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## **Blended Learning Technologies Seminar**

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### **Introduction**

As much as technology has become part of our daily lives, so have the Internet and the Wide World Web. “The Web is now causing educators, from pre-school to graduate school, to re-think the very nature of teaching, learning, and schooling.” (Owston 1997). There are new formats where courses incorporate technology as a distinguished feature from a traditional course (Sun 2004). They are called hybrid-courses (Sands 2002), blended courses (Saunders 2003), or mixed delivery courses (McFadden 2004).

As a blended course incorporates characteristics of both the face-to-face and the online classrooms, it offers you the best of both worlds as learning can occur in synchronous and asynchronous modes. In such a setting, students receive the benefit of traditional interaction with you and other students while at the same time being exposed to web-based learning paradigms (Black 2001). Using Web-based resources in the classroom offers a wide variety of benefits: it increases student interest in the course materials, introduces the "real-world" into the curriculum, provides timely information, allows them to communicate with content experts, fosters independent learning and exploration, expands information technology competency skills, and increases critical thinking skills (Freberg 2000).

The *Blended Learning Technologies* seminar was designed specifically for RPI faculty with input from RPI faculty. It reflects current educational trends and research in instructional design. It guides you in your integration of Web-based technologies in your face-to-face classroom and helps you develop an understanding of the course management system (CMS) currently used at RPI: WebCT. To guide you in this endeavor, the seminar is designed to create a situated learning environment and affords you an opportunity to play the dual role of designer and student.

### **Description of the seminar**

The seminar spans over a period of four weeks. This allows you to focus on critical aspects of course development and integration of technology as well as reflect and discuss the various issues that are raised. The Web-based components of the seminar open and close with two face-to-face sessions called “bookends” (Figure 1.)

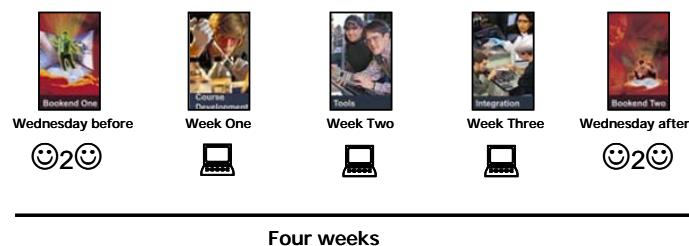


Figure 1

Throughout the seminar, you get support not only from the other participants, but from the moderators and the course developer assigned to work with you one-on-one. At the end of the seminar, you will have one week of instruction designed and formatted in WebCT and the various, critical documents created to support the integration of Web-based technologies in your face-to-face classroom. These will include the

design brief for your entire course, your reflective journal, and transcripts of the key discussion topics. For up to one year after the seminar, you will continue to receive support from a course developer and are invited to continue your participation on the discussion board.



### **Bookend One**



This first face-to-face part of the seminar takes place a few days before the beginning of the online activities. The session enables you to introduce yourself and get to know the other participants. It also enables the moderators to describe the goals and objectives of the seminar and identify the needs and expectations of each participant. The session is videotaped, then streamed and posted on the site. You then have an opportunity to view the recording and review specific topics raised during the meeting.



### **Course Development**



The first week of the seminar focuses on course development and instructional design. You start the process of integrating web-based technologies into your face-to-face classroom. You engage in this process through a blend of synchronous and asynchronous, online and off-line activities. You analyze and evaluate your own current teaching practices, identify and utilize various Web-based tools, and formulate a strategy to design one week of instruction that integrates Web-based technologies. The week opens with a chat session and ends with an Elluminate conference, enabling you to experience, first hand some of the Web-based tools you can incorporate in your course.



### **Tools**



During week two of the seminar, you engage in the process of selecting the Web-based tools that best support your objectives and expectations for your course. You identify the most appropriate user interface from a selection of templates and create, in PowerPoint, a customized look-and-feel. You analyze and evaluate their own, current teaching practices, identify and select various Web-based tools, and design one week of instruction that integrates Web-based technologies. You create the design brief, a dynamic document that identifies your instructional objectives for the course and for the selected unit of instruction, defines design standards, including the look and functionality of the site, and the Web-based tools to be used.



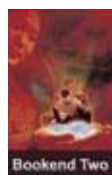
### **Integration**



Once you have completed the design brief, selected the look-and-feel and tools for your course, you are ready to start the integration of the Web-based technologies into your classroom by creating, in WebCT, a prototype for one week of instruction. This is done through a series of one-on-one sessions with your course developer. This final week of the seminar is fully customized to fit your specific needs.



### **Bookend Two**



This second face-to-face session takes place a few days after the third week of the seminar at a date and time agreed upon by all participants. The session enables you to showcase your first week of instruction, demonstrate and discuss your accomplishments and activities, and evaluate your experience. This session too is videotaped and streamed on the site.

## **References:**

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