Using Angel Discussion Boards Effectively

CELT FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION
DR. MARGIE BLODGETT

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Why Use Online Discussions in a face-to-face Class?

- To engage students in the readings/content prior to active learning activities in class
- To process in-class learning by discussing/reflecting after a class session
- To provide more time for active learning during f2f class time
- To allow all students to participate in all discussions
- To be able to analyze and grade/give feedback to all students on their discussion responses

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Why Use Online Discussions in a face-to-face Class?

- To give students time to reflect on ideas before having to express their ideas (Du, Durrington, Matthews, 2007)
- To develop critical thinking skills and goals for course achievement (Du, et al., 2007)
- To give students opportunities to develop
  - professional writing skills
  - Use of citation styles
  - Online professional communication skills

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Examples of Online Discussions

- **Most common: Threaded discussion**
  - All students make initial post early in the week
  - All students respond to peers' posts throughout the week
- **Small group discussions**
  - Students are divided into small groups that discuss throughout the week
  - Group produces a summary of discussion at the end of the week.

Examples of Online Discussions

- **Project-based Groups**
  - Students can accomplish group projects or exploration of information to collaborate on the end product
  - Reduces time required to meet with each other in person
  - Increases time on task and sharing of resources

Examples of Online Discussions

- **dPBL – "distributed" Problem-based Learning**
  - Use of group discussions to approach a case that relates to field of practice
  - Commonly used teaching method in health professions
- **Role playing**
  - Use of scenarios as a means of experiencing various viewpoints or ways of thinking about a situation.
  - Learners develop their ability to resolve problems and experience a variety of contexts
  - Learning is accomplished by experiencing a situation through the point of view of the assumed role.

How to Develop Discussion Prompts/Questions

- **Discussion prompts should**
  - be open-ended
  - encourage a unique answer from each student, with no one response being "the correct" answer
- **Some techniques include**
  - students are required to find additional readings, beyond the required course readings, on the question topic
  - Students use personal/professional experiences as examples to demonstrate their understanding

How to Develop Discussion Prompts/Questions

- **"Four Question Method"** (Alexander, et al., 2010)
  1. "Identify one important concept, research finding, theory, or idea in psychology that you learned while completing this activity." (analyzing)
  2. "Why do you believe that this concept, research finding, theory, or idea in psychology is important?" (reflecting)
  3. "Apply what you have learned from this activity to some aspect of your life." (relating)
  4. "What question(s) has the activity raised for you? What are you still wondering about?" (questioning)

How to Facilitate Online Discussions

- **Instructor must be regularly "present" in the discussion by**
  - giving feedback,
  - making suggestion to keep students on the topic
  - encouraging more discussion throughout the discussion period.
- **Remember, any time you spend giving feedback by emailing students you are present only to that student.**
- **No facilitation leads to students feeling this is "busy work."**

How to Facilitate Online Discussions

- Facilitation/Moderation of the discussions can take a variety of forms, but most experts agree that the facilitator should be careful not to dominate the conversation
  - Generally you will not respond to every student's post
  - Use short inquiry-based posts to keep the students discussing with each other
  - Reply to a thread of interactions; not just one student's comment
  - Refer other students to a discussion thread that relates to their post or questions

How to Grade Online Discussions

- Rubrics should be developed for discussion assessment including expectations for initial post and peer responses
- A typical expectation for initial responses is that they are substantial (250-300 words) that are supported by citations from assigned reading and found literature.
- Inform students of expectations for professional writing vs. online "chat" conversations

How to Grade Online Discussions

- Replies to peers are expected to be written to encourage further discussion by asking questions or comparing/contrasting the peer's response to the writer's.
- May have expectations for 100+ words to encourage substantial responses
- Identify how many replies are expected
  - Should all replies be "substantial"
  - Are additional "quick" responses acceptable, beyond required "substantial" replies?

How to Grade Online Discussions

- **Some tips to manage grading tasks:**
  - Follow grading rubrics
  - Consider using ANGEL™ grading rubric
  - Create a document with examples of common feedback that can be copy/pasted into discussion message
  - Depending on the level of learning, use peer review process