Experiential Learning Activity

3 Hour Course Guide

Mini-Term Courses

Mini-term courses provide a unique opportunity to engage in new pedagogical practices advantaged by intensive instruction. As with all course design, it is helpful to begin with the course learning objectives; Rather than merely condensing all the content and activities you might cover in a 15-week course, 3-week courses allow instructors to reduce span but increase depth. Synchronous mini-term courses, typically scheduled for three hours per day, yield new and exciting opportunities for classroom engagement.

3-Hour Synchrounous Session

3-hour instructional blocks provide time for daily activities that otherwise are challenging to fit into 50-75 minute course sessions. For example, you can open each class with a mini-activity, such as an ice breaker, brain opener, or metacognitive activity. You may also provide structured time at the end of each session for reflection to capture each student's learning for that day.

These two practices might be difficult for shorter time periods, but can be easily embedded in a 3-hour session. Longer course sessions also provide opportunities for active learning principles. Building in these interactions "flips" the course by reducing lecture time and promoting engagement and discussion during synchronous meeting times.

Active Learning Framework

These active teaching models for mini-term are positioned at the intersection of Backwards Design (Wiggins & McTighe 1998) and the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) framework (Fisher & Frey 2008).

Backward Design emphasizes intention and purpose of course activities and assessment, beginning the design process with establishing key outcomes, then determining the assessment of such outcomes, and then the content, resources, and activities that will lead students to desired results.

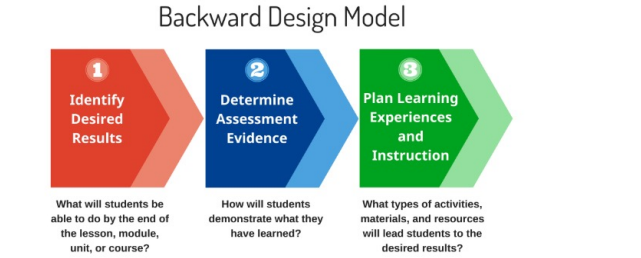

Image retrieved from: https://humboldt2.instructure.com/courses/27792/pages/intro-to-student-learning-outcomes-slos

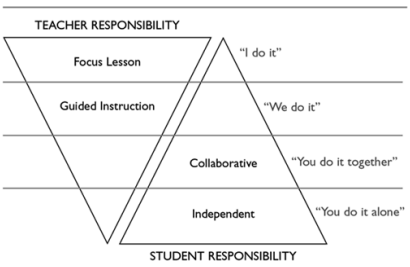

Image retrieved from https://dpi.wi.gov/ela/instruction/framework

GRR positions the importance of interaction with other students, encompassing Bruner's work on scaffolding, Piaget's work on cognitive structures and schemata, and Vygotsky's work on the zone of proximal development. Students are more engaged when provided structured opportunities to learn from each other. (Fisher & Frey 2008).

Quick Tips

- Be clear about course expectations of daily work. Remind students of time required for a 3-credit, 3-week course (3 hours in class, 4-6 hours out of class each day, for example). Setting this expectation up front, even with an email to registrants before the class begins, can help ensure students are aware of your expectations and ready for the intensive nature of the course.
- Help students maintain focus and energy by varying the pace and frequently changing classroom activities (10-min micro lecture, 30-min individual directed activity, 10-min group discussion, 20-min report out to class.
- Finally, find opportunities to make your 3-week course a community. The intensive nature of mini terms could mean your students are seeing you and their peers more than they might see their own loved ones! These deep connections present the opportunity for a powerful and collaborative learning experience.

Course Design for Experiential Learning

Often, experiential learning is thought of as a long-term engagement, such as apprenticeships, internships, field work, research, or practicums. Some may find it difficult to think about how to embed experiential learning not only in a shortened time frame, but even as part of a module. The below is possible way to set up a specific 3-hour time period based around an experiential learning opportunity.

Before Class

Provide any relevant background information or assignments to set up the activity:

- If conducting a "Solver Community" or Simulation, provide necessary context that supports the day's activities
- If reflecting on a previous service learning opportunity or virtual field trip, ensure students have completed the necessary activities to engage in class
- If hosting guest lecture, ensure students have relevant background information for guests

During Class

Time Block	Possible activities:
1	Social Icebreaker or metacognitive activity to build community
	Short activity that follows up on previous class or homework
2	Brief lecture in Zoom to introduce new topics and upcoming activities
3	Examples of experiential learning (EL) components. Students can: • Create solver communities to tackle complex issues and real-world challenges • Take a virtual field trip to learn more about a community and community partner/s • Discuss completed Service Learning opportunity in the students' community • View and comment on presentations from guest lecturers and experts in the field • Conduct a Simulation or Case Study • Create and share e-portfolios that highlight their experiences and contributions
4	Reflection and wrap up: Carve out some time at the end of class for students to reflect on the discussion, either in writing or orally. Consider asking students to not only reflect on what they learned from the experience, but to also summarize key ideas or insights and/or pose new questions. Set the stage for the next class meeting or EL component

After Class

Extend the discussion: Encourage students to continue the class discussion by leveraging asynchronous course spaces (e.g.: Canvas discussion board).

Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2008). Better learning through structured teaching: A framework for the gradual release of responsibility. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (1998). Understanding by design. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.