

2006-2007 Tablet Initiative Report: Randall Adams

The use of tablet technology was introduced to my Introduction to Sociology (Soc1010) classes during the Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 semesters. In the Fall, I conducted two sessions of Intro with approximately 150 students in each session and in the Spring, I conducted two sessions with approximately 130 students per session. All four sessions were completely paperless. The use of tablet technology provides a number of advantages in presentation, communication and evaluation.

Presentation

Prior to the introduction of tablet use, presentation options of material were writing on a dry-erase board or present PowerPoint. I have employed each of these methods successfully. However, each method has limitations when employed in large auditorium classroom such as found in Bruner 119. Distance from the dry-erase boards creates visual problems for students in the higher seats while presentation of PowerPoint allows visibility but can be non-engaging thus leading to boredom. Presentation of PowerPoint is also limited to pre-designed information. The use of tablet technology allows for the combining of these two presentation formats and provides opportunity for engagement, introduction of timely material, and additional resources. PowerPoint material was supplemented by using the tablet as a white board and writing additional comments. The tablet also allowed access to Internet material such as statistical data and information sites during the presentation. Projection eliminated visual problems for written comments.

Communication

The use of WebCT combined with tablet technology allowed for enhanced student communication and participation opportunities. Discussion boards were created for various topics. Students were able to make comments on materials and respond to one another. However, the most widely used board was the *Ask the Professor* board which allowed students the opportunity to ask any question about the course. As this was a public board, many questions were answered by other students when questions concerned announcements made in class or questions answered in the syllabus. Students could also connect to a Blog site which allowed longer expressions of personal opinions on various subjects. I also answered over 400 e-mails from students.

Evaluation

The greatest value of technology assisted classes was the ability to go paperless. Exams, quizzes, and writing assignments were submitted using WebCT. Students were also directed to examine the syllabus on-line and print a copy if a hard copy was desired. Students took weekly quizzes covering reading assignments for that week and four examinations were given during the course of the semester. Students were allowed multiple attempts over an assigned period with scores being averaged. Grade distribution was not significantly different from previous semester involving paper test in class. However, during year end exit interviews with classes many students stated that the multiple attempts helped in the learning and retention process. Quizzes

consisted of ten fixed questions but exams consisted of 50 questions randomly selected from a bank of 100 for each exam. The random selection gave the student a different set of questions for each attempt thus exposing students repeatedly to different concepts to be understood. Averaging allowed students the opportunity to raise a low grade. Most students took exams and quizzes more than once.

All writing assignments were submitted on-line. Papers could be downloaded to the tablet, notations and comments made in a traditional manner, graded, and up-loaded for the students review. As many assignments were 3-5 pages, this eliminated the use of several reams of paper over the course of the year. Deadlines for submission may also be extended and papers graded as submitted. Grades for all evaluation tools were kept current and displayed for the student through WebCt which allowed students to evaluate their own progress at any time during the semester.

Conclusion

The use of assisted teaching technology offered a variety of opportunity to instructors and provides an economical way to communicate and evaluate classes. This is especially true for classes with enrollment of 75 or more students. The technology is also available 24/7 thus allowing students to work during time period best suited for their personal schedules.

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