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CVC 2007 Awards Program
Final Report
Graphic Design Studio 2 - GID51
online @ Foothill College

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Summary

As our students move further and further into the electronic world we need to meet them there with learning experiences in all areas of academic, professional, and personal development. The visual arts and graphic design in particular have long been overlooked in the area of online learning. Previously, graphic arts education has been restricted to face-to-face classroom teaching due to the amount of visual content, necessity of hands-on instruction with creative and production tools, and the communal engagement of students and instructor in group critique.

Today's electronic media delivery tools and instructional design strategies make it possible to translate this face-to-face experience to the online classroom. The current sophistication of online classrooms and media production tools enable instructors and instructional designers to create learning scenarios which provide the breadth, depth and communal involvement equal to, or greater than, what students experience in the face-to-face classroom.

Preliminary Evaluation

The course that was chosen for this project, Graphic Design Studio 2 – GID51, is the second course in the series of three core graphic design courses at Foothill College. Traditionally it is a classroom-based studio art class. In the classroom the instructor and students spend six hours a week, working in a “studio” environment. This environment includes instructor-led demonstrations of computer graphic skills and techniques, instructor-student activities such as research, writing, sketching, producing computer graphic designs, and engaging in group critiques.

Classroom observations and interviews of the students and instructor were conducted during the planning of this project. A variety of strategies were researched and adopted to translate this course to the online classroom. The instructor-led demonstrations of computer graphic skills and techniques were recorded, edited and reproduced as interactive step-by-step Shockwave Flash (SWF) movies which students can watch and repeat at their own pace. The hands-on mentoring style in which the classroom course is taught, and the instructor-student activities, convert easily to the “guide on the side” style commonly used in successful online classrooms. Technical advances in asynchronous discussion forums make it possible for group critiques to become rich visual learning experiences as well as areas of active exchange between students.

Objectives

For CVC awards program the objectives for this project are:

The design and implementation of 12 instructional modules for the online Graphic Design Studio 2 course at Foothill College. This course is a 4-unit project-based visual arts class. It is taught via Etudes NG during a 12-week quarter.

With the exception of the introduction and evaluation modules, the instructional modules are grouped in five pairs. The first module of each pair introduces the topic and creative assignment. Students compile a vocabulary list, write a creative brief, complete an exploratory exercise, produce thumbnail sketches, develop rough designs, and write a

critique of another student's sketches or rough designs. The second module in each pair further investigates the topic and continues the creative assignment. Students compile a vocabulary list, complete an exploratory exercise, produce a final comprehensive design, and write a critique of another student's final design.

Each instructional module consists of:

- Objectives
- Textbook reading
- Online reading
- Project overview
- Interactive multi-media tutorials
- Professional examples
- Assignment solutions by previous students

Assignments submitted by the student:

- Vocabulary list with definitions
- Exploratory exercise
- Creative brief
- Thumbnail sketches
- Rough design
- Final comprehensive design
- Critique

This project consisted of instructional design, content development, multi-media production, and web page production. The web pages include text passages, images and interactive multi-media tutorials. The multi-media tutorials required recording visual and audio content, editing visual and audio media, adding animation and interactivity, and production of SWF movies.

Formative Evaluation

During the development and production of this new online course the instructional materials were made available to another instructor teaching a face-to-face section of the Graphic Design Studio 2 course. The students and instructor used and reviewed the web pages and the interactive multi-media tutorials, but did not have access to the Discussion forum. Feedback was recorded mid-term and again at the completion of the course.

Student and instructor feedback was evaluated and applied to the redesign and fine-tuning of the instructional materials. Changes included:

- Increasing descriptive details and adjusting the structure on the objectives pages,
- Inclusion of solutions by previous students for each creative brief, thumbnail sketch, rough design, and final comprehensive design,
- Increasing the number of professional examples,
- Adding more multi-media tutorials to address specific computer graphic skills and techniques,
- Reducing the vocabulary list assignments.

The students and instructor found the online presentation of the instructional materials to be well organized and very easy to follow. Students also indicated the online course content was an excellent complement to the textbook and instructor as well as an easily accessible and continually available resource for the course. They felt the multi-media tutorials were a valuable supplement to their instructor's in-class demonstrations, and appreciated the flexibility to review them at any time. Many felt that the online course materials were so complete the course could run itself.

Description of the online course environment

The course you are reviewing is "live" during the spring quarter beginning April 9, 2007 at Foothill College. It is available via the Etudes NG course management system at <http://etudes-ng.fhda.edu/portal>. In this course, modules are opened to students week-by-week as they work through the course. The login for the CVC reviewers is a "guest" student login; therefore some modules are not open or visible at this time. All modules are available at <http://fgamedia.org/faculty/cbrown/studio2/index2.html>; the Discussion forum, which is an intrinsic portion of the course, is not available there. The Adobe Flash Player plug-in must be installed to view the tutorials, download the player plug-in at <http://www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer/>

Within the Etudes NG course structure is the following main menu:

Home – intro page for the course.

Announcements – notices that are posted on the Home page and emailed directly to students.

Discussion and Private Messages – assignments are handed in, discussed, and critiqued here.

Chat Room – used periodically for group meetings.

Be A Design Group – RSS feed of a graphic design blog.

Gradebook – grades are posted privately. All feedback is publicly viewable in the Discussion forum.

Site Info – site description and contact information.

Home
Announcements
Modules
Discussion and Private Messages
Chat Room
Be A Design Group
Gradebook
Site Info

Students begin each module by clicking **Modules** in the main menu and selecting the module they wish to view from the list on the **Modules** page. On each module page the title of that module is linked to the objectives page of that module. Subsequent pages within a module are linked linearly. On pages within a module there are numerous links to online readings as well as to the interactive multi-media tutorials and assignment solutions by previous students. Linked readings, tutorials, and solutions open in a new browser window over the Etudes NG window, enabling the student to keep their place in the module while viewing these materials. Module pages also include assignment instructions and directions for submitting completed assignments. The final page of each module is a review with links back to items that students need to submit.

The Discussion forum has an asynchronous threaded format. All discussion topics are accessible by the entire class. There is a discussion topic for each module; the first post in each topic provides detailed instructions for how students should post their assignments. All student assignments are submitted in the Discussion forum where they are publicly

viewable by the entire class. Once an assignment is submitted the students and the instructor visit each other's discussion topics and post critiques, comments, or questions regarding the student's work. Each discussion topic title includes a due date, after that date the discussion topic and associated module are considered closed, but are still accessible by the students and instructor.

When a discussion topic and associated module are closed the instructor reviews all the posts in the discussion topic and enters grades for each student's assignments in the Gradebook. Modules contain between four and six assignments, the gradebook has an entry corresponding to each assignment. Students can review their grades and their cumulative score in the gradebook at any time.