Art Appreciation on the Internet

Nancy Funk[1]

The Pennsylvania State University, United States of America

nlf2@psu.edu

Abstract. Since 1986 I have taught Inart 001, survey of art--paintings, sculpture, architecture, on the Internet.

In my proposed paper I will cover the history of the "birth" of this course. The home page syllabus will be available for critiquing by the audience.

Also, several projects of evaluated artworks will be available for the audience. The final grade for students includes two "coffee-book" projects in which paintings, sculpture, and architecture are objectively evaluated. Statistics comparing both students' results in my lecture course and the Internet course will show why the Internet course is attractive to students.

I hope my paper will be accepted in order that I share with colleagues why Inart 001 on the Internet continues to be popular in all semesters, including summer.

Keywords. Art appreciation, Inart, web-based course(s), Internet.

As the controversial guru of the mass media once stated in UNDERSTANDING MEDIA (published in 1964): "The Medium is the Message." Marshall McLuhan died in 1980, before the popularity of the internet. Fourteen years later, in 1994, I planted the seed for my internet art appreciation course. In this case, is the medium the message? I hope to analyze and evaluate this web course with the lecture classes on comparable material.

To paraphrase Samuel Johnson: For man to be in the near future, he concentrates on the here and now. James Cox in "Background: What the States Created" cites various reasons why universities have set up web-based or internet courses:

1. To improve efficiency and meeting workforce needs;
2. To operate as a business venture and not necessarily as an educational goal;
3. To reduce expenses and subsidize needed courses even as overloads;
4. To address societal needs of the student. (6)

---

[1] PhD. Published playwright; web site on art appreciation for elementary (primary) grades four through six.

Now let's consider the definition of the various types of internet or web-based courses:

Anthony Picciano and Charles Dzuiban in their "Introduction" to BLENDED LEARNING: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES suggest that some courses can be two-thirds lecture and one-third internet with five Saturday face-to-face meetings. These can be called "hybrid education." (8) There are various labels for such courses: computer-assisted instruction, distance learning, online learning, distributed learning, web-based instruction, computer-mediated learning, and internet-based learning. However, my course is entirely on the internet with communication via email.

The second part, and probably the most important, to be considered is why students would register for such a course devoid of direct instruction from the instructor. Picciano and Dziuban suggest that many students have grown up with the internet and computers. Thus, "using internet tools for instruction is second nature." (11) They go on to state that internet courses give (1) "immediate learning application"; (2) "independence"; (3) "self-direction"; (4) "autonomy"; and (5) "ownership of learning." (21, 22) However, they do imply that not one medium is best because all depend on cognition and motivation of the student. (32)

Within my course I have found that student satisfaction reigns high because of several factors:

1. Accessibility of computers and the internet (including color printers for duplication of paintings) for all students;
2. Limited costs included within any other three-credit course billed as a computer fee;
3. Open communication with the instructor on a 6/24 availability (no Sundays);
4. Availability of other students' email addresses for possible collaboration and communication without instructor's knowledge;
5. Community service added for possible extra credit with thoughts centered on education majors who want the experience and résumé credit in teaching in the public schools;
6. Freedom from being required to be at a certain place and at a certain time.

I think it is important to discuss how and why I came to develop my INART 001, or Survey of Art Appreciation, entirely on the internet. As an outline I am going to use "Stages of Rogers," a 1995 graph of the innovation-decision process. (Picciano and Dziuban, 113).

1. Knowledge – I had been teaching INART 001 as a lecture-only course for approximately eight years. Thus I had the required command of the subject.
2. Persuasion – I am the Dean's Representative to the College of Arts and Architecture. I noticed that a graphic-arts professor was receiving a lot of publicity regarding his internet course. Being curious, I checked out the online syllabus to see just how this course that I had considered a hands-on discipline could be taught distance wise by remote.

3. Decision – After considerable deliberation, I decided to create a web site for a more applicable course. My face-to-face INART 001 had the proven objective art terms, required textbook, and a mid-term plus final exam evaluating paintings, sculpture, architecture, and music.

4. Implementation – Next I had to process the how-to. Since I was not comfortable and competent with computers, I had to enlist the aid of a student: my sixteen year old daughter, a freshman at Penn State. She laid the foundation, and, subsequently, I found the aid of students majoring in computer science to open the site in 1994 with twelve students, most of them adult learners. We concentrated only on paintings, sculpture, and architecture as discussed in related chapters from the textbook. Eventually I created a "special sections" such as "Minority Artists" and "Photography."

Eventually I added a "special" section on minority artists, when I became totally involved in the enthusiasm of THE NEW YORK TIMES' debate on "why the concentration of academics on European white males and their subject matter." (emphasis mine)

With Penn State University jumping into the arena of change, even though somewhat late (!), I taught INART 001 for the more "gifted" students. An Asian student showed awesome skill with computers, as well as knowledge of photography; thus "photography" and related objective terms was added.

With student aid, each chapter of the textbook, plus the two additional sections, has several links of artworks to be analyzed. After reading the related chapter for the historical foundation of that particular period, students are to choose at least three artworks and apply three of my supplied art terms for analysis. Students are to identify the term, supply the definition (they may paraphrase), and state how the artist chose to apply the term within his creation.

If the student does not prefer my links to artworks, then he is welcome to "surf" the net to find any artwork of that period mentioned in the particular chapter. Until recently I used to replace any "dead" with functional art links. However, I decided that I was being too accommodating in supplying all the artworks to be analyzed and that students should meet the challenge in locating their own artworks. Thus I can recognize students who do read the textbook and understand the historical period in which the artworks were created. I have found some students do "fall into the trap."

(Take the time for the audience to look at the INART 001 home page syllabus: the art terms, the required procedure for the two journals, several links at http://www2.ma.psu/edu/~nlf/inart01/homepage.htm).

Simple? Next was a bit more challenging. I had chosen to eliminate the mid-term exam and the music section of the lecture course. Now I had to decide on what would the final grade for the internet course be based?

If each of the chapters/sections (including Minority Artists and Photography) was worth five points, (I may be mathematically challenged on this calculation; however, I never took a math course in college because I earned a B.F.A. at Boston University.) Chapters one through ten from the textbook, with the chapter on humanitarian philosophy being eliminated, would equal fifty points for the first journal. The second journal would equal fifty-five points with chapters eleven through twenty-one, plus Photography (again eliminating a chapter on selected artworks laying the foundations of Christianity that students could analyze for extra credit).

Another extra credit exercise that I added was the possibility of analyzing four artworks per chapter and/or supplying four terms per artwork. This would add an additional point to the stated five.

Student Involvement: In analyzing the merits of my course, I needed to evaluate the projected student results regarding their learned appreciation of art. This meant applying several components of planning and assessment such as the following:

1. Knowledge – students would recognize and select at least three objective terms for each artwork;
2. Comprehension – students would identify and define each term, no matter how many times;
3. Application – students would access each chosen term within each artwork;
4. Analysis – students would differentiate how each applicable term was used by the artist;
5. Synthesis – students would relate and conclude that each selected term was correctly used;
6. Evaluate – students would evaluate their own impressions of each artwork (I labeled this the "affective response" and did not give any points because this was a subjective evaluation.) (Chew, Turner, Jones 65)

I supply the knowledge and information; students are the participants and respondents – and hopefully the learners.

Using Rogers' process of discovery and design for hybrid courses, I would like to challenge his stated hypotheses for why one would create an internet course. I had no financial incentive. I just wanted to "test the waters" – create a computer-generated course. Now in reflection I believe the administration was so overwhelmed with my point (no other faculty at our satellite campus had even attempted such an outlandish thought) and because I had the complete cooperation of our two IT personnel at that time (incidentally two females had hired my daughter as a computer aide), my course went online. At first I had to create interest because the mainly adult learners were skeptical of computers and the unproven course. But the one semester of three credits in the arts proved to be a highly successful encounter of learning and enjoying painting, sculpture, and architecture.

As INART 001 on the internet had gained popularity with students on our particular campus of Penn State, I was not satisfied; I wanted to reach other PSU students. Thus I appealed to my more immediate supervisor who contacted his colleagues in the same administrative position as directors of academic affairs responsible for curriculum. As interest in other campuses' students regarding my INART 001 grew, this course was accepted on what Penn State labeled "e-learning." But not without obstacles in the proverbial political process of academia: the chair of my own department, Integrative Arts, would not give his approval. He kept forgetting to sign the necessary documentation, or so he said.

In the meantime I had been told that two PSU instructional designers should revamp my website. With their suggestions, I added content and repeated instruction that I did not deem necessary – but I complied with their request and added "Faculty Expectations," that has proved to be ignored by most students. The one instructional designer wanted weekly assignments: a device that I clarified to her that went against my concept of one working at one's convenience.

In looking at my online course, I realized that the subject of architecture had gone through and was going through more changes than the other two visual arts. Also, architecture was able to be more practical with uses as home shelters, religious retreats, business environments, entertainment providers and so on. Thus I applied to Penn State for a grant to hire my own instructional designer to construct two architectural quizzes: one on the various components of the outside of a Gothic cathedral and the other on the inside sections of the paragon of architectural function and form.

We worked together well despite our geographical distance. I received permission from the publisher of the required textbook to use two slides of Amiens Cathedral in France. Since the instructional designer had no concept of Gothic architecture, it was laborious to make sure that arrows pointed to the precise locations of piers, gallery, clerestory windows, apse and so on. Students could take the quizzes of definitions and locations and earn extra credit points by evaluating how helpful the quizzes were in aiding them to identify the diverse terms that "came alive" off the printed page. (Check the quizzes for audience test taking, if time allows.)

Comparison with lecture course: The lecture course requires students to take a multiple-choice mid-term exam, based on the textbook. The final exam requires analysis of two paintings, two sculptures, two musical pieces, and two architectural selections (one from the Greek and one from the Gothic). The difference between both courses, internet and lecture, is that I choose the artworks in the lecture course. INART 001 on the internet allows students to choose their own selections, exempting music. Thus I believe reinforcement of learning is higher for internet students.

In comparing grades for both courses, I found that approximately 65% of the face-to-face INART 001 results in grades of eighty or above, while INART on the internet results in 80% with "high grades" of "B" or "A."

The expected problem is that I cannot prove 100% the particular student has accomplished the work by himself. However, at the beginning of the course, I invite all students to submit one artwork that has been analyzed and I will respond with my comments and no grades. Thus I believe that I "guide" students into accomplishing the intended results of the course. Also, after correcting the first journal that may have numerous mistakes I offer suggestions for improvement with the second journal. Many of the problems with the first journal are not unique in that they seem to copy each other. With the second journal many of these individual mistakes are corrected. This shows me that students do perform individually – much to my satisfaction or disillusionment.

Even as I stand before this illustrious audience my INART 001 is running this summer!

WORKS CITED

Au, Oliver T.S. (2010). "A Tabular Approach to Outcome-Based Course Planning and Assessment. In Fu Lee Wang, Joseph Fong and Reggie C. Kuan (Eds.) HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON HYBRID LEARNING MODELS: ADVANCED TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND APPLICATIONS. (pp. 64-70). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Chew, Esign, Turner, David A. & Jones, Norah. (2010). "In Love and War: Blended Learning Theories for Computer Scientists and Educationists." In Fu Lee Wang, Joseph Fong, and Reggie C. Kuan (Eds.) HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON HYBRID LEARNING MODELS: ADVANCED TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND APPLICATIONS. (pp. 18-64). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Cox, James C. "Background: What the States Created." (2009 Summer). In Katrina Meyer (Ed.). LESSONS LEARNED FROM VIRTUAL UNIVERSITIES. (pp. 5-10). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Davidson, Cathy N. & Goldberg, David Theo. (2010). THE FUTURE OF THINKING: LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN A DIGITAL AGE. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Herrington, Anne, Hodgsen, Kevin, & Moran, Charles (Eds.) (2009). TEACHING THE NEW WRITING: TECHNOLOGY, CHANGE, AND ASSESSMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM. NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Masie, Elliott. (2002, July 23). MASIE'S LEARNING TRENDS. Retrieved April 10, 2011 from http://trends.Masie.com/archives/2002/27/238-learning-on-line-vs-e-learning-a-season-of-deals-starts.hyml.

McLuhan, Marshall (1964). UNDERSTANDING MEDIA: THE EXTENSION OF MAN. NY: McGraw Hill.

Meyer, Katrina, ed. (2009 Summer). LESSONS LEARNED FROM VIRTUAL UNIVERSITIES. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (146).

Perez-Marin, Diana, Pascual-Nieto, Ismael & Rodriguez, Pilar. (2010). "Adaptive Computer Assisted Assessment." In Fu Lee Wang, Joseph Fony and Reggie C. Kuan (Eds.) HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON HYBRID LEARNING MODELS: ADVANCED TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND APPLICATIONS. (pp 154-173). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Picciano, Anthony G. and Dzuiban, Charles D. (Eds.) (2007). BLENDED LEARNING: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES. Needham, MA: SCOLE.

Rudes, Kjell Erik and Schoenholtz-Read, Judith (Eds.) (2010). HANDBOOK OF ONLINE LEARNING, 2ND EDITION. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Sieber, Stefance and Henrich, Andreas. "Knowledge Management for Hybrid Learning." (2010) In Fu Lee Wang, Joseph Fong, and Reggie C. Kuan (Eds.) HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON HYBRID LEARNING MODELS: ADVANCED TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND APPLICATIONS. (pp. 424-449). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Wang, Fu Lee, Fang, Joseph & Kuan, Reggie C. (Eds.) HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON HYBRID LEARNING MODELS: ADVANCED TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND APPLICATIONS. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Zhichang, Xu & Lixun, Wang. (2010). "Discourse Analysis on Hybrid Learning and Teaching and the Changing Roles of Teachers and Students in Hong Kong." In Fu Lee Wang, Joseph Fang, and Reggie C. Kuan (Eds.) (2010). HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON HYBRID LEARNING MODELS: ADVANCED TOOLS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND APPLICATIONS. (pp. 284-298). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.