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2010 Course Development Grant Report (Spring, 2010)

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Report Submitted: September 15, 2011

PROJECT TITLE:

Activating "ICE" in the History of Apartheid Through Technology

COURSE NUMBER & TITLE: HIST388 – The Rise, Decline and Legacy of Apartheid

PROJECT GOAL: *The Rise, Decline and Legacy of Apartheid* is an upper division course and is one of four African courses that Track A (Teaching Track) students have to take if they are to graduate with a major in history. It is also an elective for students in Track B (General) and Track C (Public and Oral History). Incorporating the educational pedagogy, ICE (Ideas, Concepts, Extensions) by Sue Fostaty Young and Robert J. Wilson, the course encouraged more active learning. Through innovative web-based projects that incorporated the ICE theory, students were meant to not only learn valuable weblogging skills using WordPress, but also construct innovative assignments and actively exchange ideas that will be relevant to their future teaching skills. Moreover, making lectures and class meetings more interactive using WordPress and Prezi.com were meant to allow students to have more ownership of the course and their learning process. Thus, to address this, the goal was to: 1) Implement and explain ICE pedagogy, 2) Activate students learning in order to allow them to become more responsible for their learning and in turn more readily be able to understand complex concepts 3) teach students technology skills they could apply in their future careers.

IMPLEMENTED: Summer, 2011, 6W1 (I was on maternity leave in Spring, so I deferred implementation until I taught the course in summer)

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: *The Rise, Decline and Legacy of Apartheid* deals with forty-six years of racial segregation in South Africa and the years thereafter between 1948 and present-day. I taught it for the first time in Spring 2008. I teach HIST 388 once a year and it is a seminar class. The course limit is 28 students per class. As the course has recently become one of the required courses for Track A (Teaching Track), now most students are taking the course because of a requirement instead of interest. The history of apartheid is one unit that high school teachers are required to cover in their own classes. However, most students have limited knowledge of apartheid, mostly because they were born in the 1980s (and some in 1990). Some students have never heard of apartheid. The course was previously designed as a lecture course. However, as scholars have pointed out, lectures merely promote surface learning and do not prepare students to teach the issue in their own classes.¹ This is partly because lecture formats promote the learning of basic facts. Thus, students are often unable to demonstrate the relationship or connections between elemental concepts or answer hypothetical questions about what the basic facts mean or how they extend to their own lives. In a course that deals specifically with race, gender, sexual and class discrimination, the ability of students, many of whom will be future teachers, to

¹ Pollio, 1984; McKeachie, 1986; Rickard, Rogers, Ellis & Beidleman, 1988.

effectively apply the lessons from South Africa to other situations would be highly beneficial.

Despite the fact that many of my students expect to passively attend lectures and often resist accepting responsibility for their own learning, studies have shown that active learning is a far more effective means of promoting deeper knowledge. John Bransford et al. in *How People Learn* point out that active learners are more able to comprehend complex material and transfer their acquired knowledge to other learning situations.² Moreover, as Anne Moore et al. point out, we need to prepare students through active means to be effective learners and teachers in an increasingly complex and technologically based world. They argue that “creating learning environments that challenge students to become actively engaged, independent, lifelong learners inside and outside of formal learning spaces should be the critical aim of change in teaching strategies.”³ This means that we need to encourage students to extend and connect intellectual ideas both within and outside of the classroom using more of the technology they already or may potentially need to use.

Proposed Innovations:

First, to promote students responsibility in their own learning I wanted to actively involve them in understanding why a particular pedagogy is used in the learning process. I therefore **adopted the ICE Approach**.⁴ In 2004, I attended a learning seminar run by Sue Fostaty Young that promoted the ICE approach to learning and assessment. Unlike other teaching taxonomies that require some understanding of educational pedagogy, ICE is an easily accessible and understandable approach to learning. ICE is an acronym for three levels of learning, the first of which is surface learning of basic *Ideas*. The second is *Connections* where students can demonstrate relationships between concepts and the third level of learning is *Extensions*, when students apply their learning in new ways outside of the initial learning situation. Key to this approach is the promotion of active learning. In order to engage students in their own learning process, ICE requires that students be introduced to the basic ideas of the ICE approach in the first class. ICE also formed the foundation for assessment in the course and students were to gain a better understanding of how their assignments were graded. For *The Rise, Decline & Legacy of Apartheid*, I introduced this taxonomy to the students in the first class.

In order to introduce ideas, connect these ideas to each other and extend the ideas to other scenarios, students needed to be more openly engaged in the learning process. One way to do this is to **use free blogging software such as WordPress** where students become active participants in the course both in and outside the classroom. Using a **class blog on WordPress**, class lectures could become more interactive by asking students to post questions they would like covered in the lecture. Moreover, students were to use WordPress for their own lesson plan assignments (where they would also need to implement ICE concepts). Good assignments are more than a means of generating grades, they have applicability to the students. With clear ICE rubrics students would more readily understand the purpose of the assignment.

Interactive classes are difficult to conduct with the linear design of PowerPoint. Prezi.com is a new presentation software that I have been experimenting with that is more like mind mapping. It allows me and the students to be more flexible in how information is delivered and is far more interactive. It also allows one to present more than surface ideas by visually mapping connections and extensions. As lectures were originally designed in PowerPoint, **lectures were to be converted to Prezi**. Prezi uses Flash software that could easily be integrated into WordPress and made available to all students. It also allows students the flexibility to move around the presentation in the way that they feel is best.

² John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown and Rodney R. Cocking, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind Experience, and School* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999).

³ Anne H. Moore, Shelli B. Fowler and C. Edward Watson, “Active Learning and Technology: Designing Change for Faculty, Students and Institutions” *EDUCAUSE Review* 42, no. 5 (September/October 2007) <http://www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Review/EDUCAUSEReviewMagazineVolume42/ActiveLearningandTechnologyDes/161908> (accessed: December 24, 2009).

⁴ Sue Fostaty Young and Robert J. Wilson, *Assessment & Learning: The ICE Approach* (Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press, 2000).

HOW THE PROJECT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

- A course lecture was created using Prezi explaining ICE and how it was to be used in the course that was given in the first class.
- All lectures were reworked into Prezi format.
- I constructed ICE grading rubrics for all assignments that were given to the students before they began working on their assignments.
- Made an example and non-example of their lesson plan assignment
- Because the implementation was during summer, and there are only 5 weeks of classes, it was extremely difficult to expect students to grasp ICE and learn WordPress in such a short period. Thus, I opted to forgo WordPress this time and instead asked students to hand in hard copies and present their assignments in class.

RESULTS OF THE PROJECT: (Additional comments – lessons learned, insights, future plans, etc)

- Students responded very well to the ICE taxonomy, stating that it was extremely easy to understand and made perfect sense.
- Students commented that they really liked the grading rubrics based on ICE which gave them a clear idea of my expectations
- Students also implemented the ICE concept in their own lesson plans.
- Students prefer Prezi presentations, stating that it gave them a good visualization of how ideas were connected and extended to larger concepts.
- PowerPoint presentations are not easily transferred into Prezi and it took a LONG time to convert all previous lectures. It would be easier to use Prezi only in new courses where you are making new lectures.
- Students understanding of what was expected of them improved, and in turn their grades improved dramatically
- Students were more active in class and took on more responsibility for their learning.
- I hope to use WordPress blog and online assignments the next time I teach this course during a regular session.