

ComS 222 Instructional Communication Term Project Proposal

- a. Name of student conducting the project: Energetic G. Student
- b. Working title of the project: Empowering Ethnic Studies Learners in Higher Education: Instilling Academic Ownership Through Alternative History
- c. Rationale of the project: I intend to create a web-based teaching module using LOCUS for a course I would like to teach focusing on Chicanos in 20th Century U.S. history. The Chicano subpopulation in the United States is growing at a fast pace, but it continues to lag behind other ethnic groups in the attainment of higher education. This project proposes a web-based course module that I will teach at the community college or university level to Ethnic Studies students next semester. The course is a lower division level course which will be offered to men and women, freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors in college. The class will have a regular face-to-face meeting time and place. The material for this component of the course will be accessible on-line through LOCUS. The discussion cycle (Tu & Corry, 2003) of this electronic component of the course will be two class sessions. The discussion duration (Tu & Corry, 2003) will be two weeks. In keeping with one of the course objectives, I will be exploring the use of electronic media in the classroom.

Comment [MS1]: Grounding project design in relevant research maintains connection to theory and proven practice; the project has a clearer context and consequently more meaning and value than one created "off the cuff."

Many students have been exposed to the experiences of Mexican-Americans (and other ethnic groups, for that matter) in the United States through traditional history textbooks and lectures based on those textbooks. The advantage of utilizing Internet technology is (1) exposure to information which can otherwise be difficult to find or altogether absent in educational textbooks; (2) it allows students flexibility with regard to their exposure to the material and in their learning rates; (3) it can alleviate the "teacher-in-the-center" problem found in many instructors' classroom designs. For the period between the first class session and second class session of the electronic component, learning can be asynchronous, with students logging on to LOCUS at different times. Students will be able to log on as often as they wish and at any time.

Advances in technology have spilled into the classroom. Some believe the use of

electronic media in education is the wave of the future. Distance learning is a hot topic and a hot marketing area in education. This small component of a course with an established face-to-face meeting time and place is not meant to promote distance learning. It is merely an attempt to acknowledge the growing use of technology in traditional classrooms and to take advantage of what electronic media has to offer in the way of access to information and student participation. As opposed to the web based course whose members never meet, this web-based component will integrate technology as one aspect of an otherwise traditional face-to-face course.

Conventional methods of teaching, utilizing what Freire coined and critiqued as the "banking model" of education have hampered the efforts of under-represented ethnic groups to increase their success of post-secondary educational attainment. Exploration of different methods of teaching and styles of learning could prove effective in raising the educational persistence of Chicano students. By giving students access to web-based course material, and utilizing discussion - both online and in class - to enhance the creation of knowledge, I aim to introduce the concept of "ownership" regarding students' educational experiences.

d. Specific goals of the project: (1) To know what sources of information (print and electronic) constitute a broadly appropriate array for scholarly historical work; (2) To develop a specific list of such sources of information about the experiences of US. Chicanos.

Comment [MS2]: These goals now have a proper instructional focus on student outcomes; they are precisely crafted and serve as a better guide for work than the previous version.

e. A detailed plan of activities you will complete to finish the project; include a timeline and assignments of responsibilities: Using LOCUS, I will create a web space where students will have access to electronic material such as links to noteworthy historical and educational sites, such as "Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey of California," "Smithsonian: Latino History and Culture," and "Tierra Nuestra: The Chicano West" and "pbs.org", among others. I will also post suggested readings and video titles from which students can choose for a writing assignment and brief oral presentation to share their acquired knowledge regarding US. Chicano history gained through the project. The nature of the writing assignments will be a short essay (two pages) in which the students will reveal something they learned about Chicanos in the

United States and the impact to them of this new knowledge. I will be researching, gathering and posting material to LOCUS and creating writing prompt(s) for students to begin their writing assignments.

Students will be given access to a web-based course module and will explore posted electronic resources on LOCUS. Through the "controversies" discussion method (Tu & Corry, 2003), students will engage in an on-line discussion responding to various aspects about the controversy(ies) posed on-line. They will be required to participate with regular frequency - two to three times per week (Tu & Corry, 2003). Pre- and post-surveys will be used as an indication of the effect of the project in terms of student goals. The surveys will ask students pertinent questions about their knowledge of the subject matter and will measure before-and-after results. Students will be asked to summarize what they took away from the lesson in relation to their own pursuit of higher education, using the post-survey. The post-survey will also include questions to measure both the cognitive and affective domains regarding completion of the project. The project attempts to address the method of education identified by Paulo Freire's critique of the so-called "banking model" and the "student as repository" problem in education.

f. Description of the final product that will emerge from your work: A web space which includes internet links, print and video resources and, ultimately, students' on-line discussion postings. It is hoped that students will come away with not only an understanding of the rich history of the Chicano subpopulation but, also a clear and definite sense of ownership in their own education and the creation of new and meaningful knowledge.

g. Discuss design choices and their effects on students: My thinking in doing this project was to explore options to add to and enhance the learning that takes place in the traditional classroom. I am not particularly fond of online or distance learning. However, knowing what I know from direct observation and experience, I feel that having the ability to conduct an online component of a traditional course could be useful and enriching for students' learning experiences. It could also be a very practical skill for the instructor who might find herself being pulled away from the

classroom to attend a professional conference or workshop. And, as you know, some scholars have identified and documented useful aspects and rich learning experiences that online teaching modules can foster.

The typical college student is a young adult assumed to have fairly sophisticated skills of computer use. Obviously, this is not true for all students, especially low SES students, but an increasing number of students rely heavily on computers to augment their college education. For those students for whom computer access is not a foregone conclusion, access to a computer can be liberating and can afford them the opportunity they may not have at home. Offering a class which utilizes the Internet and computer technology to supplement traditional face-to-face instruction I feel will be an important discovery tool for students. Having a week or two-week period where learning takes place outside the classroom and at students' own pace (albeit with a timeline), where they can choose among two or three online resources to learn about the subject material, I hope engages them, empowers them and excites them about the creation of new knowledge. Therefore, having the links to two or three educational web sites, excerpts from a book or two, and providing students the ability to conduct online discussions among their classmates affords a unique learning opportunity that face-to-face instruction sometimes lacks. From a practical standpoint, Internet resources are also sometimes easier to access than traditional textbooks and can offer students more variety in material.

References

Tu, Chih-Hsiung and Michael Corry. (2003). *Designs, management tactics, and strategies in asynchronous learning discussions*. Quarterly review of distance education 4, 303-315.

Comment [MS3]: Required for citations

Questions for Pre-Survey and Post-Survey

Comment [MS4]: A good idea to include this sort of material to get feedback on design and make sure no human subjects violations lurk here.

Please **circle** the answer that best characterizes your feelings.

1. What is your perception of electronic media as a tool for learning?

Extremely useful Somewhat useful Not useful

2. How easy is it for you to access electronic information?

Easy Somewhat easy Difficult Very difficult

3. How much course activity should be accessed online?

All Some Little None

4. Overall, you feel you learn more from:

Face-to-face instruction Online instruction