

to aid in instruction. Class size averages 22 students per quarter.

My sense was that students who did not have regular instructor support in health classes did not produce the same quality of work as those in the traditional classes. In addition, I noticed a large number of withdrawals from the distance learning classes. This evidence led to my concern that distance students were not as successful as those in my traditionally taught courses.

The study is a comparison of student achievement in traditional classes to achievement in each distance learning vehicle. A minimum grade of "C" has been set to identify successful achievement. For the first three years of the study, the traditional delivery classes have an average success rate of 83.3% and an average withdrawal rate of 8.4%. The three distance learning deliveries have an average success rate of 72.6 % with an average withdrawal rate of 19%. When the rates are compared by academic year, AY 1994-95 and 1995-96 show a statistically significant difference between achievement for traditional and distance learning classes. There is no significant difference for AY 1993-94, possibly because the data numbers are low. AY 1996-97 data is currently being compiled and statistically analyzed.

While success rates of a minimum of 70% will lead most to classify distance delivery as effective, my concerns and the result of this study have led to actions aimed at improving the potential for student achievement in distance learning. The live delivery sessions for cable TV were taped, and the College will reproduce these sessions to replace the pre-produced college by cassette. This allows greater flexibility and an internal control of content and quality with the videotaped portions of the course. The Department of Extended Learning has developed a *Student Success Guide* which contains study tips for students provided by successful distance education instructors and students from across the nation. I also have continued to modify the interactive study guide as well as my teaching techniques in an effort to improve the students achievement levels.

Student comments on course evaluations illustrate that the time and place shifts allowed by distance education are beneficial to many, and the reasons for the differences in achievement could be varied. This study will be continued through the completion of AY 1997-98. Hopefully, evidence will show that the steps taken to improve student achievement in distance learning settings will be successful.

"Let Us Go Then You and I": A Quick Primer for Tele-Teaching

**Ulf Kirchdorfer, Assistant Professor, English and Chris Robbins,
Coordinator, Distance Learning and Instructional Technology,
Darton College**

DISTANCE LEARNING IN ITS VARIOUS FORMATS is an emerging field, one which will continue to impact a greater number of students and instructors each year. As more instructors are called upon to teach in a distance learning environment, and often at a moment's notice, the need for specific and highly focused training has increased. We hope the following information will enhance the educational experience for student and instructor alike as each takes on new life in the television classroom and across the airwaves.

Essentially, your success as a distance learning instructor will depend on four factors: your preparation, your personal appearance, your teaching style, and your utilization of technology. Execute these elements effectively, and you will succeed.

Your Preparation

The quality of instruction in any class depends largely on the quality of the instructor's preparation for that

class. Preparation for distance learning classes is vital for a number of reasons. Because they are often taught in a public forum, distance learning classes are frequently seen by a much wider audience than classes taught in a traditional classroom. Consequently, the instructor becomes a representative of the institution and can impact the way the institution as a whole is perceived. The instructor may develop close relationships with his or her students over a period of time as they view the course on a regular basis, and the students will begin to overlook the instructor's idiosyncrasies. This is not the case with the casual viewer, however, who will have no such bond and be much more critical. It is therefore essential that the instructor be extraordinarily prepared for each class.

- Be focused. Take time to gather your thoughts before class. Drink a glass of juice and eat a high carbohydrate snack to help keep your energy level high.
- Know exactly what you will do in class. Time man-

agement is crucial in distance learning classes. You must start on time and end on time. And you must cover all your content in between.

- Use available technology. You can show video clips, play music, share handouts and make multimedia presentations on television. You've just got to take the time to learn how.
- Have all materials prepared and at hand. Fumbling with handouts or frantically searching for page numbers will cause both you and your institution to lose credibility with the viewer.
- Use class time effectively. Avoid doing the same things in the same way day in and day out.
- Engage students actively. If you have students in classroom with you, let them be seen and heard. Plan activities students at home or in distant classrooms can complete.
- Have a contingency plan. Occasionally, you will experience technical difficulty. Know in advance how you will make up lost class time. If possible have alternate assignments prepared.

Your Personal Appearance

It's no secret that Americans spend a great deal of their free time watching television, and viewers have been conditioned to expect certain conventions of dress and behavior from television personalities. When you step before the camera you become a television personality even though you may still feel like an instructor. Many of your ingrained habits and perhaps even your style of dress, though they were fine in the traditional classroom, will have to be modified for the distance learning classroom. It takes a conscious effort to make yourself into that television personality who is ready to be critiqued rather than criticized by viewers, whether they be amateur or expert watchers. Fortunately, there are a few general guidelines that will aid you in this effort.

- Don't become a fashion victim. What is all the rage today is tomorrow's painful memory. Remember bell bottoms and leisure suits.
- Choose colors and patterns that work on television. Solids and pastels are always good choices. Medium blues and grays work well.
- Accessorize carefully. Wear ties and scarves with conservative patterns. Avoid large, flashy jewelry.
- Maintain a well-groomed appearance. Keep hair and nails neatly trimmed. Avoid overusing hair gel, which could appear shiny under studio lights.
- Use makeup if necessary. Eyeliner and pancake makeup can enhance your appearance. Face powder eliminates glare and perspiration. It is important to note that in the world of television, makeup is not just for women.

Your Teaching Style

Many pedagogical methods that appropriate in the traditional classroom are also appropriate in the distance learning classroom. Generally, instructors who are effective in either environment build rapport with their students and use a variety of media and instructional techniques to keep students engaged and facilitate learning. When teaching distance learning courses, it is important that you:

Know your purpose and your audience. In distance learning courses you have a limited amount of time to cover your subject matter. Classes cannot start early, nor can they end late. It will also take special effort on the part of the instructor to engage an audience that is not actually in the same room. Neophyte distance learning instructors should also be certain to speak from an area of authority. Preparing lessons for the distance learning classroom can be a very involved process. It is simply not a good time to learn new material.

It is also imperative that your distance learning presentations be highly organized. Instructors should use verbal and nonverbal cues, which are especially effective on camera, to communicate their message. It is important to use quality visuals to clarify and illustrate the lesson as well. To complement such visuals, the instructor can use facial expressions, gestures, and posture to get his message across. Eye contact, as any film actor knows, is essential when conveying a message. Distance learning instructors should not be afraid to look directly into the camera. They should be cautious, however, of switching back and forth too frequently between the viewing audience at remote sites and any audience at the site of instructional origin.

To be a successful distance learning instructor, you must be enthusiastic and sincere. Speak strongly and clearly, controlling diction and syntax to keep your audience's attention. Avoid the use of slang, fillers—they are painfully obvious on television—and by all means avoid language or anecdotal revelations that could be considered slanderous or that are simply in poor taste. Above all, be yourself. Don't try to be Bernard Shaw if you are really Jerry Seinfeld. Play to your strengths.

Your Utilization of Technology

Many instructors find the distance learning classroom threatening. With its bright lights and television monitors, its microphones and constantly buzzing computer hardware, it is certainly much different from the friendly confines of the traditional classroom. While the role of the instructor is certainly to teach the course, and technicians will be available to operate the necessary equipment, it is essential that the instructor be familiar with the technology that he or she will utilize to transmit information to students. Graphics cameras, digital slide projectors, and multimedia computers are invaluable

tools in the distance learning instructor's arsenal and can enhance instruction greatly. Because any image the instructor sends will appear no bigger than the size of the students' television monitor, it is essential that all graphics presentations follow certain conventions. To ensure legibility, use sans-serif fonts, at least 24 point type, and maintain 24 point spacing between lines. All graphics should be limited to 8 lines and done in a 4x3 ratio. To minimize glare, use pale pastel backgrounds instead of white.

In closing, we hope some of our advice will help you shine for yourself and in turn reflect well on the institution as you and students enjoy the television format of teaching/learning. Remember, if you make a "mistake" on television, there is always a second chance,

next time, to rectify it. In the meantime, go with the flow of the show—that's all you can do and that's all anyone expects from you. In hindsight, you'll find that you have probably blown the "mistake" all out of proportion. You'd really have to go out of your way to do something that's an absolute unforgivable no-no on television. Keep that deodorant rolling and the enthusiasm up, distance learning partner!

Ulf Kirchdorfer is a Regents' Distinguished Professor and a Connecting Teachers and Technology Faculty Development Workshop award recipient. Chris Robbins is a Regents' Connecting Teachers and Technology Faculty Development Workshop award recipient.

General Education for the New Age: The Interdisciplinary's Elasticity and Specificity

Brenda Ayres, Associate Professor, English,
Middle Georgia College

INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES IN A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE is a timely topic. Semester conversion has given the state of Georgia the opportunity, more or less, to reinvent the junior college. The challenge has been to restructure curricula in order to better equip students for the rapidly changing and global nature of their job market.

Through semester conversion, Middle Georgia College (a junior college) created a number of special topic courses in literature, humanities, philosophy, history, and political science. For example, under World Literature are *Intro to German literature*, *Intro to French literature*, *Intro to Spanish Literature*, *Intro to Literature of the Orient*, *Intro to Postcolonial Literatures*, *Intro to Contemporary Poetry*, *Intro to Contemporary Drama*, *Intro to Contemporary Fiction*, *Intro to Children's Literature*, *War in World Literature*, *Gender Studies in World Literature*, *Intro to Australian Film and Literature*, and *Literary Adaptation of the Film*.

The state's Council on General Education rejected all of our listings of special topics as part of the core, saying "The focus on General Education is lost in Special Topics courses so we feel they should only be found in Area F [(majors)]." I would argue that the core does need to be redefined. The core should be more specialized, but, at the same time, more broadly based than ever before. That might seem to be a contradiction, and special topics might seem more appropriate for upper division, but it is not, and they are not.

We live in an information explosion, which prom-

ises to only intensify. What students learn in order to earn a four-year degree is already outdated by the time they are ready to begin their careers. Besides, the better paying jobs require at least a masters degree. Success in amorphous professions is going to depend upon a worker's ability to apply knowledge in different ways to different situations. And it will also demand specialization, which is certainly a relative term. Who can be truly specialized anymore, as much as there is to learn on any given topic and when knowledge is changing every day? Nevertheless, workers are expected to know many things about a lot, and a lot about many things. Although many students may be horrified to learn this, they will always be required to be students even after they get their degrees. They will always have to increase their knowledge just to keep pace with the demands of their jobs. Therefore, what they gain during an undergraduate program must be a broad base upon which they can build several careers. They will change careers at least seven times in their lives, and perhaps their first career won't even be in line with the major they declared in college. The job market is fickle and will become even more so. Instead of giving them prefab rooms which will prove useless for them, a general education needs to give them tools to build their own occupational structures.

To illustrate, in a survey course, why teach 200 poems, 20 short stories, 10 essays, 2 plays, and 1 novel all in one quarter, covering the "greats" at neck-break-