How to Fail in Hybrid Teaching

Course-and-a-Half Syndrome

A common mistake of many first-time hybrid instructors is to take the syllabus from a familiar on-campus class and simply add some online assignments. This produces what is sometimes referred to as "course and-a-half" syndrome, where students wind up overwhelmed with the amount of material and work assigned to them, much of it not necessarily adding to the educative effectiveness of the course.

Parallel Universes

Another problem with simply tacking online activities onto a preexisting on-campus course is a lack of integration between the two formats. In such cases, assignments and activities may be topically related, but ultimately do not flow into one another, instead serving as shorter, disjointed pieces of some vague whole rather than successive markers along one cohesive journey.

Limited Interaction

It might seem natural to think of hybrid courses (consciously or not) in terms of online and on-campus sessions dichotomously, with the former dedicated to independent work and the latter to collaboration and group interaction. But this need not be the case. You can have a great deal of student-student and student-instructor interaction take place online with discussion forums, synchronous chat/video sessions, and especially collaborative Web 2.0 tools.

Underutilized Assessment

Even instructors who take great advantage of the flexibility of hybrid teaching may yet remain doggedly committed to an assessment plan of "two exams, one term paper, one final." Not only does this often fail to capture true student learning and growth, it also fails to capitalize on the opportunities inherent to the hybrid format. Frequent low-stakes assessments, rapid learning checks, online discussions, collaborative projects, and summative e-portfolios can replace the old model, and better allow students to demonstrate their learning.