Engaging Students by Design: Principles of Course and Assignment Design

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Take a few minutes and reflect:

• Think of yourself as an undergraduate. What strengths and weaknesses did you bring to university?

• Think of a course you took as an undergraduate that you still remember. What do you remember and why?
maybe only have one of these questions--worth thinking about what the goal is here.
the self as undergraduate introduces idea of student-centred teaching
UTSC, 7/17/2018
During this hands-on session, we hope you will:

• Reflect on your teaching practices
• Explore model of backwards course design, particularly if you are not already using it
• Consider resources (people, worksheets, readings) on course design that you might consult, now or later

Our assumption: you are currently, or will be soon, designing a course
L. Dee Fink’s Model: Integrated Backwards Course Design

Key Situational Factor: UTSC students

University of Toronto*
• 12,693 total students
• 2,048 undergraduate international students from 86 countries
• Many domestic students from immigrant families and first-generation university attenders

Your Course
• Academic Level
• Course Format
• TA Support
• Place in your Program’s Curriculum

*Source: UofT Facts and Figures 2016
Test out this course design model with a course you are planning

1. Make notes on the situational factors for a course you will be teaching (worksheets p.2)
Learning Goals

Instructors:  
*shape learning and assessment activities*

Students:  
*enhance student engagement and learning*

*From What are Learning Outcomes (CTSI)*

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

• Name some of the main stylistic categories (e.g. prehistoric, medieval), artists, times and chronology, and locations of major works of art in world civilization
• Identify the key elements of design in any work of art
• Analyze pictures when they visit an exhibition, in terms of main elements of design
• Find value in supporting the arts by attending art exhibits
By the end of the course, students will be able to:

• Define the meaning of terms related to population and parameter, sample and statistics
• Apply the two key concepts, variance and correlation, appropriately and correctly
• Interpret a graph and see relationships in the real world that are being described
• Derive satisfaction from quantitative reasoning

Psychology (Statistics)
Create

Evaluate

Synthesize

Analyze

Apply

Comprehend

Memorize

Taxonomy 1: Bloom
Taxonomy 2: Anderson & Krathwohl

Cognitive Process Dimension (from Bloom)

Knowledge Dimension

- Factual (terminology; facts about discipline)
- Conceptual (theories, classifications, principles)
- Procedural (methods, algorithms, techniques)
- Meta-cognitive (self-awareness, strategy, evaluative)

Fink’s Taxonomy

Test out this course design model with a course you are planning

1. Make notes on the situational factors for a course you will be teaching (worksheets p.2)

2. Draft learning goals (worksheets p.2)
What has to happen in the course for students to do well on the assessment activities/assignments?

What will students do to demonstrate that they have achieved the course learning goals?

Situational Factors
Think about students when designing assessment and activities

• What can students do to help them master your learning goals?
• Which activities might you use to assess whether or not students have met learning goals?
• What might provide a significant learning experience that would meet multiple learning goals?
One approach: work backwards from final assessment

At the end of the course, how will students demonstrate what they have learned?
• What steps will students need to do?
• What skills will they need to deploy?
• Where are they likely to run into trouble?
Learning Activities: Castle Top Strategy

In-class activities

Intro idea of design; model analysis

Small-group analysis

Out-of-class activities

Reading on design elements

Assignment: written analysis

Assignment Design Principles

1. Design authentic forward-looking tasks
2. Make goals and expectations clear and explicit (rubrics, examples)
3. Scaffold learning—skills and/or process
4. Build in feedback (instructor, peers) and self-assessment
Test out this course design model with a course you are planning

1. Make notes on the situational factors for a course you will be teaching (worksheets p.2)

2. Draft learning goals (worksheets p.2)

3. Describe final assessment and brainstorm in-class and out-of-class learning activities (scaffolding) (pp.3-4)
Debrief with person next to you

• What came out of playing with this course design model that was useful?
• What was challenging?
• To what extent are you motivated to use this model in your course design?
Sources


Helpful resources at UTSC:

People: CTL, Writing Centre, Library, Math & Stats Help Centre, English Language Development Centre, Facilitated Study Groups, Instructional Technology, Mentor(s), Colleagues

Things: Quercus, Libguides, Writing Handouts
Follow-up and assessment

Email and come see us to discuss your course(s)

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... and in the process let us know to what extent we achieved our goals, whether our activities were useful, and how we can do better next year