



Inside Teaching Lounge
Student Engagement in Online Learning Spaces
November 13, 2014

Best Practices for Digital Tool Use

Based on the best practices provided in the workshop, I developed some of my own, and have documented under 'practice' how I was able to put this into practice while teaching my most recent course. I've also included information on the digital tools they suggested trying and how I might use these in the future.

My Best Practices for Digital Tool Use

- Give students multiple ways to contact me to provide them with methods that are more comfortable
 - Communicate with them through their chosen method in 12-24 hours
 - Practice: Students can contact me through email, Twitter or Skype
- Supplement teaching with YouTube videos and screen-casting to help them learn how to use different technologies
 - Help them help themselves!
 - Practice: Provided video documentation of how to use Storify and Twitter for assignments that require technology
- Use surveys at beginning of course to gauge technological abilities
 - Practice: Technology Use Survey given to students at beginning of the semester to determine what technology they were using and whether they knew how to use it appropriately for academic uses
- Provide multiple outlets when submitting homework so that students can have the option to go high tech or low tech depending on skill level and preference
 - Practice: Students allowed to complete mind-mapping assignment on Popplet, turn in a digitally drawn version or turn in a paper version
- Provide collective feedback on digital tool use and assignments
 - Practice: Sharing with students common problems I noticed when they were using the tool, helping work through them together so that they can gain more confidence- share that these are tech issues we all go through
- Be flexible and forgiving about new tech use
 - Technology can have issues, so if I student is having technical issues, I will be a little forgiving about them and help them come up with a solution
- Make sure digital tools align with teaching goals
 - Technology is not a magic swiss army knife that will fix every problem, need to be critically thinking about how using this technology will improve student learning and help accomplish the course goals
 - Practice: Storify used for final paper outlines because it forces students to think about their paper in a narrative manner, allows them to link journal articles and popular articles, and provides them with a set of annotated references that they can use later when writing their final paper

New Technology to Try

- **EliReview**
 - Tool for giving feedback on student papers, and also for allowing students to give feedback on each others papers
 - Improves critical thinking through feedback process
 - Great for upper level course, especially if you are online and don't have discussions in person
- **Zoom.us**
 - Allows for digital office hours, great option for online courses or for students to be able to reach teacher when they are away
- **Weekly YouTube Catch-Up Videos**
 - One suggestion was that when teaching online, you should create videos of yourself that summarize what students learned, answer any major questions, and suggest other readings or videos
 - This allows the professor to be more personal in an online setting
 - I think this is a great idea that I will use in my next online course
 - I also kind of use this during my standard classes- I take time at the end of class to summarize what we learned, how it connects to the broader course goals, and where students can learn more if they are interested