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Lander University's

White Board

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Become An Effective Teacher & Save Your Valuable Teaching Time and Energy

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching (864) 388-8426

Student Email: Issues and Solutions

The following list of ideas about how to manage course-related email was compiled from the AAHESGIT listserv.

From Terri Heath, University of Oregon

1. On your syllabus, near your email address, tell your students in your 101 class that they MUST put 101 as their subject line. In class explain that you sort all your related email before you read it so that it is imperative that this standardized subject line be included.

2. Don't RESPOND to student emails as you receive them, but rather SORT them into folders as you receive them. I believe some email software will do this for you automatically as long as your students use the correct subject line.

3. At a designated time in your work week, sit down to read and answer all the collected email for the 101 students. Many of your students will have asked similar questions, and if you are reading them together, you can more efficiently respond to each with a standard response rather than individual responses over many days. You might even tell your students how often you'll respond to their collected and stored emails thereby encouraging them to think ahead. You many find that by doing so, they ask their homework and exam-prep questions MORE than 2 hours before the work is due!

"The only purpose of education is to teach a student how to live his life by developing his mind and equipping him to deal with reality. The training he needs is theoretical, i.e., conceptual. He has to be taught to think, to understand, to integrate, to prove. He has to be taught the essentials of the knowledge discovered in the past-and he has to be equipped to acquire further knowledge by his own effort."

-Ayn Rand

From James Bess, New York University

There's a danger of encouraging frivolous and disingenuous communication from students. The e-mail should not be a substitute for studying and trying to learn by oneself. The medium is also seductively but misleadingly and inappropriately intimate. The faculty member believes he/she is mentoring, but is really only maintaining communication ties. There should be more study of this.

From Trent Batson, Gallaudet University

In this message [above], it is implied that email exchange is a simple information exchange and not in itself educational. I don't know for sure that anyone actually thought that as they wrote about managing the volume, so I don't want to put words in people's mouths. At the same time, I'd like to suggest we not overlook the educational value of writing email in and of itself.

One of the most difficult of all intellectual skills for students to master, if they ever do, is writing with appropriate tone and register for an audience, and, another is framing their writing with sufficient contextual information to make their message valuable and readable. All of us who use email know how daunting both of these rhetorical skills can be.

These skills require us to keep in mind who we are actually addressing our message to, when the message we are responding to was written, who else will read our email, and what everyone has to know in order to understand our message. Audience, purpose, context, ethos-pretty important rhetorical skills, I'd say. In many ways, writing email today is a more cognitively challenging discourse skill than writing a 5-paragraph essay ever was.

It's important to keep this in mind before we dismiss email as frivolous. If our goal is to develop the thinking skills of students, perhaps a free-flow of email is hard to beat as an exercise. We also have to be conscious of the Puritan strain in us which might make us suspicious of the learning value of anything students actually enjoy doing.

I've been doing email with my students for over 15 years. I can't remember ever getting email that was "inappropriately intimate" unless Bess is using "intimate" to mean "informal." Yes, if one is accustomed to being called "professor Batson," being called "Trent" can be a bit unnerving. But, at the same time, being called "Trent" does open up new channels of communication that would otherwise be limited.

We all work on our writing skills all of our lives. These skills are more and more important to our success in life. If students enjoy writing email, and if we understand how valuable email writing can be in students' intellectual development, then let's encourage that channel of learning rather than working so hard to restrict it.

Teaching Effectiveness Program,
Teaching & Learning Center,
University of Oregon. July 7, 2009.
[http://www.uoregon.edu/~tep/technology/communication/heavyemail.html]
November 17, 2009

FACULTY MEETING
Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010
12:40-1:40pm, LC200

WHITE BOARD
2009-10 Publication Dates
First Monday of the Month

September 7	March 1
October 5	April 5
November 2	May 3
December 7	June 7
January 4	July 5
February 1	August 2

Newsletters Archive HERE

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching
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Understanding Digital Images

You might consider incorporating images into your course content:
To make it easier for your students to follow and remember the content; to illustrate complex concepts; as part of the course content; as a way to engage students with different learning styles; to set the context of a topic; to enrich the learning climate; or simply to dress it up.

Accessibility

Images increase download time - there's just no getting around that. So, before you run off and flood your Blackboard site and PowerPoint presentations with graphics, think about why you're using the images.

The reason for the image may help you determine the way it is included (or not) for online delivery. Sometimes images used in lecture can be removed from a PowerPoint presentation before posting it to the web making it easier for students to access the material. At times when the images are necessary, it may be important to warn students that particular files may take a long time to download from a dial-up modem.

Inclusive Classroom Considerations

When working with images, especially images of other human beings, it is important to take several things into consideration. While no one would consciously teach in a manner that would exclude students, sometimes we do things unconsciously that make certain students or groups of students feel uncomfortable or not involved in the class. You know what you are trying to accomplish by using a particular image, but the students will not.

They will make assumptions and draw conclusions based on the image or images you use. Images are powerful and we need to use them thoughtfully.

Here are some questions to ask when selecting images for use.

- Who is included?
- Who is not included?
- How are those who are included represented? Positively or negatively?
- Do the images reinforce stereotypes in any way? (If they do, or might to some students, don't use them.)
- What assumptions might students make from the images you use?

Copyright and Fair Use

Educational use of copyrighted material can sometimes be justified through the "fair use" clause in federal copyright law. The goal of this section is to briefly define the elements of "fair use" and to lead you to more substantial sources for information about how copyright law applies to teaching with the Internet.

Factors of Fair Use

If you use a piece of copyrighted material in your teaching, four factors will determine whether or not your use of that material qualifies as "fair use." Note that ALL FOUR of these factors must be evaluated for fair use to apply.

1. What is the nature of the use? Is the reproduction or the distribution for education or for commercial gain?
2. What is the nature of the copyrighted work? Fiction, highlevel analysis, works of art, and musical composition are considered the most creative and therefore receive the most protection from infringement. Compilations and derivative works are usually not protected by copyright at all (except possibly in their format or user interface).
3. What is the quantity of the work used? If you use 3% of the total substance of the work or less, you are probably safely within fair use. If you use more than 10%, you are in uncertain territory.
4. What is the potential impact on the copyright holder's market? If your use of some material could materially reduce the creator's ability to profit from it, this factor would point toward your use not being "fair".

The fact that a work is unpublished shall not itself bar a finding of fair use if such finding is made upon consideration of all the above factors.

What Determines File Size?

File size is an important factor when working with digital images. Your intended use for the image will play a large part in determining the acceptable file size. The file size for high quality print images will undoubtedly be much larger that images intended for web use, while images to be displayed through presentation software such as PowerPoint will fall somewhere in between.

Image Dimensions

When we talk about the Image dimensions we are referring to the actual width and height of the image. A full screen image displayed on a 13" monitor is 640 pixels by 480 pixels. Typical dimensions for Mac and PC monitors are 832 pixels x 624 pixels for a 17" monitor and 1024 pixels x 768 pixels for a 21 " monitor (more or less).

You will determine your image dimensions at the time you digitize. These dimensions can be decreased at any time. Increasing the dimensions will distort the image, however. Therefore, if you are unsure about the final dimensions or you have multiple uses in mind, you should set your dimensions to the largest size you may want and decrease them as needed.

Image Resolution

Image resolution is defined as the number of pixels per inch, or ppi, when talking about on screen display, and dots per inch, or dpi, when referring to print images. These measurements refer to the spacing of pixels in your image. The resolution you want will depend on what you intend to do with the image. The following are basic guidelines.

Monitor Display--If you intend to display the image on a monitor, the final image resolution need only be between 72 ppi and 96 ppi. Digitizing at a higher resolution such as 150 ppi or 300 ppi would be suggested if you plan to manipulate your image. More pixels mean more information to manipulate and less unwanted distortion from manipulation. After you have finished any manipulations, you can reduce the image resolution down to 72 or 96 ppi to decrease file size.

Print Quality--If you intend to print the image, you will want the highest resolution the printer can support, usually 300 dpi to 2400 dpi. The resolution of your image can be decreased any time after digitizing. Increasing the resolution will distort the image, however. Therefore, if you are unsure of your intended output or have multiple uses in mind, it is advised that you set your resolution size to the maximum you will require and decrease it later as you create additional files.

Every pixel translates into digital information, so there is a direct correlation between the size and resolution of an image and how large the file will be when the image is saved. File size increases dramatically as resolution increases.

Understanding Digital Images, Teaching Effectiveness Program, Academic Learning Services, University of Oregon. [http://www.uoregon.edu/~tep/technology/multimedia/docs/digitalimages.pdf] November 17, 2009.