
Fall 2015 Faculty Development Forum
October 7, Wednesday, 12:00-12:50 PM, Butler 201

Online Discussion Forums: From Community of Commentary to Community of Inquiry
Facilitator: Israel Valenzuela

1) STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT -- how do we set expectations?

- a) Learning Circles (LCs): both in groups and with the entire class
- b) Scoring for Quality as much as Frequency/Quantity (use rubrics)
- c) Feedback/Prompting: start with high presence, scaffolding throughout, and end well
- d) Expectations: specific behavior, digital citizenship

2) EXAMPLES of APPLICATIONS -- how do we take advantage of its asynchronous nature?

- a) Question and Answer: traditional, typically text based
- b) Debate: compare/contrast opposing views
- c) Webquests: research on a topic on internet, less intense way to extend the learning
- d) Role Playing: research on an individual who has lived in a specific time period
- e) Reflections: metacognitive, embedded within the syllabus

3) CRITICISMS & IMPROVEMENTS -- how can we enhance our practice?

- a) Linear and unnatural
 - i) It is not designed to be the equivalent of a f2f/real life conversation
 - ii) Make the best of its design; focus less on it, use it as check in time with you, within LCs or with all members of the class
- b) Flat Communication: text based, ambiguity in communication, lost in translation
 - i) Try: rich media-based discussion, using audio, video, images, via Media Gallery, we seem more human this way
 - ii) Try: asking higher order (see: Bloom) vs. lower order questions (opinions, dissemination of information)
 - iii) point out student contribution at least once during the course, so that you have recognized each student by the end of the semester
- c) Limited Instructor Time
 - i) General rule: read all original posts. Otherwise, if you require original posts from all students, carve out the time to read them though not necessarily read all of them all of the time.
 - ii) Try: Discussion leadership and summaries
 - (1) message to all from you, to close out the discussion, point out specific student contributions, and then move them to the next topic
 - (2) assigned to student(s) within LCs
 - iii) Check course schedule: when major assignments are due:
 - (1) skip them altogether, or
 - (2) reduce the burden, through requiring less, not scoring, and instead using a thread for all questions/issues/anxieties related to the major assignment
 - iv) Balancing act:
 - (1) high presence/high touch -- scaffolding -- backing off a bit/lurking in the background, cognitively engaged, technically disengaged
 - (2) how to stay engaged (cognitively) without appearing disengaged (technically)