

Development and Implementation of a “Blended” Teaching Course Environment

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Abstract

Traditional classroom delivery has experienced a complete overhaul with the advent of Web 2.0 techniques for delivering course material. The Socratic method of teaching can now be effectively accomplished in an online discussion forum, a synchronous chat session, virtual environments, or in a wiki format. All of these innovative technologies are part of an instructor’s teaching toolkit, and his or her arsenal for transforming course delivery. In this manuscript, the development and implementation of a “blended teaching” course is described. Blended teaching is an attempt to coalesce all of the best elements of online and on-ground instruction into a “super-hybrid” of sorts, one that delivers a rich skill set and a valuable educational experience to students.

Keywords: Hybrid, online course, Web 2.0, Second Life[®], Blended

Introduction

Online and hybrid learning environments are relative newcomers to the world of higher education. Both of these formats provide flexibility in terms of face to face interaction, and enable the providing institution to offer a learning experience in different delivery modalities. A close relative to these types of instruction is the more recent concept of “blended teaching,” which entails moving some content online to devote the “freed up” classroom sessions to processes that could not normally be covered (due to time constraints. Arbaugh, Desai, Rau, and Sridhar (2010, p. 40) provide the following definition of a blended classroom: “[one that] integrates online learning with traditional face-to-face class activities in an intentional pedagogically valuable manner, and in a manner where between 20 and 70% of course content and activities are delivered online.” We define online courses as those in which none of the material is delivered face to face, and hybrid courses in which some of the material is delivered face to face (but the majority of sessions are online). Another name for face to face instruction is “traditional classroom instruction.”

As Graham (2006) explains, there is now an emphasis on introducing a “human” dimension to technologies, like virtual communities, portable digital devices, instant messaging, and blogging. Blended teaching offers an opportunity to both decrease user trepidation, and to promote acceptance of technology within courses. Graham (2006) argues that classes should be a cross between face to face and purely online modalities for some of the following reasons: (1) improved pedagogy – learning becomes more interactive and applied, while at the same time preserving some elements of the Socratic method; and (2) increased access and flexibility – students have a modified schedule which allows them to learn some material at their own pace. [Blended teaching] “now includes courses and modular content, including both face-to-face and online learning experiences, in whatever combination makes the most sense given the audience, the context, and the criticality” (Wagner, 2006, p. 43). The blended model incorporates the best of both worlds into one efficient delivery system, in that technology powers the

online components while instructor coaching presides over the in-house sessions where students can showcase learned skills.

Eveleth and Baker-Eveleth (2003) present a compelling framework and design for the inclusion of an online component inside a traditional face-to-face classroom. Through an electronic discussion designed to promote dialogue, or collaboration in consensus making, the authors emphasized (through removal of verbal cues) attention to the actual words via a team role play problem solving exercise. Tasks included: (1) posting and discussing letters of introduction; (2) a book-club type of discussion about a team-oriented project management book; (3) discussions with on-line guest speakers, and (4) a discussion about four archived public radio interviews on the topic of leadership. Through an analysis of student remarks within the discussion space the authors demonstrated student qualities of questioning, checking comprehension, contributing insights, statements of respect, and statements demonstrating shared understanding. They note these skills are important as students in business are expected to: (1) assume positions in cross-functional teams; (2) identify user needs; and (3) solve business problems, often within global virtual environments. Arbaugh et al.'s (2010) literature review further reveals that blended courses have been positively received by students, who learn skills like team camaraderie and the ability to dialogue with their peers. The end result of a blended teaching experience can therefore be more than either the hybrid or purely online formats can deliver by themselves.

In the course described within this manuscript, students developed a set of core competencies which were designed to give them a strategic workforce advantage over individuals who had not had similar exposure. The delivery of a blended teaching pilot course (a Principles of Management class for undergraduate students), is explained, and the implications for a contemporary workforce are discussed. The goal of this paper is to give instructors who are contemplating the blended methodology a step by step account of how implementation is accomplished, combined with a detailed description of the essential components and learning activities that were used.

Development and course description

Purely online courses can sometimes be the launch pad for a blended teaching experience. In the case of the first author, several online course modules from an existing Principles of Management class were used to form the basis of a blended classroom. Following Eveleth and Baker-Eveleth's (2003) model, blended design principles were used to spark dialogue among students in online discussion forums.

Step by Step Design

- (1) The Principles of Management online course content was loaded into the learning management system for the on-ground Principles of Management class.
- (2) Students were informed the first class day that the course would cover the same content as an on-ground version, but there would be a significant online homework component. The instructor also explained that class time would be used to clarify concepts, facilitate teamwork, and answer student questions regarding pedagogy and technical requirements. On ground course sessions were clearly delineated in the syllabus upfront, as opposed to the model presented by Kaleta, Skibba and Joosten (2007), who note that some blended classrooms have a different schedule each week – one that is not necessarily communicated at the semester inception.
- (3) On ground sessions were designed to provide students with clarification on the topics and manner of homework remission (e.g., formatting style within their documents, etiquette within online discussions, and technical issues with regard to uploading). Class time was also used to provide cohesion to the groups regarding their class projects (e.g., bullying presentation, globalization paper). The instructor met with groups to discuss communication norms, expectations for group assignments, and to help team members resolve conflict. Course concepts were enfolded into the explanation of homework assignments. [A listing of selected on ground activities is provided in Appendix A].
- (4) Numerous opportunities were implemented for student feedback to expedite problem resolution, and to check on the success of design implementation. These included e-mail within the online course shell, a discussion board where students could post suggestions anonymously during the semester, and a discussion board that was specifically targeted to end of semester feedback. Student comments and their implications for course success are explained later within this paper.

The course organization (described in the syllabus) was segmented into face-to-face course concept presentation time, group project instruction and presentation, and online assignments. Class time was

strategically used to (1) discuss issues and to present material that did not lend itself to online interaction (e.g., in the Individual Differences content module several personality tests were distributed in class, and the ramifications for managers were discussed); (2) clarify and explain online assignments; (3) work with groups in providing direction; and (4) provide time for group presentations and student interaction. Because Desire to Learn (the learning management system used for online course delivery) was implemented campus wide, students were already familiar with how to use this learning tool.

Using “already tested” online course segments worked well because the material (and the approaches) had been used in numerous semesters of instruction. Both the course delivery method and the material had also been audited during the process of the first author’s application for the designation of Certified Online Instructor (provided through the LERN organization), and, they had been reviewed at a regional level to ensure adherence to “Quality Matters” standards. In addition, discussion boxes asking students to provide feedback (e.g., what did you like about the course, suggestions for improvement) with an “anonymous” posting option had been used at the semester end (for several semesters) to gather information for course improvement, and sectional course instructors were also surveyed to solicit their ideas on module enhancement. Input from this objective, “fresh set of eyes” was used to streamline the course syllabus, delete unnecessary features, and to provide clarification to students. The end result of this vetting process not only improved the online course in question, but served as a basis for a blended learning environment. A sampling of online modules that were included in the blended classroom is described in Table 1.

The blended classroom itself was comprised of the following components: (1) on ground Informational Sessions; (2) a Course Management System; (3) in-class lectures; and (4) laboratory time.

On-Ground Informational Sessions. Students benefitted from having an on ground component not only because they were exposed to additional concepts, but because they were able to receive in class explanations regarding the required segments of online assignments. The on ground class periods were termed “informational sessions,” because the lecture material was in many cases interwoven inside the discussion of a respective homework overview. For example, in the explanation of the diversity management plan diversity training techniques, performance appraisal methods, and mentoring arrangements in a multicultural society buttressed the description of assignment instructions. Other in-class sessions afforded students the opportunity to “showcase” their knowledge gained in the Student Bullying and International Strategy projects through group presentations using a PowerPoint slideshow, and, to hear guest speakers on related course topics. In both the speaker and presentation formats respectively, students were encouraged to ask questions of the guest expert and to probe their peers for further information.

Materials were presented in a way that maximized student interaction within class. In discussing intergroup conflict, three students were assigned the role of “Sales Department,” and three students were assigned the role of “Engineering Department.” In an inter-team development exercise, groups described the following (in writing): (1) how their “department” viewed itself; (2) how their “department” viewed the opposing department; and (3) how they perceived the opposing department viewed them. With the instructor serving as facilitator, both departments shared their lists with one another (in class). Experiential exercises of this type were peppered throughout the on-ground course sessions to give students a real world taste of management concepts. In the diversity “informational session,” legal cases regarding the detrimental impact of “lookism” (discrimination based on weight, height, or facial appearance) were presented to solicit student understanding and engender cognitive flexibility. In one case in which an employee was constructively discharged from a company (for appearance), the first author asked class members: “Would you care if your fast food server had a facial disfigurement?” Questions of this nature forced students to examine their conscience, and to explore an issue from multiple perspectives.

Learning Management System. The blended format included a generous portion of online instruction, permitting the introduction of a rich set of ancillary course materials. All of these materials were housed within a learning management system (LMS), which research has found more beneficial for students in blended classrooms (Sauers & Walker, 2004). Because a large chunk of faculty time is spent making copies, responding to student queries, organizing handouts, and handling day to day correspondence, an LMS can provide “one stop shopping” to students for items like course notes, lectures, style guides,

handouts, grades, and general course instructions. Ruiz (2005) explains that an LMS provides the following benefits for instructors:

- A venue to publish syllabi and class assignments; and
- A place to consolidate PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes, student feedback, web links, and a storage unit to house test-authoring tools. Posting of the student “bullying” PowerPoint presentations allowed for an electronic social space in which students could both learn from and critique one another’s work.

Table 1. *A description of selected online learning activities within the blended classroom*

Topic	Activities
Leadership Discussion Board	<p>Respond to the following discussion questions:</p> <p>(1) How do you wish for your manager to treat you at work? In what ways can he/she empower you?</p> <p>(2) Based on your responses to the above questions, which contemporary leader(s) do you think encompass those qualities and why? Which in your opinion represent the antithesis of those qualities?</p> <p>In the virtual library, locate the article entitled "Nightmares, demons, and slaves" within the ABI/Inform database, and post a summary to the “Bullying article summary” dropbox.</p> <p>Lutgen-Sandvik, P., Tracy, S. J., & Alberts, J. K. (2006). Nightmares, demons, and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. <u>Management Communication Quarterly</u>, 20, 148-185.</p>
Bullying PowerPoint Group Project	<p><u>Project Description:</u> Your group has been assigned a six slide PowerPoint presentation in one of the following aspects of bullying at work: (1) Hazing; (2) Cyber bullying; (3) Corporate bullying; (4) Discrimination; (5) Stalking; (6) Sexual Harassment.</p> <p>Your presentation should utilize the "notes" feature of PowerPoint, with each slide explained in full and referenced with in-text citations. Slide content is below:</p> <p>Slide 1: Introductory slide, to include group topic and member names</p> <p>Slide 2: Importance of the topic - why is "hazing" for example a serious issue? Examine why "hazing" occurs at work [e.g., lack of legislation, or inappropriate modeling at the organizational apex?]</p> <p>Slide 3: Provide examples: (e.g., what constitutes "hazing" behavior at work?)</p> <p>Slide 4: What are the consequences of this behavior for the victims, for the organization, and for society?</p> <p>Slide 5: Explore remedies that companies can take to prevent bullying from occurring inside corporate walls.</p> <p>Slide 6: References</p>

An LMS also simplifies the process of e-mail by keeping class correspondence separate from one’s primary provider account. Grades can be securely stored, and in some cases statistics such as class average, mean, mode, minimum, and maximum can be calculated. With a continuous display instructors are less likely to encounter discrepancies once grades are posted. Along these lines a calculated column

entitled “Running Points” was created that allowed students to see where they stood throughout the semester.

Drop boxes within an LMS permit students to post homework assignments which (if graded online) greatly reduce office paperwork and the usage of campus resources. Many other types of tools, like rubrics, “live chat,” quizzes, student checklists, and homepages are also available within LMS systems. For semester long projects that require interaction among students, some packages permit instructors to establish “groups” in which only subscribed members can see their internal discussion board postings.

The LMS acts as a “branching off” point for additional instructor resources; see <http://mtweb.mtsu.edu/jgilbert/Electronic%20Course%20Notes/index.htm> for a website that contains electronic course notes, or outlines of topical segments (e.g., strategy, globalization, diversity, etc.) which can be updated at a moment’s notice. These were created with ThemeArt’s FrontPage Templates. Although electronic storage tools do require occasional “pruning” to weed out inactive or outdated urls, this drawback is overshadowed by the ease and speed at which these pages can be modified. The LMS provided the launch pad for students to engage in online interactions with their peers, via open ended discussion questions. Students were given specific grading criteria regarding posting length, content, and class interaction (e.g., see the grading rubric in Appendix B).

In-Class lectures. With some content moved online, the first author was able to introduce additional concepts that would be helpful to students in their careers, and potentially valuable to a future employer. These included (among others) stress management, virtual teams, personality assessments, intergroup conflict, e-mail etiquette, “lookism,” and the Second Life[®] (SL) virtual world (see Table 2 for a description).

Table 2. *A description of selected face-to-face course activities within the blended classroom*

Second Life	Students participated in an experiential laboratory exercise in which they created an avatar, visited an island, and interacted with other class members. For a full description, see the assignment in Appendix C
Stress management	The business cost of stress on the job and its causes, along with stress management techniques and companies that are exemplars in this area was covered. Students also participated in an experiential stress reduction exercise. Film: <i>How to be happy: Positive psychology in action</i>

Some of the competencies that students gained from in-class and online activities included the following:

1. The ability to present using PowerPoint
2. The ability to perform group work both on ground and virtually in a respectful fashion (see the Virtual Team Agreement in Appendix C that each group was required to submit for instructor approval).
3. The ability to effectively respond to peers in an online forum, participate in an online debate, and provide peer feedback;
4. The opportunity to apply management theory in a semester long journal, in which students described actual work environments that paralleled the week’s readings. Students concluded each journal entry by describing how to improve their situation using course concepts.

Laboratory time. Scheduled laboratory sessions helped students learn navigational skills within Second Life[®] (SL). Because technical skills are now considered a crucial component in students’ job hunting arsenal (“Which classroom skills,” 2010), Web 2.0 technology was introduced into the curriculum. Navigation within the virtual environment was another opportunity for students to experience electronic

interaction, and to provide a mechanism for them to gain experience in a future training mode. The goal of incorporating SL fulfilled the electronic component of a “blended” course, in which learning is flexible to accommodate a variety of learning styles. The SL learning segment consisted of a lecture on the business uses of SL, followed by two laboratory sessions. The first laboratory class time was designed to help students obtain an avatar, while the second guided them through some of the navigational difficulties they might encounter in a virtual metaverse (See Appendix D for a description of the SL assignment instructions, and Figure 1 for an image of the first author’s avatar). For many students in the first author’s class, this was their initial introduction to this learning mode.



Figure 1. A picture of my avatar at the CLIVE (Center for Learning in Virtual Environments) island

Per their assignment instructions, students were required to change their avatar appearance, befriend their instructor, take a picture, navigate to an amphitheatre to rendezvous with fellow students, fly, and chat with virtual residents.

This assignment was later linked to their textbook chapter on organizational change. Students were posed the following question:

“You are considering the implementation of Second Life as a training tool in your company. How would you manage this process, and how would you ensure a successful change effort?”

This exercise allowed them to apply concepts like co-optation, resistance to change, organizational upheaval, and successful planned implementation of technology initiatives. The purpose was to introduce the concept of virtual worlds as a future mode of both communication and business interaction.

Overall, students had a positive impression of Second Life (SL) in that several felt this medium removed physical constraints, and even allowed them to modify their personal appearance. They noted in their homework that individuals who do not feel comfortable contributing in a traditional classroom might feel freer to express themselves disguised as an avatar. In a more critical analysis, they did argue that in most cases SL should not usurp the face-to-face experience, but rather be used to introduce learning that would be impossible otherwise (such as a field trips to a foreign land, or a linkup with students of another culture).

Importance of virtual environments. SL affords the sense of presence and 3D appearance that enables real time conversations to occur among virtual representations, as in classes across continents learning

about each others' cultures. SL is in fact promoting a "globalization" of sorts, in that avatars worldwide can participate in group activities and in a larger community. One of the most appealing educational features of SL is that it can be accessed from anywhere, by students who reside in diverse regions of the world. Professor Stephen Carpenter of Texas A&M had the following to say about his SL experiences:

"Second Life...offers both synchronous and asynchronous communication possibilities, streaming video, voice communication and image display. It's just a different package that offers a different way of teaching. *In Second Life, my students are able to visit places they may never have an opportunity to visit in real life*" (Gulf Coast E-news 2007, "Education Prof").

Carpenter is now able to both teach and lecture in virtual lands. In a similar vein, opportunities for virtual interaction allowed an instructor at EdTech Island to collaborate with researchers from the University of Helsinki, who resided in the island's high rise condo unit (Goral, 2008).

Virtual worlds remove the constraints of travel, excessive cash outlay, and opportunity cost. Unlimited by both resources and space constraints, there are infinite possibilities for team teaching subjects like language, culture, and international management. A much richer and pan-cultural experience can be offered to learners at no additional cost, save the SL learning curve. The diplomatic games "Exchanging Cultures" and "Global Kids Island" are examples of how virtual worlds are currently being used to promote understanding and appreciation of diverse individuals. The following excerpt from "Travels with my mouse" (Verghese, 2009, "Traveling the Free World," ¶8) demonstrates the rich foreign experiences that are available with the touch of a mouse click:

I dropped by to visit friends in Scotland. It was cold. Stoic lads wandered the greens in kilts, one carting a giant grey concrete slab that later turned into a guitar. He strummed some engaging melodies. Another gentleman appeared to be in a trance, his body hunched over against the cold, or so I thought...he went on to show us the finest tartans and blades. You can pick up a fine Glasgow Tartan outfit for L\$1,000.

If instructors partner with a foreign counterpart, students can then be exposed to a global perspective on how their work is perceived by others. "Multicultural virtuality" is a way of immersing students within a diverse world to prepare them for a more realistic market place. This is the intent of International Schools Island, where educators from around the globe can collaborate to enhance the classroom experience and share resources (Shambles n.d., "Second Life & Int. Schs. Island"). Stephen Carpenter, an associate professor of Art Education and Visual Culture in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, stated: "I'm...able to construct spaces that students normally couldn't visit, such as unusual classrooms or art galleries." He added: "In Second Life, the unusual is often the usual" (Kujawski, 2007). One of the truly breakthrough aspects of SL is that individuals can easily change their appearance to experience "first hand" a different race or ethnicity. A change of avatar skin type or gender may give students pause for how to overcome ingrained stereotypic behavior, and how to combat electronic race hate (for a more in-depth explanation, see (Au, 2006) and (Brennan, 2009) for a discussion of race hate within social spaces).

There are many "virtual" SL regions and cities to visit; these include Africa, Dublin, Tokyo, and Torino, Italy - (check out YouTube "Torino Italy Second Life wedding" for a virtual Torino wedding), Amsterdam, Australia, Paris, Mexico (replete with audio tour), Dubai, and the "Forbidden City," among many others. Percival (2008) reports that there are even travel companies within SL that can facilitate residents' in-world excursions. The type of training offered in sites like "Pacific Rim Exchange" ("New PacRimX partnership," 2008) is especially attractive to multinational corporations that are considering "third culture kids" or "...children who are members of expatriate families who reside outside of their passport country for varied periods of time" (Kidd & Lankenau, n.d.) as potential employees. Visitors can chat with others in a foreign tongue and learn important facts about geography, customs, and cultural idiosyncrasies (see Avatar Languages n.d., "Virtual learning") for a live demonstration of training that utilizes Google maps, social learning, and real time participation, and Italian Campus classes (see (Italian Campus class, n.d., "Learn Italian") for a demonstration of Italian language training). Within SL. Virtual Kowloon - a SL island where the majority of residents are Asian - visitors have an opportunity to learn about Chinese culture and practice its language. For those who wish to speak in their native tongue, a "babblor," or in-world translation widget is available (Percival, 2008).

Some instructors also take advantage of SL virtual reality rooms, which contain "crystal clear, photorealistic environments" (Alliance Virtual Library, n.d.) superimposed within the 3D world. These

realistic looking 3D places are particularly useful for “field trips” in the areas of geography, tourism, culture, archeology, architecture, and medicine, because the areas can be explored and explained via lecture with an in-world guide.

Pedagogical Conclusions

The introduction and pilot of a blended learning environment proved to be both a positive experience for the instructor, and for students. Below are some “take-aways” for instructors considering this pedagogy:

1. The blended format makes the online component more accessible, in that students are able to ask questions in real time about assignment expectations and remission. Moreover, they receive additional course material, because different lessons are presented in both the online and face-to-face environments.
2. The triangulation method of instruction (online, on ground, and laboratory) caters to multiple learning styles - visual, auditory, and “hands-on.” The variety helps keep students engaged, and exposes them to a larger skill set than would be possible in a purely face-to-face environment.
3. Critical thinking abilities are enhanced by encouraging students to comment on their peers’ online discussion postings. They learn to challenge their assumptions and to provide a rationale for their responses.

Implications for Work Environments

Skills learned in the blended classroom are transferrable to corporate environments. Companies like IBM, Sun Microsystems, Dell, and British Petroleum have in fact transformed what was formally “live” training to the metaverse (Gronstedt, 2007) in an effort to involve more individuals, take advantage of cost savings, and participate in 3D interactivity. Gronstedt (2007) explains that the geographic equalization, combined with the ability to “talk” with other people in a “realistic” setting is prompting IBM to supplant its videoconferencing and webinar activities with Second Life[®] (SL) applications.

A few governmental agencies have even established an SL presence to raise awareness of travel opportunities, local culture, and landmarks of interest within their regions. The first government sanctioned virtual embassy debuted in Second life in 2007 (see “Opening of the Swedish embassy,” n.d.) for a video. Although the embassy does not issue visas or passports, it does act as a portal to visitors who wish to learn more about Swedish history, tourist attractions, and travel restrictions. The following are some of its interesting features:

- A photography exhibit with images from Sweden;
- A rooftop café where visitors can “sample” Swedish food;
- An exhibit about the life of Raoul Wallenberg, and;
- Artwork curated by the national museum (Simmons, 2007)

Employer Implications

According to “Which classroom,” (2010) the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reports the following skills in demand: (1) effective communication, interpersonal, and teamwork skills; (2) the ability to formulate a logical argument and analyze a problem; and (3) the ability to learn complex systems and new technologies. The advent of Web 2.0 collaborative tools, combined with rapidly changing technology and a highly competitive global business environment necessitates graduates who possess a different skill set. This set includes technological savvy (ranked as one of the most important skills for new hires (“Microsoft offers,” 2002)) and presentational skills in programs like PowerPoint, which can demonstrate to a potential boss a candidate’s ability to professionally showcase his or her ideas in a technical medium. Randy Pierson, chief executive officer of Certiport Inc., states, “Part of university’s role is to prepare students for the challenges they’ll meet in the digital workplace” (“Microsoft offers,” 2002). In addition, both “attitude management” (“Dale Carnegie,” 2010), and interpersonal skills, or the soft side of business, have gained prominence in employer desired aptitudes. The Center for Creative Leadership for example teaches executives to recognize interpersonal weak spots in their interactions with other people (Walker, 2010). Michelle Malloy (a Center for Creative Leadership instructor), parallels what the first author has suggested to her students during the “personality” Principles of Management course segment: “Before you can lead other people, you have to understand who you are as a person.”

As Arbaugh et al. (2010) argue in their literature review, blended courses provide a unique format from which to learn essential skills, along with a student centered atmosphere in which individuals feel more in control of their learning outcomes. Students mentioned that the online discussions were respectful, and (despite their attendance) they learned more in this class than others (perhaps due to the blended format). Relatedly, Gray (2010) explains that there is currently a disconnect in the way that students are instructed and in what is required of them upon graduation. The blended course described in this article is an attempt to provide an applied format for future employees to practice real world skills, and to nurture their need for intellectual expansion.

Additional research is needed to assess if blended teaching translates to increased recruiter acceptance, enhanced job performance, and in an ability to outperform others who have not had similar experiences. Exploration of these topics and others can provide a forum from which to continue the development and enhancement of this unique course concept.

Roadblocks/challenges to Developing a Blended Course

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to developing a blended course is the student fear factor. Many individuals in my class had never crafted a PowerPoint presentation, much less navigated in an online discussion. Despite their familiarity with Web 2.0 tools like Facebook, MySpace, and instant messaging, the thought of being graded for online participation was somewhat threatening and intimidating. It was also difficult initially for students to understand the rationale for some assignments (such as Second Life). In future classes, more emphasis on business necessity, future usage, and SL current applications will be incorporated into the course pedagogy. Because there were many different types of assignments in this course (including group work, both on and off line), some students also expressed dissatisfaction with having to rely on team members. Use of the Team Agreement did however help to coalesce groups, and to give members a framework for expected behavior. Instructor feedback on the Team Agreement is essential in providing guidance regarding conflict resolution, assignment schedule, and interpersonal interaction among members.

The blended model is a student-centered approach that allows the instructor to behave as a coach, a facilitator, and a cheerleader for his/her students. It is a way to let students lead in an environment in which they're guided to success. In the words of Singh (2002, p. 476), "To be successful, blended [teaching]... needs to focus on combining the right delivery technologies to match the individual learning objectives and transfer the appropriate knowledge and skills to the learner at the right time."

A unique contribution of this manuscript is that it describes the actual components of a blended course in detail, as opposed to reviews of faculty readiness (Lindquist, 2006), learning management systems and their role in electronic facilitation (Limón, 2006), or a discourse on how to design a blended course (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). The discussion of class assignments and a "blow by blow" description of course components provides a roadmap for educators who are contemplating a move away from either a one hundred percent brick and mortar classroom, or a purely online environment. Some of the assignments included may provide examples for instructors who wish to craft learning experiences using the same concepts and principles.

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Appendix A

A listing of selected on ground activities within the blended classroom

- * Feedback on assignments to date
- * Discussion of the Teams/Groups/Conflict assignment, Motivation roundtables, motivation group assignment, and journaling assignment.
- * Meetings with groups to discuss the upcoming *Bullying* powerpoint project
- * Individual Differences
 - Machiavellianism/bullying
 - Fear of Success
 - Birth order
 - Type A/B (film)
 - Locus of control (film)
 - Self-monitoring
 - Myers-Briggs
- * Clarification of expectations regarding group globalization paper, globalization lecture
- * Review for Exams
- * Stress lecture
- * Second Life Help session; Second Life Lab session
- * Clarification and discussion regarding diversity management assignment; Lookism lecture
- * Speaker, professionalism and business etiquette
- * Presentations, globalization paper
- * Guest speaker, Career management
- * Discussion of organizational journal and formatting, quality assignment, grade calculation
- * Film: Bad Bosses

Appendix B

Discussion Grading Rubric

Discussion Rubric			
	DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS	MEETS MOST EXPECTATIONS	MEETS ALL EXPECTATIONS
10 POINTS	Discussion Responses	Discussion Responses	Discussion Responses
	<p>Responses are not made by the appropriate deadlines.</p> <p>Total word count (as defined in "Meets All Expectations" above) is less than 500 for all discussion boards within the topic</p> <p>No inclusion of course material, nor substantive responses to peers' postings, etc. per the Discussion Caveats. Provides comments based on opinion, and makes general statements. Responds with simple "I agree" statements. No sources used.</p> <p>Student's contributions do not add any richness to the conversation.</p> <p>The contributions repeat what others have said, and thus are not integrated in the thread of conversation.</p> <p>The contributions are not in student's own words, but merely copy information on sites.</p> <p>Student is not felt to be present in a collaborative way in the class.</p>	<p>Responses are made by the appropriate deadlines.</p> <p>Total word count (as defined in "Meets All Expectations" above) is from 500-1000.</p> <p>Some inclusion of related URLs, one or two references to course material, and limited commentary of peers' postings per the Discussion Caveats. All ideas are pertinent to the topic.</p> <p>A good number of the student's contributions are meaningful.</p> <p>In most cases, the contributions are well connected to the thread of conversation.</p> <p>The student in some cases asks good questions and initiates good threads.</p> <p>In some situations, the student has tried to be collaborative...</p>	<p>Responses are made by the appropriate deadlines.</p> <p>Initial posting must contain between 500-750 words</p> <p>Commentary (including responding to reflections on peers' postings) must be substantive and include numerous references to course material (e.g., book/course notes/peers' discussion) along with URLs per Discussion Caveats. Poses relevant follow-up questions and reflective thought. Fully explains agreement/disagreement, and then provides specific, relevant information based on implications for the classroom environment. Response generates further discussion postings from other students.</p> <p>The majority of the student's posts are meaningful, no copies, integrated with the thread of discussion and adds to the learning experience.</p> <p>The student asks very good questions or makes important comments that generate good conversation in the class.</p> <p>Student is clearly collaborative with others in the class in many situations. (Bringing new information useful to others, clarifying doubts, answering questions, promoting high spirits, promoting his/her peers.)</p> <p>Total word count is greater than 850, inclusive of all postings and responses to postings (less quotes and bulleted lists) per the Discussion Caveats</p>
Grade	0-5	5-7	8-10

Some information adapted from [Dr. Stella Porto](#), University of Maryland University website.

Appendix C
Virtual Team Agreement

MGMT 3610

TEAM AGREEMENT & WORK PLAN

(TEAM NAME GOES HERE)

Date of Plan/Revision/initials of editor

I. TEAM AGREEMENT:

A. Team Contact Information

Member Names (underline preferred)	Telephone Numbers	E-mail Contacts	Guidelines for contact (including preferred days, emergency information, etc.)

B. Mission Statement: (This should be a statement of the team's purpose.)

C. Vision Statement: (This should be an inspirational statement that captures the team's aspirations.)

D. Shared Values: (e.g., honesty, mutual respect, etc.) (Please offer rationale and a working definition for each team value).

E. Desirable team behaviors and consequences for non-compliance: (e.g., punctuality, effective "listening," no harmful "group think," systematic documentation of important team communications and decisions, etc.) (Please explain what you mean by each desired behavior and why you believe it to be important for effective teamwork.)

F. Summary of individual member strengths and weaknesses (self-assessed)

Members	Individual areas of strength (e.g., good writer, editor, researcher, organizer, communicator, technology-adept, etc.)	Growth areas for teamwork (e.g., limited team experience, tend to "take charge and want to be in control", writing weaknesses, inexperienced editor, etc.

(Note: Honest self –assessment is important. You will want to use this information to help

you distribute the work in a way that leverages your individual and team advantages.

G. Team conflict management plan (Explain what you will do when conflicts arise, as they inevitably do, especially during the storming stage. Include the circumstances that would lead you to ask for faculty intervention and the method to be employed should this be necessary. Note that intervention by a third party, either in the form of mediation or arbitration, poses potential risks for team bonding. If an intervention becomes necessary, faculty will rely only on materials posted in the study group area. Faculty reserve the right to assign individual grades if there is evidence of inadequate performance on the part of one or more members.)

H. Statement of team decision protocol (Outline how your team will go about making decisions both on a regular basis and in emergency situations.)

I. Encouragement of Teamwork

(Explain the strategy your team will use to encourage full participation and with it, prevent the common problem of "free ridership." This classic team problem can adversely affect the quality of the work you produce and can lead to poor working relationships. Your strategy should include how the team will deal with poor or weak commitment.

Please note faculty may occasionally have to act when there is evidence that a member is not contributing a fair share to the work of the team. This includes submitting work to the team that is clearly not aligned with the team's stated and expected standards.)

J. Team self-assessment approach and methodology

(An important factor in individual, team, and organizational success is the ability to self-assess, reflect, learn, and continuously improve. How will your team assess its performance against established goals and mileposts and make any adjustments needed to achieve optimal performance?)

II. TEAM WORK PLAN

(It is important for you to know that one of the most significant factors in effective team performance is effective time management. Teams that have been most successful have allocated time each week to work on their projects. They have completed drafts sufficiently in advance of the due dates to allow editing to produce a cohesive quality document *written in a single voice* and to ensure all members are comfortable with the results.)

Team Task Assignments & Timeline for Delivery

(Revise as appropriate for your team needs.)

Task	Lead	Due	Completed and submitted to team
A. Team Agreement:			
Coordinate development and production of Team Agreement			
Manage values clarification exercise and provide needed input for Agreement.			
Collect and organize team strengths and areas of weakness for inclusion in Agreement.			

Develop and obtain approval of a team conflict management plan for inclusion in Team Agreement.			
Coordinate and facilitate project idea brainstorming session.			
B. Basic Team Project Plan - amend the document below to fit the needs of the project and the team.			
Tasks	Assignments	Due	Completed and submitted to team

C. Hannah (rev. January 8, 2010)

Adapted and modified from Dr. Chris Hannah

Appendix DSecond Life Laboratory Assignment

MGMT 3610

Your Name:

Welcome to Second Life! This assignment is to be completed in the computer lab, so you are not required to download the Second Life software to your personal computer unless you choose to (so you can continue exploring this vast and fascinating virtual world on your own). This lab is divided into two parts: Part I provides you with instructions for getting started in Second Life and provides you with a checklist of activities to perform as part of this lab assignment. Part II consists of a few discussion questions regarding your experience in and perspectives of Second Life.

PART I: Getting started and performing activities in Second Life.

1. Create a Second Life account, download, and install the software. From www.secondlife.com, click on the "Get Started Free Download" button. This will lead you through the following steps:
 - a. Create a new Second Life account
 - b. Confirm your Email Address.
 - c. Download and Install the Second Life software.
2. Click on this URL to teleport directly to Vassar Island: <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Vassar/108/126/27>
3. Add me [the instructor as one of your friends]. Just right click on your avatar, select Friends, and click on Add. Once you have me added as one of your friends, you can IM/Call me if you get lost in Second Life and I can teleport you back to Vassar Island. Add a couple other students as your friends in Second Life.
4. Follow the road signs in Vassar Island to find Castle Vassar. Take a snapshot of the castle and email me the snapshot. Take a while to explore the castle; if your avatar likes to dance, check out the dance floor in the great room of the castle.
5. Now, find your way to the amphitheatre to meet up with the professor.
6. Try out the following:
 - a. Change the appearance of your avatar
 - b. Chat with other students and/or the professor
 - c. Check out your inventory and try a few gestures (e.g. dance, clap, bow, etc...)
 - d. Find your way to the Sistine Chapel; take a tour if you wish.
 - e. Take a virtual, automated tour of Vassar Island
 - f. Check out the map
 - g. Fly
7. Check out at least one other PG rated island. Important Note: although you are free to explore various islands available in Second Life, you should be forewarned that there are many inappropriate islands available in this unregulated territory. I am not responsible for the content you encounter as you explore Second Life. I strongly encourage you to stay on "PG" rated islands. Some suggestions are below:

Bowling Green State University <http://slurl.com/secondlife/BGSU%20Creation/254/255/33>
BBC Film Network <http://slurl.com/secondlife/depo%20business%20hub/242/145/41>
Toyota <http://slurl.com/secondlife/TOYOTA/128/128/27>

NASA <http://slurl.com/secondlife/NASA%20CoLab/128/128/11>

8. Watch one or two YouTube videos about Second Life. Some suggestions are below:

Architecture in Second Life <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KruzH82Z2qQ>
Starwood Hotel <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPeRukbyDhk>
NASA <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kr3vXuxEPB8>
BBC Cinema <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqnhGskQV7U>
Second Life (SL) in Real Life (RL)

*Adapted and modified from Dr. Melinda Korzaan

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