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Promoting Student Success with TILT in Asynchronous Online Classes

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Abstract

Research has shown that the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) framework is an equitable practice that promotes student success by emphasizing the purpose and real-world applicability of academic work (Winkelmes et al., 2019). Most of the research on TILT has focused on in-person instruction. In this article, the authors discuss their implementation of TILT as a “guiding philosophy” (Carpenter et al., 2021) to (re)design their asynchronous, online classes. As instructors, they note that TILT made a tangible, positive difference in student ownership and engagement in classroom tasks. To understand TILT’s impact on students, the authors conducted a small-scale study in which they surveyed their students about their experience of the assignment instructions in their courses in terms of clarity, helpfulness, and other factors that affect student learning. The results of the study corroborated the authors’ idea that TILT had a positive impact on student learning in their asynchronous, online classes. The authors conclude by arguing that TILT is a valuable framework that enhances other best practices for online teaching.

From Fall 2019 to Spring 2021, Sabrina and Lorraine participated in a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) at Middle Georgia State University. Sabrina led the FLC as a Chancellor’s Learning Scholar (a University System of Georgia faculty development initiative) and invited Lorraine to join as a participant along with four other faculty from a variety of disciplines across their five-campus institution. Faculty from English, foreign languages, history, interdisciplinary studies, and communications were represented in the group. The FLC concentrated on teaching online but swiftly narrowed in focus to Transparency in Teaching and Learning (TILT), a method of course design that is gaining in popularity as an evidence-based

teaching practice that promotes student success. Over the course of these two years,

Sabrina and Lorraine conducted extensive pedagogical research, participated in thoughtful and fruitful discussions about their teaching practices, and redesigned their courses to utilize the TILT framework. Sabrina and Lorraine concluded the experience by conducting an Institutional Review Board-approved, qualitative study in two, asynchronous, online courses in which they had utilized TILT.

Asynchronous, online courses present some of the same difficulties for students as face-to-face courses while magnifying them because of the course delivery method; in

addition, they possess some unique challenges. One challenge that is common to both modalities is the need for course content and assignments to align with student learning outcomes (Darby & Lang, 2019; Zehnder et al., 2021). For example, an instructor might become invested in an exciting assignment or an interesting text and import it to another class without examining whether it is a good fit for the particular student learning outcomes of the course. Another challenge in both modalities is ensuring that course content and assignments scaffold properly; an initial assignment should provide the skills and practice necessary for subsequent assignments. As a result, sequencing of course content and assignments becomes key to student success (Darby & Lang, 2019). One challenge that is unique to the asynchronous, online environment is the lack of immediate communication between students and the instructor that can lead to confusion and frustration for students (Swan, 2002). Sabrina and Lorraine spent a great deal of time discussing these issues and potential solutions at the beginning of their FLC but quickly realized that TILT addresses most of them.

After redesigning their courses to utilize the TILT framework, Sabrina and Lorraine believe strongly that doing so has made their courses more effective. They examined all their course content and assignments to align them with student learning outcomes. They made an effort to scaffold their courses so that they contain enough opportunities to practice skills before proceeding to the next stage in the sequence. They included information about the real-world relevance of their course content and assignments, a fundamental element of TILT. They rewrote assignment instructions until expectations and procedures are clearer for

students, and they provided a section of tips and commonly asked questions for each assignment. After doing so, the number of questions they received about assignments decreased considerably, and the number of students misunderstanding the purpose or other components of assignments also decreased. From their perspective, TILT was working incredibly well in their asynchronous, online courses, but Sabrina and Lorraine wondered about its success from their students' perspectives. The present study was conducted to examine student perceptions of TILT in two asynchronous, online, undergraduate courses in which they had already implemented the TILT framework.

The following research informs Sabrina and Lorraine's teaching, their courses, and the construction of the study they designed to solicit student feedback on TILT.

Literature Review

Online Learning

Singh and Thurman (2019) define online learning as "learning experiences in synchronous and asynchronous learning environments using devices with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students" (p. 290). In a synchronous online class, students and faculty meet virtually through a platform such as Zoom while in asynchronous, online classes, students work independently on the course material and course activities the instructor has prepared and made available usually on a learning management system (like Canvas or D2L/Brightspace). Other online options

include hybrid classes where part of the work is handled asynchronously and some sessions are synchronous (whether in person or online), and hyflex classes in which students can elect to come in person or attend online synchronously or asynchronously.

Prior to 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, online classes had gained momentum because of the convenience and flexibility they offer students (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Darby & Lang, 2019; Howard et al., 2019; Londino-Smolar & Hansel, 2021). Current research shows that students are electing to continue learning online post-pandemic (Anderson, 2021; Morris & Anthes, 2021). As Londino-Smolar and Hansel (2021) report, research studies show that student performance in online courses is comparable to traditional classroom settings and that online education can be as effective as brick-and-mortar education. Notable areas of challenge for online education include lower completion rates compared to in-person classes (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Nilson & Goodson, 2018) and “lower completion rates and poorer grade performance” for historically underrepresented groups, such as minority and nontraditional students (Howard et al., 2019, p. 2).

As Bolliger and Inan (2012) show, students can often feel lonely and disconnected in online classes because they are not physically in the same room as their instructor and their peers. Swan (2002) notes that there is a “heightened need for instructor activity and interaction in online environments” in order to develop an online learning community (p. 26). Garrison et al. (2000) propose a community of inquiry framework that centers the online learning environment around the concept of community. For Garrison et al. (2000),

learning occurs at the intersection of three forms of presence: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. Teaching presence is understood as the design of the course material and learning activities, from their curation to the way they are presented and organized, and as the facilitation of the learning in the online environment. Social presence is summed up as the socio-emotional aspect of the class where students get to know their instructor and their peers and where the feeling of connection to others is created; social presence is about “presenting themselves to the other participants as ‘real people’” (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 89). Finally, cognitive presence is the learning process that occurs in the class. Boettcher and Conrad (2021) sum up the concept of presence as “being there” (p. 81) and argue that it is “the most important best practice for an online course” (p. 81). In this article, we will show that transparent teaching methods help establish and sustain the three forms of presence recommended in building a community of inquiry in online learning environments.

Another best practice for online learning concerns course design: course materials should be accessible (following the principles of Universal Design for Learning), easy to find, and consistent (Asgarpoor, 2019; Darby & Lang, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Riggs & Linder, 2016). In addition, clear channels of communication between the student and the instructor and amongst students are vital (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Darby & Lang, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018).

Finally, Akella et al. (2021), drawing on existing research, note that while technology is at the foundation of the learning experience online, “technology by itself cannot take up an independent role or

even replace teachers. Ultimately, it is the teachers, their choices and decisions, their relationships with students which all affect student performances” (p. 44). Nilson and Goodson (2018) also remind us that “excellent teaching is excellent teaching—and conversely, ineffective teaching is ineffective teaching—whether the environment is classroom based, online, or hybrid” (p. 1).

Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT)

The concept of transparent teaching emerged in the early 2000s (Biggs, 2003; Harden, 2001) and was formalized into a pedagogical framework by Winkelmes in 2013. TILT makes explicit for students and faculty the relationship between the assignment, the course learning outcomes, and the real world, including students’ personal and career goals. Faculty who subscribe to TILT explicitly present those connections to students and explain why they ask them to complete a specific assignment. TILT assignment instructions are typically divided into three sections: purpose, where the connection between the learning outcomes, career and personal goals is made clear; task, the description of the assignment; and criteria, detailing format requirements along with a rubric. It is also common and recommended to provide a help section with exemplars of successful assignments and other tips.

The goal of transparent teaching is “to advance equitable teaching and learning practices that reduce systemic inequities in higher education” (Winkelmes, 2014). Winkelmes et al. (2019) explain that “students who received transparent instruction that emphasizes the purposes,

tasks, and real-world applicability (or problem-centeredness) and criteria for academic work experienced elevated confidence, belonging, and metacognitive awareness of skill development” (p.17). Winkelmes et al. (2016) also showed that transparent assignments had especially positive outcomes for underserved students and could lower the attrition rate in at-risk student populations. Other studies have corroborated and expanded those initial findings in a variety of disciplines; for example, Bhavsar (2020) recorded better reading compliance in TILTed assignments in a science course and better metacognition on the part of students who reported that “the assignment was valuable in helping them learn the material” (p. 34). Kang et al. (2016) implemented TILT in a variety of college courses (communication, genetics, and general biology among others) and saw increases in students’ success on the assignments, more metacognition on the part of students, and a greater number of students feeling they had received more meaningful feedback.

More recently, the concept of transparency has been expanded to course design and teaching as a whole rather than just as a way to frame assignments. For instance, one of the authors of “Faculty Development for Transparent Learning & Teaching,” Travis Martin, states that TILT is not a framework for him, but rather that it is “a guiding philosophy” and “a testament to the instructor’s commitment to student success” (Carpenter et al., 2021, p. 60). In this broader understanding, the following are examples of transparent teaching practices:

- A “Start Here” orientation module that contains essential information about the class—such as the syllabus

and tech support (Londino-Smolar & Hansel, 2021);

- Course policies and expectations that are explained in jargon-free language and are easily accessible (Carpenter et al., 2021);
- A predictable structure with the content broken down into modules, each containing the course material for a specific class session along with the assignments due written with transparent instructions (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Eblen-Zayas, 2021; Londino-Smolar & Hansel, 2021; Nilson & Goodson, 2018);
- Scaffolded assignments that make tasks manageable and support student learning (Darby & Lang, 2019; Londino-Smolar & Hansel, 2021);
- Course material that clearly states the learning goals for each module, including academic, personal, and career goals (Darby & Lang, 2019); and
- Active communication from the professor (Carpenter et al., 2021).

Through these various practices, transparent teaching is presented as an inclusive practice that benefits all learners and helps them shift the focus from the “how” or “why” of a course and assignment to the “what,” leading to more engagement with the course and the learning process (Carpenter et al., 2021; Eblen-Zayas, 2021; Zehnder et al., 2021).

TILT in Online Learning

TILT in online learning is an emergent field with little existing research. A foundational article by Howard et al. (2019) focuses on the implementation of transparent assignments (and a transparent syllabus) in an online political science course. Although the study expected to find that students performed better in in-person courses, the research findings show that students in the transparent online class outperformed students in the nontransparent online class and nontransparent in-person class, corroborating Sabrina and Lorraine’s understanding of the value of TILT for the online teaching modality.

Articles published in the May 2021 issue of *The Journal of Faculty Development* show that transparent teaching has emerged as a strategy for faculty to help students learn successfully during the challenging time of the pandemic. Most of these articles reflect on the fact that transparent methods allow for adaptability in various ways.

- Instructors can make changes as needed through a transparent and dynamic syllabus and through reflective assignments which allow for “bi-directional transparency to remain responsive to the unique situations” of students (Villalobos & Jessup, 2021, p. 76).
- The learning environment is more inclusive for students from various backgrounds and abilities (Londino-Smolar & Hansel, 2021).
- One of the main foci is on communication through making sure that faculty convey intent (Carpenter

et al., 2021) and provide “more personalized student-instructor interactions to emerge successful in an online environment” (Akella et al., 2021, p. 69).

- Instruction is focused on students and student learning outcomes (Carpenter et al., 2021).

Such research findings dovetail with the best practices for online education previously mentioned. In addition, the research suggests that transparent teaching methods can enhance such best practices in so far as they can “reduce the cognitive resources that online learners have to expend on tracking course organization” (Eblen-Zayas, 2021, p. 69) and, in the authors’ view, on understanding assignments. Transparent teaching methods merge the three forms of presence recommended by the community of inquiry framework: teaching presence, as instructors are intentional in their course design and in the connections they establish between the course material, the course goals, and the students’ academic, personal, and career goals; social presence, as transparent teaching is an inclusive and caring practice that shows respect for students’ varied abilities and allows them to focus on being creative with assignments and to personalize course goals for themselves; and cognitive presence, as transparent teaching helps “develop and enhance analytical and critical thinking skills and deepen student learning” (Howard et al., 2019, p. 2).

Study Purpose

Sabrina and Lorraine redesigned their asynchronous, online courses to utilize the TILT framework and have seen clear

indications via grades, informal conversations, and other markers that TILT is having a positive impact on student success in their courses. The purpose of this study is to examine students’ perceptions of TILT and provide more concrete data to support their use of TILT in their asynchronous, online classes. Sabrina and Lorraine wanted to confine their initial research inquiries to asynchronous, online courses since they both teach a significant number of courses online each academic year and because so little research about the impact of TILT on asynchronous, online courses has been conducted.

Methods

Participants

The study participants consisted of the 13 students enrolled in Sabrina’s undergraduate, asynchronous online Methods in Interdisciplinary Studies course and 13 of the 14 students enrolled in Lorraine’s undergraduate, asynchronous, online English Composition 1 course. One student in Lorraine’s course was excluded for being under 18 years old, per the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. Methods in Interdisciplinary Studies is a required, junior-level course in which students learn how to conduct interdisciplinary research, and English Composition 1 is an introductory writing course focused on developing argumentative writing skills.

Research Design

Sabrina and Lorraine administered a qualitative survey to students about their experience of the assignment instructions in their courses in terms of clarity, helpfulness,

and other factors that affect student learning. Surveys were anonymous, consisted of five open-ended questions, and were delivered to their classes separately using Microsoft Forms. The survey prompted students to read the assignments for the class and answer various questions about the clarity of the instructions, the purpose of the assignment, and the effectiveness of the tips or resources section (see Appendix A).

Sabrina and Lorraine posted announcements to their courses explaining the research project, the anonymity of the survey, that no compensation or extra credit was attached to student participation, and that only students 18 and older could participate. Finally, the announcement included the link to the Microsoft Form and indicated the two-week window students had to complete the survey. A reminder to complete the survey was posted shortly before finals.

After the survey closed, Sabrina and Lorraine collected student responses and analyzed the feedback.

Results and Discussion

Description of TILTed Courses

In order to present their findings in the most useful light, some explanation of Sabrina and Lorraine's course design and implementation of TILT is necessary. In 2019, Sabrina was introduced to TILT through a faculty development workshop offered by the Office of Faculty Development of the University System where she and Lorraine work. For Sabrina, this was a revelation and a turning point in her pedagogical approach. Shortly after the workshop, Sabrina was asked to turn her Methods in Interdisciplinary Studies course

into an asynchronous, online class because of increasing student demand for online classes. TILT proved to be a valuable "guiding philosophy" (Carpenter et al., 2021; p. 60), to transform a face-to-face class for an online learning environment.

TILT allowed Sabrina to take a step back and evaluate the class, and she noted that several aspects could be improved: the alignment of the assignments with the course goals, the real-world connection, and the scaffolding of the assignments. Sabrina made changes to all the assignments for the course and will discuss here the final project. The final assignment for the class is a project that Sabrina designed to focus on a real-world application of interdisciplinary studies (see Appendix B). The unit leading to the final project examines common socioeconomic and cultural obstacles to a healthy lifestyle. To improve the scaffolding of the project, Sabrina maintained the project pitch from the existing in-person iteration of the course, which ensures she can give feedback on the topics students select and the formats they choose for their projects. But she added a summary of the research students use to inform their projects. In course evaluations for the in-person iterations of the class, students had asked for more feedback opportunities. Therefore, Sabrina also added a peer review step where students receive feedback from classmates and herself on a draft of their projects. Finally, Sabrina assigned a short reflection paper in which students identify strengths and areas of improvement for their projects. For each step of the project, Sabrina included a purpose section detailing why she asked students to complete that step. Her hope is that students see that the steps in the assignment are not busy work but rather her way of ensuring they practice the skills they need and receive

the feedback they need before they move to the next phase of the project.

TILTing the assignment also helped Sabrina improve the real-world aspect of the assignment. The students' projects must raise awareness of the importance of healthy living for their communities, and they must have a plan to share the project with the members of their communities. Some students shared their podcasts on online platforms, others shared their videos or websites with their coworkers, and others organized garden planting days with their communities. The self-reflection papers show that students enjoyed the creative freedom of the assignment and the fact that their projects made an impact on their communities. The real-world dimension of the project led to more personal and focused projects than in previous years.

Lorraine has been teaching English Composition 1 online for over a decade; the course has naturally gone through multiple iterations and refinements over such a long period of time, and assignment alignment with student learning outcomes and assignment scaffolding already functioned well in the course. However, examining the class through the framework of TILT led Lorraine to more explicitly articulate the real-world purpose of the assignments in the course than she had in the past (see Appendix C). Students often do not understand that the skills they learn in one class are transferable to other courses and to situations outside their college careers. Students in English composition courses often mistakenly believe they are only learning how to write papers for English courses rather than learning the reading and writing skills they will need for all their college courses, their careers, and their lives as private citizens (see Appendix C). TILT

requires instructors to highlight how the skills assessed in a particular assignment will be used in the future, but Lorraine took that concept further in this English Composition I course; she also explained to students why she assigned each reading—to serve as a model for a particular element of writing, for example—and underscored the transferability of skills in discussion assignments with the class. She hoped that reinforcing the relevance of each assignment beyond the finite bounds of the duration of the course would help students become more invested in their success on those assignments. Because Lorraine has been teaching English Composition I online for many semesters, she was already aware of the most common errors students make on assignments for the course. The TILT framework for constructing assignments includes a tips section in which Lorraine listed those most common errors and specific advice to avoid them in the hopes that more clarity would lead to higher quality student work (see Appendix C).

Results

Student responses to the survey in both courses indicated that students recognized obvious benefits of the TILT framework. A handful of themes emerged from this feedback: clarity of instructions and purpose coupled with an abundance of tips and resources led to students feeling more prepared to attempt assignments because they better understood the expectations. All responses to the question regarding clarity stated that the instructions are clear. One student in Sabrina's course commented, "I like the simplicity of the way the instructions are written, it is almost in a 'step-by-step' form which allows us to foster creativity in a simple way without overthinking the topic too much." This

comment validated Sabrina's hope that the assignment instructions she provides are clear but not so stifling that they harm students' creativity. One of Lorraine's students commented, "I like the fact that the instructions are written clearly. There is little room for assumptions as to what the teacher is looking for in the assignment." The other wrote that "the instructions are clear, simple, and thorough."

Comments about the purpose section of the TILTEd assignments also corroborate Sabrina and Lorraine's perception of the way that section functions in their courses. One student commented to Sabrina's survey that the purpose section "helps us understand 'why am I writing about this and who is this for,'" and another also stated that "it helps you understand why you are doing it." Lorraine's student commented that "it makes you incorporate what we are learning in class to the world around us. It opens our eyes to what is right in front of us." Another of Lorraine's students responded, "The purpose section of the assignment does give a clear understanding as to why the assignment was give [sic] in respect to the material and the course."

Lorraine's students confirmed that the tips section of TILTEd assignments helped them to succeed on those tasks. One commented that "the tips and resources/help section of the assignments were a great tool," and the other said, "I use the tips as a sort of checklist to help me make sure I am staying on track with my assignment." Lorraine also saw support that the tips section works in the decreased number of questions she received about assignments over the course of the semester and the very small number of students making errors addressed by that section. Sabrina made a similar observation and noted that student

questions focused on the substance of the assignment (narrowing down the scope of the paper or project, for instance), rather than on clarifying the instructions.

Conclusions

This study has led Sabrina and Lorraine to several conclusions. Using TILT in their online classes has allowed them to be more intentional regarding assignments, course content, and real-world application, and they believe it has made them better online instructors. Redesigning their online courses to utilize TILT has reignited their passion for teaching and rekindled their enthusiasm for pedagogical experimentation. Devoting a significant portion of instructional space—whether that is a specially labelled section of assignments or instructor comments made in a video announcement to the class—to ensuring that students understand the purpose of course elements seems to have made a positive difference in student ownership and engagement in classroom tasks. TILT has provided Sabrina and Lorraine with a valuable way to be present for their students by relating the content of the class to the real world and by laying down clear expectations along with tips and helpful tools for the assignment.

One improvement Sabrina would like to make that would increase the transparency of the class is to indicate to students how much time each assignment and reading will take them to complete. She would also like to improve her tips for success section. To that end, she has started asking students for permission to share their work. However, Sabrina is hesitant as she wonders whether sharing too many examples could lead to what Torrance (2007) calls "criteria

compliance” (p. 282) when students believe their work must fit into a particular mold. For Sabrina, TILT is currently striking a balance between providing the tools needed to be successful while also offering the breathing room to be creative with the assignments. Lorraine would like to focus on enhancing her communication of the purpose of assignments. The same student in Lorraine’s course who commented that the purpose section “gives a clear understanding” also said, “Sometimes it is really useful, other times not so much.” This ambivalence about the value of the purpose section, even from a single student, demonstrates a clear need for Lorraine to continue refining that aspect of her courses. One way to improve communicating purpose to students might be to consider adopting a low stakes assignment entirely devoted to purpose.

Finally, both Sabrina and Lorraine conclude that TILTING assignments is a good start but not enough, and that is why they think the idea of extending TILT as a “guiding philosophy” is a fruitful approach. Sabrina’s student course evaluations overwhelmingly mention the in-depth feedback she provides and the fact that she responds to inquiries in a timely manner. Sabrina does not believe in being chained to her work email, and she does not respond to emails at all hours of the day and night, but she does respond promptly. Lorraine also believes strongly in grading quickly, responding to student emails quickly, and providing extensive feedback that allows students to improve on subsequent assignments. Students comment on the fact that Sabrina is approachable, and she thinks this stems from the ways she establishes presence in the class: she posts video announcements every week to recap the work they have done, clarify concepts, and talk about upcoming activities; and she uses

a variety of modes (written, video, and audio) to leave feedback on assignments. Lorraine posts weekly announcements to her course, maintains an active presence on discussion boards, and makes contact with her classes in the same variety of formats that Sabrina uses. All the students who responded to the survey Sabrina and Lorraine used in this study spontaneously mentioned instructor responsiveness and class presence as being at least, and possibly more, valuable than any of the elements of TILT on which they were directly surveyed.

Limitations

Sabrina and Lorraine must acknowledge the size limitations of this study. They each surveyed one class, and only three students in Sabrina’s class and two students in Lorraine’s class responded. As a result, they lack a significant number of student survey answers to definitively corroborate their understanding of the way TILT works in their asynchronous, online courses. They do not know for certain why such a small number of students participated. However, Sabrina and Lorraine administered the survey during the last two weeks of class, which is a busy time for students, and they did not offer any compensation or extra credit as incentives, factors which may have inhibited participation. While offering compensation and/or extra credit would violate the terms of the IRB agreement, conducting the study earlier in the semester might have resulted in higher levels of participation.

Additional limitations include the lack of demographic information about the students surveyed in the study. As a result, Sabrina and Lorraine cannot substantiate any of the claims made by other researchers

about the positive impact of TILT on the academic performance of underserved, underrepresented student populations. They also cannot comment on distinctions in the way different student populations in the courses surveyed experienced TILT. Finally, the terms of the IRB did not allow Sabrina and Lorraine to compare grades in the courses surveyed to grades in other courses they have taught.

Future Directions

Further study is needed on the effect of TILT on student success in the asynchronous, online classroom. Since Sabrina and Lorraine teach in different disciplines and Sabrina's teaching spans disciplines, they have the opportunity to include more disciplines than English and Interdisciplinary Studies in a future study. They also teach courses that run the gamut from freshman, introductory courses to upper-division level courses taken by seniors who are about to graduate; exploring whether the TILT framework is experienced differently by varying cohorts may also prove a productive avenue for future research. In the meantime, TILT has proven to be a valuable guiding philosophy to promote student success in asynchronous online classes.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Please read the instructions for the assignments in this class before you take the survey. It will be helpful to have them open in another window while you answer the following questions.

- What do you like and what do you dislike about the way the instructions are written?
- How clear are the instructions for the assignments in this class? If you don't think they are clearly written, how could they be improved?
- How does the purpose section help you understand the real-world relevance of the assignments? If you don't think the purpose section helps you understand the real-world relevance of the assignments, what suggestions do you have for improving that section?
- How did the tips or resources/help section of the assignments help you complete the assignments? If they weren't helpful, what suggestions do you have for improving that section?
- This is an asynchronous online class, and you do not have access to your instructor in real time. How did the instructions help you to successfully complete assignments without immediate access to instructor assistance? If you did not find the instructions helpful for completing assignments in the online environment, what suggestions do you have for improvement?

Appendix B

Guidelines for IDS Project

Purpose: For their second and final case study this semester, we are discussing healthy living and healthy eating. My purpose is twofold:

- **Professionalization** As I explained in the introduction to the class, one of my main goals for this class is your professionalization. One objective for the IDS project assignment is that this will be a helpful exercise in designing and conceiving a project and seeing it through.
- **Real-World Problem-Solving** My second objective with this project is to make you put together a product that will benefit your community. We saw when reading Repko at the beginning of the semester that IDS is meant to study a real-life problem and propose solutions. I will ask that you disseminate your project in your communities and to MGA. This will bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Task: You will create a project that raises awareness of the importance of healthy living/healthy eating by focusing on a specific problem.

Steps:

1. **Choose your target audience:** it can be MGA students, your workplace, your church community, a specific population. This is an essential part of your project as this will determine the format you pick.

2. **Choose your topic:** Do you want to talk about the importance of exercise? Focus on how to make time to cook healthy meals? Discuss work-life balance? The importance of educating children on how to eat healthy? Help people make good choices when shopping or eating out? Study the way marketing influences their eating choices? Understand the impact of dieting on people? Propose a plan for your city to improve parks, increase the number of bike paths and sidewalks? Raise awareness of the importance of sleep?

I want you to pick a topic that is **of interest to you** and that you believe will make the most impact on the community of people you choose as your target audience.

3. **Research your topic** so that you can make an informed product. You must have at least 2 scholarly sources (from different disciplines) that inform the conception and production of your project.

4. **Choose the format** that is the most appropriate for your topic and your community: a video, a website, a comic, a social media campaign, a podcast, an infographic, etc...Make sure that the format is appropriate for your audience. For instance, a social media campaign might be appropriate for teenagers but not for children. **You cannot do an oral presentation.**

5. **Complete your project.** It must be a finished product, i.e. if it's a website, it must be functional; if it's a brochure, it must fold correctly when printed, etc...

6. **Write a reflection paper.** [guidelines on the next page]

Criteria:

- The scope of your project is well defined. Your topic is clear, your target audience is clear, and the format you picked suits the target audience you chose.
- The project must educate your target audience on the importance of healthy living/healthy eating.
- Your research informs your finished product.
- Your project is polished, well thought out, well researched, creative, and appealing.
- Your 2-3-page paper reflects on your conception of the project, why you chose it, and your personal assessment of your final project – what are its strengths? what could you have done differently? What did you learn from the process?

Tools & Help: Do you need help crafting a good research question to guide your project?

- Re-read carefully Repko's chapter 10, specifically pages 251-266.
- Contact me!
- Read
this: <https://sites.evergreen.edu/media/works1516/wp-content/uploads/sites/121/2016/03/Research.pdf>
- Watch
this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWLYCYeCFak>

Appendix C

**Purpose Section from English
Composition 1 Narrative Essay
Assignment**

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate that you can successfully write a narrative essay.

I start this class with a narrative essay for a couple of reasons. Most students are more comfortable writing about themselves instead of jumping into the more complex kind of argumentative writing right at the beginning. The narrative is a good way to practice using MLA formatting, following directions, and writing an essay free of errors before getting into more difficult assignments. Also, narrative is an important part of argumentation. People are often more convinced by the "this happened to me" or "I have personal experience with this" portions of an argument than they are by facts and statistics. Narrative is a strategy you will employ in the argumentative essays you write later in the semester, so practicing that skill now is key.

You will likely be asked to write narratives of some kind in your future job. For example, annual self-evaluations are narratives; they're the stories you tell about your performance in a job and are key to earning raises and promotions.

This assignment satisfies student learning outcomes 3, 4, and 7 listed on your syllabus.

Tips for Success Section from English Composition 1 Discussion Assignments

- Remember that the comment box counts words to help you make sure you are meeting the word count requirement for your posts.
- Consider posting on the discussion board more than is required. Students often feel more positive about and have more fun in a class when their level of engagement with their fellow classmates is high.
- Remember you will not be able to see your classmates' posts to discussion boards until you make one of your own.
- Do not wait until close to the deadline for the discussion to make your initial post; if most students do that, completing the discussion becomes very difficult as there are few posts to which you can respond. Waiting also makes their discussions much less like actual conversations.