (Merisotis and Phipps, 1999, p. 17)
44. Use best practices to promote participation (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 118).
45. Use humor (Coghlan, 2002, "Getting Started" bullet 8)
46. Use the web as a resource (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 105)
47. Most of all, have fun and open yourself to learning as much from your students as they will learn from one another and from you! (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p. 36)

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 Modified after T. C. Smith (2003b, pp. 9-11)

Table 2

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 Instructor/facilitator competencies needed for successful delivery of online learning—Knowledge
 

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## Knowledge of:

1. Copyright, fair use, and intellectual property issues, laws, and policies (Ko and Rosen, 2001, p. 180)
  2. How to use the technology that has been selected to support online learning
  3. Institutional rules, regulations, policies, and procedures
  4. Internet technology and techniques (Coghlan, 2002)
  5. Netiquette (Coghlan, 2002)
  6. Subject material
  7. Teaching and learning methods
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Compiled by T. C. Smith

Table 3

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 Instructor/facilitator competencies needed for successful delivery of online learning—Skills
 

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## Skills:

1. Analyzing
  2. Communicating
  3. Course management and administration
  4. Critical thinking
  5. Developing appropriate learning exercises
  6. Facilitating
  7. Problem solving
  8. Reading
  9. Synthesizing
  10. Writing (Coghlan, 2002)
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Compiled by T. C. Smith

quizzes—the most commonly used assessment tools in face-to-face instructional settings—to be useful "they must measure performance in terms of the goals" (p. 67).

Ko and Rosen (2001) discourage instructors from relying solely on online testing for grading individuals. Instead, they suggest using other methods (e.g., essays, discussion participation) of evaluating learner performance. CITES Educational Technologies (2002) suggests that instead of large, heavily weighted exams, more frequent and smaller-value quizzes tend to make cheating less likely. Moore, Winograd, and Lange (2001) suggest that instructors use a portfolio approach that may include student journals, class (or online) participation, short papers, submittal of draft papers, and projects. Whatever the assessment approach, Palloff and Pratt (2003) concluded that assessment should be ongoing throughout the course (p. 93). They identified the following as key qualities of online assessment:

1. Clear rationale and consistent pedagogical approach
2. Explicit values, aims, criteria, and standards
3. Authentic and holistic tasks
4. A facilitative degree of structure
5. Sufficient and timely formative assessment
6. Awareness of the learning context and perceptions (p. 94, after Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999)

Palloff and Pratt also recommend use of grading rubrics for assessing contributions to online discussion and written assignments (pp. 101-102). Rubrics.com (2001) identifies the following critical components of a rubric:

1. Performance Element: the major, critical attributes which focus upon best practice.
2. Scale: the possible points to be assigned (high to low).
3. Criteria: the conditions of a performance that must be met for it to be considered successful.
4. Standard: a description of how well the criteria must be met for the performance to be considered "good".
5. Descriptors: statements that describe each level of the performance.
6. Indicators: specific, concrete examples or tell-tale signs of what to look for at each level of the performance.

### *Evaluation*

Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick (1987) define evaluation as "the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object's value

(worth or merit), quality, utility, effectiveness, or significance in relation to those criteria" (p. 5).

Evaluation seeks answers to questions such as, but not limited to:

1. Were specified course or lesson learning outcomes achieved and/or demonstrated?
2. Should the course continue to be offered?
3. Should a specific lesson continue to be a part of the course?
4. How might the course or lesson be improved for future delivery?
5. Should specific learning outcomes be added or eliminated?
6. While the course is in progress, should lessons be altered to better accommodate the needs of those currently enrolled in the course?
7. What procedures and devices (e.g., rubrics) need to be revised or reformulated?

Collected data can be used formatively (e.g., to improve the program or lesson) or summatively (e.g., to make decisions about the program's future or adoption; Worthen et al., p. 17).

Worthen, et al., describe several methods of evaluation. For the purposes of this project, I limit discussion to the objective-oriented evaluation approach. Worthen, et al., note that "The distinguishing feature of an objectives-oriented evaluation approach is that the purposes of some activity are specified, and then evaluation focuses on the extent to which those purposes are achieved" (p. 81). In the case of an online course, evaluation data include comments (written or oral, public or private) made by learners, assessments of learner performance, and responses to questionnaires that promote reflection about the course. Performance assessments include those created by the instructor and, if so delegated, the learners themselves. Questionnaires include those distributed (a) while the course is in progress (e.g., mid-course solicitations) and (b) after course completion.

## Case Study: SVU First Course

*Introduction*

One of the ED 7693 assignments required (a) developing a lesson (one week of course content), (b) posting a draft in the Capella courseroom, (c) allowing colleagues to test and comment on the lesson, (d) responding to and reflecting upon comments, and (e) finalizing the lesson. Reflecting on my Capella experience, I recognized that PC 501—Program Completion Strategies—(a) provided a valuable introductory experience to online learning and the Capella style, (b) helped me plan for and overcome personal challenges that might have made completing my Ph.D. difficult, and (c) helped me develop a personalized learning program—a personal roadmap for the future. I also recognized that such a course would help undergraduate and graduate students in similar ways. Palloff and Pratt (2003) note that a good orientation is critical for success (p. 65). They suggest that a good program orientation should:

1. Provide a self-assessment to determine if online learning is appropriate.
2. Provide orientation to the courseware in use either online or face-to-face, with online tutorials available throughout the course.
3. Teach the basics of Internet use.
4. Teach the basics of online searching and research.
5. Provide information on the demands of online learning, time management, and differences in instructor and student roles.
6. Offer information and instruction in appropriate online communication skills, including giving and receiving feedback, netiquette, and use of emoticons.
7. Provide information on how and where to get help when needed.

8. Provide information on program and course policies, grading, and expectations of students.
9. Post course descriptions, syllabi, and faculty bios on the program website.
10. Provide information about technology requirements for online courses and programs.
11. Provide information about any course or program policies (p. 76).

A major (although not declared in the syllabus) goal of the course is to help students make, or discover, their own meaning. I want to challenge them, yet enable them to succeed. I want to help them identify subject matter content that is necessary for success in their chosen field, so as to prepare them to connect with the content of future courses rather than viewing some such courses as simply "another requirement" that has been imposed by some unknown academic or administrator, and to construct such knowledge for themselves. Achieving such a goal would help maximize each learner's educational potential.

I also want to begin to involve each learner in the university community—to move them from "simply participating" in a class to a position of "collaborating" with fellow learners and faculty. Doing so, Palloff and Pratt (2003) state, requires (a) shared goals, (b) shared exploration, and (c) shared process of meaning-making (p. 23). I want them to begin to learn how to learn. In the 1960's and 70's, when I was attending college, my instructors focused on content—I do not recall ever being exposed to any course that dealt with learning how to learn. Since that time, a paradigm shift occurred (Table 4) that recognizes double- and triple-loop learning.

Several years ago, I helped present a video-course by Best and Small (n.d.) that covered studying techniques. Small suggested that students would be better prepared for learning if they had a good roadmap to the course, the textbook, and even individual chapters in the book. Palloff and Pratt (2003) also recommend that instructors:

Table 4

Foci of higher education learning paradigms during the 1960's (old) and today (new)		
Degree	Foci of Old Paradigm	Foci of New Paradigm
Bachelors	1. Learn content	1. Learn content 2. Learn how to learn content
Masters	1. Learn more content 2. [Sometimes] Begin to learn how to do research	1. Learn more content 2. Learn how to learn content 3. [Sometimes] Begin to learn how to do research
Doctorate	1. Learn more content 2. Learn how to do research 3. [Sometimes] Learn how to teach others to do research	1. Learn more content 2. Learn how to learn content 3. Learn how to do research 4. [Sometimes] (a) Learn how to teach others to do research and (b) Learn how to learn how to learn content

1. Post course descriptions, syllabi, and faculty bios on the program website.
2. Provide specific information on how the course and the course website are organized.
3. Provide specific information on course expectations, posting requirements, assignments, and grading.
4. Make available a "Frequently Asked Questions" file about the course and how to complete it.
5. Provide specific information about what faculty expect of students and what students can expect from faculty.
6. Provide information on any course or program policies (p. 76).

The syllabus (see Appendix) is, in effect, a roadmap for the course that contains the information that they suggest in items 3, 5, and 6.

Phipps and Merisotis (2000) identify 24 benchmarks that are essential to ensure quality in Internet-based distance education. Four of those benchmarks relate to course design and selection of proposed exercises used in this case study:

1. Courses are designed to require students to engage themselves in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as part of their course and program requirements.

2. Student interaction with faculty and other students is an essential characteristic and is facilitated through a variety of ways, including voice-mail and/or e-mail.
3. Feedback to student assignments and questions is constructive and provided in a timely manner.
4. Students are instructed in the proper methods of effective research, including assessment of the validity of resources (pp. 2-3).

### *Overall Course Model*

The SVU First Course for Undergraduates closely follows the Capella model in that learners are required to complete action assignments (reading and research) and participate in online discussions. (In the face-to-face version of this course, learners will complete these discussions in small groups). Although the ED 7693 requirement was to develop a single lesson (later clarified to mean one week of content), including related assessment and evaluation provisions, for two reasons I elected to frame the required content within an entire course. First, the chosen lesson comprises the first steps of a three-week learner assignment, with assessment and evaluation-related exercises continuing through week 10. Second, I wanted to convey this framework to peers (see Introduction in Appendix) who were reviewing the lesson. Developing this framework also makes sense because the course uses a Capella-like discussion model and discussion rubrics are contained in the syllabus.

As noted in Appendix, the proposed suite of assignments is intended to provide opportunities for meaningful learning, meet university guidelines, and minimize opportunities for cheating. The Internet, cell phones, and other technology have afforded new opportunities for students to cheat on tests or acquire written materials to present as their own work. To minimize cheating, the course includes a wide range of assignments and activities, some of which are

illustrated in the syllabus and lesson seven. The criteria are the learning outcomes specified in Appendix and institutionally set objectives (e.g., dropout/retention rates) that are not necessarily explicitly communicated to learners.

### How ED 7693 Helped Transform Me into a Scholar Practitioner

By conclusion of this quarter, I will have completed 12 of the 15 courses that comprise my approved Ph.D. program. When I began the program a year ago, I was unsure about what constitutes Ph.D.-level work and whether I was functioning at or near that level. During my first courses, I focused on (a) understanding online learning and the Capella model, (b) how to survive (time management, attitude, and technology), (c) how to succeed (designing my own program, setting reasonable short-term goals and long-term goals, and making sure that each program element would build towards a logical whole), and (d) how to thrive (self-motivation, acquiring confidence based on the comments of those around me, gaining self-confidence and yet remaining humble).

This course helped build my self-confidence. The comments of my peers and the instructor helped confirm that my efforts have value and that, when I do begin to present online courses, I have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed.

The case study experience confirmed that pre-testing has value—that faculty can collaborate and test each other's course plans and make useful observations that will improve the course and/or detect flaws that might confuse learners or hinder learning. It also confirmed that the comments of and suggestions made by learners (meaning not only those in ED 7693, but also in each course that I might present as an instructor/facilitator) have value. For example, during ED 7693, some of us asked questions to clarify assignments; Dr. Conrad's responses indicated that she or course designers would incorporate several of these suggestions into future editions of

the course. I also witnessed that students' willingness to share their epiphanies can help me, as a scholar-practitioner, capture the obvious "wisdoms" that I sometimes take for granted. For example, in response to my lesson plan, Edwards (2003) observed that she learned the value of developing written directions and plans in advance of presenting the course to students so as to minimize organizational problems. She stated that she also learned that it's valuable to share overall plan with students "so they are able to see what future assignments are due and where the instructor is trying to take the course." Yes, we must be ever-ready to learn from our students, illustrating the need for humility to which I earlier referred.

My experience in ED 7693 once again reminds me that I always need to consult rubrics and assignment guidelines prior to planning papers. In fact, I learned that a reflection paper can actually be much more than a simple reflection (e.g., the text that appears on pp. 18-19 herein), but that it can actually constitute a much more comprehensive and useful study. Through this paper, I have tied together the literature, application, and reflection, which forced me to think, discover new meanings, and write them down to share with others. By so doing, this case study within a case study format has enabled me to document how ED 7693 helped me become a scholar-practitioner.

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Thernstrom, A., & Thernstrom, S. (2003). *No excuses—Closing the racial gap in learning*.  
New York: Simon & Schuster.

Worthen, B. R., Sanders, J. R. & Fitzpatrick, J. L. (1987). *Program evaluation—Alternative approaches and practical guidelines* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]. White Plains, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

## Appendix

### ED 7693 Course Project

My ED 7693 course project appears on the pages that follow. When originally submitted it consisted of an Adobe Acrobat format, variously paginated, and used bookmarks for navigation.

## **ED 7693 Project by Ted Smith**

### ***Contents***

Introduction

Overall Course Model

Relationship of Week 7 Lesson Plan to Weeks 8, 9, and 10

Course Syllabus

Course Schedule

Week 7 Lesson Plan

## **ED 7693 Project by Ted Smith**

### ***Introduction***

This project examines the lesson for Week 7 of a 12-week first course for undergraduate learners. As background to assist reviewers, I've included an outline for the course schedule and a syllabus. The latter presents:

- (a) Instructor contact information
- (b) Learning outcomes/objectives for the course
- (c) Requirements
- (d) Competencies
- (e) A reading list
- (f) Grading rubrics and related information.

### ***Overall Course Model***

The SVU First Course for Undergraduates closely follows the Capella model in that learners are required to complete action assignments (reading and research) and participate in online discussions. (In the face-to-face version of this course, learners will complete these discussions in small groups).

### ***Relationship of Week 7 Lesson Plan to Weeks 8, 9, and 10***

Week 7 begins a three-week exploration of career-related factors that learners should consider while developing their degree plan. For example, during Week 7 learners will gather some background information about one or more possible careers or fields and provide three draft interview questions. During Week 8, learners will finalize their interview questions. During Week 9 they will conduct the interviews. Finally, during Week 10, they will comment on this part of the process.

# GE 100—First Course for Undergraduate Students

## Syllabus

### ***Instructor & Contact Information***

Theodore (Ted) Smith

Phone: 916-726-4961 (call only between 10 AM and 9 PM Pacific time, please)

E-Mail: [tcsmith@calweb.com](mailto:tcsmith@calweb.com) (please include GE 100 in the subject of your message so I may recognize it as relating to this course; e.g, GE 100 question, or GE 100—Question about my proposed plan).

### ***Learning Outcomes/Objectives***

By the end of this course, each learner will:

- 1) Become an active participant in Sacramento Valley University's (SVU) learning program.
- 2) Explore key resources, policies, and procedures necessary for successful completion of his/her degree program at SVU.
- 3) Explore his/her personal responsibilities as a learner at SVU.
- 4) Research at least one potential career, identify knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for success in that career, and compare the career requirements with SVU degree programs.
- 5) Develop a Personalized Degree Plan (PDP) that integrates his/her goals, experience, and individual needs with specific degree program requirements.
- 6) Demonstrate some of the skills necessary to successfully complete an undergraduate program at SVU.

### ***Requirements:***

- 1) Read the university's policy regarding cheating and plagiarism. This policy will be enforced in this class.
- 2) Complete assigned reading **each week**.
- 3) **Actively and regularly participate** in online discussions and learning activities. Each week, post a response to **each discussion question** and **at least** two substantive responses to posts made by other learners. See the Online Participation Grading Rubric (below) for more information.
- 4) Initiate contact with your Academic Advisor and develop a Personalized Degree Plan (PDP) to chart your academic program. Have your PDP approved by Academic Advisor.
- 5) Write a 5-page paper that describes and reflects upon your PDP-related research.

**Competencies:**

- 1) SVU online learning competencies:
  - a) Become proficient in exploring and navigating SVU's online course room and web site.
  - b) Identify differences between traditional (face-to-face) and online faculty and learner roles.
  - c) Become proficient in exploring the SVU library, SVU learning center, worldwide web, other online resources, and local library resources that are available to aid you in your degree program.
  - d) Become proficient in interacting with other SVU learners, faculty, and staff in the online course room and via e-mail.
  - e) Connect with the SVU online community outside the course room.
- 2) SVU standard course-related competencies:
  - a) Identify course requirements and related factors that will determine the grade you will earn.
  - b) Become familiar with your instructor and fellow learners.
- 3) Degree planning competencies:
  - a) Honor and build upon your personal knowledge and experience.
  - b) Assess your educational and professional strengths and accomplishments.
  - c) Research at least one potential career to determine the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to succeed in that career.
  - d) Identify SVU courses that are relevant to your professional, educational, and personal needs and goals.
  - e) Identify SVU courses that will help you acquire competencies needed for success in your educational program.
  - f) Develop a tentative timeline that includes all program requirements.
  - g) Become familiar with your academic advisor.
  - h) Understand how to proceed with your program.
  - i) Learn how to develop a *curriculum vita* and an annotated transcript and update them each quarter.
- 4) Personal learning competencies:
  - a) Reflect upon and discuss your readiness for self-directed learning.
  - b) Recognize the personal and professional challenges and barriers that you may face during your degree program and develop strategies to overcoming these challenges and barriers.
  - c) Develop and implement a personal time-management program.
  - d) Identify skills that are necessary for success in your degree program.
  - e) Identify your personal support system.

## Required Textbooks

Combs, Patrick. *Major in Success: Make College Easier, Beat the System, and Get a Very Cool Job*. Ten Speed Press, 1995. ISBN: 0898156092.

## Reading and Resource List

Many of these resources are available from the SVU library, many local libraries, or online:

Albion. Netiquette Home Page. Available online at <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>

Emailreplies.com. E-mail etiquette. Available at <http://www.emailreplies.com/>

Hambridge, S. Netiquette guidelines. RFC 1855. Available at <http://www.faqs.org/rfcs/rfc1855.html>, <http://www.dtcc.edu/cs/rfc1855.html>, and many other locations.

Kaplan. *Jumpstart your career in college*. Kaplan, 2000. ISBN: 0684873443.

Lee, Chris. *College planning in the twenty-first century*. PublishAmerica, 2002. ISBN: 158851479X.

MacHado, Julio. *Fishing for a major (students helping students)*. Natavi Guides, 2002. ISBN: 0971939241.

Michael Leaner Productions. *Harness e-mail: E-mail netiquette*. Available at <http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/65mailet.htm>

Princeton Review. *Guide to College Majors: Everything You Need to Know to Choose the Right Major*. ISBN: 0375762760.

Robinson, Adam. *What Smart Students Know: Maximum Grades, Optimum Learning, Minimum Time*. Crown Publishing, 1993. ISBN: 0517880857.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2003. *Occupational outlook handbook*. Available online at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

## Grading

### Relative Weights for Assignments, Quizzes, and Tests

Item	Percent of Grade
Online participation	40%
Completion of Action Assignments	20%
Submit a draft Personalized Degree Plan	20%
Research Summary/Reflection Paper	20%
TOTAL	100%

### Written projects should meet the following criteria.

All papers should be typed, double-space, using 12-point Times New Roman font. References cited should be single-spaced with double-space between entries. Your reference list should only include those papers or resources (including web sites) that you cite in your paper [I don't want a list of everything you consulted during your research]. Ideally your paper should follow Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association guidelines, but papers that follow other guidelines (e.g., of another professional society) will be accepted. If you don't have the APA manual, see <http://www.apastyle.org/faqs.html> for answers to frequent questions, tips, and other suggestions.

### Research Papers

Papers will be graded according to how well they

1. Represent original choice/aspect of topic within the scope of this course
2. Provide clear, detailed, logical explanation
3. Identify clear, analytical and sophisticated treatment of topic
4. Use appropriate/consistent citation structure and organized format
5. Use correct use of spelling, grammar, punctuation
6. Meet minimum length requirements (including bibliography)

### Research Paper Grading Rubric:

A	B	C	F
1. The text (not including reference list, cover page, abstract, table of contents, and indexes to tables and figures) of the paper is at least 5 pages long.	1. The text (not including reference list, cover page, abstract, table of contents, and indexes to tables and figures) of the paper is 4 pages long.	1. The text (not including reference list, cover page, abstract, table of contents, and indexes to tables and figures) of the paper is 3 pages long.	1. The text (not including reference list, cover page, abstract, table of contents, and indexes to tables and figures) of the paper is less than 3 pages long.
2. The paper is comprehensive, relevant to this course, identifies and discusses key principles; there are no misconceptions.	2. The paper is relevant to this course and is substantive, but a few key principles may be omitted. There may be some misconceptions.	2. The paper is relevant to this course and mentions some key principles, but there are significant misconceptions or omissions.	2. Although the topic might be relevant to this course, there are no references to key principles; if key principles are mentioned, there is no evidence that the learner understood the principles.
3. The paper is clear, concise, and easy to understand. Terminology is used appropriately and the response is logically organized.	3. The paper is adequately written, but it may contain some organization problems or a few inappropriately used terms.	3. The paper is poorly written; one may comprehend the learner's ideas only after repeated readings.	3. The paper is poorly written; one cannot comprehend the learner's ideas after repeated readings.
4. The paper is submitted on or before the due date.	4. Not applicable. See note below.	4. Not applicable. See note below.	4. No paper was submitted.

General weighting of factors 1 through 3 in the above rubric:

- |                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Length of paper             | 20% |
| 2. Content                     | 45% |
| 3. Clarity, organization, etc. | 35% |

Note: Late papers will be graded, then marked down one full letter grade.

**Personalized Degree Plan (PDP)**

1. Your PDP should be submitted on the SVU PDP form (available at <http://www.svu.edu...>)
2. If you have not yet declared a major
  - a. You may do so when you file your plan.
  - b. You may continue with an undeclared major. Should you do so, your plan may focus on general education courses and courses that help you further explore possible majors. Ideally your PDP should include a target date for declaring a major. Keep in mind that you must declare a major no later than the start of your junior year.

***Online Participation Grading Rubric*****For initial posts:**

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>F</b>
1. The response is at least 250 words in length.	1. The response is 200 to 250 words in length.	1. The response is 100 to 200 words in length.	1. The response is less than 100 words in length.
2. The response is substantive and related to key principles; there are no misconceptions.	2. The response is substantive, but a few key principles may be omitted. There may be some misconceptions.	2. The response mentions some key principles, but there are significant misconceptions or omissions.	2. There are no references to key principles; if key principles are mentioned, there is no evidence that the learner understood the principles.
3. The response is clear, concise, and easy to understand. Terminology is used appropriately and the response is logically organized.	3. The response is adequately written, but it may contain some organization problems or a few inappropriately used terms.	3. The response is poorly written; one may comprehend the learner's ideas only after repeated readings.	3. The response is poorly written; one cannot comprehend the learner's ideas after repeated readings.
4. The response is submitted on or before the due date.	4. Not applicable.	4. The response was submitted after the due date.	4. No response was submitted.

**For responses to other students:**

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>F</b>
1. The response is substantively related to the course content; key principles are presented, clearly understood, and well integrated in the response.	1. The response is largely related to the course content; most of the key principles are presented and understood; most of the principles are integrated in the response.	1. The response presents a few principles from the course content; they may be poorly integrated in the response or there may be little evidence that they are understood.	1. The response contains no reference to key principles; if key principles are present, there is no evidence that the learner understood the principles or integrated them in the response.
2. The response addresses the ideas and concerns of the other learner.	2. The response largely addresses the ideas and concerns of the other learner.	2. The response addresses a few of the ideas and concerns of the other learner.	2. The response does not address any ideas or concerns of the other learner.
3. The response is characterized by three or four of the following criteria: - Thought-provoking - Supportive - Challenging - Reflective	3. The response is characterized by two of the following criteria: - Thought-provoking - Supportive - Challenging - Reflective	3. The response is characterized by one of the following criteria: - Thought-provoking - Supportive - Challenging - Reflective	3. The response does not include any of the following criteria: - Thought-provoking - Supportive - Challenging - Reflective
4. The response is clear, concise, and easy to understand. Terminology is used appropriately and the response is logically organized.	4. The response is adequately written, but it may contain some organization problems or a few inappropriately used terms.	4. The response is poorly written; one may comprehend the learner's ideas only after repeated readings.	4. The response is poorly written; one cannot comprehend the learner's ideas after repeated readings.
5. Both responses are submitted on or before the due date.	5. One of the responses is submitted on or before and one after the due date.	5. (a) Both responses are submitted after the due date; or, (b) only one response is submitted before or on the due date.	5. (a) No responses are submitted; or, (b) only one response is submitted after the due date.

## **GE 100—First Course for Undergraduate Students**

### ***Course Schedule***

Note: This course is designed to fit a 12-week quarter.

#### Week 1) Getting Acquainted

- a) Learning Outcomes
- b) Activities
- c) Discussions

#### Week 2) Learner and Faculty Roles in Online Courses

- a) Learning Outcomes
- b) Activities
- c) Discussions

#### Week 3) Communicating Effectively Online

- a) Learning Outcomes
- b) Activities
- c) Discussions

#### Week 4) Learning Styles: Optimizing Your Learning Opportunities

- a) Learning Outcomes
- b) Activities
- c) Discussions

#### Week 5) Recognizing and Overcoming Barriers to Learning

- a) Learning Outcomes
- b) Activities
- c) Discussions

#### Week 6) Developing Your Personalized Degree Plan—Overview

- a) Learning Outcomes
- b) Activities
  - i) Reflect on your experiences in this course thus far
  - ii) Download and review the PDP form
  - iii) Review the PDP guidelines and checklist
- c) Discussions
  - i) How is the course going for you thus far? What have you found most valuable? What could your peers or your instructor do to improve this course?

- ii) After reviewing the PDP form, guidelines, and checklist, describe two of the factors that you need to consider in assembling your Personalized Degree Plan. Why are these two factors particularly important to you?

Week 7) Exploring Career Opportunities—Part 1

a) Learning Outcomes and Competencies

Weeks 7 through 9 focus on developing research skills and gathering information needed to assemble your Personal Degree Plan. During Week 7 we focus on:

- i) Competency 1c: Become proficient in exploring the SVU library, SVU learning center, worldwide web, other online resources, and local library resources that are available to aid you in your degree program.
- ii) Competency 3c: Research at least one potential career to determine the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to succeed in that career.

b) Activities

- i) Read the introduction to this week's unit
- ii) Select one or more (but not more than three) professions to research.
- iii) Research your candidate occupation(s) at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) web site <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>. Locate other web sites, books [there are some in the Capella library], and/or other resources that provide information about your candidate occupation. [Note that the OOH does not always indicate that some professions (e.g., civil engineers) must be licensed in some or all states.]
- iv) Participate in this week's discussions

c) Discussions

- i) During Week 9, you will briefly interview two or three people who are now working or have worked in your potential career. Develop three questions to ask them and share those questions here. Read the questions that other learners share and provide constructive feedback.
- ii) Identify the profession(s) that you researched. List three resources that you found. What, if anything, that you learned surprised you or stood out about your potential career or related educational needs? Based on your research, what specific courses or types of courses that you might want to include in your degree program?

Week 8) Exploring University Basic Degree Requirements

a) Learning Outcomes

- i) [Not yet listed]

b) Activities

- i) Review the degree requirements for your chosen or possible major(s).
- ii) Finalize your interview questions.

iii) Identify two or three people or companies to interview.

c) Discussions

- i) How well do SVU's degree requirements seem to align with the information that you gathered last week? How much flexibility (e.g., how many elective courses) is there in your program? Begin to think about the kinds of courses that you might want to include to strengthen your job prospects or that would enable you to specialize in an area of interest.
- ii) Reflect on the feedback that you received on the interview questions that you posted last week and the questions that other learners posted. Finalize your interview questions and post them here.

Week 9) Exploring Career Opportunities—Part 2

a) Learning Outcomes

i) [Not yet listed]

b) Activities

- i) Interview two or three professionals in your chosen field by phone or in person. While it's okay to interview recruiters, try to include one person who actually performs the type of work that you are interested in.

c) Discussions

- i) How did your interviews go? What, if anything, did you learn that will help you finalize your Personalized Degree Plan?
- ii) [Additional discussions not yet developed]

Week 10) Assembling Your Personalized Degree Plan

a) Learning Outcomes

i) [Not yet listed]

b) Activities

c) Discussions

- i) Reflect back on your activities during Weeks 7 through 9. Share one significant insight that you gained by completing the career-related research? Was the process of interviewing two or three professionals worth the effort? Why or why not? What, if anything, would you suggest to improve the career-research exercise?
- ii) [Not yet developed]

Week 11) Finalizing Your Personalized Degree Plan

a) Learning Outcomes

b) Activities

c) Discussions

Week 12) Reflecting on Your First Course

- a) Learning Outcomes
- b) Activities
- c) Discussions

## **Week 7**

### ***Introduction to Week 7***

Before leaping into this week's introduction, let me try to take some pressure off. Some of you probably enrolled at SVU knowing what you wanted to study or with a future career in mind. Others may have enrolled without a clue about what to major in or what kind of job would be of interest. Still others already have had one or more jobs and enrolled to learn skills and knowledge that will help them either (a) advance in their current career or (b) change careers. Some of you may be college freshmen right out of high school. Others are transferring from other colleges as sophomores and juniors. So let's try to use our polyglot mixed nature to our mutual advantage during the next few weeks.

It's really not unusual to switch majors after you start college. In my own case, while in high school, I decided to become a forester, so I enrolled in college as a forestry major. During my freshman year I couldn't get into a biology class, so I enrolled in a geology course (which was required to major in forestry). By my sophomore year, I decided that I liked geology a whole lot more than biology, so I changed majors. Some of my fellow students switched majors two, three, or as many as seven times. Even after becoming a geologist, I sought a Masters degree in another field (environmental planning), and still later changed careers after 29 years as a geologist and manager.

All this is to say that YOU control your education, your future career, and your life. The Personal Degree Plan (PDP) does NOT lock you into an irrevocable decision. Instead, the PDP is intended to provide you with a general road map to success, both here at SVU and in a future career.

### ***Where We Are Headed***

By Week 11, the goal is for each of you to finalize your PDP and submit it to your academic advisor. You'll recall that last week we discussed the factors that need to be considered as you assemble your DCP. Those factors include, among other things, (a) the knowledge, skills and abilities that you must obtain and begin to master to enter your chosen profession, (b) the university's general education requirements, (c) courses required for a specific major and/or minor, (d) courses that will help you succeed in other courses (e.g., computer courses, composition and writing) and (e) prerequisites for specific courses that you plan to take.

This week begins a three-week effort to discover the knowledge, skills and abilities that you must obtain and begin to master to enter your chosen profession. There are several ways to discover the needed information. First, there is a host of web resources—job outlook reports, professional society sites, and licensing agencies, just to name a few. Next there are the people who now work in or used to work in your chosen profession. They can (a) suggest web and other resources to aid in your research, (b) provide insights about which courses helped them the most to excel in their career, and (c) provide tips that may help you get your first job. For example, 30 years ago I was advised that employers wanted geologists who were independent workers and that I should focus on field mapping and independent studies. I followed that advice and, even though I only had a Bachelor degree, on employment exams I outscored many people who had

Masters and PhDs but no field experience. Twenty years ago I advised that geology majors should learn cartography or drafting because people with those skills were usually the first hired and last fired during tough times. Today computer skills (e.g., GIS) are in great demand in geology and many other professions.

This week we'll begin by identifying some web resources and developing interview questions. During Week 8, you'll continue this effort by finalizing your interview questions and identifying some companies to contact. During Week 9, you'll conduct the interviews and report your findings.

### **Action Assignments**

- Select one or more (but not more than three) professions to research.
- Research your candidate occupation(s) at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) web site <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>. Locate other web sites, books [there are some in the Capella library], and/or other resources that provide information about your candidate occupation. [Note that the OOH does not always indicate that some professions (e.g., civil engineers) must be licensed in some or all states.]

### **Week 7, Discussion 1**

During Week 9, you will briefly interview two or three people who are now working or have worked in your potential career. Develop three questions to ask them and share those questions here. Read the questions that other learners share and provide constructive feedback.

One tip: Try to develop open-ended questions. For example, "Do you like your job?" isn't a very effective question because it suggests that a "Yes" or "No" response will suffice. A better approach would be to ask questions such as "What do you like about your job?" and "What do you dislike about your job?"

### **Week 7, Discussion 2**

Identify the profession(s) that you researched. List three resources that you found. What, if anything, that you learned surprised you or stood out about your potential career or related educational needs? Based on your research, what specific courses or types of courses that you might want to include in your degree program?

### **[Notes]**

Related activities are planned during weeks 8 and 9 (see the Schedule for related content during those weeks). Assessment information on this exercise also is gathered during Week 10 in Discussion 1 (see next page).

***Week 10, Discussion 1***

Reflect back on your activities during Weeks 7 through 9. Share one significant insight that you gained by completing the career-related research? Was the process of interviewing two or three professionals worth the effort? Why or why not? What, if anything, would you suggest to improve the career-research exercise?