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Peer Review for Dr. Sharon L. Russell's EDCI 580 OL
By David Karl

As a student and colleague taking EDCI 580 OL this past fall, my perspective as a reviewer is, I think, unique. As an overview, from firsthand experience, the course content is effective and meets the syllabus criteria, and the assignments and discussions are a logical extension of learning. Overall, this has been an extremely informative, challenging, and valuable course that I would recommend highly.

Announcements –

- The initial announcement is effective--it greets the students and gives them information on how to start (Start Here), as well as general information needed for navigation overall and doing the discussions.

Start Here –

- This is effective as a starter for the course. It engages the student with an opening video and then has a breakdown of all modules for the course--each containing everything you need to complete that module including overarching description of the module, specific assignment descriptions, page assignments for textbooks and links to additional required readings and videos, and submission points and/or discussion post links for each module. It is a complete "all you need" section of Blackboard.

Course Overview-

- This succinctly yet thoroughly maps out the four main phases of the course and has a detailed chart breaking down the course, week by week, regarding what is to be done. It's very clear to the student where we are starting, where we are going, and what we need to do to get there, and this matches the syllabus.

Instructor-

- This page has an engaging photo and bio that is a nice introduction to Dr. Russell and her background.

Course Content-

- There is a mix of print and audio-visual material here that is effective and engaging
- The module information and assignments are always part of a logical progression through the module and the course.

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- The layout of each unit is always the same. That's important for consistency across the courses and was very helpful in navigating through course material.
- Instructional content is valuable, pointed, and relevant. It is also manageable within the time frame.

Assignments –

- The modules/progression of the course link together well and are organized coherently. The assignments in each module are well-connected to module material and require students to apply what they have read and watched that week, as well as previous weeks, and think critically. The big projects at the end require students to put it all together, which is the ultimate summative assessment.
- These assignments are practical, pragmatic, and reasonable given the time constraints of the course.
- Overall the material, organization, and assignments come together to make a challenging and valuable course.

Suggestions-

- The biggest suggestion I have, from a student's perspective, is regarding the way Blackboard is set up for this course. When beginning the course, as I said above, the fact that everything you need is in "Start Here" is a big plus. However, on the flipside, being as that is also the only portal by which you can access whatever you need for the course, it is also a hindrance. There are extra steps required for doing any assignment or accessing any material because one has to go through that "Start Here" portal for everything. I suggest keeping that as is in the sidebar, but I would below "Start Here" have "Discussion" and below that I'd have each module listed so that students can access these directly without going into "Start Here" and scrolling down to the module in question and then having to open that to get what you need every time. That would be a significant improvement in the practicality/ease of use for this Blackboard shell.

Start Here

Discussion

Module 1

Module 2

Module 3

Module 4

etc.

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- The other suggestion would be that overall I think this could use a cleanup. I know this was the first time for this course and that in the middle of the summer scramble to put it together Dr. Russell had some unexpected personal things that cost her much-needed time to get ready, but before the next time its offered I'd go through the whole shell to proofread. There are typos here and there and places where a student is referred to as "he" in the first set of questions in a prompt and then "she" in the follow-up questions, and just things like that.

Overall this was an excellent course and it is a great addition to the literacy program and the overall course offerings for our graduate programs.

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