ATT & MSU Award script

Punya Mishra & Matt Koehler
(with a little help from Leigh)

[Music]

Leigh: *Welcome to the latest edition of What's Up, what's down, what's online! With your host Leigh Wolf. We have an exciting program for you tonight. Coming up:*

Does Web 2.0 really mean the web is here to stay?
What does Google docs mean to you as a teacher?
What happens to the digital footprints we leave on the shores of the great river that is the internets?

But first, an interview with two faculty members from a large mid-western, world-grant university who have been exhibiting boldness by design through an online course called Reflections on Learning.

Joining us in the studio are the designers of the course, Matthew Koehler, Hi, Matt

Matt: Hello.

Leigh: *& Punya Mishra, Hello Punya.*

Punya: Hi there.

Leigh: *Thanks for joining us today. So let me start with you Matt. What is this course you have been teaching?*

Matt: This is a course about learning as it occurs both inside and outside classrooms, and in formal, informal and digital formats. Recognizing that learning happens across the lifespan, from birth to maturity.

These diverse viewpoints, meant that our course TE150, required us to approach learning from multiple directions, including psychological, social, theoretical and pragmatic.

Leigh: *So Punya, what are the goals for, what was it again, TE150?*

Punya: Yes, TE150 is what we call it. Anyway, our first and foremost goal in developing TE150 was to create an engaging student experience, one that showcases learning in all its complexity and richness, as Matt just described. We want student participants to see the world through "learning colored glasses" to realize that learning (and teaching) occur everywhere around them. We want them to become better teachers, coaches, parents and most importantly, better learners.

Leigh: *So how did you use technology in this course?*

Matt: These goals, we just described have determined to a great extent the technologies we use and the activities we have students engage in. We combine multiple technologies and activities (from online magic tricks, to book reviews, from discussion forums, to quizzes, from interviewing teachers and coaches in their community, to short responses to clips from Hollywood movies). We also wanted to create a learning community with rich interaction between students, with an emphasis on student and instructor presence (to mitigate the loneliness that is often characteristic of online courses).

Leigh: *Did you use some kind of a course management system?*

Punya: The university supports a course management system called Angel. For a range of reasons, we decided at the very beginning to not use Angel but rather go with Moodle, an open-source learning management system. Using Moodle allowed us to reconfigure / reprogram it for our purposes – to tweak the interface to make it stand out from other course offerings students may have experienced in the past, to design the interface to better orient students as to where they are at a given moment, to write code that would throw up random pictures of students and instructors when they log in, as a way of making them realize the presence of other people in the course.

Matt: I'd like to jump in here to add something to what Punya just said. Our goal of integrating the course better with students' lives pushed us to experimenting with Facebook as a site for course discussions. We are currently conducting a true experiment (randomly assigning students to either a section where discussions happen exclusively within Moodle and another where they happen within Facebook) to see how this effects student interaction. And that has been very interesting to watch.

Leigh: *How to try to engage students in TE150?*

Matt: We make extensive use of video, mostly through clips from Hollywood movies, as well as some clips from youTube. This allows us to both tap into pop-culture as well as encourage students to apply their knowledge to new settings. For example, in the first week of the course, we provide students a montage of short video clips from films such as Dead Poet's Society, the Matrix, Mad Ballroom, and Spellbound. These clips implicitly represent learning in multiple ways. We ask students to talk about how these clips are relevant to learning. Each week, we spend more time on one of the clips, as they learn more about a particular view of learning. And at the end of the semester, we revisit the whole activity again. The difference in what students can see in the montage between the beginning and end of the semester is quite remarkable.

Punya: I did want to include some clips from Bollywood song and dance musicals but …

Matt: It turns out 15 minute dance sequences don't translate well into TE150.

Punya: I still think that would have been a good idea.

Leigh: *Can you tell us a bit about how you went about designing this course?*

Punya: The design of 150 was a team effort – through and through. Matt and I do a lot of work together so when this opportunity came up we did it together as well. We have been working on it now for around 2 years now.

Matt: I must say that designing and teaching TE150 has been an amazing experience and none of this would have been possible without the hard work of a bunch of people. A large part of the credit for TE150 goes to the design team we have had the privilege of working with. They include Anne Heintz, designer and teaching assistant, Tianyi Zhang and Jinjie Zheng content developers, Michael Lee and Ashish Dore multimedia and programming, Laurence Bates technology support, Andrea Francis and Michael DeSchryver, teaching assistants. Finally we would like to thank Carole Ames, Dean of the College of Education for her support through the entire process.

Leigh: *This is fascinating, but as you know we are short on time, so a final question, what do you think you have learned through this process?*

Matt: Each and every module in TE150 ends with one question: Why aren't we done yet? This is our way to conceptually orient students to reflect on what has happened in the course so far and what is coming up next. "Why aren't we done yet?" is also the title of the last assignment students complete in this course, this time forcing them to think of ways they would continue to learn about learning as a way of reinforcing the idea that learning is a life-long process and one that merits multiple bouts of reflection and thought.

This question, "Why aren't we done yet?" is an important one for us, the TE150 design team as well. We have learned a lot through this process of design and re-design of TE150 in an attempt to create a different kind of student learning experience, and receiving this award is extremely gratifying. That said, we also know that we're not done yet, and that there is still a lot that we will learn in the semesters to come.

Punya: I could not have phrased it better.

Leigh: *Thank you so much Matt and Punya for joining us. We hope to have you back here again sometime soon, to talk about other fun things you guys are getting into.*

Matt/Punya: Thank you for having us.

Leigh: *Goodbye.*

Coming up next, Web 2.0, Google Docs, Digital Footprints… And more… when we come back.

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