EDCI 335—Learning Design

Description of the Logic of this Course

This course is designed to take you through a series of activities divided into 5 blocks in which you develop skills related to the design of learning objects and learning environments. ***The point of this course is NOT to make you memorize this or that little fact about designing for learning but to give you opportunities to get into the modes of designing, which provides you with opportunities to develop the dispositions and attitudes of a designer of learning resources / objects***. The 4th block has you plan, build, and analyze and test a learning object. The first three blocks are designed to provide you with opportunities to develop some of the required skills. Thus, *throughout the first three blocks, you should be thinking about what you want to build as a learning object at the end, and about how what you read and do will relate to and be reflected in that final project*. The Learning Journal (Block 5), a personal blog in which you document your thinking about learning and designing for learning, is also integral because it gives you a platform for critically reflecting on your own thinking, which is an important asset to a practitioner in any field, and especially in the field of design (cf. *The Reflective Practitioner,* Donald Schön, 1983).

The logic underlying the design of this course is this:

Block 1. You learn about some central issues in learning, issues that designers (educators, teachers, designers) frequently do not think about. You do so by reading three texts, for each of which you (a) write a summary of the key things you took away and (b) you suggest ways in which the research findings will shape the design of learning objects (you do not yet need to know your own) (*Assignments 1a, 1b, 1c*).

Block 2. Two readings related to the analysis of online learning objects are provided. They are designed to tune you into finding out what supports and what interferes with learning when accessing a learning object (resource). You then conduct such a study and report your results (*Assignment 2*). You may choose any material and in any context that leads (some) users to learn something. For example, it could be a video posted to teach something, or a YouTube video on learning how to fix a bicycle, cook, or learn chemistry. You could think of interactive websites, PowerPoint slides, newspaper features, etc.

Block 3. Although professional designers and design teams will do usability studies, which show how users interact with the designed object, many designers of educational materials do not conduct usability research to see how potential users learn, are hindered learning, etc. In this block, two video and associated usability studies are provided. Some links to overviews of intents and how-tos of usability studies are provided. After viewing the video and reading the studies, you will do a small usability study and report its result (*Assignment 3*).

Block 4. To give you experience with learning object design, you will create an interactive learning object based on a topic of your choosing. The type of learning object is up to you: for example, you can create a small eBook, Flash/HTML5-based interactive resource, interactive video, blog, educational game or other object (*Assignment 4*). You first submit a plan (design of

learning object, design of usability study), then build the learning object, test it, and write a report.

Learning Journal. To provide you with an opportunity to reflect on your own learning, you are asked to keep a _learning journal_. There are <mark>6 (six) weekly entries</mark> (500+ words) in the learning journal. In these entries, you describe **CONCRETE** events in which you stumbled in learning, where you were surprised to find out something new, where you attempted to follow instructions, etc. Then you reflect on the event, describing what we (as a community of learners) can learn from that experience. (_Assignment 5_)

Problem-based Learning and Group Work
Research has shown that _problem-based learning_ is an ideal learning environment. (I have taught middle and high school students in this way.) In problem-based learning environments, groups of students engage with some task and submit the results of their work together. Even Block 1, which is concerned with reading about theoretical issues in learning and some of the fundamental constraints on learning, should be thought as a project; are thus encouraged to work in groups of 3 to 5 students. The group then is a "reading group," in which members discuss issues and report back to the instructor. Blocks 2–4 are completed in groups of 3–5 students; you organize yourself and choose the partners you want to work with. Considerable work is involved in each of these three blocks; the tasks are thus is designed to be completed by groups rather than individually. You complete the Learning Journal on your own.

For Block 2 and Block 3, you remain in the same grouping (you can switch during the first week of Block 2). You may switch groups or form new groups for Block 4 activities. You may use the group forum feature to discuss within your group; and your discussion is not available to anyone from outside the group.