

Isaac Ewuoso—Online Writing Instruction Teaching Philosophy

My Teaching Philosophy on Online Writing Instruction (OWI)

With the booming changes to technology and the continued rise of the new media, I agree with the conclusion that “writing instruction must prepare students to communicate effectively in the 21st century” (Graham et al, 2016 p. 329). While there are challenges in teaching writing an online class, such as the fact that today many online college classrooms “are filled with underprepared students such as veterans, first generation learners, international students, single parents, and returning adult students,” I believe that there are mitigating effects that can impact a course’s outcome, especially the design choices that an instructor makes for the course (Brown 2011). Establishing netiquettes, benchmarks that will guide students’ entries and participation, problematizing my student’s demography and learning needs, fostering their engagement in activities by adopting a range of voices, incorporating elements of multimodality, and applying minimalist designs to the crafting of instructional materials sums up my core strategies for teaching writing in an online space.

Identifying my students’ demographic population and the typical learners that constitute my class will be my chief aim in the first module of my course. Problematizing their needs and technological affordances, I will anticipate that my students will likely fall under two categories of learners: field-dependent and field independent learners (Lynn-Chambers, p.76). The former are students who rely “on cues and structure from their environment” and “heavily on external stimuli to motivate them” while the later are students who “are less socially oriented but “task-oriented, focused, disciplined learners,” who “prefer more formal learning environments (Lynn-Chambers, p.76). To balance the various learning needs and styles in my class I believe in incorporating multimodality into my course readings and lecture materials that will include, and

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is not limited to, hyperlinked texts, article readings (both PDF and word documents), charts, visual maps and diagrams, YouTube videos, podcast audio, and other audio visuals.

As research projects constitute a major assignment given in most first-year writing courses, and by implication, my course, I will encourage the use of internet-based applications like Google docs, and Noodle Tools. To do this, I believe it is necessary to apply minimalist designs to the construction of my class handouts, course calendar, course syllabus, lesson activities, and assignments. OWI scholars, Harris, Nier-Weber, and Borgman (2016) write that “the key to minimalist design is to closely align individual activities and course assignments with multiple course goals or course learning outcomes” (19). Particularly, my OWI course will approach writing, reading, and research from an argument perspective, serving to reinforce multiple learning skills, such as summary, evaluation, and analysis. On major assignments in my class, research papers and annotated bibliographies, group activities on online discussion board posts will “perform a cohesive and well-chosen set of” scaffolded tasks that will help my students the course’s goals and objectives (19).

Adapting to the roles of a “conceptual facilitator” (i.e highlighting or parsing out important concepts, “conceptual landscape,” in the readings of a module), “reflective guide” (i.e summarizing, “with slightly different emphasis,” important points on class’s online post and students’ responses to them), and a “mediator” (i.e synthesizing various points of agreements or disagreements echoed in student-to-student post responses or responses “in support of the central goal” of the thread), at various stages of my class’s module activities, using various tools of communication, zoom recorded videos or podcast recorded audios, or discussion board prompts, my course will challenge students to develop responses that are clear, focused, and thorough,

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“clarifying or focusing on important points, highlighting connections, or uncovering tensions” in model topics (Collison et al p, 102-118).

Some of my synchronous class activities will require students to engage with technological tools that can foster group collaboration like Zoom and Google docs; and student-student peer review research paper drafts will take place synchronously and asynchronously, on shared Google word documents, with students having the option to use “track changes,” “reject,” “accept,” or “comments” functions on Word document. With a minimalist design approach, holistically, many activities in my course will highlight multiple course goals such as “critical thinking, reading, writing & research,” “rhetorical knowledge,” “processes,” “composing in electronic environment,” and “knowledge of conventions.” (Council of Writing Program Administrators 2008). These outcomes will be sandwiched between my scaffolding activities and my course assignments, and in the final assignment of project of my class which will asks students to produce an argumentative research essay or a rhetorical analysis essay, depending on theme of my composition class in a given semester.

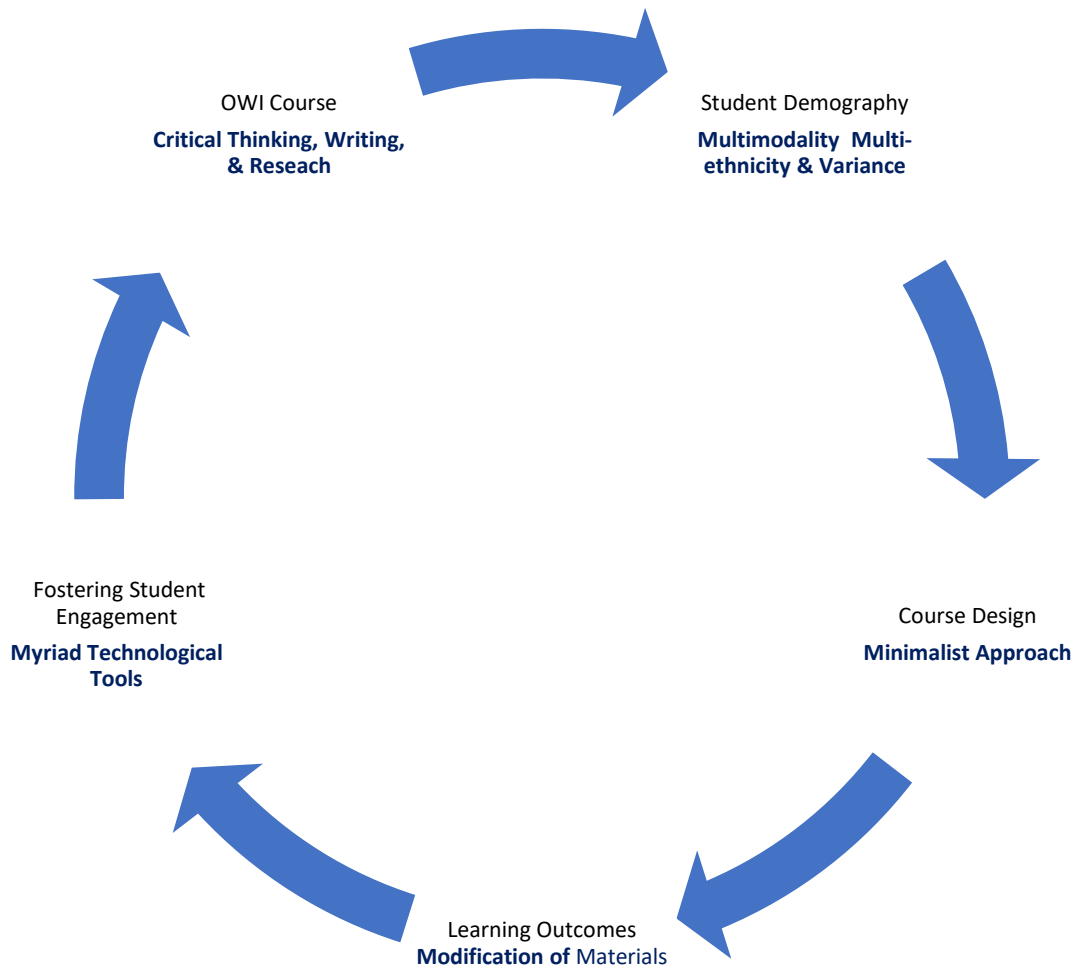
Finally, giving students the opportunity to complete a midterm survey, voice their concerns, and suggest alternatives for improving the course or even comment on the blind spots of my online course pedagogical practices, can lead me to apply the necessary stitches (changes) to my OWI that, to quote the proverbial saying, will save a nine. Harris, Nier-Weber, and Borgman have found that the solicitation of “end-of term” student feedback using specific and detailed questions on course content, management, and design” can enhance the effective design of a class and the course’s redevelopment (26-29). As I redevelop my course in the progress of the quarter or semester and use appropriate feedback recommendations given by my students, I will seek to create an online writing environment not just the one that encourages cognitive

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presence but teaching and social presence in a seamless manner as would be in accordance with any minimalist design decision in an online course.

My OWI Teaching Philosophy Map

Figure 1a



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