

Hybrid & Web-Enhanced Courses Workshop



This workshop addresses the increasingly popular “Hybrid” or “Blended” course model which incorporates traditional, face-to-face classroom instruction with online components that students participate in outside of regular class time. A hybrid course creates a “best of both worlds” learning scenario in which students benefit from face-to-face instruction *and* online learning within a single course. This innovative format offers significant advantages for students, instructors and institutions.

The Four Types of Courses

- 1. Traditional (Face-to-Face, On-Ground, Brick & Mortar).** This type of course takes place entirely in a physical classroom on campus. There are no technological components other than media used within the classroom itself (i.e. overhead projector, PowerPoint presentations).
- 2. Online (Distance Learning).** This type of course takes place entirely online at a computer-mediated distance. There are no face-to-face meetings. Currently at WLAC we have over 100 courses that take place entirely online using the ETUDES course management system.
- 3. Web-Enhanced (Course Webpage).** This type of course is basically a traditional, on-ground course in which the instructor has also created a supplemental Webpage for students. While all class meetings take place face-to-face, the course syllabus and/or other course-related materials are posted online for easy student access. *WLAC is currently developing a campus-wide plan to help instructors create standardized Web sites for all courses.*
- 4. Hybrid (Blended, Mixed).** This type of course combines both online and face-to-face instruction in varying ratios. Many say that a course must be at least 50% online to be considered a “true” hybrid course. However, in practical application this definition is limiting as there are many ways to successfully combine the two types of instruction. The bottom line is that at least some regular classroom time is replaced by time spent online. Time traditionally spent in the classroom is reduced, but not eliminated.

In hybrid courses, instructors redesign some traditional course content into new online learning activities that may involve chat, discussion boards, quizzes and exercises, simulations, and/or group collaborations. *The goal of a hybrid course is to combine the best features of face-to-face teaching with the best features of online learning to promote active, independent student learning and reduce class seat time.*

Hybrid Courses Are NOT

- Regular distance education courses (since they are not entirely online).
- Traditional face-to-face courses with a Web site added to them (since online time *replaces* classroom time).
- Created by simply transferring information to the Web (since new and creative online activities to catalyze student learning are required).

Pedagogical Shift

Students spend a significant portion of their time working on their own at the computer in addition to an abridged schedule of regular classroom meetings. Students are expected to take increased responsibility for their learning process and are encouraged to become self-motivated, independent learners.

Instructors spend less time lecturing to students and more time guiding them and interacting with them online. There is a pedagogical shift from the “Sage on the Stage” to a “Guide on the Side.” Ideally, online activities are discussed and built upon during face-to-face classroom time *and visa-versa*.

A Word of Warning (and Encouragement)

Creating a hybrid course or redesigning a traditional course for hybrid delivery takes a considerable amount of foresight and hard work. Because class seat time is reduced and a significant part of the learning process is moved online, instructors must reexamine their course goals and objectives, design online learning activities to meet those goals and objectives, and effectively *integrate* online activities with the face-to-face meetings.

Most instructors will need to acquire some *new teaching skills* and strategies, such as learning to facilitate online discussions and assessing students’ online learning. Some instructors may need to acquire some *new technology skills* as well. In order to develop a successful hybrid course you should allow yourself several months of lead time since you will be doing all of these things and you will also need to complete the ETUDES-NG instructor training course.

But, please remember that instructors who commit to the process are rewarded with a course that actively engages students and facilitates learning at a whole new level. Plus, these pedagogical changes can also be applied to your traditional on-ground classes as well. *The bottom line is that this is an extremely worthwhile investment both for your students’ learning experience and for your teaching skill set and future marketability.*

Benefits of Hybrid Teaching and Learning

For Students:

- **Convenience**
 - Increased flexibility of time
 - Accommodates students’ schedules
 - Can work online any time of day or night
 - Less commuting
 - Less searching for parking
- **Increased Learning**
 - Better student work
 - Increased depth of understanding
 - Greater retention of course content
 - More meaningful discussions
 - Deeper level of engagement with material
 - More thoughtful comments and responses
 - Learn technology skills for future education, work, and life
 - Learn life skills such as time management, independence, and self-discipline
 - Learn to take greater responsibility for the learning process

- Leveling of the Playing Field
 - Students can take more time to think and reflect
 - Students can edit their comments before communicating them
 - Shy students tend to thrive online
- Interaction
 - More student-to-teacher interaction and discussion
 - More student-to-student interaction and discussion
 - A more student-centered learning environment
 - Less passive listening and more active learning
 - Greater sense of connection

For Instructors:

- Convenience (same as for students above)
- Increased Learning (same as for students above)
- Leveling of the Playing Field (same as for students above)
- Interaction (same as for students above)
- Flexibility
 - Ability to teach in new and different ways – more options available
 - Increased variety and creativity of learning activities
 - More effective use of traditional class time
 - Enable students to learn in a variety of ways
 - Engage all students in at least some class activities
 - Address different learning styles
 - Changes and improvements can translate to on-ground courses as well
- Administration
 - Time to examine student work more thoroughly
 - Ability to document and record online interactions
 - Ability to manage grading online

For Institutions:

- Savings
 - Accommodate more students with the same number of classes
 - Accommodate more courses with the same number of classes
 - Increased student satisfaction = higher retention and fewer repeats
- Maximize Physical Resources
 - Lower demand on limited campus infrastructure
 - Decrease congestion on campus
 - Decrease congestion in campus parking lots
- Outreach
 - Reach new student markets such as working adults and busy parents
 - Appeal to current students thus increasing enrollments

No One Formula for Hybrid Courses

A quality hybrid course may take many forms; there is no single formula that must be followed. Based on the individual course content, the student population, and the learning objectives of the course, it is up to the instructor to decide what should go online and what should take place in the physical classroom.

Here are a few possible hybrid scenarios:

- Eliminate one class meeting per week throughout the term and replace it with online work.
- Meet face-to-face for the first several weeks and then online for the remainder of the course.
- Alternate meeting face-to-face and online week by week throughout the term.
- Meet face-to-face only for an orientation at the beginning of the term, for proctored exams (and possibly review sessions), and then again at the end of the term to wrap things up.
- Reduce less productive class hours from a long-session course, but still meet face-to-face on the same days.
- Any and all other combinations are possible and worth considering.

Hybrid Faculty Prerequisites

Faculty considering should consider possessing the following skills and experience as prerequisites to teaching a hybrid course.

- An interest in trying something new and a desire to innovate in your teaching.
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- Basic computer and Internet skills.
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- Experience with the ETUDES-NG Course Management System. (Completion of the ETUDES-NG faculty training course.)
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- Experience with, or at least exposure to, a course Web site or Web-enhanced aspects of a course.
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- Access to support from mentor instructors.
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- Realistic expectations and sufficient time to invest in hybrid course development.
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- Sufficient time management skills.
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- A commitment to continuing participation in the online community you create.

Hybrid Teaching Tools (ETUDES-NG)

Discussion Boards: This is an *asynchronous* communication tool in which students (and instructor) can interact textually online.

Pros: Online discussion is often the heart of any online course (or the online portion of a hybrid course). Students can discuss topics decided upon by the instructor or which they create themselves. They can take their time in responding which allows them to really think through what they want to say. They can also spellcheck and revise, all before submitting to the group. Since all communication is textual, your class becomes a de facto writing course.
Cons: Very few. One thing to be aware of is that students often do no more than what is required of them. Usually some students will be very active, but others will do the bare minimum, thus instructors should explicitly state participation requirements and grade them.

Private Messages: Communicate directly, on-on-one with students.

Pros: Keep a record of all correspondence with students via your inbox and sent box.
Cons: Students must log into the course shell to view messages.

Chat: This is a *synchronous* communication tool in which students (and instructor) can interact textually in real-time.

Pros: Real-time communication. Good for virtual office hours. Good for students to meet on their own or for small group work. If used formally, consider keeping participation optional or offer multiple sessions as it may be difficult for some students be there at the specified time.
Cons: You can only have one chatroom open at a time. Students have to be good typists. Many students competing to be heard. Synchronous, thus students must all be able to be there at the same time.

Assignments: Instructors post assignments and students submit them online.

Pros: Create online assignments in which students interact with the course material and out on the open Web. No paper to keep track of. Due dates are clear and late submissions are tagged automatically. Grades and feedback can be given conveniently online as well. In fact, you might consider having students submit all class assignments this way.
Cons: None that I can think of! This is an excellent way for you to disseminate assignments, for students to access and submit them, and for you to grade them and share the grades with students.

Tests & Quizzes: Instructors post assessments and students take them online.

Pros: Design a variety of quizzes, tests, or surveys and post them online. Create question pools, randomize questions, set timeframes, etc. No paper to keep track of. Due dates are clear and late submissions are tagged automatically. Grades and feedback can be provided to students automatically or you can respond to individual submissions yourself.
Cons: Online tests are by definition open book. Concerns about cheating are relevant, but manageable. If it is a high stakes test, consider delivering it face-to-face in a proctored environment. (This is the advantage of hybrid courses!)

Modules: For publishing and viewing course content in sections.

Pros: A nice organized way to present course content in “chunks.” Can be used for new content not presented in class or to house all content so that students have access to it at all times.
Cons: None.

Syllabus: For creating and posting the course syllabus.

Pros: In addition to handing out a paper copy in class, post it online and students will never say they didn't know something because they could not find the syllabus ever again.
Cons: None.

Announcements: For posting current, time-critical information to all students.

Pros: Deliver information to all students via announcements which appear in multiple locations within the course shell and can also be delivered directly to students via email.
Cons: None.

Schedule: For posting and viewing deadlines, events, etc.

Pros: This is a great way to keep track of all course due dates and other important events. Students can view it at anytime and you can update as needed throughout the term.
Cons: None.

Gradebook: For posting and managing student grades.

Pros: Consider doing all of your course grading through the online gradebook which students can access at any time. A clear and convenient way to manage and disseminate grades.
Cons: None.

Good Ideas for Hybrid Teaching

- Spend at least some of the first week of class focusing on the technology and the specific skills students will need to succeed.
- Be a good role model by checking in regularly and posting online yourself. Let your students know you are there by commenting on their posts and by asking additional questions for them to consider. The best online discussions have daily participation – you should actively facilitate online discussions without dominating them.
- Integrate the face-to-face and online activities within the course. Do not just “bolt-on” some online material to a face-to-face course. The online activities should *replace* normal classroom time, not just add to it. The two formats should compliment each other and create a synergy which results in a learning experience that is greater than either a traditional face-to-face course or an all online course alone.
- “Entrance Tickets.” Require your students to familiarize themselves with some online content or have them complete some online exercises *prior* to attending class and then have them use that information in your in-class discussion. The reverse of “Entrance Tickets” is also important. Present material in-class and then have students reflect on it or complete some exercises related to it online. The best hybrid courses do both “Entrance Tickets” and the reverse regularly. In other words, classroom work leads to online work which leads back into classroom work throughout the term. The two mediums, online and face-to-face, are seamlessly integrated.
- Create small group collaborative assignments that encourage student-to-student interaction.
- Don't “lecture” when you write and post online. Good online pedagogy indicates that many small topics or “chunks” of content are better than long top-down lectures.

- Create short online research assignments that take advantage of the tremendous information available for free on the Web, such as asking students to seek out information and then report findings back to the group.
- Mandate participation in the discussion boards (i.e. at least one post and two responses a week). Incorporate this participation into student evaluation and grading.
- Have students post (at least) some of their assignments publicly and encourage peer feedback on their work. Grades should be shared privately, however.
- Include a “meta” area where students can reflect on their experience learning online. Such a discussion board is often referred to as the “lounge,” thus suggesting informality. Transform students from being mere participants to reflective co-creators of the learning process.
- Provide a reflective survey for students to fill out at the end of the term. The results will help you better understand what worked and what needs improvement.

Ten Questions to Consider When Planning a Hybrid Course

1. What do you want students to know when they have finished taking your hybrid course? In other words, what are your learning objectives for the course?
2. As you think about learning objectives, which would be better achieved online and which would be best achieved face-to-face? You do not want to add online content or activities just for the sake of doing so. Do not fall in love with the bells and whistles; instead choose the delivery medium based on how it will best serve your goals for the course.
3. Hybrid teaching is not just a matter of transferring a portion of your traditional course to the Web. Instead it involves developing challenging and engaging online learning activities that complement your face-to-face activities. What types of learning activities do you want to be using for the online portion of your course?
4. Online asynchronous discussion is often an important part of hybrid and online courses. What new learning opportunities will arise as a result of using asynchronous discussion? What challenges do you anticipate in using online discussions? How would you address these?
5. How will the face-to-face and online components be integrated into a single course? In other words, how will the work done in each component feed back into and support the other? The two elements should work together synergistically to create a learning experience not possible by one or the other in isolation.
6. When working online, students (and instructors!) sometimes have problems scheduling their work and managing their time, as well as understanding the implications of the hybrid course module as related to learning. What do you plan to do to help your students address these issues?
7. How will you *divide* the percent of time between the face-to-face portion and the online portion of your course? How will you *schedule* the percent of time between the face-to-face and online portion of your course?
8. How will you divide the course-grading scheme between face-to-face and online activities? What means will you use to assess student work in each of these two components?

9. Students sometimes have difficulty acclimating to the course Web site and to other instructional technologies you may be using for face-to-face and online activities. What specific technologies will you use for the online and face-to-face portions of your course? What proactive steps can you take to assist students to become familiar with your Web site and those instructional technologies? If students need help with technology later in the course, how will you provide support?

10. There is a tendency for faculty to require students to do more work in a hybrid course than they normally would complete in a purely traditional course. What are you going to do to ensure that you have not created a course and a half? Remember, you don't just want more, you want better. How will you evaluate the student workload as compared to a traditional class?

Adapted from: Learning Technology Center, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee
<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/LTC/hybrid/>

Seven Principles of Good Teaching

Based on considerable educational research, Chickering and Gamson (1987) outlined Seven Standards of Good Practice for Undergraduate Education, principles that have been widely accepted as measures for judging the effectiveness of classroom teaching. ETUDES-NG incorporates elements in each of the seven areas, as demonstrated below:

Principle 1: Encourage student-faculty contact

Through Private Messages students and faculty can communicate. Among other things, this allows instructors to be proactive by following up on students who are not participating in chats, discussions, etc. Students and faculty can also communicate through the discussion forums.

Principle 2: Encourage student cooperation

The same areas of ETUDES that allow for student-faculty contact can also be used for student-to-student contact. Assignments can be created to take advantage of this. Furthermore, the discussion forums can help foster group work and collaboration among students. Consider incorporating peer reviews, project sharing, and thread-leaders to moderate discussions. Student collaboration leads to a sense of community and higher learning outcomes.

Principle 3: Encourage active learning

Instructors can take advantage of the rich interactivity on the Web by designing assignments around appropriate Websites. When students come to these sites, they make choices, and they learn from their choices. Active learning also takes place when students work cooperatively. Give students more control, leadership roles, and options in what assignments to complete. Leave the center stage and transform yourself into a guide on the side.

Principle 4: Give prompt feedback

In ETUDES, students can see results of their tests and view solutions to graded assignments immediately after submission. Instructors can and should promptly respond to student questions. ETUDES allows you to provide both acknowledgement and information feedback.

Principle 5: Emphasize time on task

For example, give students something specific to respond to in each module via the discussions. Build in a reward system of points for each post and reply to the discussion forums. In other words, make posting and responding mandatory. Create a structure that can be followed, broken down week by week or unit by unit, allowing for acceleration of pace.

Principle 6: Communicate high expectations

In your syllabus you should include course goals and performance objectives. You might include model assignment submissions that can serve as examples for students to follow. The bottom line is that you must be explicit and clear in communicating your expectations to students.

Principle 7: Respect diverse talents and ways of learning

Create assignments that offer students options. Giving students choices in their learning experience increases satisfaction and retention. Consider giving students options as to what format to submit assignments or projects. For example, they might design a Webpage, write an essay, or develop a PowerPoint presentation. There is no reason why all students should submit the exact same homework or participate in one discussion topic. Variety is the spice of life and your online class; teach to the various learning styles of your students.

Is Online Teaching Right for Me?

The online instructor plays a vital role in developing and maintaining an effective online learning environment and must possess a unique set of tools to perform successfully. Some instructors from the traditional classroom environment will easily adapt to the online model, while others may find the transition challenging. Reflect on your teaching style, circumstances and technical skills to see if teaching online is right for you.

Questions:

Computer skills

- Do you have (or are you willing to obtain) access to a computer and Internet connection at home and/or at work?
- Are you willing to upgrade your computer equipment or purchase new software if needed?
- Do you know how to use email and access the Web using a browser?
- Can you download files from the Web and save them to your own computer?
- Can you attach a document to an email message?
- Can you cut/copy and paste from one program into another?

Experience in the online learning environment and qualifications

- Have you ever taken an online course as a student (i.e. the ETUDES-NG training course)?
- Have you used Webpages to supplement your on-the ground course or seminar?
- Have you used online quizzes, a discussion board or chat room as part of your teaching?

Attitudes towards teaching and learning in the online environment

- Do you believe that high-quality learning can take place without interacting with your students face-to-face?
- Do you believe lecturing is the best, or only, method for delivering education in your field?
- Do you feel that discussion is an effective teaching strategy for your subject matter?
- Do you believe it is important to structure activities so that students can learn from each other via interactivity and collaborative learning?
- Do you believe increased learning can occur when work/life/knowledge experiences are shared among peers?
- Do you think creating a sense of community amongst learners is a priority in your teaching?

Teaching style and habits needed to teach online

- Can you dedicate a significant number of hours per week (any time during the day or night) to participate in the online teaching process?
- Are you willing to log on and contribute to your online classroom discussions and interact with students online at least 4 times a week, and ideally more?
- Are you able to create schedules for yourself and stick to them? In other words, are you a self-disciplined, independent worker?
- Are you flexible in dealing with students' needs (due dates, absences, make-up exams)?
- Are you comfortable in communicating almost entirely through writing (since online courses are text-only environments)?

Training and commitment

- Are you willing to invest a significant amount of time and energy in preparation for teaching your course online?
- Are you willing to spend time rethinking and redesigning your teaching materials to fit the needs of the online environment?
- Are you willing to invest time in professional development to continue learning new online teaching and/or technical skills in the future?

Feedback:

Experience in the online learning environment and qualifications

If you have had first-hand experience as an online student, you will likely have greater insight into your own online students' needs and a better understanding of the unique requirements of the online environment. Experience using the Internet and the Web to enhance your teaching in the traditional classroom can be a good first step to teaching entirely online.

Attitudes towards teaching and learning in the online environment

An online instructor should be able to accept the value of facilitated learning as equal to the traditional model. If a teacher feels the only way that true learning can take place is through the traditional means of educating in a classroom, the person is generally not a good fit for the online paradigm. This is OK, but we must be honest with ourselves. Both an accelerated learning model and the online process depend on facilitative techniques for their success. The online classroom requires new teaching strategies and instructional techniques; *you should not try to recreate the on-ground classroom in the online paradigm*. The person leading a successful online class must be a proponent of facilitative learning, and have confidence in the system in order to make it work.

Teaching style and habits needed to teach online

The online facilitator should be open, concerned, flexible, and sincere. An online instructor must be able to compensate for the lack of physical presence in the virtual classroom by creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable participating and especially where students know that their instructor is accessible. Failure to do this can alienate the class both from each other and from the instructor and would make for a very weak learning environment. Online students are as busy, or busier, than anyone else in today's hurried world. An online instructor should be willing to give individual attention to students who may need extra help. Being sensitive, open and flexible is mandatory for success in the online realm.