

Bill's Advice about Online Course Preparation June 17, 2007

Erin,

The best way to approach your online course is to be prepared. I always advise to make a trip to Office Depot and pickup binders, dividers, printer cartridges, and other things that make creating of your own notebook easy. I created an admin closet with printer paper, pens, cartridges, etc. This made my years of online courses very easy. I begin by printing the entire syllabus and post it into the notebook. This gives me access to most of the assignments, reading assignments, and links to other web resources. This helps because sometimes you are working on coursework and aren't online.

I always buy all the text books and read them. I know this is hard, but I've found this to be very helpful. I use and loan my notebooks and text books all the time. Order your books well in advance, so you aren't waiting for your books.

One piece of advice that truly pays dividends deals with the mind-set about online learning. A person must adjust their thinking, both within themselves and within their family and friends, to make their online course as legitimate and time appropriate as a traditional class would be to all of them. What I mean by this is to validate your time to go study or write assignments. When you make it a hard scheduled priority your family and friends will encourage you instead of sabotage you. They don't mean to sabotage you, and most times they don't understand that online courses are more convenient, not less time intensive. They actually are much more time intensive, since you are getting to deeper levels of understanding and manipulation. Plus, you are reading your classmates papers and writing about their views. This just takes time!

With the online format, you will know your class better than you ever did in a traditional classroom. This can be especially true for graduate programs. If you remember in undergraduate there were people who would settle for a "C", but in grad programs most people are there for an "A". It's obvious, so developing teams becomes easy and they tend to last. At least this was my experience.

As for the facilitator, this is one component that can't be overstated. The facilitator isn't actively leading the class through their coursework, but they provide the guidance for the class as they move as a unit through their coursework. As the class develops and online discussions evolve, the facilitator will respond to discussions in appropriate ways. This may be only a few posts, instead of responding to everyone's posting. If the facilitator is the focus, the course is not being facilitated well. It should be the coursework and subjects being discussed that are the focus. Just some thoughts for you to keep in mind.

If you want, here is the link to my capstone project "Learning Culture" thesis:

http://courses.international.edu/edu669jan078s1/bsalmonedu669/Final_Drafts_of_Chapters_As_of_02_25_07/The_Learning_Culture_files/slide0001.htm

You can also go to my personal web site: billsalmonlearningassociates.com This is what I'm developing while I write the "Learning Culture" book that comes from my thesis.

The "Adult Learner" by Malcom Knowles, is the simply the best adult learning book I've found.

Please let me know if I can help in any way.

See you soon, Bill