

Marlboro College Graduate Center

MAT 615.SP06: “Facilitating Online Collaborative Learning” (FOCL) 3 credits

Syllabus

Instructor

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Course Overview

This optional third-trimester course explores approaches to facilitating the learning-centered teaching strategy of collaboration in face-to-face, online, and blended classrooms. The course is offered in hybrid format, with face-to-face meetings at the start and completion of experience. Particular emphasis is given to (1) understanding the individual in community, and how social interactions mediate collaboration, (2) the role of facilitator and best practices for guiding collaborative learning, and (3) technology as a mediator in collaborative environments. You will work independently and in groups to experience and reflect on a variety of community building, collaborative learning, and facilitation techniques. You will also explore and evaluate collaborative software tools; plan, design, create, and implement a computer-supported collaborative learning experience; and demonstrate what—and how—you've learned through these experiences. In addition to investigating theoretical foundations of collaborative learning and community, you will also learn specific techniques and tools that can be used for structuring collaborative discussion and problem solving.

Prerequisites

- Pedagogy, Curriculum, and the Web I and/or II, or permission of the instructor or Academic Dean.
- Background knowledge in instructional theory and design, learning and education or training.
- Interest in design, learning and collaboration processes, and innovative uses of media for learning design and collaboration.

Goals and Objectives

My goals for your participation in this course are that you:

- have an opportunity to explore the theoretical underpinnings of computer-supported collaborative learning
- re-examine your definition of “learning community” and how your understanding of that overused term shapes your approach to the facilitation of learning
- read about, experience, analyze, and discuss best practices associated with the facilitation in online and hybrid environments
- read about, experience, analyze, and apply best practices associated with teaching collaboratively with the support of computers

- find out about appropriate evaluation strategies for collaborative learning; experiment with a wide variety of collaborative learning activities and an array of technological tools for supporting collaborative learning
- practice facilitating collaborative learning by developing and implementing a small collaborative project
- set your own personal goal(s) for this exploration and follow through on a strategy for meeting your goal(s)

In working toward these activity-oriented goals, by the end of the course you will:

- be able to describe your own approach to building community
- be able to articulate the value of computer-supported collaborative learning
- be able illustrate techniques for online facilitation
- know about and be able to describe some of the research that has been done on collaborative learning and learning communities
- be able to identify appropriate collaborative learning activities for different kinds of teaching objectives
- know how to evaluate collaborative learning tools and assess learning from such activities

Instructional Formats

Facilitating Online Collaborative Learning” (FOCL) will use four primary environments to support our work together:

- **Two face-to-face sessions** – one at the start and one at the completion of the course:
 - We will meet at the Graduate Center on **May 3**, Saturday am (8:30am to 11:00am)
 - And on **Aug 2**, Saturday am (8:30am to 11:00am)
 - The rest of the course will be fully online using Moodle as the organizing environment.
- **Moodle**, Marlboro Graduate Center’s learning management system - for our discussions, assignments, course **blogs**, and materials management
- **Skype** – for scheduled synchronous class meetings
 - There will be 2 scheduled Skype sessions Dates TBA based on participant availability
- **A Wiki Tool to be Named later** for a collaborative group project

Asynchronous work between the classes is approximately 10 hours a week to be split between reading, online discussion, individual work, and group work. Please be certain you can dedicate this much time to the course – to both meet our responsibilities to ourselves and to co-participations in this experience.

Required Materials

Textbooks and Resources

TBA

Supplies

- **Required:** Headset for Synchronous Online Communication
You will need a headset with earphones and microphone for communication during synchronous online sessions.
- **Optional:** Web Cam
We don't have videoconferencing planned as part of our synchronous online sessions. However, if you'd like to try live video communications we can set up an experiment for those interested and who have a web cam.

Headsets and Web Cams are available from a variety of online vendors. I recommend any of the products sold at Skype: <http://us.accessories.skype.com/>

Software and Online Tools

- **Moodle**
You will receive information to log in to Moodle with access to this course.
- **Skype**
Some synchronous online activities will be conducted with Skype. If you don't already have a Skype account, sign up at <http://www.skype.com> (Free*)

* Depending on the size of the class, we may need to use a third-party Skype-based audio-conferencing service for synchronous sessions. In order to participate in these sessions, you will need to purchase Skype Credit. \$10 worth of credit will likely be more than enough credit. You can also use this credit to make "SkypeOut" calls from your computer to land line phones.

Assignments and Grading

Following are the components of your participation in this course that will be graded, along with the weights of each component. All assessment for these components will be formative. You will get feedback and points for each component during each segment of the course. There will be no summative assessments except your final grade, based on the combined score of all formative assessments.

About 50% of your grade will be based on Instructor assessment. The remaining 50% will be based on self- and peer-assessment.

- Participation in Course Interaction as Learner and Facilitator (30%)
- Individual Reflection Blog on Collaborative Learning (10%)
- Collaborative Community Analysis Wiki Contribution (20%)
- Individual Facilitated Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning Experience (20%)
- Whole-Class Collaborative Project (20%)

Participation in Course Interaction as Learner and Facilitator (30%)

Assessed by: Instructor

You will be expected to be an active member of our learning community at face-to-face meetings, synchronous online sessions, and ongoing asynchronous interaction. Specific grading rubrics will be provided for in-class participation and participation in online discussions as a learner and facilitator. The rubrics will include an expectation that you demonstrate what you've learned in the readings by connecting our activities to concepts and ideas discussed in the readings.

A total of 300 course points will be available for Activities and Discussion Participation—50 points every two weeks.

Individual Reflection Blog on Collaborative Learning (10%)

Assessed by: Self

Individually, you will be responsible for creating a blog in the Moodle environment and contributing to it on a **regular** basis with your reflections on what we're discovering about **collaborative learning**. Your blog can reflect on your experiences in class or in online discussions, computer tools we've worked with in support of collaborative learning, something you've discovered to help facilitate collaborative learning, one of the course readings or something else you read.

You will post at least two blog entries, and at least one comment on another's blog, sometime during each two-week period. A total of 100 points are available for blog entries (10 points for set-up and 10 points for each entry).

Collaborative Community Analysis Wiki Contribution (20%)

Assessed by: Peers

You will work with a small team to identify and analyze a community with which you are familiar using a wiki (to be identified later. We may use the Moodle wiki). You will use this as an opportunity to explore concepts of community through a small-group collaborative process for which you will identify your roles, tasks, processes, and quality criteria.

Your work will be assessed by team members using a rubric derived from your quality criteria – according up to 200 points.

Individual Facilitated Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning Experience (20%)

Assessed by: Self

You will be required to design, construct and facilitate a collaborative learning experience for yourself and at least two other people, to be supported by an online environment and to span four weeks' time. The experience you develop and implement might be a project for work, something you've been interested in learning about, or just a fun project (online book club, collaborative garden design—whatever!). Specific guidance for choosing a collaborative learning experience topic and implementing the experience will be provided.

You will use a grading rubric to assess your own work. You will be able to give yourself up to 200 points (100 for the design of the project, 50 for each two-week period of the implementation.

Whole-Class Collaborative Project (20%)

Assessed by: Instructor

Throughout the course you will collect a set of best practices for:

- Building and Sustaining Community
- Collaborative Learning
- Facilitation

These will be derived from readings, research, and individual and collaborative work in the course. As a class (or in two groups, depending on class enrollment), we will work together on creating an annotated Best Practices Resource to be published online. We will construct the resource from outline to finished product, collaboratively using a tool selected by the class.

A total of 200 points are available for the whole-class project.

Topic Flow and Schedule TBA