What’s New at Online Instruction?

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

**Stipends.** The Office of Online Instruction offered two stipends to be awarded for Fall 2003 courses. Information about the GE stipend and the Share the Space stipend is at: http://www.csun.edu/~webteach/stipends.html

**Student evaluations.** CSUN now has a way to conduct online student evaluations through a software database written by Professor Ken Chapman. Sixteen fully online courses were evaluated by students in fall 2002. Any department wishing to participate in this project should email me with their specific departmental questions, and course title, ticket number, and name of the instructor of any course that is completely online, who needs an online student evaluation for this spring semester.

**Current Projects.** OI webpages were completely upgraded this fall. Ken Stuart in ITR has designed a new online reservation database for faculty workshops, which will be available soon. Anyone who has waded through the laborious process of password-protecting their webpages will be happy to hear that Ken is also working on a much easier form-based webpage for faculty to restrict their webpages to a CSUN-only audience. Kate Berggren in ITR has upgraded Extended Learning's Blackboard program to Version 6.

Feel free to contact me at catheryn.cheal@csun.edu or Randal Cummings at rcummings@csun.edu or Ken Stuart at kps1@csun.edu or Kate Berggren at kate.berggren@csun.edu for any help you might need with online faculty lab.

Faculty Lab
Open Hours:
M, T, W, Th, F
1pm – 5pm
Sierra Hall 422

All faculty are welcome to drop in and use the computer lab and tech staff support during the semester.

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The Pedagogical Payoffs of Feature Films in Online Teaching

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

One very fruitful and viable pedagogical approach to online course construction involves the use of commercially available video. I use films to create categories of self-reference and self-scrutiny as a means to self-discovery that often far exceeds the hitherto lexical and phenomenological experiences of my students. For contemporary students who have very scant historical consciousness let alone any concept of pre-history, the right film can suddenly open the door to a new world of discovery. For example, if I want my students to consider the religious figures typified by “Shamanism” I have them watch films like “Pathfinder,” “The Black Robe,” “The Emerald Forrest” or even, “Quest for Fire.” When trying to introduce them to the complexities and highly nuanced philosophical tenets in Buddhism, I first start them on the path to enlightenment via such films as Bertolucci’s “Little Buddha” or Scorsese’s “Kun Dun.” The ever-increasing catalogue of films is a virtual goldmine of imagistic vistas just waiting to be unpacked before the watching eyes and open minds of...

Continued on p. 4 R. Cummings
Online GE Program—Global Perspective of Environmental Health 353 OL

---Professor Anita Slechta, Department of Health Sciences

I first became aware of the value of online courses when my husband began taking classes in web design. I had always thought of them as an “easy” way to take a class, but his experience changed my opinion. I have taught at CSUN for over 20 years now, and have taught online courses for the past two years. What has been most surprising to me is that the online student’s knowledge demonstrated on tests and in discussions and chat rooms is, in most cases, greater than that of students taught in a classroom setting.

There are challenges to teaching online however. Most often they result from students entering the course with the same expectations that I once had -- this is going to be easy. Students who are not prepared when the first week begins usually have a rude awakening. I have tried to counter this misapprehension by making the course requirements (assignments, chat room discussions, quizzes and tests) very clear in the online course description. The result has been a valuable learning experience for those who are here to learn, and not just get by with an easy online course.

Of course one of the great advantages is that students can access most of the course at any time of day or night. They can do their coursework sitting at their home computer in their pajamas, and frankly, I can grade their assignments in the same attire.

Chat room discussions at specific hours have become an invaluable tool for my online students. Those who may otherwise tend not to join in classroom discussions lose their inhibitions online. The give and take of the online chat room not only provides a greater understanding of the course material, but also offers unique and valuable insights into the students’ thinking and understanding of the subject matter.

My feeling is that online courses are a very valuable method of teaching for the advanced adult learner, and should be embraced by more members of the faculty.

Online GE Program—Contemporary Issues in Asian American Studies 345 OL

Online Teaching--Promises and Pitfalls

---Professor Steven Masami Ropp, Department of Asian American Studies

I recently had the opportunity to develop and teach a completely online course, AAS 345OL: Contemporary Asian American Issues [http://www.csun.edu/~smr78195/aas345]. This was an interesting and at times trying experience but in the end, very worthwhile. For that reason, I want to share a little bit about the experience.

Preparation, practice, time, yes, lots and lots of time and finally patience; these were the major challenges in setting up and running the completely online course. As with other technology, the promise of timesaved is often dependent on time invested up front. Apart from that, I would say that the biggest challenge was in developing and maintaining effective communication with students. In other words, the online

Continued on p. 3    S. Ropp
SPRING 2003 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. **INTRODUCTION TO WEBCT**<br>**MON. FEB. 10, 2 TO 3:00PM**
2. **WEBCT DISCUSSION AND CHAT**<br>**MON. FEB. 17, 2 TO 3:00PM**
3. **WEBCT QUIZZES AND GRADING**<br>**MON. FEB. 24, 2 TO 3:00PM**
4. **WEBCT CONTENT AND FILES**<br>**MON. MAR. 3, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**OR WEBCT SERIES II**

1. **INTRODUCTION TO WEBCT**<br>**THURS. APR. 24, 2 TO 3:00PM**
2. **WEBCT DISCUSSION AND CHAT**<br>**THURS. MAY 1, 2 TO 3:00PM**
3. **WEBCT QUIZZES AND GRADING**<br>**THURS. MAY 8, 2 TO 3:00PM**
4. **WEBCT CONTENT AND FILES**<br>**THURS. MAY 15, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**BLACKBOARD**

**THURS. FEB. 27, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**LEARN AN ALTERNATE ONLINE COURSEWARE PRODUCT**

**POWERPOINT**

**THURS. FEB. 13, 2 TO 3:00PM OR**
**FRI., APR. 4, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**ENLIVEN YOUR LECTURES WITH CHARTS, PHOTOS, AND ANIMATION.**

**PASS-WORD PROTECT WEBPAGES**

**WED. MAR. 5, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**HIDE YOUR WEBPAGES FROM THE PUBLIC**

**WEB-PAGE MAKING—NETSCAPE COMPOSER**

**MON. MAR. 10, 2 TO 3:00PM OR**
**TUES. MAR. 25, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**CREATE A WEBPAGE IN AN HTML EDITOR**

**FLASHLIGHT**

**THURS. FEB. 13, 2 TO 3:00PM OR**
**FRI., APR. 4, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**ENLIVEN YOUR LECTURES WITH CHARTS, PHOTOS, AND ANIMATION.**

**HYPERNEWS**

**THURS. APR. 3, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**MOVE YOUR IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS TO AN ONLINE BULLETIN BOARD—NEWLY REVISED!**

**DREAMWEAVER**

**MON. APR. 21, 2 TO 3:00PM**

**CREATE WEBPAGES IN THE TOP OF THE LINE HTML EDITOR.**

In terms of the promise, once everything was set up, I did save a lot of time. In addition, student interaction was surprisingly good as students felt less shy about speaking up and interacting online as opposed to in the classroom. Using mostly weekly discussion activities, alternating between real-time chat and bulletin board postings, students were very good about working together, challenging each other, and ultimately learning from both each other and course material.

In general, I think that as the culture changes, while professors may lag way behind on technology-use, more and more of our students will be coming to the university with a rich and extensive background with online culture, with the Internet, instant messaging, online gaming, email, etc. I think that in the very near future, if you are familiar with Yahoo Groups (http://groups.yahoo.com) and Yahoo Games (http://games.yahoo.com), you can sort of see what the online classroom might include: A simple set of communication tools, games and activities, and ultimately, through a facilitated social environment, learning through action and interaction.

Continued from p. 2 S. Ropp

format is very conducive to independent studies but those students who need a little bit of extra attention in the classroom tend to get left behind.
Peek Review of Online Courses

Fully online courses at CSUN are monitored for quality by departments in ways parallel to on-campus courses. Departments hire all online faculty. There is now an online process for student evaluations (See page 1). Peer evaluations by the department can also be managed by faculty peers even if they have never seen an online course before. Try referring to the following checklist. Ask the online instructor for the URL and a login if necessary, to view their course.

**Issues to Consider when Peer Reviewing an Online Course**

1. **Content**
   
   Is the content delivery obvious? Lecture content may be offered by textbooks, multimedia, bulletin boards and chat, webpages and/or external links.

2. **Student Interaction**
   
   Are there group activities to take the place of face-to-face meetings? Asynchronous bulletin board, synchronous chat discussion, or group projects serve to create a community of learners and are usually fully logged so all semester’s conversations are visible.

3. **Instructor Feedback**
   
   Is the faculty response time to emails announced as a one to three day response? Is there an announcement page or email listserv for contacting students? Are there ample instructor responses to student postings on a bulletin board.

4. **Student Assessment**
   
   Online quizzes are generally considered to be open book exercises for study purposes or to reinforce readings. When limited by time with different questions for different students they may support student assessment. Other ways to monitor student progress include on-campus monitored exams (which needs to be clearly announced to students before registration), essays, posted papers, and emailed assignments.

5. **Clarity of Design and Expectations**
   
   Are webpages, syllabus and expectations clear and well-organized? Is the navigation of the course pages understandable? Would you as a student know what to do when? Is there a grading rubric, and are the goals of the course, assignments, and email prominent?

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**Films as Launch Pads**

Films are not simply useful for their historical content but also as launch pads for discussions about ethical debates or issues pertaining to philosophical epistemology. Films often touch upon the deep abiding questions about truth, art, aesthetics, politics, violence, capitol punishment, just-war theory, terrorism, justice, economics, and what should we have for dinner (see “Babette’s Feast” or “Tortilla Soup”).

For on-line courses, films are a great way to get the class on the same page in HyperNews, online bulletin boards, or virtual class discussions. Since online courses generally collect students who do not come to campus, I have found that most of the themes I wish to explore are contained in commercial feature films at the local video store. I simply include the videos I want them to watch right on my syllabus next to the required texts for the course. With the implementation of the new copyright laws and the advent of streaming video via the internet it will soon be possible to use up to 10 percent of a theatrically released film as part of the instructional materials in a course. I would invite you to consider the use of feature films to supplement, augment, and otherwise spice up your class discussions. The possibilities are virtually endless and full of plenty of pedagogical payoffs.