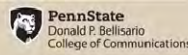


Bortree, Denise Sevick

From: Mailing list for information relevant to Bellisario College of Communications faculty. <L-COMM-FACULTY@LISTS.PSU.EDU> on behalf of Bortree, Denise Sevick <dsb177@PSU.EDU>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 2:49 PM
To: L-COMM-FACULTY@LISTS.PSU.EDU
Subject: Teaching Tuesdays - Project Gating by Michelle Baker

TEACHING



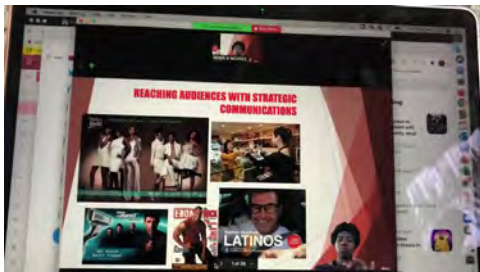
TUESDAYS

Faculty – Welcome to Teaching Tuesdays. This week we'll hear from Michelle Baker about how to use "gating" to help online students tackle challenging projects. Also, did you know that you can make your PowerPoint deck your background when teaching on Zoom? Renea Nichols shows us how that works. Another great opportunity – your students can submit to a deepfake education competition conducted by UC Berkeley. And, finally, don't forget to submit your book orders for spring 2021. Lots of good stuff in this edition.

Sharing your PowerPoint deck as a Zoom background

Check out this creative idea that allows you to be on screen with your PowerPoint deck (and not have to use the "share screen" option). Renea Nichols created this video to show you how it works:

<https://twitter.com/ProfNichols/status/1305916013624475648>



[Renea Nichols on Twitter](#)

"Did you know you can share your powerpoint AND be on camera for your audience? @penn_state Share using advance option, share "slides as virtual background."

<https://t.co/OWt2lfOBnW>
twitter.com

Deepfake Education Challenge

The [CITRIS Policy Lab](#) at UC Berkeley and the [Silicon Valley Leadership Group](#) have launched a student competition on deepfake education. According to their website, "The competition encourages high school, undergrad, and grad students to produce engaging video content to help educate the public on the threat of deepfakes." You can learn more here: <https://www.svl.org/deepfake-education-competition/>. Thanks to Patrick Parsons and former grad student Brandie Nonnecke for bringing this to our attention.

Spring 2021 Book Orders

Don't forget, spring 2021 book orders are due now. You can submit them online using FacultyEnlight (<http://www.facultyenlight.com/?storeNbr=435>). Thanks!

Teaching Tip: Project Gating

This week we hear from **Michelle Baker, Director of Online Programs in Strategic Communications**. Michelle has been managing the undergraduate and graduate degrees in strategic communications, and she shares a best practice for helping students work through semester-long projects in the online environment. Michelle writes about a concept called

“gating” that provides a roadmap for student projects. This has application to both online and in-residence courses. Enjoy.

Project Gating in the Online Environment

By Michelle Baker, Assistant Teaching Professor, Director of Online Programs in Strategic Communications
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A great way to support student success (and prevent procrastination) on final projects, especially in the online environment, is to use a strategy called project gating. Many of us already use some form of this strategy in classes that are project-oriented by nature, like a capstone course. The final project is divided into a series of phases, so that students submit small sections of the project throughout the semester until the entire project is completed at the end of the course.

Because the online learning environment can feel so fluid and even unstructured to students, especially those new to different forms of online learning, World Campus instructional designers often use project gating to segment large final projects to support student learning.

Some benefits to project gating:

- 1. Students have a place to start and a roadmap to final project completion.** One of the reasons students procrastinate is not knowing where to begin, which can lead them to feel overwhelmed and anxious. Breaking the final project into smaller, concrete sections creates a kind of road map for students to follow throughout the course and can reduce their uncertainty about project expectations. They have a specific place to start and a linear pathway to follow.
- 2. Students can connect course concepts to the assigned project tasks.** If we’re teaching a particular concept in Week 4 of the semester, and then students submit a portion of the final project as an assignment that week, they can see how those theoretical concepts map onto the final project in a practical way.
- 3. We can provide more detail when defining the final project purpose and deliverables.** When the project deliverables are segmented week to week, the instructions for the project are too. This gives us more opportunity to describe why students are expected to complete each portion of the project, clarify expectations, provide real-world examples, and indicate how that section of the project will be assessed.
- 4. We can provide feedback on the final project earlier in the semester.** If we’re assessing portions of the final project throughout the course, students can know if they’re on target or if they’re missing the mark. Getting feedback early gives them time to make changes. And these checkpoints help us to know how individual students are doing, as well as the whole class. We can know if the class is ready to go on to the next phase of the project, or if more clarification is needed.
- 5. Students can experience a sense of confidence and accomplishment.** Instead of feeling overwhelmed by a huge project looming “out there,” students can focus on smaller segments and build incrementally toward the final project. If they do well on these assignments, they can gain confidence with small wins, which can increase their motivation for the next phase of the project. If students need to adjust their projects based on corrective feedback, this can also build their confidence that their final submission will reflect their professor’s expectations.
- 6. We’re modeling for students how to approach a complex, multi-phased project.** Sometimes students don’t have the skills to break down a multifaceted project into next action steps. By dividing the project into smaller pieces as part

of the course, we demonstrate this skill. They can see where the natural breaks and transitions are, better estimate time on task, and more fully understand the number and type of steps needed to complete this kind of project. By demonstrating this skill, we help them to build it, and it can be professionalizing for students who have not yet completed a complex project in the workplace.

Course Example: COMM 830, Strategic Communications Industry

A course in the online MPS program in Strategic Communications, COMM 830: Strategic Communications Industry, developed by Ann Major, is a great example of project gating. The final project for this course is a multifaceted Strategic Communications Plan. Because this is the first course students take in the program, and the students often haven't been in an academic setting in some time, project gating is a good plan for supporting students as they complete the final project.

During the first few weeks of COMM 830, students are introduced to foundational concepts related to the strategic communications industry. Starting in Week 5, students submit the first portion of their final Strategic Communications Plan as a weekly assignment. Students continue to submit phased portions of the project during Weeks 6, 8, 9, and 11. Between Weeks 11 and 14 students independently finish the last portions of their projects and then submit the projects in their entirety in Week 15. Students receive feedback and grades along the way, so they can know how they are doing on the project and feel confident about their final submissions.

This approach to the project also provides structure to the course, and the project assignments reflect both the weekly learning outcomes and the course-level learning outcomes.

COMM 830 is also a good example of how project gating can be used while still allowing time for other elements of the class. Students submit portions of their final projects for six weeks of the course, which allows about nine weeks for exams and other assignments. Project gating doesn't necessarily mean the final project has taken over the entire class: it can be interwoven with other learning strategies.

Because the online learning environment in general can feel unclear to students, especially students who are used to or prefer in-person meetings for their courses, methods like project gating can provide an extra level of scaffolding to offer support, clarify expectations, provide early feedback, and reduce anxiety or uncertainty students feel related to large final projects.

Hope you enjoyed this edition. Keep an eye out for Teaching Tuesdays every Tuesday this semester.

TEACHING TUESDAYS – Edition #4

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