

COURSE GUIDE

FOR

DCTE 730/830 ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

CLUSTER FORMAT

2008 FALL TERM, SEPTEMBER 12, 2008 – FEBRUARY 11, 2009

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Contents:

- **Getting Started**
- **Online Access to Course Materials and Activities**
- **About Student Forums**
- **Details on Course Assignments**
- **Details on Completing the 830 Project**

Getting Started

Welcome to the Online Learning Environments course! This document provides specific instructions on what you need to do to complete the core course (DCTE 730) and the project course (DCTE 830). These are intensive, high-level courses involving the investigation and application of theory and practice of online learning environments-- in general, the study of online learning and education, including distance education. You will research the current literature on relevant topics, issues and trends being addressed in the academic circles (conferences and peer-reviewed publications) devoted to this area of study. You will produce high quality (potentially publishable) papers on current topics and trends in the area of online learning. During the term, you will research and share resources, discuss issues with your professor and with professors who may be guest lecturing during cluster meetings, and with fellow students in online discussions.

Getting organized and maintaining organization is important for successful completion of this course. Please read this document carefully and login regularly to WebCT to check for special announcements. For those who may have taken a course with me before (HCI?), the format of this course guide may be familiar to you. Please read through this carefully though, since each course has its own unique objectives and activities.

Online Access to Course Materials and Activities:

Most course activity is managed through WebCT, except for email communication. Additional information resources are available from the professor's OLE Study Area website at: <http://scis.nova.edu/~laurie/index.html>. WebCT is being used as the "central course location" to post the most essential electronic course materials such as the course syllabus and course requirements (contained in this course guide.) We will use WebCT for our online asynchronous discussions, course announcements, and for assignment submissions. With the use of WebCT and the OLE Study Area website combined, consider this online environment to be the "classroom" where you go to learn and communicate about this topic area. Please note: WebCT email WILL NOT be used for course correspondence. Students are required to use their SCIS email accounts through standard email software to communicate with the professor outside of WebCT. Also, no email attachments of assignment submissions will be accepted, unless pre-approved by the professor.

We will also use a wiki to build a "work-in-progress" resource on effective practices in online and blending learning. The wiki can be accessed here: <http://dcte730wiki.pbwiki.com>
The password to the wiki is dcte730.

Class Participation – About Student Forums and the PBWIKI

About Student Forums

We will use WebCT's asynchronous discussions area as an environment in which students and the professor discuss OLE issues throughout the term. I like to refer to this environment as "Student Forums". Most of our discussions will occur between the first and second cluster meeting weekends. After the second cluster meeting in December, our discussions will slowly ramp down to topics that will focus on future research. We will share an abundance of information and resources in the Forums. The Forums should serve as a significant resource for current research in OLEs.

There will be several threads or mini-conference topics relating to Online Learning Environments (OLEs). The professor will post specific topics throughout the term. Class participation points are earned on the basis of steady effort and meaningful contribution to the discussions throughout the term. This means that students should be active in the current threads. (Current threads generally run for one to two weeks, depending on the momentum of the class discussion. The professor **does not** establish specific due dates, but prefers the natural flow of discussion to occur.) In terms of length of responses, several short responses are encouraged, but they should be responses that reflect thought and promote further interest in the topic, not just responses for the sake of meeting the participation requirement. The class participation grade will be based on quality and quantity of contributions, including original contributions and responses to others that add value to the discussion topic, postings that are made during the active period of the current thread(s) being discussed, presentation and grammatical accuracy, postings that are well-written, well-organized, and accurate, and postings that provide appropriate literature citations. Overall, I look for the evidence of steady contributions over the term. A total of 30 points is attributed to class participation, so timely and meaningful participation in the discussion forums is important to earn full points.

Of course, it is also important that you provide effective and meaningful responses to your peers. Meaningful interaction is about discussing the issues based on what the research literature is addressing and questions and issues we raise about the topic. This also includes discussing and citing the appropriate literature into postings as often as possible. It's important that we share the research. Otherwise, our discussions will be limited to personal commentary. I look for a healthy balance of scholarly discussion with personal insight. I believe this practice makes for an interesting discourse.

Please **DO NOT** establish your own main threads or themes. If there is a particular topic you would like to discuss as a main thread, write Dr. Dringus an email. From there, the professor will post all main conference threads or themes. Also, the professor is the gatekeeper of the forums. So, the professor reserves the right to delete any student postings that are considered inappropriate or irrelevant to the discussions. High-level scholarly discussions are expected for this class discussion activity.

The professor will post a couple of starter topics early in the term so that you can practice using the asynchronous discussions area in WebCT. The first formal discussion topic will be posted in late September/early October. Again, to keep the discussions lively and active, students should plan as part of the weekly activity, to review postings and to contribute to the on-going themes. Steady participation throughout the term is required to earn full class participation points. The process works best when everyone participates throughout the term.

About the PBWiki – (<http://dcte730wiki.pbwiki.com>; password is dcte730)

The professor has created a wiki to use with several of my graduate students to develop a work-in-progress resource for faculty and students on effective practices in online and blended learning. Using the wiki, we share resources -- links, references, effective practices (both professional experience and that those being shared in the field), and recommend ways to use online discussion forums and Web 2.0 technologies to enhance student and faculty engagement in the learning process. Our work focuses on online and blended learning in particular – what effective practices (i.e., pearls of engagement) exist and what resources exist to help us explore ways to improve learning and engagement in these environments. Since many graduate students have not used a wiki before, I like to use the wiki as a “test” on learning how to use a wiki and for building some interesting resources. Participation in the wiki is expected, so be prepared to share interesting resources in the wiki. Hopefully, together, we’ll seek a balance between the use of the wiki and the WebCT discussion forum throughout the term.

DETAILS ON COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENTS: These assignments require extensive and independent literature research and activity:

Assignment #1: Due date to submit through WebCT is on or before: **Sunday, October 19, 2008.**

Select and review one book and three journal articles related to OLE research. The book review should be about 5-7 pages. Each article review should be about 3-4 pages. Only specific journals and conference proceedings may be used to select appropriate articles. Details for completing this assignment are presented in this course guide.

Assignment #2: Due date to submit through WebCT is on or before: **Monday, December 08, 2008. (This is the day after the second cluster meeting ends.)**

You will write a mini-research paper (about 15 manuscript pages of content) on a topic of your choice related to OLEs. Substantial literature integration/synthesis is required. A paper of publishable quality is expected. Be prepared to discuss your paper topic during the second cluster meeting. Details for completing this assignment are presented in this course guide.

Assignment #3: Due date to submit through WebCT is on or before: **Sunday, January 25, 2009.**

Mini paper #2. You will write a mini-research paper (about 15 manuscript pages of content) on an evaluative aspect related to OLEs. Substantial literature integration/synthesis is required. A paper of publishable quality is expected. Details for completing this assignment are presented in this course guide.

Instructions for Completing Assignment #1:

Assignment #1: Due on or before October 19, 2008. When submitting Assignment #1 through WebCT, you must submit ONE file containing both the book review and the article reviews under the *same* Assignment #1 slot. MS Word file (.doc) format is preferred. Please *do not* submit in PDF or HTML.

Two deliverables are required for this assignment. The first deliverable is to choose ONE high quality and current (year 2007 or 2008) book related to online learning, virtual classrooms, online education, etc., and review that text in a paper about five to seven manuscript pages long. You will prepare a FORMAL book review that is potentially publishable in a peer-reviewed journal related to online learning. In regard to content, you should follow a presentation style similar to most book reviews contained in peer reviewed journals. The top of the first page of the book review should contain the complete citation of the book. (See General Format for Book Review below.) The complete citation of the book should look like this:

Lynch, M.M. (2002). *The online educator: a guide to creating the virtual classroom*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 170 pages, ISBN: 0-415-24422-6 (paper). US\$24.95.

In addition to the book review, the second deliverable is to select and review THREE journal articles related to the theory and practice of online or blended learning. Only specific OLE journals listed below may be used to select appropriate articles. (Do not select articles from the Article List.) The articles you select for the reviews can be used for Assignments #2 and 3, so choose the articles carefully. (See potential topics under these assignments.) You must select articles that have been published between 2007-2008. Also, make sure your articles come from a mix of publications and not all from the same publication (no more than two from the same publication.)

ACE Journal
American Journal of Distance Education
Australian Journal of Educational Technology
British Journal of Educational Technology
Communications of the ACM
Computer-Supported Cooperative Learning
Computers & Education
Computers in Human Behavior
Distance Education
Educational Technology Research and Development
European Journal of Open and Distance Learning
International Journal on E-Learning
International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning

Internet and Higher Education
Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN) -- online
Journal of Distance Education
Journal of Distance Learning Administration
Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia
Journal of Educational Technology Systems
Journal of Interactive Online Learning Research
Journal of Interactive Media in Education
Journal of Learning Sciences
Journal of Research and Development in Education
Proceedings of the ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference
Proceedings of the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS)
Quarterly Review of Distance Education
Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education

Many of these publications can be found directly through various databases in NSU's Digital Library.

“General” Format for Book Review:

First page is the Title page: including title of review, your name, course number, and date.

Beginning on page 2:

Complete citation of book being reviewed.

Introduction

Section headings as appropriate

Conclusions

Reference List

“General” Format for the Journal Article Reviews”

Each article review should be no more than three to four pages in length (double-spaced). Each article review should contain the following:

1. A full citation of the article. Present this first. (Use strict APA format for correctly presenting the full citation of the article.)
2. State the problem presented in the article in your own words.
3. Summarize the article, identifying the major issues and conclusions.
4. Describe your impressions. State whether you agree or disagree with the author(s)' findings and/or conclusions, and explain why.
5. The articles you will review will have a reference list. Select one or more references that are of interest to you and that you may want to read to gain better perspective on the ideas presented in the article. (In other words, what additional resources may be available to investigate further the topic presented in the article?)

General Format for Assignment #1

1. Follow APA 5th for strict form and style and the Dissertation Guide for sample title pages, TOC, etc. The paper must be prepared in double-spaced format, 12-point type (preferably Times Roman). Strict third person narrative must be used. Follow all standard procedures (title page, line spacing, margins, proper citation format, etc.) as established in the SCIS Dissertation Guide.
2. Provide one title page for Assignment #1 including your full name, date of submission.
3. Provide one table of contents, listing the book review and then the three article reviews.
4. Provide the book review first.
5. After the book review, on a new page begin the first article review, then the second on a new page, then the third on a new page.
6. Submit the entire assignment #1 (book review and article reviews) AS ONE FILE through WebCT.

Please refer to the syllabus for specific course requirements and policies!

Instructions for Completing Assignment #2

Assignment #2: Due on or before December 08, 2008. Note: This is the Monday immediately after the second cluster meeting.

Mini-paper #1

You will write a mini-paper (about 15 manuscript pages of content) on a topic of your choice related to OLEs. The issues of online learning, online learning environments, online learning management, etc., are extensive so you should be able to select easily a topic that interests you.

Requirements for Mini-papers: Substantial literature integration is required for this paper. The paper must be scholarly and grounded in theory. You must dig deep into the literature to address an identified problem area -- a relevant problem that serves as the conceptual basis for the paper. Present one or more research questions related to the problem to provide organization to the flow of the paper. To show the trends in "current" research, the majority of literature sources should be between 2006-2009 --e.g., some new texts are released in late 2008, but are predated 2009) to bring support to the discussion in the paper. (Early works may be presented, but this has to be balanced with current material.) You must synthesize the literature by comparing and contrasting work presented by the experts in the field of study. The paper should conform to the format guidelines established in the SCIS Dissertation Guide (margins, text, references, etc.) and the APA Manual 5th edition. Peer-reviewed research journals, conference proceedings, and texts should be used as sources. At least 10 references should be used for this paper, but it is likely there will be more. Web sites that are only highly professional and peer-reviewed (such as those articles contained in formal online journals and organizational websites) may be cited. Papers will be graded for content, depth of topic, clarity, originality of thinking in approaching the problem statement, organization, quality of references used, language and style, and overall quality of the paper. Future research must be substantially addressed. This paper should be potentially of publishable quality in a high-level journal related to OLEs.

Possible topics for Mini-paper #1. PLEASE note these are only examples!!!!!! (These are actual current research trends taken from various research journals.)

- Interaction Theory in OLEs
- Synchronous Interaction
- Asynchronous Interaction
- Building Teams in OLEs
- Web 2.0 impacts in collaborative computer-mediated communication
- Groupware for Collaborative OLEs
- Cognitive and Learning Aspects in OLEs
- The Problem of Plagiarism and Cheating in OLEs
- New Frameworks for Defining an OLE
- Standards in OLE Development and Management
- Time Management in OLEs

- Faculty Development
- Student Development
- Innovations in OLE design
- Online Communities; communities of Practice
- Best Practices in a Specific Aspect of OLE Activity
- Blended Learning
- Accessibility in OLEs

.....the list goes on!!!!

Instructions for Completing Assignment #3

Assignment #3-- Due on or before January 25, 2009

Mini-paper #2

You will write a mini-paper (about 15 manuscript pages of content) on a topic related to the evaluation of OLEs. You may focus on evaluation aspects of courses, OLEs as a whole, of resources (human and technical) and OLE designs. You may even wish to evaluate all of these aspects as contiguous elements of online delivery. The requirements for this paper are the same for those requirements given under Mini-paper #1. (See **Requirements for Mini-Papers** in the previous section.

Possible topics for Mini-paper #2. PLEASE note these are only examples!!!!!!

- Effectiveness of Web 2.0 technologies on collaborative work
- Evaluation Methods That Work in OLEs
- Course Evaluation
- Learning Effectiveness: Assessing Students Online
- Blended Learning Effectiveness (hybrid: face-to-face and online)
- Evaluating the OLE as a whole entity
- Criteria for Evaluating OLE design
- Evaluating Online Group Projects
- Evaluating Virtual Secondary Education
- Criteria for Evaluating Quality Interaction in OLEs
- Evaluating an Institutional OLE Portal
- Validating Online Standards of Practice
- Faculty Satisfaction and Faculty Workload Concepts
- Metrics for Assessing Progress in online education
- Workflow Activity in OLEs

.....this list is endless, too!!!!!!

“General” Format for Mini-papers #1 and #2:

First Page is the Title page: including title of paper, author full name, full contact information, course number.

Beginning on page 2:

Title of paper

Abstract

Keywords

Introduction

Includes background, problem statement, and research questions

Section headings as appropriate to cover the depth of the topic in an organized way

Conclusions

Reference List

Appendix (as appropriate)

Use 12 pt type, Times Roman, double space entire document. (Read section “Other Tips.....”)

Please refer to the syllabus for specific course requirements and policies!

DCTE 830: Project in Online Learning Environments (4 credits)

Fall 2008 Cluster term dates: September 12, 2008 – February 11, 2009

Objective: This course requires the student to produce a research paper on a current topic related to online learning. The project is one that delves in-depth into a specific research topic of online learning environments.

Project Deliverables

Original work is expected that is grounded in theory and practice on a relevant issue in OLE research. The student is expected to isolate a particular topic relevant to OLEs, investigate the topic through extensive literature search and deep synthesis, and produce a scholarly project. High-level research and writing is expected for the project work.

The primary objective of this research paper is to provide students with the opportunity to isolate a specific research topic of their own interest related to online learning environments and to explore the topic through an in-depth literature review and analysis of the issues. Future research should be addressed in depth.

Project Requirements and Due Dates

- **All deliverables are to be submitted through WebCT .**
- **All deliverables must conform to form and style requirements as specified in the SCIS Dissertation Guide and APA Manual 5th Edition.**
- **Incompletes will not be issued for this course. All due dates must be adhered to.**
- **Work completed in DCTE 730 or any other course cannot be reused for DCTE 830.**
- **Adhere to IRB Guidelines as appropriate.**
- **Papers will be graded for degree of original work, depth of topic, content, scholarly synthesis of literature, organization, language and style, and overall quality.**

Project idea paper: 2 pages detailing the problem and work to be done. This is for the professor to determine the suitability of the topic in writing. Students are to submit the idea paper through WebCT, not email (although some prior general discussion about the topic can be done through email if needed.) *Due: October 12, 2008.*

Project proposal: Building on the approved project idea paper, the proposal is 8-10 pages expanding the details of the proposed work and presenting the draft of literature integration and synthesis: *Due: November 9, 2008.*

Project Final Report: Expanding on the approved proposal, the final paper is 30-35 pages in length providing complete expansion of the paper: *Due: February 1, 2009.*

Possible Project Themes

Below are some *possible* areas appropriate for further investigation.

- The background and the need for online distance learning: evolution and history of OLEs, motivations for implementing online distance learning, etc.
- Conceptual models or theoretical frameworks for OLEs.
- The “stakeholders” of OLEs and what their roles are.
- Technical considerations for online learning delivery.
- Application of groupware to online learning activities.
- Design considerations for building OLEs.
- Successful learning and/or teaching styles that currently fit OLEs.
- Online versus traditional -- are we progressing in terms of effective learning, etc?
- The planning and management of online courses.
- Issues pertaining to evaluating online learning environments (environment, courses, people, programs, process).
- Standards in OLE management systems.
- Working in teams in OLEs.
- Current research in blending learning.
- Impacts of Web 2.0 technologies on communication processes.
- Online communities.
- Social networking.

Project Types

All project types require extensive literature synthesis and review to produce a paper of acceptable quality. One of the following project types is acceptable for this course:

1. Exploratory discussion on a topic. An extensive examination of a problem through literature review of an OLE issue. Provide specific research questions that form the conceptual basis for the paper. Make recommendations for potential dissertation research in the area. (Most students select this project type.)
2. Evaluation: Conduct an evaluation of an online learning environment, processes implemented in OLEs, or tools used in OLEs. Comparative evaluations of two or more similar tools or products are acceptable. (This is NOT a product review paper. It is an effective comparative study of tools with extensive research and literature review.) Discuss this option with Dr. Dringus before you prepare the idea paper.

Additional topics of relevance to the OLE research community. Prior approval from the professor is required for all project ideas. The idea paper is the deliverable that will help the professor determine suitability of topic for the project. Students are to submit the idea paper through WebCT, not email.

Basic Project Outline (This is an outline to serve as an initial guide and is not inclusive of the Dissertation Guide!) Required for idea paper (IP), proposal (P), and final report (FRPT) where indicated.

Follow the form and style rules in the Dissertation Guide! (IP, P, FRPT). This is important because each chapter has specific things that must be addressed in the paper.

Write in third person narrative. (IP, P, FRPT)

Title page: The title of your paper, your name and username, the course number, and date. (IP, P, FRPT)

Table of Contents: (IP, P, FRPT)

Abstract: A short description of the paper. (This is not an introduction. It is a self-containing overall description of the paper (IP, P, FRPT).

Keywords: Key terms searchable in online databases that are related to your paper. (IP, P, FRPT).

Chapter 1: Introduction. Includes a clear and compelling problem statement with literature substantiation, with a description of the significance of your project to the OLE area of study. Present one or more research questions that will help you organize the conceptual framework for the paper. (IP, P, FRPT).

Chapter 2: Literature Review. A discussion of the current literature relating to your topic. Note: in the Idea paper, you will only provide a maximum of five references to show you have already located some literature to help you focus on the topic. In the Proposal, you will provide a brief start of the literature review, therefore, your Reference List should begin to grow here. The Final Report should include at least 20-30 references in your literature review and Reference List. Preferably, these references should come from peer-reviewed academic journals and academic texts. Limit your use of magazine articles or web site sources as they are often non-refereed and contain low-level information. Such Web site citations should be kept to a minimum, unless cites come from respected journal sources. Scholarly texts on OLEs are acceptable, too, but such should be balanced with current research article sources (IP, P, FRPT).

Chapter 3: Methodology. Only applicable if you are conducting a study or an evaluation. (You will not have a Chapter 3 if you are doing an exploratory paper on a topic!!!!) This chapter describes the exact details and approach to the project, including procedures, comparison/evaluation instruments, etc. Note that the methodology chapter is written in the future tense in the proposal and in the past tense in the final report. Important! If you have selected project type option #1 (writing an exploratory paper), you will NOT have a methodology section!!!!!!(P, FRPT).

Chapter 4: Results. Only applicable if you are conducting an evaluation. Provide narrative and tabular (if appropriate) results of your study. (P, FRPT).

Chapter 5: Conclusions. This chapter presents conclusions and interpretations of results and relates conclusions to findings in the literature. Recommendations should be made that clearly describe areas that appear promising for future research. (This is important for all project types.) (FRPT).

Reference List: All sources used in researching and writing your paper. (IP, P, FRPT).

Back Matter: Appendices, large statistical tables, questionnaires, example screens, etc. (IP, P, FRPT as appropriate).

Note to the student: You are requested to follow the five-chapter model (e.g., as presented in the Dissertation Guide) to organize your paper as much as possible. However, the five-chapter model may not fit all project types. For instance, if you are writing an exploratory paper on an issue and will not be collecting data (in effect doing a study of some kind), then you need to organize your paper in sections so that the flow of the paper is tight and easy to follow.

Other Tips to Providing Quality Submissions in DCTE 730/830

It seems no matter how hard the professor tries to give explicit directions for completing assignments and project work, students often miss basic details in preparing their written work. I offer some “additional” tips to providing quality submissions in this course.

1. Remember that everything you submit to your professor should be of the highest quality work. You are to demonstrate scholarly knowledge of the subject area. Refrain from stating the obvious and generic things. Approach your work from a high-level of thinking – what are the underlying issues and how we can approach OLEs differently. Synthesizing the literature is very important in this course. Do not simply quote authors, instead paraphrase and cite important sources that describe the essential aspects of the issues. Do not merely point to sources (e.g., Dringus, 1999; Dringus 2001; Dringus, 2004). Compare and contrast what authors are saying about a particular issue.
2. Use third person narrative throughout your papers. Take a formal approach to presenting your discussion and arguments. Avoid “I, me” statements. If you have to refer to yourself, use “the author discovered.....”
3. There should be ample literature citation in the body of the report and a correctly formatted Reference List at the end of the paper. Anything that is not of general knowledge to the reader should be cited in the body of the paper.
4. Use 12 pt type in all papers. Figures or tables can be reduced as needed. However, it is best to follow the SCIS Dissertation Guide for form and style. Also, all submissions should have a proper title page, etc.
5. Use current literature – 3 years to present will probably produce the most insightful information. Points will be reduced for extensive use of required reading and the use of sources that are not current. You must demonstrate that you have researched the topic beyond what the professor has already given you.
6. Limit the number of Web-based sources, UNLESS they are refereed-type OLE articles available on the Web. Only use high quality and reputable Web-based sources.
7. You should have at least 10 sources for the mini-paper assignments, but it is likely you will have 20-30 references for each assignment. Again, demonstrate that you have researched the topic.
8. Related to #7: Do your homework! Do not expect the professor to give all needed resources for this course. As a doctoral student, you are expected to demonstrate to me you have the ability to research a topic on the highest level.
9. Want to learn how to write a publishable paper???? Read, read, read, high-level peer reviewed journal articles!!!! Model after them!
10. Contact the professor if you have any questions!