The Office of Online Instruction has been busy this summer. The June Workshops were filled as a number of faculty spent 4 days learning WebCT, Flashlight, web-page construction, and Powerpoint, discussing online teaching during brown bag lunches, and working on individual projects in the Faculty Lab.

The Faculty Lab, with its 10 PCs, 4 Macs, scanners, data projectors, CD-Rom and DVD burners, digital still and video cameras, will be open again this coming year Monday through Friday from 1 – 5pm. New software includes Flash, Premiere, SoundForge, and WordPerfect. All faculty are welcome to drop in in and use the computer lab equipment during the semester.

What’s New at Online Instruction?

---Professor Catheryn Cheal, Art Department and Online Instruction

WebCT was moved to a new server in June by Kate Berggren and HyperNews was modified by Ken Stuart to be easier for students and faculty to use.

Professor Ken Chapman has created a new database for student evaluations of completely online classes. Since the online Upper-Division GE program will have 22 classes this fall, an online evaluation system is crucial. Two classes last spring were tested with this system, which follows all CSUN requirements for anonymity and security. Students had little trouble answering the online evaluation forms and tended to answer the essay parts in greater depth than in standard classes.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like an individual consultation about how to move your course online, either partially or completely.

Online GE Program—Sociology 324 OL

---Professor Teresa Madden, Sociology Department

I taught the Sociology of Sex Roles as a traditional class for several semesters and was not sure how it would work as an online class. Traditionally, the course lends itself to lively in-class discussions from which we all learn a great deal. Putting the class online was quite a challenge, especially since I am far from computer savvy. While designing the course, my mission statement was “keep it simple”!

While the course does not have many of the bells and whistles of the “sexier” sites, the class has been a success. As in the traditional course, we all learn a good deal!

I designed the class in much the same way as I do the traditional class. I regularly post lecture notes along with any important announcements. Students are required to respond to reading prompts using the discussion board. Furthermore, they respond to the postings of two other students. These weekly postings take the place of class time. In fact, completing them takes about the same amount of time as the traditional student spends
Online GE Program—Chicana/o Studies 445OL

---Professor Gabriel Buelna, Chicana/o Studies Department

Going into my third semester teaching Chicana/o history, I have evolved in my online teaching methods. However, I believe the first most important point that an online instructor learns is that if it is not written down for students to see, it really does not exist. That is, while an instructor may not have to write every note, thought or suggestion down for students within a traditional classroom setting, the online environment demands clarity that all students must be comfortable with.

The second most important issue an instructor must learn to deal with is compensating for the loss of direct contact with students. While it is true direct contact is important, concise and frequent communication with students is essential and can compensate for loss of human contact. This can take the form of numerous e-mails, chat rooms, discussion groups and even posting short biographies.

This brings me to my final point of the types of technologies used for online instruction.

While WebCT is great, I only use it for my weekly chat sessions and discussion responses. I have learned to utilize basic computer programs within my assignments. My semester project of having students create a presentation about their family background and the historical context of their family background has been a great success. Having students create the project on basic PowerPoint, helps them learn how to acquire photographs via computer from family members that reside far away, and scan pictures and documents into their presentations. These presentations are then posted on my site for all students and the world to see. Students have steered family members from throughout the world to my website to view their family history.

The online class is not only important for the academic development of students, but is also a way for our university to share its resources with our community. The Internet has changed the definition of what a community is to include the community where a student is learning. I have learned that this can be in Jalisco, Oakland or Tehran.

ITR is also in the process of moving other applications to new hardware. We recently moved the CSUN Chat server, certain websites, and Quizmaker to a new Compaq server. Although we had to schedule server outages to move these applications, each should function the same as always. If you do notice any changes or encounter problems, please let me know at kate.berggren@csun.edu.

---Kate Berggren, ITR Online Teaching Consultant

This summer, WebCT was moved to a new operating system in preparation for future application. Because of the move, faculty passwords had to be recreated.

If you have any problems accessing or locating your WebCT courses please contact Kate Berggren in Information Technology Resources (ITR) immediately.

Technology News

Online Instruction offers Faculty Stipends.
Information at: www.csun.edu/~webteah/stipends.html
FALL 2002 FACULTY WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

The Office of Undergraduate Studies and Online Instruction are sponsoring Faculty Computer Workshops in order to facilitate online teaching and learning.

Call x6558 to make a reservation. We have room for 12 participants. All workshops will be in the Faculty Lab, Sierra Hall, room 422. Any of the workshops may be taken individually and assume no prior knowledge.

IMPORTANT! You must sign-up for a WebCT, Flashlight, or Blackboard account prior to taking the workshop on that topic at: www.csun.edu/~webteach/account.html

Calendar

WEBCT SERIES I

LEARN A COURSEWARE PRODUCT, CONTAINING 20 ONLINE TEACHING TOOLS.

DATES AND TIMES:
1. THURS. OCT. 3, 1PM TO 2:00PM
   INTRODUCTION TO WEBCT
2. THURS. OCT. 10, 1PM TO 2:00PM
   WEBCT DISCUSSION AND CHAT
3. THURS. OCT. 17, 1 TO 2:30PM
   WEBCT QUIZZES AND GRADING
4. THURS. OCT. 24, 1PM TO 2:00PM
   WEBCT CONTENT AND FILES
OR WEBCT SERIES II

BLACKBOARD

TUES. OCT. 29, 1PM TO 2PM
LEARN AN ALTERNATE ONLINE COURSEWARE PRODUCT

WEB-PAGE MAKING—NETSCAPE
COMPOSER
TUES. NOV. 5, 1PM TO 2PM
CREATE A WEBSITE IN AN HTML EDITOR

DIGITAL CAMERA AND PHOTOSHOP
TUES. NOV. 12, 1PM TO 2PM
TAKE DIGITAL PICTURES, CORRECT IN PHOTOSHOP, AND THEN UPLOAD TO YOUR WEBPAGE OR WEBCT.

HYPERNEWS
TUES. OCT. 22, 1PM TO 2PM OR MON. NOV. 11, 1PM TO 2PM
MOVE YOUR INCLASS DISCUSSION TO AN ONLINE BULLETIN BOARD—NEWLY REVISED!

FLASHLIGHT
MON. NOV. 18, 1PM TO 2PM OR THUR. NOV. 21, 1PM TO 2PM
LEARN HOW TO USE AN ONLINE SURVEY PROGRAM

In Conjunction with CELT

“TEACHING ONLINE—STIPENDS & PLANNING”
( NOT A COMPUTER LAB WORKSHOP)
SIERRA HALL, ROOM 439, OCT. 22, 2PM TO 3:30 PM, BY CATHRYN CHEAL

Faculty Computer Lab

in class attendance (2 - 3 hours). For many online students, there is significant improvement in both their writing ability and critical thinking skills as the semester progresses. This may be because they are writing for each other as well as for me. Students are able to compare their work and are forced to argue their point.

I find there are both positive and negative aspects of teaching online. The biggest challenge for me has been the amount of email correspondence required. Teaching two classes with forty students each requires me to stay on top of correspondence. It is extremely important to be as detailed and specific as possible in the syllabus, but no matter how clear things seem to me, inevitably, there are questions! Increasingly, my reply is a standard, “consult your syllabus,” as the majority of questions stem from incomplete or inaccurate reading of the syllabus. Furthermore, I state at the outset that I will not answer technical questions, and require students who have them to attend one of the WebCT workshops.

In general, I am pleased with the online experience and recommend it to anyone—even to those who like me, have yet to master the finer points of computer technology!
New Online Teaching Consultant

“I would like to introduce Ken Stuart, our new Online Teaching Consultant in ITR…”...ccheal

Ken has worked professionally in university computing since 1991 when he joined the Academic Technology Services department at Cornell University after completing an MA in archaeology there. Ken stayed at Cornell, working in front-line HelpDesk consulting, technical writing, web development, and related positions through the summer of 1997 when he moved to the LA area.

After serving as Webmaster at the USC Integrated Media Systems Center for nearly a year, Ken took a position as project manager/web/database developer at the Digital Archaeology Lab at UCLA for three years. In his spare time, Ken develops web-based games with Perl CGI (cincpac.com), creates virtual tours with QuickTime VR (property360.com), and works with archaeologists to put their data on-line through web-based databases in MySQL and PHP (archbase.com). Ken lives in Shadow Hills with his wife and two dogs and two cats, and devotes time to playing board games, working in stained glass, and fiddling around with a violin whenever possible.

The Brave New World of Online Instruction

---Professor Randal Cummings, Religious Studies Department & Online Instruction

Technology has come to us as both a blessing and a curse. On one hand it has alleviated much of the drudgery and time-consuming tasks of the myriad bygone generations, yet, on the other, there lurks the foreboding sense that "every technological innovation has led humanity closer to a collective death." Not least of the concerns associated with advancing technology is the fear of being dominated and ultimately displaced by machines as in some cyberpunk nightmare. This has been the fear of a century of factory workers and the plot structure from Brave New World to The Matrix. I sometimes encounter that fear when I am introduced to fellow faculty members as one of the coordinators of Online Instruction here at CSUN. When they have had a chance to pull me candidly aside, more than a few colleagues have asked something like: "Is this some nefarious plot by the administration to eliminate teachers from the educational process?"

This is an interesting theory. I suppose the idea is that with the growing availability of online instructional materials and texts, and with the vast array of testing facilities such as Quizmaker and its ilk, the traditional instructor could easily be seen as a superfluous intermediary soon to be eliminated by technologically oriented course designers and Big-Brother-like curriculum committees. It reminds me of the suggestion in the movie "The Player" that it would be simple to make movies without writers, the response to which was "Well, if we could just eliminate the actors as well, we might have something." Simply stated, my answer to my techno-phobic colleagues is that online education involves the same educational dynamics as traditional courses with the only difference being a change in the medium of delivery. It is like trading the blackboard for an overhead projector or a PowerPoint presentation.

In online education, teacher-student exchange, course objectives, class discussion, and evaluations all remain at the same (if not higher) levels of intensity as in the traditional classroom. At CSUN the professors are the course designers and the primary determiners of course pedagogy and the modes of presentation for course material. They are the chief resource providers, guides, mentors, and dialogue partners with the students, and thus, an invaluable component of online instruction. So, let us set aside those fears of being replaced by machines in the technological future of education. The educational process is about exchange between instructors and students and the empowerment of inquiring minds through the best media available. As it lives here at CSUN, the online option fulfills and enhances all the basic criteria of traditional education. Socrates would be proud.

Catheryn Cheal, Editor
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