Podcast Transcript

In the Classroom 2
Prepping a New Course for the Spring Term

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Stan Skrabut: In today's episode, I'm going to talk to you about the course that I'm putting together for some grad students at the University of Wyoming. They happen to be part of the college of education. The course that I'm teaching is I-Tech 50350, multimedia development. According to the course catalog, it's an introduction to technique, software, and applications used in the design manipulation and development of multimedia artifacts for instructional purposes. This course includes accelerated hands-on activities to practice and apply message-design principles in multimedia settings.

All I know is it's a lot of fun. We talk about all kinds of different aspects of multimedia learning to include text, audio, video, animation, what have you that we talk about it in the class and how you can best apply it in the class. Plus, there is also hands-on activities that we get the learners involved in, so they can practice. In most cases, they're learning it for the first time, their first time that they're ever touching, maybe how to make a podcast like this. This is a 16-week course. I'm teaching it online. I'm using Canvas, which is a learning management system. Everything that I'm doing I'm putting in there.

The other thing about this course is I'm not necessarily using a textbook. I am of the inspiration of Curtis Bonk who created this Monster Syllabus. You can honestly look it up. If you look up Curtis Bonk, Monster Syllabus, you'll get an understanding of what I'm talking about. That inspired me to the fact that I don't really need a textbook in order to teach a course. I can pull together resources from the Internet, put them all together and package it in a way that is very useful for the students and gets the point across that meets my student-learning objectives. I'm not going with a course or with a textbook, instead, relying mostly on open resources that are freely available on the Internet and also open-education resources. That's actually a big part of this course. I'll talk to you about that in a second.

What we're doing in this course is, there is really three major activities that students are getting involved in. The first activity is weekly discussions. Every week, the students are given a number of different articles to read, videos to watch, maybe even podcast to listen to. With all that, then they enter the discussion. The way I my discussion is I use a format that I had found. It's called an IRA post. IRA stands for three distinct things. The I is insight. From the reading that they have, I want them to share three things that jumped out to them, three things that made an impression, three things that maybe they didn't even agree with, and to add justification why they chose those three things.

Next is the R. The R is resource. I want them to go out into the interwebs and find a resource that they chose and that they're going to share back with the class in the discussion. I want them to find a resource, but also tell me why they chose that particular resource. Third, the A, the application. I want to know how they are going to apply it in the future or how they're presently applying it or maybe even how they applied it in the past. That makes up the IRA post. That's usually the initial post that they are expected to provide to class. Although, some of them jump in and start responding to their fellow students first before they craft their IRA post. That's totally fine.

My discussions run for a week. During that week, they have to get full marks for that week. They have to earn 20 points. The way they earn the 20 points is certainly the IRA post. If they post that IRA post, it's worth zero to three points, depending on how well-crafted it is. In most cases, they get the full three points. Additionally, I give out bonus points. For that IRA post, if they post it-- I open the discussions on Sunday. If they post their IRA post on Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday, I'll give them an extra three points. If they post it on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, I give them one additional point. If they wait until Saturday to do their post, they just have to do a lot of extra work. That one IRA post, they get an additional three posts. That actually means, instead of posting seven fully qualified posts, they would maybe only have to post six. It gets them out of a little work if they work ahead and they're rewarded for that. If not, they just have to do a little more work, but not so much.

Once they post their IRA post, then the idea is they enter into dialogue with me and their fellow students. They are required to go in and add additional comments and keep the discussion going and make it scholarly, to have some robust conversations. So far, this has worked out quite well. The feedback that I've gotten on course evaluations, everyone seems to-- Everyone is a big word, but everyone really seems to really enjoy how the discussions are put together because it really taps into this Malcolm Knowles's idea of andragogy, where I am pulling out experiences that they have. Some of these individuals had been teaching in the classroom already. Some of them have had experiences as an instructional technologist, or they're bringing stuff from the business world. I want to hear that, I want to know how this is applying to them. I want to make relevant to them. That's how I set up the discussions.

The next piece of this is what I call quest. Quests are just little assignments or little activities. I give them something small to do. For example, if we're talking about audio, at the beginning, I just want them to be able to record an audio track. That's one quest. They get graded for that because I want to scaffold the learning. They'll do that. Then maybe the next quest is they have to learn how to build an intro and outro. Then, the next one is how to incorporate music with their intros and outros, then finally turn it into maybe a full podcast. The same would go for learning about video. The same thing would be about how to take pictures, how to get imagery, how to build presentations, just the whole gamut. For this, they have to earn 1,500 points. Each of these quests are worth anywhere from 25 points to maybe a 100 point, depending on how complicated the actual task is.

It's competency-based learning. When they do this particular task, it's either go or no-go. Either they give me a product, demonstrate that they can do it, or I provide

feedback, kick it back and have them redo it. As I noted, I'm totally about failure. As I mentioned in episode 1, it's got to be messy, challenging. There has to be failure involved. I don't necessarily sign off on everything that I get, but I want them to create a learning environment where they're learning how to put all these elements together. They have to earn 1,500 points. My deadline for the course is the last day of the course. They can and some have waited until the last day of the course to try to do everything. It's not a strategy that I recommend, but they are, in my mind, capable of making that decision. I let them go at it. Part of this is learning about time management. I think on the other side of time management is stress management. If you don't get the time management right, you're going to learn about stress management or at least stress.

Here, they turn in a quest every week. Now, one of the things I do is, I also hand bonus points. Just like I did for the discussions, I had bonus points if you do it early. I have the same idea for turning in quests. If you turn a quest in every single week, I will give you additional points. If you turn one quest in, I will give you an additional point because I know it's going to move you along the path to that 1,500 points. Also, I have these grouped into blocks. One block happens to be audio. Another block happens to be video. If you earn 75 points in one block, I will award an additional 25 points. There is ways to- -use this idea, gamification of getting rewards throughout if you do it strategically. I used the additional points for each grouping because if they go in and touch on each grouping, that's what I want them to do. I don't really want them to ignore a group, so I reward if they got through so much of that group, and I want them to be able to go out and fully explore in areas. They don't have to do everything. Matter of fact, for the 1,500 points, I probably right now have about 2,300 points worth of quests out there, so they get to pick and choose what they want to do.

That's another aspect that I try to weave into my classes, is I want them to be able to choose their path of learning, decide what they want to be able to do. The question around pieces of software or techniques and strategies that I would typically use as an instructional technologist. At the college I'm working at, we do not have a large budget, so I have to go find the free software, I have to find strategies that leverage the software that we are paying for. Those are the type of tools that I introduce to the learners that are in my particular class.

The other major project that they have to work on is they are writing a chapter, each of them are writing a chapter for an OER book, an open education resource book on multimedia development. Talk about messy, oh my goodness. I started it last term, never did it before. We're learning al; together, and it's a mess, but I figured out strategies to help them get through it a little better. I think I'm going to weave those strategies in this particular term, and I think I'm going to be successful.

What what I'm doing is they're going to write the chapters. They're going to draft the chapter in pretty much the first month, then they will have to review at least two other chapters. There'll be a peer review, have two students review somebody else's chapter. From those notes and the notes that I put in, they will get to edit the chapter, they will make those tweaks and we'll have it peer-reviewed again, the same process. Then finally, they'll make their changes and turn in a final edition.

Some of the aspects of this is they will need to identify the license, the Creative Commons license that it's going to be available under. Basically, I'm trying to push them to attribution license so CC-by license, because that'll make it just easier to pull that information, and we want to create something useful that others can benefit from.

In the end, I plan to put these into press books which is an add-on for WordPress that allows me to pull everything together and have it published on the internet.

Now a couple of considerations is, what if a student doesn't want to have their chapter out there? Well, that's absolutely fine. I have a mechanism to ensure that. One of the things they have to do is they have to basically give permission in writing that they agree to have their chapter included and what license that they wish to use on it. If someone doesn't want to do it, that's fine, they still had to create a chapter because that's part of the exercise. It just will never be available to the public.

I had that happen in the last class. That's not a big deal. Also, I have other capabilities of producing it using a tool called Scribner, and I can push it out as a need publication in Mobi or some other file type. I may be able to get this on a Kindle or such, but I'm still working through that. I'm well behind on that but it's something that I'm finding fascinating and a lot of fun. The students reported last term that that was a really rewarding exercise, so I'm continuing with that.

This is the layout for my course. It's the second time I have taught it. Naturally, I've made some adjustments to it. Learners seem to enjoy the time and indicate that they are learning quite a bit. I'm looking forward to seeing how this course goes. I will be adding additional quests for them. We're getting started, a matter of fact, on Monday the 28th, which probably by the time this episode comes out. I may push two episodes right away, and so it'll start tomorrow.

Well, before I cut loose, one of the things I want to do is put a plug in for my book. I just got a book published is called *Read to Succeed*. Naturally, I'm quite proud of it. Here's a little more about that.