

Project Name

Enhancing Student Success in Potsdam's Hybrid History Courses

Principal Investigator James German

Campus Potsdam, State University College at

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Tier Tier Two

Project Team

- Natalia Veinott, SUNY Potsdam

Overview Summary

Development, implementation and assessment of technologies (SMS, social media, lecture capture) that enhance student success by increasing interactivity, accessibility, and options in SUNY Potsdam's large enrollment history hybrid courses.

Outcomes Summary

Course redesign effort demonstrated a total .69 gain in grade outcomes when coupled to social media use as detailed in presentations, as well as student perceptions of use and convenience of social media course integration.

Project Abstract

This project will develop, implement, and assess technologies that enhance student success by increasing interactivity, accessibility, and options in SUNY Potsdam's history hybrid courses designed for General Education and Childhood Education students. Five sections of the courses, developed in 2009-2010 with a Course Redesign Grant administered by NCAT and funded by SUNY, enroll over 1200 students annually. Each week, students meet for one hour of interactive lecture (clickers), spend one hour in a computer

laboratory staffed by knowledgeable undergraduates completing online exercises, and work an additional hour online on their own.

Evaluation and assessment data indicate that student learning equals that in traditional history courses. Student satisfaction, however, lags. A plurality of students who complete the redesigned courses report that they would have rather taken traditional courses. The purpose of the grant is to experiment with technology and techniques that will make the courses more student-friendly. Students feel better about courses when they are more connected to teaching staff. Providing students with more choices about how they complete their work increases their sense of ownership. Hence it should mitigate the alienation the large lecture format creates. We plan to employ multiple strategies to make help more available and to increase student options about the way they learn.

Some of these strategies center on introducing new technologies that will make the courses more studentfriendly. First, we will provide help through media that students regularly use. We will integrate a real time (SMS) communication system into the course and thereby increase access. During the sixty hours each week the lab is open, the ULA on duty will be responsible for a mobile phone. Graduate student teaching assistants would share responsibility for six additional hours each day. The SMS will also make it possible for students to sign up for reminders about course work, which studies show improves student success.

Second, we will make course content available on platforms that students regularly use. The Moodle page a student may need is often a half dozen clicks away. Facebook is always there. It is an obvious platform for posting reminders about coursework. It is also suited for posting course content—assigned readings, videos of lectures, links to coursework in Moodle, and ancillary related materials such as web pages, film clips, and music. It provides an easy way for students to access staff with questions and concerns, and will be a forum for discussion. Moreover, it will serve as a student response system, paralleling the use of clickers in class. Funds will be used to pay a staff member to keep the course Facebook page current.

Third, we will explore Lecture Capture technology as a way to provide our students with interactive access to course content. We'll post searchable videos of lectures, along with accompanying slide shows, on both Moodle and Facebook. Students can then review entire lectures, or just parts they found confusing, at their convenience. We would also explore the possibilities provided by video feedback and student recording drop boxes. Funds would be used to attend the Educause Annual Conference in Denver in November 2012 so that we might be assured that we are using the most appropriate and cost effective technology. They would also be used to purchase software, perhaps Panopto, which would increase interactivity and enhance student success.

In addition to these technological fixes, we will develop a menu driven version of the courses. Studies show that providing students with options enhances intrinsic motivation, improves student completion rates, and results in higher levels of learning. Over the past four years, we've provided a variety of ways for students to demonstrate their mastery of course material—discussion board, essay exams, multiple-choice quizzes, PowerPoint presentations, peer review, short answer worksheets, and short papers. These measure different kinds of skills. All of our learning objectives center on higher-level skills, as there are no particular facts we care that students remember.

We envision employing two strategies to match assignments to the abilities and needs of individual students. First, we will create scaffolded assignments that allow students who demonstrate (and sustain) mastery of higher-level skills to opt out of assignments that test lower level skills. Students who demonstrate a factual knowledge in their discussion posts, for example, might be excused from reading quizzes. Second, we will provide options that allow students to complete course work in different ways. Each week students read (or view or listen to) primary source material, but there is no reason why they should all read the same material, nor is there any reason why they should all demonstrate their mastery of the material in the same way. For example, after listening to a lecture on natural disasters, students currently watch the film San Francisco. They could as profitably listen to Woody Guthrie's album Dust Bowl Ballads or view photo images of the 1927 floods

in the Mississippi Valley. In various versions of the course, we've asked students to either complete a worksheet or post on the discussion board about San Francisco, but there is no good reason why they (not we) should not make that choice. And there are other projects—multimedia perhaps—that might equally promote student learning. Some options might even allow student to complete their First Year Writing, Speaking, or Critical Thinking requirements for General Education. Grant funds would be used to purchase reassigned time spring semester and provide summer stipends for the development of course materials.

We will first implement the changes in HIST 120. It enrolls over 500 students per year. To the extent that they are successful, we will integrate them into the other hybrid courses.

Reports and Resources

- [Social Media, Student Satisfaction and Student Success: History for General Education at SUNY Potsdam](#)
- [SUNY Potsdam History Course Redesign](#)

Instructional Design

- Online Education
- Student Learning Support

Instructional Technologies

- Mobile Learning