



Course Design: Best Practices

00:08–00:26

Andrew Coletti: Hello and welcome back to season two of the T in Teaching, a podcast made for higher education professionals and students alike to bridge the divide between technology, teaching and learning. The Online and Digital Learning Department here at Fox wanted to start this season of the podcast with ideas and tips, for course designed prior to the start of the fall semester.

00:26–00:56

Andrew Coletti: Therefore, to start season two, we'll be dropping one episode of the T in Teaching podcast each week for the month of August. Each episode will cover a different topic, a course design, as well as new ideas, tips and strategies for updating and developing new courses. To start season two, our hosts, Shawn Ponder and Sarah McCarthy discuss the best practices when designing or updating your course and shared various do's and don'ts for course creation based on feedback from faculty and students alike.

00:56–01:00

Andrew Coletti: Thanks for listening and please enjoy.

01:02–01:06

Shawn Ponder: Hi, I'm Shawn Ponder, and I'm here with my wonderful colleague.

01:06–01:08

Sarah Mccarthy: Hi I am Sarah McCarthy.

01:08–01:36

Shawn Ponder: And we're so excited to give you some great tips and best practices of course design. A well-designed course is essential for student learning and growth in the classroom. We want to provide tips and tricks for building an effective course. So, Sarah, I'm going to start with you. And the first thing I want to know is what's one of your most memorable, well-designed courses that you've taken?

01:36–01:56

Sarah Mccarthy: A great course that I took. It's interesting because I took the course at an undergrad level and then I took a very similar course at the grad level. And she did, you know, she did different things with each of us, which was nice. But the way she kind of designed her courses was very similar to the way that she designed her training because she was a training faculty.

01:56–02:19

Sarah Mccarthy: She did a lot of workshops and training with Philadelphia police temple. She did HR stuff. It was very interesting, but she did a wonderful job of tying homework readings. Anything that we would do before class to the class. So, she'd come in, we'd review things, she'd we'd ask our questions. But the main bulk of class, she would call the entree.

02:19–02:42

Sarah Mccarthy: You know, appetizer, entree, dessert. And it was very experiential learning. And she was very intentional with everything. So, we would come to class, she would clarify if anyone was confused on stuff, she would generate ideas and improve upon by giving her personal examples, and then it would follow up with the class discussion. You know, students would give their personal example.

02:42–03:00

Sarah Mccarthy: She would kind of give us time to relate to the content, to clarify, and then we would follow up with like presentations and the experiential learning part where we would kind of be guiding the class. She would be more of a sage. No what did she say? The guide on the side versus the sage on the stage.

03:00–03:03

Shawn Ponder: And I love that!

03:03–03:17

Sarah Mccarthy: Yeah. So yeah, I just, I really liked both of her courses because she involved us so much in the content in the learning process, clarifying, following up to make sure it was, you know, solidified for us. That was one of my best classes.

03:17–03:47

Shawn Ponder: And I think that's a fun class. You know, the thing is, is like when you are when when you're not included, right. Especially as an adult who has like a lot of experience, then you don't want to share your story. But when the instructor includes you in the learning, then it helps you to connect what you already know or the experience that you have and as you can bring to the table so that your peers can learn something new as well.

03:47–04:02

Shawn Ponder: And so what I like too, is that she also seems like the type of professor that kept herself open to learning more and that that you just know everything. So a good teacher also keeps themselves open to learning. And so that's what she sounds like to me. So that's really cool.

04:02–04:24

Sarah Mccarthy: Yeah, she definitely mentioned the lifelong learning aspect, which was very, very€ I respected that so much because she had so much experience and yet she was very humble and I'm still learning with you. There's always new ways of doing things or learning things or going about what we've been doing forever, especially in the training world, when she just she was had so much energy.

04:24–04:27

Sarah Mccarthy: It was fun. Like we were involved in class in the learning process.

04:28–04:48

Shawn Ponder: And that also reminds me to this is like that means that students were listened to and that just talked at. And so you are just even the smile that you get talking about her, it just that goes to show you that she did a great job, including you all. And listening to. So I think that's fantastic.

04:48–05:06

Sarah Mccarthy: Absolutely. She did great job at that. So I have a follow up question for you. So what are some things professors can do to prepare for their courses, whether it's a new course or they're updating content? What would you recommend?

05:06–05:30

Shawn Ponder: That's a good question. Well, one thing I would recommend, especially if it's a new course, is a blueprint. You know, just mapping out a course as detailed as possible, of course, objectives, learning objectives and, you know, tying them back to the content that they want to assign. And then also really pondering, you know, why am I given this assignment?

05:30–05:53

Shawn Ponder: And so that helps when you are able to tie back the learning objectives and the program objectives back to the assignment, because it helps you to understand your why. And then if you've already

done that part, you know, a syllabus mapping it out, you know, all the assignments, family descriptions, course descriptions, and then also when you're mapping out the assignment, like what?

05:53–06:26

Shawn Ponder: What are some of your expectations? You know, how long is the paper or how long is a presentation like really given some detail like putting yourself in the student for my students perspective and think about like how you want it mapped out so that you can do a good job and then creating a grade breakdown not exceeding 30%, as you always say, that's all your favorite thing to say, and then creating a great attendance policy so that they'll know the expectations of, well, first of all, students, you should definitely go to class all the time.

06:26–06:43

Shawn Ponder: But if you miss a class like what's with that policy? How are you held accountable? A late assignment policy, like if you turn in something late, I mean, things happen, but what are your expectations for the students? And then also a rubric so don't know how they're being greeted?

06:44–07:10

Sarah Mccarthy: Yeah, interesting. So those are all wonderful. I actually just remembered one more thing she did. She made us sign a syllabus contract saying we read the syllabus. You know, we don't have questions. We're going to. And she had attendance policy, late policy. So, we knew going in the expectations best offer. And you know it's save time in class we didn't have as many questions about like, well, what do I need to do for this paper that ten pages, Is it 12?

07:10–07:11

Sarah Mccarthy: There's a difference.

07:12–07:17

Shawn Ponder: There's a difference. Especially when you just like like I don't have anything else.

07:17–07:22

Sarah Mccarthy: Yeah. So she did a lot of that. That's I like going over this because I just it was a great course.

07:22–07:38

Shawn Ponder: Yeah. And then, you know, also I've seen it where there weren't like any due dates. I think it's important to have some type of due date like when is this assignment due? And then also like, how much time do I have? And then also kind of be a little bit consistent with it. So, if you have a discussion board, do on Tuesdays 11:59 PM, O would recommend being a little consistent with it every week.

07:38–07:53

Shawn Ponder: You know, so the students get a kind of a feel of how to map out their day to day and also how to prepare for that discussion board too.

07:53–08:04

Sarah Mccarthy: Yeah. Oh gosh. If I was a student, they had it all over the place. I'd be like, Well, let's do this time last Monday. So I'm going to have it done this time next Monday. That'd be that's, yeah, that would.

08:04–08:09

Shawn Ponder: Be more consistent. Even if it's asynchronous, you should have some type of consistency.

08:09–08:13

Sarah Mccarthy: So where can faculty go for these kind of support?

08:13–08:35

Shawn Ponder: Well, I'm glad you asked Sarah. We are instructional designers and there's something that we enjoy doing and it's something that we would love for professors to come and attend our campus, drop in sessions. And then also, you know, you can send us an email if you have any questions or concerns, like we're always here to help make your course even better.

08:35–08:48

Shawn Ponder: And then also sometimes we host workshops, we have wonderful podcasts that they can also listen to for additional resources. But yeah, just always feel free to reach out to us. And you can also attend our drop-in session.

08:48–08:57

Sarah Mccarthy: Yeah, I know. Coming up, we'll be having some fellow coworkers coming over from assessment and accreditation to talk more about rubrics and instructions.

08:57–08:59

Shawn Ponder: So this is very important.

08:59–09:02

Sarah Mccarthy: Yes, it all ties back.

09:02–09:08

Shawn Ponder: So, Sarah, how to focus on the quality of the content, like how do they do that in their course?

09:09–09:29

Sarah Mccarthy: So definitely quality over quantity. I would say like, you know, when it comes to homework, especially if you're updating a course or if you're looking at like, is the content new this year? Is it the same as last year? If there's something new, you need to add, why are you adding it? Is it because a lot has changed?

09:29–09:57

Sarah Mccarthy: Or like I know accounting and finance, they have a lot of current changes, changes to the policies and the way things are done. So, you know, if you're tying it in to that, obviously you need to update regularly. But if it's articles, are you, are you relating it to current topics, past topics, Is it preparing them for a discussion or preparing them for assignments that are coming down that they're going to have to write papers in a couple of weeks?

09:57–10:14

Sarah Mccarthy: You know, we've talked about andragogy before, the adult learner. These students want to know why they're being assigned this. What is the reason they need to know this information? Don't just give busy work. Are they going to need this for their paper or are they going to need this for when they're in the workforce?

10:15–10:15

Shawn Ponder: Is it for a group assignment?

10:15–10:20

Sarah Mccarthy: How to work with their other students?

10:20–10:40

Shawn Ponder: So I agree with that. And then also again, we can't stress enough the importance of making sure that is relevant. And then how you can do that is student feedback. Yeah, you know, asking them questions at the beginning of the semester, checking in and with the students weekly. Like, "Hey, how did you like the content that we were sharing this week?"

10:41–11:07

Shawn Ponder: You know, it is it was a meaningful and then also even at the end of the semester getting the feedback. So then that way they can improve for the next semester and not just relying on SFF, but also having your own personal survey and then also some videos. We have a whole studio that professors can take advantage of and create new content that can be used in other classes as well.

11:07–11:15

Shawn Ponder: And so, I think that that's highly important to consistently like, you know, update your videos so that students can have some relevant content.

11:16–11:35

Sarah Mccarthy: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I've had some faculty that do student forums at the beginning of the semester like what are you excited to learn about this in this course? What do you know already coming in? Weekly ones. You know what was confusing this week? What do I need to clarify next week? What are you excited for?

11:35–11:54

Sarah Mccarthy: And then we have the SFFs. But certainly I know faculty, whether you know this or not, you can add questions to the SFFs. You can create your own. You know, we have access to Qualtrics and other survey material programs. Take advantage of all that. You know, we have so many tools at our disposal.

11:54–12:12

Shawn Ponder: And keep a discussion board open to ask questions. You know, like, hey, this is just a question, discussion board. You can have this at the beginning, the middle or the end. You can always feel free. And then what's even more special is that sometimes when she's asked questions, there might be another student in the class that can help out as well.

12:12–12:34

Shawn Ponder: So being very inclusive. So, you know, we just we just wanted to drop some little tips and tricks and do's and dontâ€™s and little best practices. But we'll be back for more episodes to continue this conversation because it's just too good to stop here. Thank you all so much for listening. And we look forward to meeting you back.

12:35–12:36

Sarah Mccarthy: On the podcast. More tea later!

12:36–12:53

Shawn Ponder: More tea later.