

Syllabus

**IDND 30515:**

**Designing Assignments and Activities to Promote Learning (1 cr)**

**Fall 2008**

**Location:**

Clark University

**Instructor:**

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**INTRODUCTION TO COURSE**

Faculty are continually challenged to explore ways for students to demonstrate and/or reinforce their knowledge and understanding of course learning objectives. Often, faculty are unfamiliar with the multitude of types of learning activities and strategies that can be incorporated into their courses. The goal of this course is to provide participants with models, strategies and tools to aid in creating and assessing learning activities consistent with particular course learning objectives. In addition to exploring specific types of learning activities (e.g. problem sets, films, observations, simulations, games, case studies, journals, model building, observation, peer tutoring, fieldwork, problem posing, group tests, oral reports, research papers, lab investigation and data collection, in-class exercises), we will discuss the challenges and opportunities related to conducting these assignments in various course environments (traditional, hybrid, or online) and in light of whether an activity is an individual or group task.

This course will include readings, discussions, and individual and group activities. There will be hands-on workshop sessions providing participants an opportunity to critique provided assignments and to present their own assignments.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of IDB 501: Seminar in College Teaching or permission of instructor.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of current assignment and learning activity models, strategies and tools that can assist them in creating and managing effective course assignments.
2. Demonstrate the ability to design, deliver and assess learning activities that meet specific criteria for effective course assignments.
3. Recognize how the learning environment influences and impacts effective course assignment design.
4. Develop a list of types of learning activities that may be appropriate for use in their discipline and individual courses.

## **TEXTS**

Fink, L. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.  
Significant learning homepage: <http://www.ou.edu/pii/significant/index.htm>

Walvoord, B., & Anderson, V. (1998). *Effective grading: A tool for learning and assessment*  
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## **COURSE MEETINGS TIMES**

The course will consist of five weekly classroom meetings. Class meetings will be held on Thursdays and will meet from 4:00 – 6:00 on September 25, and from 4:00 – 7:00 on October 2, 9, 16, and 30.

## **COURSE FORMAT:**

Classroom participation is a "way of life" in this course. The readings will afford you an in-depth exposure to concepts and examples of learning activities, and class discussion will provide opportunity to apply concepts to the examples. You are expected to attend all classes, complete the assigned readings before class and be prepared to engage in class discussion. Classroom time will be devoted to extensions, connections and discussions of prepared material, and for providing feedback from class members on your three written assignments. Accordingly, your class contributions will be included in your overall evaluation.

## GRADING PROCEDURES

Performance in this course will be graded on the basis of the development of three learning activities that relate to a course you teach or plan to teach, and to your contributions to the in-class discussion.

1 <sup>st</sup> assignment	10%	(10 pts)
2 <sup>nd</sup> assignment	20%	(20 pts)
3 <sup>rd</sup> assignment	40%	(40 pts)
In-class contributions	30%	(30 pts)

Assignments and in-class contributions will be graded with letter grades that correlate with the rubrics that will be distributed at the first class meeting. Your final course grade will be determined as follows: 90-100% = A; 80-89.9% = B; 70-79.9%=C; 60-69.9%=D; below 60% is an F.

## ASSIGNMENTS:

Below are brief descriptions of the focus of your three written assignments. You will be provided a packet that includes detailed criteria for each assignment, some examples, and the rubrics that will be used to evaluate each assignment. These materials will be distributed, and elaborated upon in class, the week before the due date for each assignment.

### 1<sup>st</sup> written assignment (10%)

Focus: “Short Learning Activity”

Due: October 2

For this assignment you will design a learning activity for **introducing** a concept in a course you currently teach or plan on teaching. For our purposes, a “short” in-class activity is one that is introduced and completed within 15-20 minutes of a class session.

You will discuss your “Short Learning Activity” in class on October 2 and receive feedback from class members.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> written assignment (20%)

Focus: “Group Learning Activity”

Due: October 16

For this assignment you will design a **group** learning activity that relates to a single topic in a course you currently teach or plan on teaching. This activity should be designed for your student-groups to complete within one class session or, at most, one week. You will discuss your “Group Learning Activity” in class on October 16 and receive feedback from class members.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> written assignment (40%)

Focus: “Integrative Learning Activity”

Due: October 30

For this assignment you will design an **integrative** learning activity for a course you currently teach or plan on teaching. This learning activity should be designed to afford your students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and or mastery of specific course content. Depending on your goals and discipline, the activity you design might be for students to demonstrate competency of a major course topic, a module from course materials, or the body of knowledge covered in one semester. You will discuss your “Integrative Learning Activity” in class on October 30 and receive feedback from class members.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY**

There are no quizzes or tests in this course; all your assignments will be take-home. The goals of the assignments are to connect course content to your current or future teaching practices. While you may discuss the assignments with whomever you wish during the thinking and planning stage, at the point at which you begin to write, your work is expected to be your own.

When making use of external sources such as books, published papers, web resource, etc., you are expected to cite sources of ideas and information that are not your own, and to enclose in quotation marks and properly attribute any material that you take verbatim from other sources.

Consult Clark’s “College Board Procedure for Dealing with Accusations of Violation of Academic Integrity” at <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm> for additional details and for procedures and penalties in case of violations.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you believe that you may need accommodations in this course, and if you have not already done so, please contact Jane Daigneault, Coordinator of Disability Services at Clark University (508-793-7468). Also, consult “Disability Services at Clark” at <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/ada/>. If you would like to discuss how your accommodations will be implemented during this course or if you would like to share information unrelated to accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

## Schedule of Course Topics, Readings & Assignments

Date	Topics	Reading Assignments	Assignments Due
9/25	What Makes a Good Learning Activity		
10/2	Learning Activity Models and Examples	<p>Fink:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 1: Creating Significant Learning Experiences</li> <li>• Chapter 2: A Taxonomy of Significant Learning</li> </ul> <p>Walvoord &amp; Anderson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appendix B: Types of Assignments &amp; Tests</li> <li>• Chapter 3: Making Assignments Worth Grading</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> written assignment “Short Learning Activity”
10/9	Exploring and Critiquing Different Types of Learning Activities I	<p>Fink:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 3: Designing Significant Learning Experience I: Getting Started</li> <li>• Chapter 4: Designing Significant Learning Experiences II: Shaping the Learning Experience</li> </ul> <p>Walvrod &amp; Anderson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4: Fostering Motivation and Learning in the Grading Process</li> </ul> <p>Michaelsen, L., &amp; Knight, A. (2004). Creating effective assignments: A key component to team-based learning. In L. Michaelsen, A. Knight, &amp; D. Fink, (Eds.). <i>Team-based learning</i>. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.</p>	
10/16	Exploring and Critiquing Different Types of Learning Activities II	<p>Fink:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 5: Changing the Way We Teach</li> </ul> <p>Walvrod &amp; Anderson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 5: Establishing Criteria and Standards for Grading</li> <li>• Appendix C: Examples of Primary Trait-Based Scales Developed by Faculty</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> written assignment “Group Learning Activity”
10/30	Strategies for Engaging Students in Their Learning and Encouraging Their Participation	<p>Bender, T., (2003). Innovative online teaching techniques (Chapter 7). <i>Discussion-based online teaching to enhance student learning: Theory, practice &amp; assessment</i> (pp. 118-153). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.</p> <p>Lowman, J. (1996). Assignments that promote and integrate learning. In R. Menges, &amp; M. Weimer (Eds.). <i>Teaching on solid ground: Using scholarship to improve practice</i> (pp. 203-231). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.</p>	3 <sup>rd</sup> written assignment “Integrative Learning Activity”