

DAVID BRAZER ON ASSESSMENT AND INTERACTION WITHIN GSE'S CANVAS

In 2013, the Graduate School of Education began exploring new learning management systems for GSE courses and ultimately selected and migrated to an open source version of the learning platform, Canvas. Associate Professor and Director of Leadership Degree Programs, David Brazer, was an early adopter of the platform, and joined GSE-IT's 5-course pilot test of Canvas last Fall. One year later, he shares how he is using Canvas in his Policy, Organization, and Leadership seminar and Instructional Leadership course.

Q: You were an early adopter of Canvas and are actively using the Assignments, Rubrics, and Gradebook features. How does the platform facilitate assessment and feedback in your courses?

One basic premise is that I want my students to understand clearly the rationale behind the assignment, and what separates 'good' from 'less good.' I do a number of things to support that: I create detailed assignment descriptions where I give students the rationale behind the assignment, describe a process that I recommend they go through to complete the assignment, and describe the product. I also use the rubric tool to provide detail about the major pieces and features of the assignment. When you say 'write a reflective essay' that means different things to different people. I can stipulate what I mean through the rubric. I like for my students to know the rules of the road—I don't want them to have to guess and I don't want to have to justify something later that I never told them.

I also feel as though the value of an assignment is in having a dialogue about thinking, so I like to make a lot of comments on student work. What happens in Canvas is that the students submit their paper online, then I open it and the rubric tool side-by-side. I make comments using track changes on the paper—this is the dialogue part about the student's ideas—and then in the rubric I can connect that dialogue to how I assessed their work. The platform really facilitates all of that by enabling you to be explicit about what you want without having to repeat yourself or negotiating what you meant. Though it does require investing considerable up front time, really thinking through my assignment and how I want to assess it pays dividends when the student reading the rubric alongside his or her paper with my comments on it has an absolutely clear sense of how I responded to the paper. And I generally get good feedback from students about that.

I do all of my assignment submissions and grading in Canvas. I never touch paper. For me, it's just a much more efficient way of grading student work. Because it's more efficient, I can be a lot more thorough in my assessment and feedback. The other way that it really helps me is in working with my teaching assistant—by having the detailed assignment and rubric, our grading can become well aligned. Last year, there were few questions about how I wanted my teaching assistant to assess student work.

One thing for faculty getting started with Canvas to be aware of is that when you're grading, you cannot leave the rubric page without saving or else all of your comments and scores are lost.

Q: The discussion forum is a feature of Canvas and virtually every other learning management system and online learning platform. Do you assign online discussions in your courses?

Discussion forums are tricky because you need to structure the timing of students going into them, otherwise you don't always get good engagement. The two ends of the problem are that you get those who post right away with little engagement and those



who sign-in right before the deadline and feel like 'there's nothing left for me to say.'

I find that I have to really structure with deadlines when students submit an initial post and then a later reply. Another approach I use is to break the class down into smaller discussion groups, so that each person's online contributions draw attention and responses. All of this requires more time and attention from me, so I've got to figure out whether

I should make that investment for a particular discussion activity. I want it to be valuable for students.

There is a dilemma for the faculty person too: 'do I respond to everything? Or if I respond to only some things, is that privileging some people and neglecting others?' The way I try to work through that is to read several posts and make a collective comment for that section. It's more efficient for me and it doesn't leave people out.

This year, I'm including at least one online discussion forum in each of my classes. I've structured each of them with two open-ended prompts based mostly on the reading. Students are required to make at least one original post and reply to another student's post for each of the prompts. I give students nearly two weeks to complete the online discussion so that they can fit it into their busy schedules. It hasn't happened as of our interview, so we'll see how it goes.

Q: Moving to a new technology or system is among the toughest programs to plan and execute for any organization. What has been your experience migrating to the new platform?

In distinction from Blackboard and other tools that I've used, the students have had no trouble navigating Canvas, and that's motivating. Another strength is that GSE-IT takes care of enrolling students into the courses—that is a huge thing, because I used to have to enter all of my students in myself.

Q: What's ahead for you in your courses and with Canvas?

What I'd like to do in the future is more videotaping in my classes of various kinds of activities. I would like to then post that on Canvas, and have students complete reflections and critiques off of the videos.

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Find out more:

The GSE-IT Canvas Team will be presenting about Canvas at an upcoming ITS Tech Briefing, on Friday, December 12, from 3-4:30pm in Turing Auditorium (Polya Hall, Room 111). The presentation is open to the entire Stanford Community and will address

GSE USES HEAT MAPS TO UNDERSTAND WEBSITE VISITOR BEHAVIOR

Understanding how people read and search for information on the Internet can directly influence how websites and mobile applications are designed. Similarly, being able to 'look through the eyes' of learners as they navigate an online educational activity or application has the potential to improve education by providing insight into behavior and preferences. Web analytics software enable this by tracking visitors' mouse clicks, and then overlaying visual information about that activity on the webpage. GSE uses Crazy Egg heat maps and Google Analytics on sites like ed.stanford.edu to learn and monitor which links and areas of the page get the most interest and attention. GSE also uses Google Analytics with its Canvas LMS to monitor site traffic and schedule maintenance and updates that minimize disruption. By analyzing visitor behavior within websites and learning environments, web and instructional designers can make informed decisions to improve usability, content availability and effectiveness.

Interested in using analytics in your courses or work? Contact Lyudmila Christie at lyudmila@stanford.edu.

GSE-IT's approaches for working with Canvas software, integrating with Stanford's PeopleSoft, and migration and rollout strategies.

Questions? Contact the GSE-IT Canvas Team at instructionalsupport@stanford.edu.



Screenshot of heat map data of one of the web pages on the GSE site: ed.stanford.edu/academics/masters

EDUC 180 ADOPTS PAPERLESS CLASSROOM MODEL

For decades, students have been completing assignments in school. Often, however, these are only seen by the teacher, graded, and returned to the student. In a paperless classroom, course materials are distributed and preserved in an online storehouse that students can access at any time, from any device, during and after the course is offered. Last Spring, I implemented a paperless model in my "Digital Classroom: Technologies and Practices for Educators" course, a hands-on elective providing direct instruction on how to use technology to emphasize communication and higher-order thinking, drive inquiry, and create engaging and student-centered learning opportunities in K-12 classrooms. Going paperless was not only environmentally-friendly, but enabled cloud-based collaboration, mobile access, quick searching, preservation and sharing of student work.

Developing a strong 'workflow' and knowledge management system for the classroom is essential—I used GoogleDrive to create a living syllabus containing hyperlinked collaborative activities, project-based assignments, and course materials. This cross-platform technology supported a Bring-Your-Own-Device model in which students could participate and interact on whatever laptop, tablet, or smartphone they owned and brought to class that day.

More compelling than the shift from paper to digital format are the pedagogical changes that web-based technologies and applications make possible. Students used GoogleDocs to complete collaborative group activities, and Kaizena, Padlet, and GoogleForms to provide written and audio feedback to each other's work. On a field trip, students captured and synthesized audio, images, and video using the Notability app, and wirelessly submitted this work to my iPhone via AirDrop. Since the conclusion of the course, the online syllabus has become a continuing education and self-marketing tool, where students can access course resources, read news and developments in the field, and share their work with employers.



EDUC180: Digital Classroom: Technologies and Practices for Educators will be offered again in Spring 2015.

To find out more about the course or to explore a paperless classroom model for your teaching or work, contact Pamela Levine at pblevine@stanford.edu.

Access GSE's Computer Lab from Anywhere

Did you know that you can use your personal computer to access SPSS, STATA, R, and Microsoft Office 2007 remotely and for free? GSE students, faculty, and staff with an active SUNet ID can access Big Tree Computer Lab through VMware and an internet connection at any time. Visit gse-it.stanford.edu/instructional/vcl/setup for instructions.

SearchWorks 3.0 Released



SearchWorks, Stanford University Libraries' official online search tool for journals, books, databases, media, and government documents, was recently updated. The new release comes with numerous enhancements to the Stanford Libraries' catalog, including a mobile-friendly interface, improved search, redesigned displays, and the ability to "chat with a librarian." Searchworks is available at searchworks.stanford.edu.

Zoom Update Now Includes iOS Mirroring



GSE-IT has tried many video conferencing tools, and has chosen Zoom, an easy-to-use cloud-based virtual meeting space, with high-quality audio, video, screen-recording, mobile whiteboarding, and virtual desktop control. Participants can join an online meeting from any mobile or desktop device, without needing a login. In addition to desktop screen-sharing, now users can wirelessly mirror iOS devices over 'Airplay' in order to display applications.

Interested in using or trying Zoom for your work? Visit zoom.us and contact Shawn Kim at shawnkim@stanford.edu.

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Digital Initiatives is written by Pamela Levine and is published by GSE IT 3 times a year.

For more information, contact pblevine@stanford.edu.