

Teaching Subject Headings in Your Jammies

WebCT at West Virginia University
Libraries

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What is WebCT?

- Web Course Tools
- Secure online environment for keeping all materials for a course
- Leading web-based course management software
- Possible solution for on-campus space and resource problems

Advantages for Students

- Availability / Student Pace
 - Entire course available online
- Commuting
- Diverse Student Body
 - Students can login in from anywhere
- Technology
 - Varied technical requirements

Advantages for Students

- Collaboration
 - Helps to develop a learning community
- Discussion Quality
 - opportunity to edit and revise postings
- Degree Completion
 - online courses can fit around student's work and family schedule

Disadvantages for Students

- Technology
 - WebCT “has a steep learning curve” (Martin and Lee, 2003)
 - Servers can go down; personal computers may not be compatible or have correct software
 - Students can also have a difficult time learning new technologies and software. The Nielsen Norman Group Study (2005)

Disadvantages for Students

- “Face Time”
 - Students may miss actually seeing and working with instructors and fellow students.
- Motivation
 - Students must be “self-starters” and disciplined to succeed in an online class

Advantages for Instructors

- **Availability / Instructor Pace**
 - Entire course available online; therefore instructor can access at own pace, at any time
- **Customizable Content / Appearance**
 - Upload all course materials in one spot
 - Can set own colors, even upload own pictures or icons
- **Glossary**
 - Can write up definitions for commonly-used terms in the course

Advantages for Instructors

- Selective Release
 - Can set criteria materials are available to the students.
- Self-Test
 - non-graded feedback

Advantages for Instructors

- Online Quizzes
 - Autograding
- Online Grade Book
 - Customizable
 - Formula to calculate grades
- Analysis Tools
 - monitor what pages a student has visited

Disadvantages for Instructors

- Designer / Instructor Learning Curve
- Technical Issues
- Student Use of Technology
 - Instructor has to give tech support

Disadvantages for Instructors

- Access
 - Only available to students and teaching faculty
- Updating / Changing Course
 - changes must be made in proper format and then uploaded
- Setting up Quizzes
 - questions / answers must be typed in. Very time-consuming.

Disadvantages for Instructors

- Autograding
 - Only works for matching or MC or T/F
- Time
 - very time-consuming; emailing takes up a good portion of time
- Face Time
 - Difficult to tell if students are having problems

Student Attitudes

- Study conducted at Creighton University, Nebraska
 - 73% of students strongly believed that they received adequate instruction.
 - 83% reported that their computer skills were adequate to use the course website.
 - 80% said they were using WebCT for less than 3 hours per week. Only 14% felt this was excessive.

Student Attitudes

- Study conducted at Creighton University, Nebraska
 - Students on whether WebCT helped them maintain interest in the class (Disagree – 24%; Neutral – 31%; Agree – 45%)
 - WebCT helped them learn faster (Disagree – 27%; Neutral – 35%; Agree – 38%)

Student Attitudes

- Study done by Linda B. Alexander and Robert C. Smith at Western Kentucky University
 - “[o]lder non-dorm university students . . . appreciate . . . taking a library skills course on the Internet to a much greater extent than do traditional students”
 - “There was no compromise in quality in the two different formats, according to the achievement results”

WebCT @ WVU

- MDS 103 is a one-credit course designed to teach students basic library skills that they can use not only at WVU Libraries, but other libraries as well.

WebCT @ WVU

- MDS 103 was offered online for the first time in the summer of 2003.
- It was initially offered to Extended Learning students

WebCT @ WVU

- Evaluation Results (Based on a scale of 5 = Excellent, to 1 = Poor)
 - Lectures = 4
 - Assignments = 2.92
 - Instructor Feedback = 4.75
 - Course Overall = 4.08

WebCT @ WVU

- MDS 103 was taught online and in the traditional classroom setting in Fall of 2003.
- Enrollment in MDS 103 online was not restricted; therefore it was open to traditional on-campus students.

WebCT @ WVU

	Traditional	Online
Lectures	4.11	4.00
Assignments	3.92	2.92
Instructor Feedback	NA	4.75
Course Overall	3.92	4.08

Best Practices

- Simple Design
 - students use dial-up, have older computers, are not tech savvy.
- Feedback, Feedback, Feedback
 - Constant communication with students:.
 - Email every week to remind them about assignments.
 - Provide lots of feedback on assignments.

Student Comments

- “[T]his online class allows you to get to know one another without all the previous judgments and first impressions we ALL receive on those first day[s] of classes, For example, we are all of different ages, backgrounds and places yet we can achieve friendships and understanding simply because our interactions are based strictly on personality”

Student Comments

“I took an online class last semester and there was no interaction with others in the class at all. We did have a place to post messages or anything like we do here. This class is so much more enjoyable and I think it helps in the learning process.”

“I just sen[d] an email when I had questions and always received prompt answers.”

Student Comments

- It's hard to be anti-social when you're already sitting in front of a computer screen talking to people who can't see you . . . Heh :)