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*Exploring Course Design and Genre Studies
in the Online College Writing Classroom*

Overview:

Last fall, I took a webinar hosted by Penn State University on building effective online programs and it has partially inspired what I wish to explore with online college writing courses. I've always been interested in curriculum and course design, but my interests have really begun to focus on online college writing course design. Eventually, in my career, I want to be a writing program director in a program that has both a traditional in seat and an online version of its college writing course.

I currently teach online at several universities and out of them, I am able to design only one of the courses; the rest are already designed. I've seen what works and what does not in the online college writing classroom and I'd now like to do some research about it. In my daily life, I work with multiple online platforms and teach with many different curriculums, and I am faced with a personal and professional need to sort some of these things out.

Specifically looking at online college writing courses, I am searching for frameworks that will allow me to negotiate both the online college writing courses I teach and the ones I design and teach. I am also searching for frameworks that will allow me to understand the methodologies behind designing online courses, the effectiveness of design, and the learning that takes place, as well as how I can improve the learning that takes place.

Though not yet fully developed, my project will focus on course design in the online college writing classroom. The research and final project will look at two related things: (1) what models are effective in online college writing courses; specifically the design elements, such as assignments, readings, discussions, and pedagogy, and (2) how one could design an online college writing course using a genre studies approach/model. Specifically, I'd like to see how I could apply the PARC approach (a concept from my co-authored CCCC presentation)

to an online college writing course within a program that allows me to design my own courses.

I see this project as ongoing and with potential to morph into a larger research study on course design both in the traditional college writing classroom and the online college writing classroom. Yet, I also see this project having potential for becoming a dissertation (with modifications) or a presentation for a college writing/distance education, but for now, I think this would become a research article that analyzes, discusses/springboards on the idea of building a successful online college writing course and further explores how to design effective online college writing courses. I see myself using one of my classes (the one I get to design) as a sort of test course, and a place to collect data for my article.

Some questions that I might explore include: Can students learn the about writing as effectively in the online classroom verses the traditional classroom? Is student learning enhanced with the technological tools that the online classroom can provide? What method or pedagogical philosophy works best for the student learners in an online college writing classroom in terms of understanding and learning material? How can an instructor/facilitator adapt an online college writing course to his/her philosophy when faced with departmental learning outcomes or a set curriculum? Would it work to do genre studies in the online classroom? What do other scholars and researchers say about online college writing course design?

While I do notice these are a lot of questions to examine, as I define my research more clearly, I also plan on refining the questions I address.

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