



OLTD 503 - Reflection on Running a Seminar (The Hose)

The main things I have learned from 503 may seem obvious at first: one, that my presence - what I bring to the table - is extremely important to my online course, and it can make or break my community; two, that building this community and ensuring people care about each other and the group is the most efficient, healthier way for the course itself to thrive and for *learning* to happen.

For this piece of evidence, I chose the website for the Seminar we ran together as a group. We all had great insight and contributed equally to the overall success of the project; I had the idea of organizing things on the website and of using some sort of gamification system throughout. I love working out the graphics, so I had a lot of fun putting the website together in Weebly, making logos, badges and so on. I also had the idea of dividing the work into four sections, one for each member of the group. My section was section 2, which dealt with filtering the information that comes from the internet. I chose to use humour and quick, unique activities to generate connections between the group. The activities involved collaborating on a whiteboard, taking pictures of themselves, watching a funny video, reading through an infographic, doing a quick online search as well as tweeting results. I added one of my favourite infographics, which has a summary on how to do a proper search on Google. I remember when the Internet arrived in Brazil, this was the first thing you learned; now we just hope kids to know these tricks from birth, which is totally unrealistic.

I would have liked to have had the experience of actually running one of the discussions, as I would have liked to try some other method of synchronous sharing of information other than discussing it. I find that open discussions online tend to get stilted, feel forced or awkward, and there are other ways to connect and get people talking about what they have learned other than discussing what was learned. I could put an image prompt up, and ask people to type the first word that comes to their mind; after this, I could ask them to explain their choice

of word. Or, I could split everyone into groups and give them a task by chunking the information they were introduced to -- "this group will talk about A, this group will talk about B, this group will talk about C" and so on; after ten minutes, they would have to come back to the group and share the three most important take-aways from their topic. A little like jigsaw, but an online version of it.

One of the activities I wish I had spent more time on was the one where I requested students to send me a picture of themselves holding a sign with their favourite app or software that they use to restrict or organize the flow of information found online. My intention was to make some sort of collage, to show them all together -- I thought this would help build community and it would be fun to have that pictorial. Unfortunately, I got caught up with work and could not complete this in time for the end of the week: our seminar time was over, but I still kept thinking of the idea, and that it would have been good if I could have done it easier somehow. A couple of weeks later, I had the opportunity to attend the Digital Learning Conference, and was so happy to see my exact idea being used through Padlet. The presenter suggested asking students to upload photos of themselves holding hashtags that symbolize or summarize what they are all about; this created a visual representation of the whole class. What a brilliant idea to do during the first weeks of an online course!

I also wish I had explored the gamification aspect a little better. The badge system worked to a certain extent, but on an actual full course, I would like to add more aspects of gaming, such as cooperation within a team and competition with another team. Due to our one-week timeframe, this was a little tough to do.

This seminar and the work that went into planning and executing it shows good evidence for the following program outcomes: **Demonstrating basic competency with design and implementation within a variety of online learning environments and tools**, as well as **moderation and mediation**.

This course allowed us to take a giant step further towards actually becoming online teachers. Some of us already teach online, but for me, this was the first time I actually taught something online only, and to people who I have never met before. This was a huge breakthrough, and I am excited to try running my own full course in the future; imagine how fun I would have if I had more time to plan extra activities!