Building Syllabi for Online Classes:

A Case Study of Course Management Tool Use in

Online Composition Courses

by

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes syllabi for first-year college composition courses and interview responses to examine how the choices made by instructors affect online course design. Using the Syllabus Assessment Instrument designed by Madson, Melchert and Whipp (2004), this dissertation looks specifically at attendance and participation policies, course behavior policies, contact information, required material choices, course organization decisions and tool decisions to reveal how instructors do or do not accommodate online class pedagogies. This study finds that the choices instructors make in syllabus design provide significant information about the overall online course design itself. Using Selber's multiliteracies as a frame for understanding the choices made by instructors, this study finds that instructors focus primarily on functional literacies in their discourses and in the way they communicate their choices to students. Instructors vary in how they inform students of the mechanics of how to interact with tools, how often to interact with the online course, and how to use the tools within the online course. While these aspects of online courses are important, focusing on these aspects of the online course overshadows alternative perspectives on tool use that could encourage critical reflection by both instructors and students. To help instructors and departments design more effective syllabi and courses, this study raises questions and offers observations about how instructors communicate policies and how they understand these policies and pedagogies in online courses. In providing general guidelines for syllabus design and course design, this study will help writing instructors and

composition programs better understand the significance of the choices they make in online course design.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my very supportive family. Thanks especially to mom and Aaron for always listening to my progress and my word choice.

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I would like to thank my committee for all their assistance and support through this process. It really is a marathon and I wouldn't have made it without your help, guidance and comments.

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Chapter 1

ONLINE COMPOSITION COURSES

Many courses at universities across the US have moved online to accommodate increases in student numbers. Allen and Seaman (2011) found higher education institutions reported that 31% of their students took one or more online courses in Fall 2010, meaning over 6.1 million students took at least one online course in the United States Fall 2010. The move to online delivery of courses shifts the course from a combination of verbal and written instruction, to almost entirely written instruction. These 6.1 million students experience online courses more as text based courses than the traditional face-to-face course. This shift alters the method of teaching and learning as well as the ways instructors and students create themselves within the classroom. Instructors must learn to create online courses within an electronic environment. While instructors must learn how to be instructors, how to instruct, and how to instruct students how to be students in online courses, students must learn how to be students in the online course. "Sometimes students feel that they are adrift without support or a sense of structure or community. Instructors may feel the same" (Vai and Sosulski, 2011, p. 4). Instructors have the role of creating community, order and structure within the virtual classroom with only electronic tools available to them. If they do not understand the tools, the students may not understand their course and not know who to turn to for assistance.

Online instructors must now be concerned with page navigation, student interaction in virtual space, representation of lectures and course material, new presentations of assignments, new ways of measuring class attendance, and more. The space teaching occurs in becomes as important as the content in the online context. Instructors learn to create the classroom, skills, interactions, ways of reading, ways of writing, ways of knowing a classroom and ways of being a student and instructor as they engage with the learning management system to create the course. Students, then learn skills, interactions, ways of reading, ways of writing, ways of knowing a school classroom and ways of being a student as they engage with the learning management system as a student within a course (also meaning each course a student takes can be different). With many researchers (Cassell) suggesting the use of traditional organizational methods, and others (Lane, Warnock, Brunk-Chavez and Miller) emphasizing the need for a new approach, what choices do instructors make when creating their online courses in this new space? What tools do instructors choose to use, how do they design their courses, and what do these choices tell us about their policies in online composition courses? To understand the choice made by instructors, I collect syllabi from online composition instructors to examine the policies for online course space, and how that impacts tool functionality. I then conduct an interview with these instructors discussing the tools they choose to employ in their online courses.

To begin, I first discuss previous research in online instruction, specifically online writing instruction.

Computers and Composition

Prior to composition courses moving to online space, computers were introduced into composition classrooms, influencing teaching and learning in the classroom. Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran and Selfe (1996) discuss the introduction of computers in 1979 and trace the discussions about computers in composition classrooms through 1994. They focus on how instructors adopt computers and computer technology in their personal lives and teaching lives. In more recent years, Palmquist, Keifer, Hartigsen and Goodlew (2008) "explored how teachers made the transitions between the two settings [with and without computers in the classroom], how students and teachers interacted with each other in the two settings, and how students and teachers thought about and engaged in writing in the two settings" (p 252). These researchers found that introducing computers into the composition classroom changed the expectations of the students when they were engaged in writing activities, prompting instructors to change course design to better meet expectations while still encouraging good learning. Simply introducing a computer prompted the modifying of course curriculum. Without tracing a history of computers in composition, these two works raise the important issue of how teaching and learning alters with the introduction of computers. These conversations about how technology alters teaching and learning continue today.

When the technology introduced to the composition classroom became the classroom with online courses, the conversations shifted to how to use the technology as the classroom. Although outdated now, Hoffman and Scheidenhelm (2000) explain very simple technology like email and discussion boards. Similar to

discussions about introducing technology to the face-to-face classroom, the underlying focus of their discussions is the technology, and they strive to lower the fears of instructors when faced with technology. They write to English instructors they seem to assume are nervous about the use of digital technology, and spend time reducing those fears by showing how easy it is to translate face-to-face assignments and teaching into online assignments and teaching.

With an ever increasing list of new media applications available on the internet, many scholars discuss literacy and digital literacy as a way to engage new media in composition classrooms (both online and face-to-face). Gilster (1997) was one of the first to theorize digital literacy without a discrete list of tasks that needed to be mastered to be considered digitally literate. Gilster defines digital literacy as "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers" (p. 1). Assumed within this definition is that users are also thinking critically about the application of their usage, and critically reflecting on the information they access. Users need to access information in a meaningful way for specific purposes. In this case, Gilster also emphasizes the ability to find/locate the information, the functional practice (a term not used by Gilster) of finding the right type of information in the right way. Gilster furthers his definition with "use." Gilster continues by discussing how users must be able to find and access the correct information from a variety of sources. For composition scholars, the

Besides Gilster's digital literacy, there are more recent conceptualizations of digital literacy and digital literacies. Lankshear and Knobel (2010) further Gilster's

idea of digital literacy, and focus on digital literacies, the multiple practices in play while users are on the computer. Lankshear and Knobel find Gilster's definition particularly useful because of "its combination of the specific and the general, and (perhaps ironically) its lack of a strong structure, so that it is a general concept adaptable to changing times and concerns" (p. 23). In adapting Gilster to changing times, Lankshear and Knobel find it necessary to conceptualize digital literacy as digital literacies as a way to account for the numerous practices being engaged by users while on computers and the internet. They include computer literacy and the how to use a computer within the definition of digital literacies, they also include competencies, background information, finally they include "social literacy" as key to conceptions of digital literacies (Lankshear and Knobel p. 29-30).

Lankshear and Knobel specifically discuss digital literacies with the aim of aiding instructors in including digital practices in their classrooms. They include various scholars in their edited collection who discuss conceptualizations or components of literacy they find important to understanding digital literacies in classrooms. Johnson (2010) discusses functional internet literacy and divides the concept into 5 categories based on internet usage. She divides it into communication (instant message, email), information (webMD, Wikipedia), recreation (movies, games), commercial (banks, shopping) and technical (downloads) (p. 36). In this case, Johnson uses survey results to create five categories of use based on current internet usage, categories that could shift and disappear as quickly as MySpace disappeared when Facebook took over. Her examples can aid instructors in

understanding how students are currently familiar with managing their online world, and apply those concepts to their composition pedagogy.

Buckingham (2010), in his discussion of multiple literacies in digital space, also discusses the importance of critique about media through digital literacy when he states "education *about* the media should be seen as an indispensable prerequisite for education *with* or *through* the media" (p. 73). Without going into great detail, Buckingham also points to the importance of critical reflection about the media being used in a course in education. In addition to functional and digital literacy, Fieldhouse and Nicholas (2010) take up a multiliteracies approach to digital literacy by including information literacy or information savvy in their definition. For Fieldhouse and Nicholas "being information savvy is more than just being able to use technology to locate information. It suggests a common sense approach to and awareness of the problems and pitfalls of exploring the highways of the internet" (p. 48). Fieldhouse and Nicholas, unlike other scholars who base their ideas on Gilster's digital literacy, are being more explicit about the need for multiple literacies, one of which needs to include thinking about, critically reflecting on, the uses of the information being accessed and used. When discussing information literacy critical reflection is even more important since ideas of information literacy often reflect national standards.[1] Learning the necessary standards to be considered information literate has the risk of reifying dominant hegemony without critical thinking being a key feature of the discussion.

[1] Fieldhouse and Nicholas have an extensive conversation on information literacy and national standards in the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand. See their article for the full discussion .

While focusing on how technology changes teaching and learning, this research does not address the choices instructors currently make in their online composition courses as they design and teach them. This research also does not discuss the decisions instructors make about policies in online courses that they enact through tool choices within the learning management system. So as an online instructor I can read recommendations on ways to use tools, and how to generally design my course, but there is no information on what choices instructors currently make and the implications of those choices.

Online Course Design

With the potential for online learning management systems (sometimes referred to as course management systems) to turn content into a series of readings, lectures and tests, many instructors may feel overwhelmed with the process of transitioning course content into a digital class in meaningful ways. In transitioning online, instructors utilize the tools provided by learning management systems to create their classroom within the online system. Research about online courses generally falls into two categories, overall course design and content specific research. New and seasoned instructors of online courses may turn to these resources for help with their overall course, specific aspects of their course, or to overcome specific issues they may have encountered.

Course design texts focus on overall course design, how to create design, how to engage learners, how to use tools provided by learning management systems, which learning management systems to use and how to communicate with students.

These manuals focus on broad uses of various tools, so they can be applicable to a variety of content areas. These scholars discuss the various uses of tools provided by learning management systems and tools outside learning management systems that can be useful to online courses. These guides discuss ways for instructors from any content area to gain knowledge and insight of online instruction. Guides like Vai and Sosulski's (2011) The Essentials of online course design and Dirksen's (2012) Design for how people learn focus on the different organization necessary, and the steps necessary for instructors to create an online course that can flow for any content area. These guides specifically discuss the tools provided by various learning management systems, and how the tool substitutes for face-to-face aspects of courses. For instance, these books focus on tools like the discussion board. These discussions emphasize how the discussion board tool can be utilized in an online course. Additionally, these books discuss how a discussion board tool can be used to re-create face-to-face discussions in online courses, and how these tools can aid an instructor in counting attendance. While helpful in discussing tool application across various disciplines, the lack of focus on content mean instructors reading these guides need to determine how best to apply the tools in their own learning management system, within their own online courses.

Beyond basic course design, scholars discuss spaces beyond the university or college provided learning management space to hold virtual classes. Petrakou (2010) discusses avatars in virtual worlds (specifically Second Life) as a way to encourage synchronous communication in online courses to enhance interactivity. Blythe (2001) discusses systems and user-centered models for web-based course

design to show how user-centered models best reflect composition pedagogy in design, including strategies for adopting the design model (see also Girvan and Savage, 2010 for a discussion of virtual worlds in online courses). In the same issue, Savenye, Olina and Niemczyk (2001) suggest theories for instructional design that supports effective student learning. They also include different strategies for adopting their design model. In both articles the authors focus on aiding online instructors in understanding the learning management system, and how to adapt instructional and learning goals to the new space. Barab, et al. (2012) approach design from a game-based curriculum perspective by describing a curriculum that engages students with learning.

The community college where I conducted this study requires instructors to complete two courses prior to being eligible to teach online. Similar to the general design books, these courses consist of instructors across disciplines, so the discussions focus on the broad application of tools. Unlike the design books, the two courses focus on the learning management system at the community college, so the courses only focus on tools provided by the learning management system of the college, and discuss syllabus policies specific to the community college. These courses expose student-instructors to online course design basics within the learning management system they will use for their online course.

Separate from online course design books, content areas publish research on teaching online specific to their content. The field of English has many guides devoted to instruction in online writing instruction, focuses on the use of learning management system tools for English, changing assignment sheets, presenting video

lectures, and more, specific to teaching online composition courses. Unlike the design books, these content specific guides focus assignments familiar to content instructors, and do not focus on overall course design.

Spring 2012 I switched to The Norton Field Guides to Writing in my face-to-face English 101 courses. Since this was my first time with this particular textbook, I read through the teaching guide to help me understand the text before creating my syllabus. This guide includes a chapter devoted to online teaching and the ways to approach it. Within this chapter, Cassel (2010) raises questions many scholars have about online writing instruction. In addressing how much work a new online course will require in material preparation, Cassel says instructors won't "be able to simply transfer your [instructors'] syllabus, assignments, instructions, and lectures word for word to an online format" (p. 85). Returning to the chapter by Cassel, after she discusses the need to modify assignments, instruction and lectures, she follows this with the suggestion that instructors seeking more knowledge on organizing the course, especially creating syllabi, assignment, lectures, etc. refer to the face-to-face chapter on organizing the course (p. 85). In this case, Cassel simultaneously points out aspects of the online course that cannot be transferred from face-to-face settings, syllabi, assignments, instructions and lectures , then refers instructors to the face-to-face organization chapter. So while assignments, lectures and syllabi must change, Cassel seems to be implying the overall organization of the course does not change when the course is moved to an online setting. The tools for delivering material have uniformly changed, and students interact with the course entirely differently so it seems the organization (the tools used to present the course) must change when in a

digital space. The assignments and assignment presentation need to change because of the online format, but without the time organization of a face-to-face course it seems the organization needs to change as well. Based on my experience as an online instructor, transferring the organization from face-to-face syllabi, assignments, and lectures does not work. Instead of blocking out segments of time to fill up the 50 or 90 minute class time with content knowledge, lectures, groups assignments, etc, the online instructor must plot a course through reading material, with the tools provided by the learning management system being used, to achieve the same learning goals. Lane (2009) emphasizes that "most professors think in terms of the semester, and how their pedagogical goals can be achieved within the context of time, rather than space" (para. 12). This also has implications for the syllabi, specifically the attendance and participation policy implemented by the instructor designing a course in space, and forcing time into that space.

Best Practices Guides

Separate from online course design books, content areas publish research on teaching online specific to their content. The field of English has many guides devoted to instruction in online writing instruction, focuses on the use of learning management system tools for English, changing assignment sheets, presenting video lectures, and more, specific to teaching online composition courses. Unlike the design books, these content specific guides focus assignments familiar to content instructors, and do not focus on overall course design. While Savenye, Olina, Niemczyk and Blythe raised questions about the interface, the scholars writing best

practices guides focus on raising questions about interface design and on updating assignments for that design, raising specific issues about specific assignments.

Recognizing the space difference in online composition courses, scholars write guides for new and seasoned online teachers to aid them in constructing their online composition courses. Some focus on one difference between online and face-to-face courses, discussing methods of teaching the online course to address that difference. Notably, the face-to-face interaction and discussions common in composition courses so scholars focus on tools available to teachers to recreate interaction in online space. Some researchers discuss collaboration (Bruffee, 1984; Hewett and Ehmann, 2004) and others discuss collaboration as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; R. Selfe, 2004) as methods of organizing students in online courses to aid online discussions.

Hewett and Ehmann (2004), Warnock (2009) and Richardson (2010) provide best practices guides, describing different technologies and different approaches to online pedagogy to aid online instructors in presenting their course content. Hicks (2009) approaches the recommendation for best practices by applying principles from writing workshop to the curriculum of online writing instruction. Instead of providing a best practices guide, Gouge (2007) raises questions about the values reflected through online course design.

Other scholars, like Cassel, recognize the difference in teaching delivery and discuss the need for instructors to modify their assignments, discussion questions, quizzes, lectures and syllabi. Cassel offers the advice that the presentation of assignments, lectures and syllabi must be modified in online space. This focus on

presentation implies content of the materials does not need updating. Similar to Cassel, Brunk-Chavez and Miller (2007) note the difficulty in translating face-to-face instruction and assignments. Instead they call for online writing instructors to rethink their approaches to teaching, accounting for the tools available to instructors online. Brunk-Chavez and Miller emphasize the importance of the tools within the learning management space for dictating how the class will be taught. Unlike Cassel, Brunk-Chavez and Miller, however, Warnock (2009) claims educators should start by translating their curriculum to the online environment initially. Warnock then focuses on raising awareness of differences in the online space, and raising questions about pedagogy with the inclusion of technology to aid instructors in translating their pedagogy to a technology heavy environment.

Learning Experience

With new, translated, and updated approaches to and within the composition classroom, scholars and researchers discuss and research the experiences of the students and instructors in these new spaces. Many researchers discuss the learning and experience of the student (Stine, 2008; Boyd, 2008; Peterson, 2008; Blair and Hoy, 2006; Saade, He and Kira, 2005; Sapp and Simon, 2005; Carr, 2000; Warshauer, 1998; Turnow, 1997). Other researchers discuss the experience of the instructor. Reinheimer (2005) observes the experience of the instructors finding online instruction to be more time consuming than face-to-face instruction. Anderson (2006) notes the language used by instructors, cautioning instructors to be aware of potential bias based on their language usage in discussion board

discussions. Picciano (2002) examines performance beyond grades and withdrawal rates to understand interaction in online courses. With the introduction of virtual environments like *Second Life*, scholars focus on the experience of students in virtual environments while engaging with courses (Herold, 2010). Other researchers discuss adult learners in online environments to see if age affects learning performance in online courses (Ke and Xie, 2009). This variety of issues related to learning and performance in online courses demonstrates some of the complexity online instructors face when designing an online course.

Assignments

A significant portion of the literature on online composition courses focuses on best practices and useful technology tools for instructors to use to enhance learning and assignments in their online courses (Herrington and Moran, 2009; Buckingham, 2010; Kastman Breuch, 2004). Frost, Myatt and Smith (2009) and Kittle (2009) approach the online courses through multimodal literacy skills, arguing for the application of multimodal assignments to aid student content learning and digital literacy learning. Other researchers focus on how students adapt to the online setting. In addition, experienced online educators discuss best practices in online courses, including using the technology to teach composition courses. Anderson (2006) discusses how to use discussions and discussion boards. Uzunboylu, Bicen and Cavus (2011) discuss the use of Web 2.0 tools in education to positively affect student learning. Ellis (2011) focuses on digital tools and online peer feedback, pointing out the different type of interaction fostered by digital tools.

These scholars focus on tools available in general and in specific learning management systems or on the internet to aid instructors in finding tools to fit their pedagogical needs.

Syllabi and Policies

In most college courses, a syllabus provides the learning goals, assignments and course policies determined by the instructor and followed by the student. Eberly, Newton and Wiggins (2001) specifically note that the syllabus "serves the dual role of providing specific information for the course, as well as establishing the foundation for the yet to be negotiated, unwritten rules for the ways in which the class will function" (p. 59). Presumably, online courses rely even more heavily on the syllabus to outline the course for students in a space where instructors don't explain the syllabus on the first day of class.

Some scholars look at the syllabus as an entire document. Higbee (2002) discusses how the syllabus serves as a contract between instructor and student of the responsibilities of each in the course. Habanek (2005) focuses on how instructors use the syllabus to define learning outcomes and how assignments will meet those learning outcomes. Eberly, Newton and Wiggins (2001) examine syllabi features to discuss their findings that syllabi serve as course outlines. Parkes and Harris (2002) discuss syllabi as serving the function of contract, permanent record and learning tool with various aspects of syllabi fulfilling each necessary role.

Instead of focusing on the syllabus as a whole document, Baecker (1998) discusses the use of pronouns and their implications in syllabi. Graves, Hyland and

Samuels (2010) examine syllabus to understand the range of assignments instructors required. Thompson (2007) discusses how instructors present the syllabi in courses, specifically discussing the presentation strategies instructors use to downplay the strict rules outlined in syllabi. Parkes, Fix and Harris (2003) examine syllabi to understand what they communicate about examination practices in courses. Madson, Melchert and Whipp (2004) analyzed syllabi to determine the technology updates instructors added to their course descriptions and course objectives when technology was used in the course. Doolittle and Siudzinski (2010) assessed college syllabi to determine, by discipline, which aspects instructors include. They encourage instructors to include additional policy information sections in their syllabi to aid students in courses.

These scholars discuss just some of the issues related to syllabi in higher education. However, the lack of research in syllabi in online courses demonstrates the presumption of the importance of the document, and the lack of research into the purpose of the syllabus in new online space. This dissertation seeks to raise questions about the purpose of a syllabus in online courses to better understand the purpose of the document in new teaching space.

Figure 1.1. This is a word cloud list of many of the factors influencing online composition courses. Showing these factors in a word cloud shows just how jumbled, interrelated, and complex these influences are on online composition courses.

To make sense of these factors, instructors make choices in their course design and with their online curriculum. But what choices do they make? And how do these choices influence course design? This study examines syllabi to discuss the information added to syllabi to account for the online nature of the course. Additionally, I interview these instructors to better understand the choices they make as they build their courses, specifically asking them about the Canvas tools they use to create their courses. Chapter 2 discusses Canvas as a learning management system. This chapter also discusses the inherent values in each of the

tools provided through Canvas, where they are located, how they look, and how these impact how the tool is supposed to be used by instructors. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of this study, including the questions being analyzed of the syllabi and being asked of the instructors. Chapter 4 presents the results of this analysis, discussing what these choices mean and how they promote literacies. Finally, Chapter 5 analyzes the results and discusses the broad implications of the study. Notably, colleges and departments should provide guidance to online instructors in their syllabi choices and their learning management tool choices to help instructors reflect on what their choices mean within the learning management system interface at their institution.

Chapter 2

VALUES OF A LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Many universities provide learning management systems or course management systems to faculty and departments at their university. Universities often house these systems behind extensive firewall systems maintained by university Information Technology departments (IT). Some universities offer training courses on these systems, and encourage use beyond classes (for clubs, etc). However, responsibility for creating course space and implementing the learning management space resides with the individual (instructor, student or club). Essentially, learning management systems provide instructors, clubs and students an empty shell with a series of tools that instructors, students, and clubs must shape into a usable, recognizable space. Before discussing the choices made by instructors within the Canvas learning management system, a critical first step is to examine the individual tools provided by Canvas to see which tools are privileged, and how these tools shape literacy practices. Selber discusses the need to question the place of computers and technology within larger institutions. Lane (2009) also notes the non-neutrality of course management systems. To understand the inherent pedagogy of Canvas, how Canvas privileges specific tools, and how tool use and implementation can influence literacy development, this chapter examines how Canvas promotes the use of the specific tools.

This study specifically looks at how instructors in a composition course use the Canvas learning management system as implemented at a large urban community college. Approximately 40,000 students enroll at the college annually,

which means, in any given year, 40,000 students may access and/or use the Canvas learning management system for one or many course. I selected this institution because college administration chose to change the learning management system at the time of the research study. Instructors participating in this study began using the learning management system in the same semester. In the late Spring 2012, the community college transitioned from an older version of WebCT to Canvas as their district wide learning management system. This change introduced a new learning management system to students, staff and faculty. The community college educates traditional freshmen, adult learners, individuals returning to education, and many other types of students. These students may have extensive experience learning with technology or no experience learning with technology. Instructors choose to implement learning management systems into their courses knowing there may be a broad range of abilities with the tools used within the course. Institutions of higher education adopt learning management systems to meet the needs of their students in a variety of courses. Understanding the diverse student population at a community college helps illustrate the wide variety of students potentially using the system and the population the university designs their default system for. Before discussing the default design of Canvas and the tools privileged based on that design, I first discuss learning management systems.

Learning Management System

Canvas, a system provided by Instructure (www.instructure.com), calls itself a Learning Management System. However, Morris and Stommel (2012) reported at a

2012 Instructure conference that Canvas was a “learning platform” (para. 3). Generally, learning management system, course management system and virtual learning environment refer to systems provided by colleges or universities to house course information virtually, behind a college or university managed firewall. As labels for the systems, learning management system and virtual learning environment are used more often than course management system as the terms include learning, which has more positive connotations for virtual environments than a course management system. Course management system typically implies administrative management more than learning management. On the surface, a learning management system appears to be a value free system provided by colleges or universities to instructors to house virtual course information. However, from the beginning college and university administration determines which features of a learning management system to provide to instructors. Instructors then choose among the delivered features to utilize in their courses. In addition to choosing which tools to use for a given course, an instructor directs the usage, providing control over the class application.

When discussing online courses and online portions of courses, Morris and Strommel find that many discussions relate to tools and application of tools in the classroom instead of pedagogy. For example: Hoffman and Scheidenhelm (2000) devote a chapter to various tools instructors need familiarity with as online instructors, Kastman Breuch (2004) focuses on one virtual peer review through one tool, Anderson (2006) discusses power in online discussions, Hewett and Ehmann (2004) detail steps to train online writing instructors focusing extensively on

synchronous and asynchronous tools educators may encounter when teaching online, and Richardson (2010) discusses possible applications of more modern virtual tools like blogs and RSS feeds in classrooms. In their work, each scholar discusses various tools and classroom applications of those tools for online and face-to-face composition courses, skimming over pedagogy and literacy discussions, or not including them at all. Rather than focusing on the application of a specific technology tool (like discussion boards), this study looks at the technology choices instructors make inside and outside a college supported learning management system. While resources on the use of specific tools, like discussions boards, can be helpful, there is little research on the technology choices instructors make.

Before looking at individual instructor choices within the learning management system, I first discuss the default settings of Canvas at the community college. Lane (2009) finds that learning management systems "influence pedagogy by presenting default formats designed to guide the instructor toward creating a course in a certain way" (para. 1). Lane further notes that "the design of the product is a result of its perceived use" (para. 2). Lane cautions instructors to discuss and consider the perceived use built into the design of these tools, as failing to consider the design of the tool may result in instructors using a tool simply because it is available. Additionally, Lane finds that instructors fail to consider the pedagogy inherent in that tool and how it works with or against their pedagogy. Programmers and companies create learning management systems to address all content areas, with input from various professors (who may have limited to no technology background so they don't know what is feasible). As Lane points out, the combination of all this

input means each tool and each system is not value free. A lot of opinions have come together to create the tools available, with a presumed use of each tool within the system. The presumed use of each tool influences how instructors and students use and understand that tool within online composition courses.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all learning management systems. Two advantages to college or university provided systems are the purging cycle and the firewall protection. Universities and colleges are required to have purging cycles of course data published and followed. This means the college or university purges course data created by students on a regular basis. Universities and college are also required to have firewall systems to protect student information and student data, keeping course created information behind university firewalls and not available in general searches. This is meant to keep writing created for courses private unless the student chooses to share the writing. Part of Lane's argument about implementing technology tools within the learning management system without considering the impact on pedagogy can be applied here as well. Implementing technology tools available outside university firewalls without considering the long term implications can potentially impact a students' future. Information posted to the internet can be found by potential employers; universities and colleges design firewalls and develop purge cycles to protect student writing from being accessible outside the university or college. Using a university or college managed learning management system, while possibly not offering all the tools an instructor desires for learning within their course, may offer protection to course material that outside systems do not.

As students continue attending courses at the same school, and assuming the college supported learning management system is not regularly changed, a possible benefit is student familiarity with the system. Most colleges and universities try to make their learning management systems easily accessible to students and faculty, often creating course shells for every class even if faculty never use them. Due to the ease of access, the same system will often be used by many professors allowing students to become more familiar with the workings of the learning management system. If instructors chose to use a learning management system outside the college or university supported system, they can implement it in their classrooms. But, they cannot integrate it easily with other college and university supported systems.

On the other hand, college and university supported learning management systems also present many problems. While colleges and universities implement a broad learning management system to support all courses across campus, the system design does not necessarily allow for any specific discipline, such as writing courses, to implement the system in a way best suited for the subject matter. The inherent pedagogy of the tools provided and promoted within a learning management system influence whether and how an instructor will use that tool within their course. Lane finds that

> the built-in pedagogy of the big systems is based on traditional approaches to instruction dating from the nineteenth century: presentation and assessment. This can be seen in the selection of features which are most accessible in the interface, and easiest to use. In Blackboard/WebCT, the simplest tasks are uploading documents and creating text in boxes (para. 3).

Learning management systems provide a wide variety of tools for classroom use, but promote certain uses of the space. For example, in some systems (like Canvas) multiple choice quizzes and tests can be created with automatic grading, reducing the grading work of an instructor. In these systems, when the instructor selects the quiz tool the system defaults to multiple choice.[2] As a design choice, defaulting to a specific setting can influence use of a tool within a learning management system, meaning more instructors could choose to create multiple choice quizzes based on default design not pedagogy.

Since learning management systems are designed to cover all subject areas, they do not always support the pedagogy of composition instructors as well as they could. For instance, many systems don't offer tools for students to upload drafts of papers for instructor comments, they don't offer tools that allow students to easily collaborate on writing projects, and many don't offer tools for voluntary student interaction (they are more instructor-student designed and supportive than student-student). When allowed by their institution, Instructors can certainly weigh the advantages and disadvantages of learning management systems, and decide to use an external non-university supported system. External systems like Ning allow for a more social network feel to their spaces (ning.com) emphasizing student-student interaction as much as student-instructor. A space like Wordpress (wordpress.com) allows for page creation, interface individualization, and blogs with a good commenting system and tagging.[3] Again, this space offers tools for more student-

[2] This is true in Canvas, and was true in WebCT the previous system at the college in this study. It may differ in other systems.
[3] There are many more spaces available that could be discussed here. These two specific examples have been discussed at CCCC, and used in graduate courses.

student interaction. Depending on the desire of the instructor, these systems could be more desirable despite their open availability outside the university fire wall (Ning is password protected). In spaces like these, the instructor takes responsibly for deleting the posts of students to ensure student writing is protected as required by the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA). As an alternative, departments can create their own learning management systems. While these can be built to be supportive of department writing requirements, these require extensive funding and technical abilities. The Edupunk (Young 2008) movement, founded on Do-It-Yourself (DIY) principles, encourages anti-corporate learning management systems designed by individual instructors and/or departments. The movement strives to allow instructors more freedom in virtual course design by empowering them to create the course themselves. While allowing an instructor a lot of freedom to design a space that meets the needs of their own pedagogy, this approach does not preclude the instructor designed course to be free from values, and it can't be presupposed that the site will be better simply because it's not proprietary. It appears, no matter the approach there are advantages and disadvantages to learning management systems. No matter what system an instructor chooses to employ in a given course, the use of the system determines what happens, what pedagogy is in play, and what choices an instructor has available. How an instructor employs a given tool determines all these things, which drives one of the questions of this study, seeking to determine what tools instructors use in their online composition courses.

To understand how default settings impact learning management implementation, Lane looks at courses created by novice internet instructors. She finds that novice internet instructors tend to use default settings and don't explore other options in the system. Lane then discusses how to think about pedagogy beyond the default settings of a learning management system. While Lane raises a number of important pedagogical questions about technology in online courses, this study builds on that work by asking instructors about which tools they choose to use, and how they design their policies in their syllabi to understand how they employ the college learning management system. In employing specific tools in specific ways, tool selection influences how students complete a course and how they understand the policies of the course. Students begin to view the course, understand course material, understand how to interact with course material, understand how to interact with peers and instructors, understand language choices, understand assignment structures, understand how to be students and so much more based on the tool choice of instructors. Before looking at instructor choices at the research institution, I discuss the values inherent in Canvas to better understand the learning management system available at the research site.

Canvas

This study focuses on a specific learning management system at a specific community college. However, the tools provided to the instructor in Canvas may not be unique to the Canvas learning management system, and may be provided by other learning management systems. Therefore, while the results speak to the choices made by instructors at a particular college, the general reading of the learning

management system may also indicate some of the tools used by instructors in other learning management systems. The following exploration of the default settings and tools provided in Canvas discusses the inherent values in each tool, and the ways Canvas values the use of certain tools over other tools provided. Lane finds that learning management systems "influence pedagogy by presenting default formats designed to guide the instructor toward creating a course in a certain way" (para. 1). Understanding the default settings of Canvas is a necessary first step before discussing how instructors choose to implement the tools in their course.

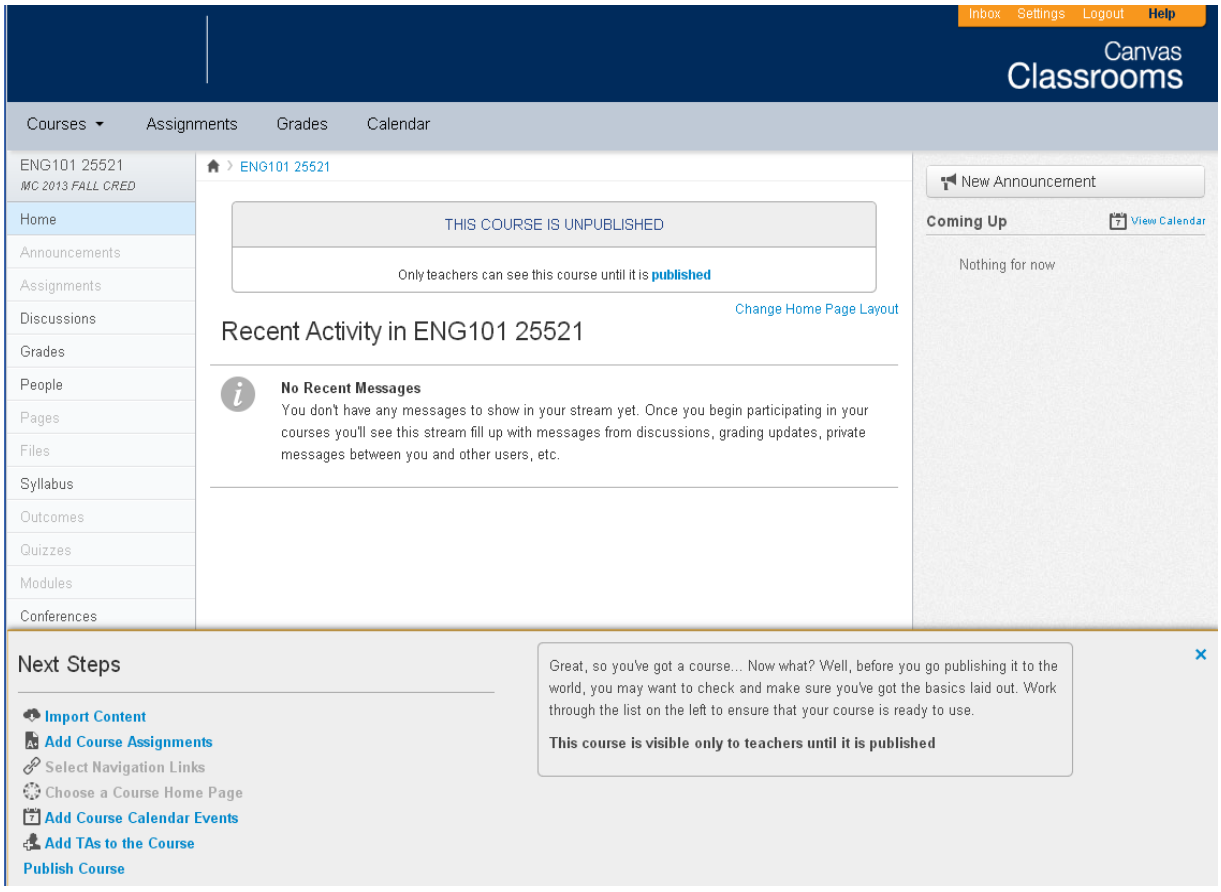

Figure 2.1. Default instructor page for a new online course. Each course, each semester contains the grey-shaded dialog box about beginning set up for the course.

When an instructor first accesses the Canvas site for an online course, a grey bar appears across the bottom of the screen. Figure 2.1 shows the default Canvas settings, including the Next Steps bar across the bottom.

I first give a brief overview of all the tools provided by Canvas, simply discussing what the tool allows an instructor to do in the learning management system. I then discuss each tool in more detail, looking at the placement within Canvas, the color of the text, the multiple uses of the tool, and how student behaviors and understanding of online course space can be shaped by the use of the tools. Figure 2.1 shows an overview of the Canvas shell provided to all instructors for each class they teach at the research institution. Figure 2.1 hides a few of the tool links as it displays the Next Steps box, so I'm listing the tools as ordered in this brief description. To begin, Canvas provides an Import Content feature in the Next Steps box. As the name indicates, this feature allows instructors to import content. The second feature in the Next Steps allows instructors to build assessments into their courses using the Add Course Assessment link. Below that, instructors modify the navigation of the system when viewed by students by using the Select Navigation Link tool. Instructors further alter the view of their Canvas course with the Select a Course Homepage link provided next, allowing each instructor the ability to design their desired page to set as the page that automatically opens to students enrolled in the course. The next tool, Add Course Calendar Event, allows instructors the ability to create reminders of assignment, reading and/or discussion board due dates. Next, instructors have the ability to provide access to people such as Teaching Assistants, through the Add TAs to the Course tool. The final tool provided in the Next Steps

box is the Publish Course tool. This final step provides access to students enrolled in the course, finally letting them view the course shell created by the instructor.

The main Canvas navigation menu resides on the left hand side of the page (see Figure 2.1), and runs vertically on the page. The first tool provided within this navigation menu (this order assumes instructors did not already modify the order of the menu through the Select Navigation Link tool) is the Home link. As the name indicates, this link allows an instructor or student to move back to the course homepage with just one click. The next tool provided allows instructors to send email announcements to students enrolled in a particular section of a course. The Announcement tool sends an email through the Canvas provided email (email that resides within the Canvas interface) to all students. This email triggers a note to the student email (at the community college Gmail supports the student email system) alerting them of an announcement in the course. The next tool allows instructors to create assignment space within the course. This tool not only allows for instructors to upload assignment criteria in the form of notes and documents, it also allows instructors space to build a rubric as part of the assignment notifying students of grading requirements, accept assignments electronically, and scan the text for plagiarism issues. This tool allows instructors to create very complex assignments, with large amounts of information available to students to assist them as they prepare and submit the assignment. The tool also allows instructors to set assignment due dates and times, points for grading, and finally it creates a log in the Grades feature to notify students of their grade on the assignment. The next tool, People, allows instructors and students access to the entire enrolled student roster,

allowing both instructors and students to contact members of the course. Similar to the People tool, the Chat tool allows instructors and students to communicate with members of the course. In this case, the Chat tool allows for synchronous communication. Students in an asynchronous course could make arrangements to meet at a specific time in the Chat tool so they could communicate real-time. Course content can either be uploaded to Canvas as a document file (.doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf, etc), or displayed in Canvas similar to text on a web page. The next tool, Pages, allows instructors space to build out course content (or copy and paste course content) that displays as a page within the Canvas interface. Directly below the Pages tool, the Files tool displays uploaded files, presumably course content, to students. This tool requires students to click on and open the document uploaded by the instructor instead of displaying it as a web page embedded within the Canvas interface. The Syllabus tool allows instructors to create a list of assignments and quizzes along with their due dates, essentially any assignment or quiz loaded into Canvas with a due date appears on a Canvas calendar to help students track assignments. The Syllabus tool simply lists those assignments in order with dates for the student and instructor. After these content tools, instructors can track the progress of students through the Outcomes tools. As previously mentioned, Canvas provides a Quizzes tool to instructors in the list of available tools. The next tool, Modules, allows instructors to organize their course content, essentially providing folder space in which instructors can file individual documents, quizzes and assignments. The Conferences tool allows instructors to create and upload videos to the course. Collaborations provides space to instructors and students to work

together on a virtual document, allowing peer editing, instructor editing, or other kinds of group work. The next two links direct students to other web sites within the institution. The Online Tutoring link directs students to tutoring support within the community college, while the Library Resources tool directs students directly to the Library home page. The final tool, Settings, provides ways for instructors to modify the color scheme, link order, and permissions within their course. Since many of these tools can be used in sequence, and in some cases depend on other tools (Modules must have Pages, or Assignments, or Quizzes, etc to organize any information), this brief overview will help as I describe the underlying values of each tool.

By default, an instructor must upload course content and publish the course in Canvas before students can access any materials. However, Canvas sets no requirement on the tools accessed and utilized to meet this requirement. Returning to Figure 2.1 and the Next Steps box, this grey box specifically tells instructors "this course is visible only to teachers until this course is published" (see lower right hand box in Figure 2.1). This box appears until an instructor uses the X to close the window or publishes their course. This Next Steps box appears for each course an instructor teaches, each semester. The repeated appearance of the box demonstrates the value placed on the tools created by the designers of Canvas. Because this box with the same tools appears in all Canvas course shells and because this box remains open, the designers of Canvas promote and emphasize the tools contained within the box as the 'necessary' tools to use to create a Canvas course, thereby influencing pedagogy. Using Lane's terminology, the steps included in this box signal the non-

neutrality of the space by highlighting specific tools to users; in this way, this box directs instructors in how to build their course. Without critically examining the features being highlighted on the start page, the instructor can create course space as envisioned by the informational technology department, and the creators of Canvas, instead of designing course space to reflect their pedagogy.

Figure 2.2. Next Steps box with Import Content highlighted.

Figure 2.2 shows the first tool, Import Content, available to Instructors in the Next Steps box. In listing this tool first, Canvas design signals the importance of content in classroom space. When an instructor uses this tool, Canvas provides step-by-step instructions making the tool very easy to use. In highlighting a tool, listing it first, and making it easy to use, Canvas design emphasizes the need for instructors to put course content into their Canvas shells. In using this tool, and in using it first, instructors agree, possibly reluctantly, with the necessity of course content. By tool design, Canvas reduces online teaching to course content imported into the course shell. An advantage to this design choice is the creation of course content and the access students will have to it once the course begins. A disadvantage, or a step that must be taken later is the actual organization of course content in meaningful ways for course flow. Instructors often plan out their semesters through assignments, lesson plans, and the syllabus. By design, this tool in Canvas creates space for course

content, requiring instructors use other tools later in organizing that content. So a composition instructor can upload all their paper assignment sheets using this tool as a first step to using Canvas, and all will appear as a list in the order they were imported. In this way, by design, this tool over emphasizes the content and course material, to the detriment of course organization, requiring instructors to choose to organize at a later time using a different tool.

In providing additional text instructions to instructors about the ease of using the import content tool, Canvas also positively reinforces the benefits and ease of using the tool. These instructions may have resulted in an effort to alleviate supposed instructor fear in using learning management systems, or to alleviate questions by instructors to IT staff about how to use specific tools. Either way, this is the only tool in the Next Steps box that specifically speaks to ease of use, further demonstrating Canvas designers valuing course content as the main purpose of the learning management system. With Import Content as the first tool provided, the research site also stresses (whether consciously or unconsciously is not within the scope of this study) to users that the primary function of the learning management system is to archive documents.

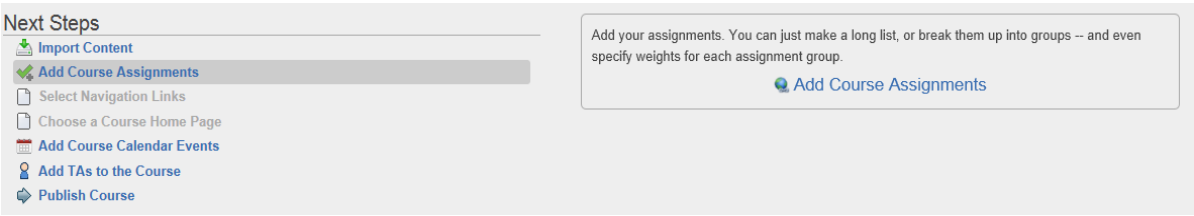

Figure 2.3. Instructor page with "Add Course Assignments" highlighted to display the additional text.

The second link available in the Next Steps box is called Add Course Assignments, where an instructor can add assignments; this step is highlighted in figure 2.3 with the additional instructions shown. Canvas encourages instructors to "make a long list, or break them up into groups – and even specify weights for each assignment" (see Figure 2.3). With this feature, instructors assess the students on the content provided in the previous step. Lane argues that "the built-in pedagogy of the big systems is based on traditional approaches to instruction dating from the nineteenth century: presentation and assessment" (para. 3). Listing course assignments as the second step in creating an online course supports Lane's argument, allowing an instructor to first upload course content documents then create assignment space to assess the course content learned. Again, listing this step second focuses the instructor on creating content and assessment for that content well before tools to assist with organization of the course and interaction among teachers and students. Additional instructions in the text box to indicate to instructors that they can change the order and grouping of assignments, indicating flexibility within the system through other tools. However, looked at by itself, and given the order of the tools, the Add Assignments tool indicates the high value Canvas places on providing tools to allow instructors to assess student learning (learning supposedly provided by the Import Content tool provided first).

Providing these two tools as the first two available to instructors does not necessarily encourage critical reflection about pedagogy or good learning principles. Instead they quickly supply methods for instructors to build online course content and assess the content. These two tools influence how students understand, behave

and interact in online courses. Instead of understanding the online classroom space for how it enriches discussions and builds connections, things composition instructors may create space for in their face-to-face courses, students now understand online courses as solitary events, where students access course content at any time then indicate their access of that content by completing the assessment through the assignment. By not introducing organizational tools early in the list in the Next Steps box, Canvas emphasizes the value of the learning management system for housing course content and assessing students on that content.

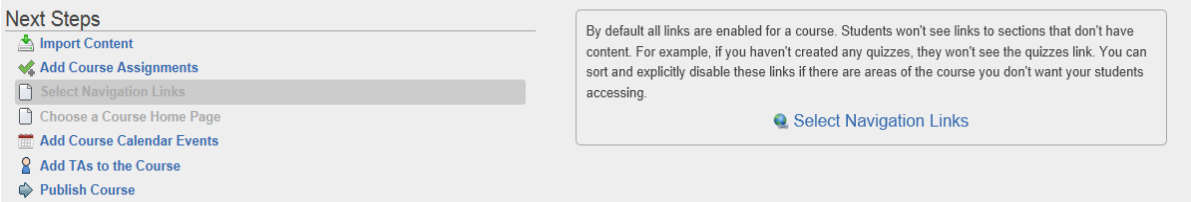

Figure 2.4. Instructor page with "Select Navigation Link" highlighted. By default, the font color for this link is much lighter, and grey compared to other links provided.

The third link allows instructors to choose to display or remove navigation links for students' view of Canvas. As an organizational tool, the Select Navigation Link allows instructors to remove features of Canvas from student view so they will not be able to access specific components of the learning management system directly, or so they will view the order of links in a specific instructor designed order. In the main menu behind the Next Steps box, Canvas provides a few organizational tools such as Modules. An instructor choosing to organize their class into modules, an organizational pattern that allows content and assignments to be organized in groups, individual links to course content (Pages, which will be discussed later), and individual links to assignments can be moved or removed, forcing students to use the

Module tool to access the course instead of the assignment course. This tool allows instructors to shape the student view of the online course, removing access and moving navigational links which directly impact the look of the course to the students. In using this tool, instructors shape the flow of the online course, changing the default settings. In modifying the default settings, a student using Canvas for multiple courses must learn the navigational flow for each course where menu items have been moved.

As shown in Figure 2.4, the designers of Canvas shaded this particular tool a light grey, making it seem secondary to the bright blue links available. To many internet users, a light grey link often implies unavailability of use of a given feature, so many users will move on. Understanding this feature as disabled encourages instructors to leave the navigation of the course as delivered (with announcements and assignments the top two). Using this feature encourages instructors to reconsider the flow of their course, and to consider the flow as it appears to their students.

The select navigation tool encourages instructors to examine the layout and design of their courses, to develop a flow appropriate for their particular course and course content. However, in providing the feature in a different color, a color often indicating unavailability of use, Canvas designers provide a tool and discourage use. In this way, Canvas discourages instructors from modifying the flow of their Canvas course by moving and removing links from the student view of each course. This color choice encourages instructors to leave the navigation of the course in the

default settings, possibly encouraging students' familiarity with the navigational flow since they'll experience the same navigational flow in each Canvas course they use.

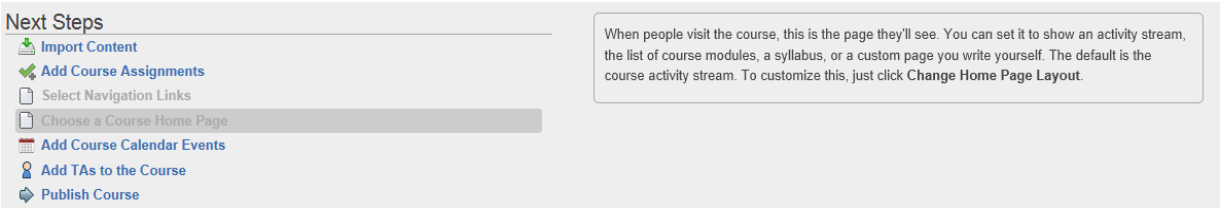

Figure 2.5. Instructor page with "Choose a Course Homepage" highlighted. By default, the font color for this link is much lighter, and grey compared to other links provided.

The fourth link provided is the Choose a Course Homepage link. As shown in Figure 2.5, this tool appears in a light shade of grey instead of the bright blue shade of the other tools. Using this tool, an instructor can change the page that opens for students every time they open the course. Similar to the Select Navigation Links, use of this tool encourages instructors to consider the overall flow of their course and how they represent their course from the first page. In modifying the page that opens for students, instructors can select a page that represents something unique about their course. Instructors can send students directly to announcements, or course content, or modules based on the page the instructor determines most important for students to see every time they open the course. However, the lighter color of the tool could discourage instructors from modifying the default settings of the learning management system.

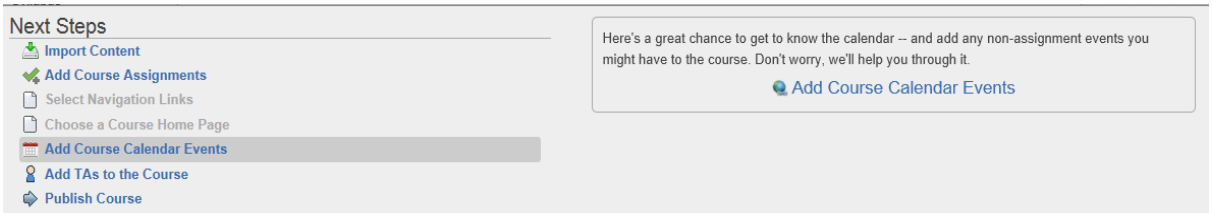

Figure 2.6. Instructor page with "Add Course Calendar Event" highlighted.

As shown in Figure 2.6, the fifth tool provided is the Add Course Calendar Event tool. After two grey shaded tools, Add Course Calendar Event appears bright blue, drawing the eye to it. The language that displays with this tool is especially filled with developers' ideas of who uses this space. The text reads "here's a great chance to get to know the calendar – and add any non-assignment events you might have to the course. Don't worry, we'll help you through it" (see figure 2.6). The positive, encouraging language that accompanies these instructions implies a less than tech savvy faculty member can use the tool without a lot of assistance. This tool tries to reduce the need for an instructor to figure out how to use the calendar on their own, and will even direct what types of events should go onto the calendar (including when to do certain readings, etc). Through the positive language and the return to the blue color, this feature is again being valued within the space. When put to use, this tool walks students through an online course, bringing up reminders, listing individual assignments, quizzes, and discussion boards that must be completed. The tool specifically encourages faculty to list out the requirements of the course that do not fall into the assignment category (in the Canvas space this means not associated with a grade), including readings, submission of rough draft for peer review, participating in peer review. Any assignment loaded to the Canvas course with a grade and due date associated with it does not require manual entry on the calendar. It automatically appears on the assignment due date. This tool encourages instructors to list out course requirements in a way that will remind students about them, encouraging completion of the work. This tool encourages instructors to consider how to notify students of assignments and requirements

throughout the course. Displaying only some of the assignments may encourage students to ignore this feature, while displaying all the assignment may encourage students to rely solely on the calendar for course requirements. Again, this tool encourages instructors to consider navigational flow in their online course through the tools provided. Unlike the previous two tools, the color choice of bright blue encourages use of this particular tool, highlighting the importance Canvas places on notifying students of assignments and other course requirements.

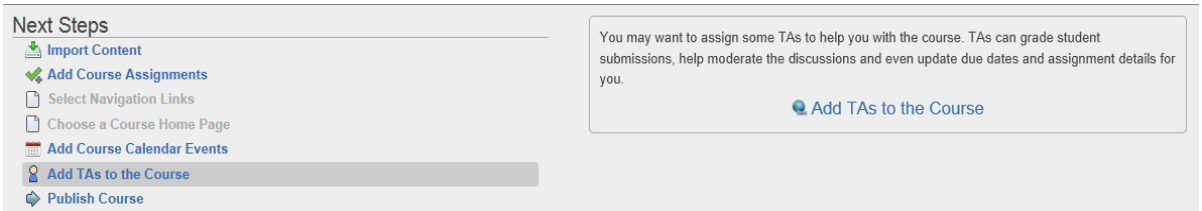

Figure 2.7. Instructor page with "Add TAs to the Course."

The sixth tool provided is to add TAs to the course, see Figure 2.7. This allows an instructor to add assistants to the course with higher technical access to help administrate the course. While not typically used with English 101 and 102, this tool allows instructors to share the work load.

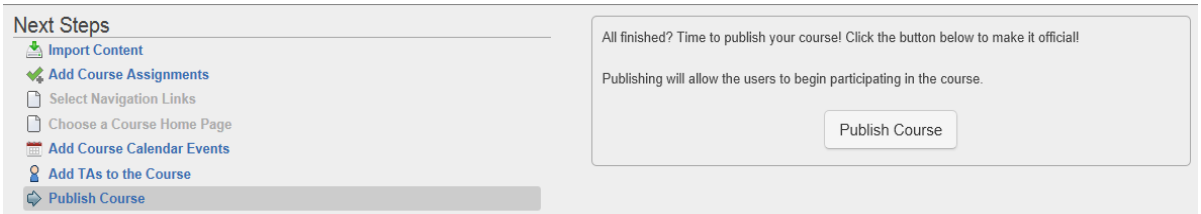

Figure 2.8. Instructor page with "Publish Course" highlighted.

As seen in Figure 2.8, the final tool provided in the box is the Publish Course tool. This tool allows the instructor to make their Canvas course available to the

students enrolled in the course. The text associated with this tool presumes that following the steps above the Publish Course tool will allow the instructor to consider their course design complete. In this way, none of the tools above Publish Course encourage exploration outside the Next Steps box. In this way, Canvas design places greater importance on the tools provided in the Next Steps box, and allows instructors to Publish their course without exploring the additional tools provided in the Canvas course menu.

As discussed earlier, and as seen in Figure 2.9, once the Next Steps box is closed, Canvas provides many additional course design options to the instructor for building and teaching their course. I briefly discussed each of these tools earlier, since many can be used in conjunction with the organizational tools provided in the Next Steps box. However, since a course can be published without exploring any of these tools, the tools not appearing in the Next Steps box (the Assignments tool appears in both locations), by design, hold less value within Canvas for an instructor creating their initial course.

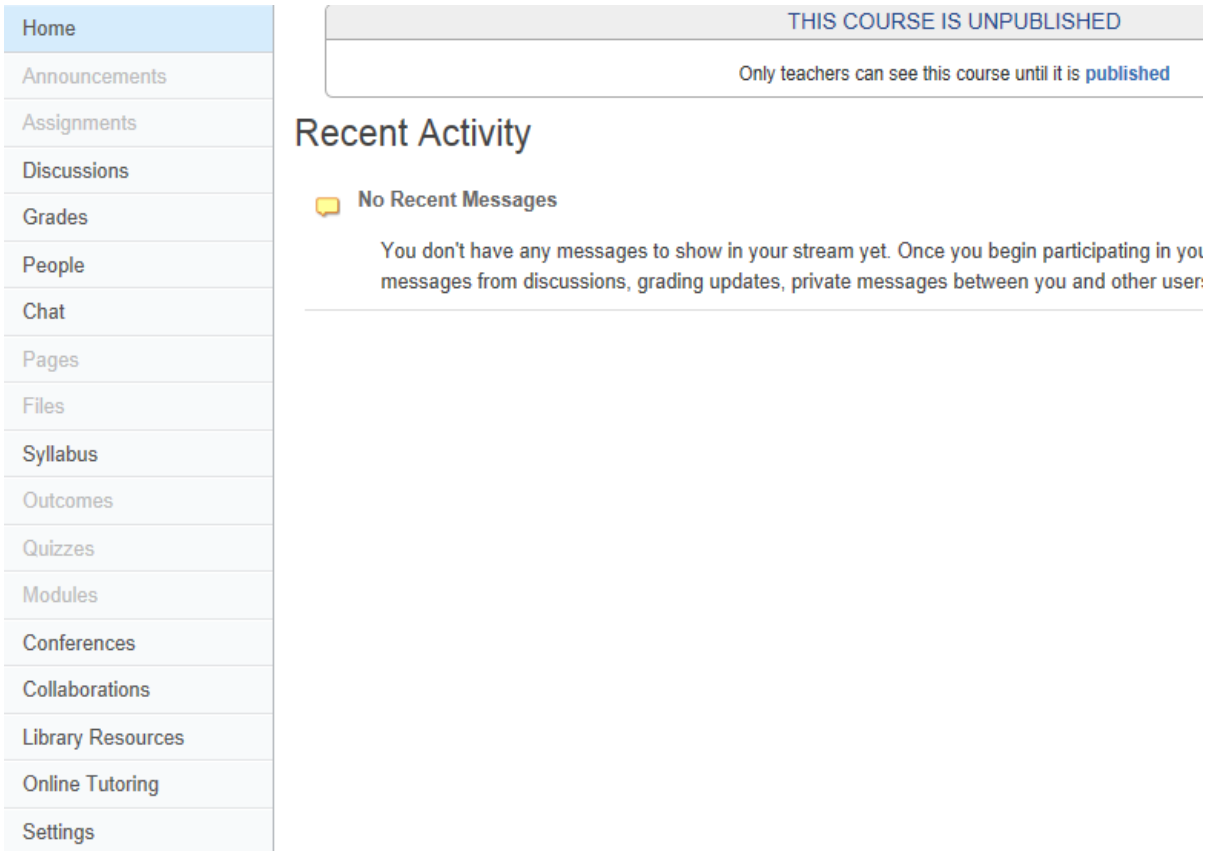

Figure 2.9. Instructor view of all navigation and tool options available once the Next Steps box is closed.

The first link available to instructors in Canvas is the Home link. This word 'home' is a part of the specialized discourse of internet users, now applied to an online course context. Instructors and students interpret the page/space as the opening to the course and a place to return to as the course progresses. The home page defaults to announcements, or a custom created page where an instructor provides text to students. An instructor can also choose to default the Home link to a different page, such as Modules, to highlight navigational importance within the online course. This page influences how a student learns to understand navigational flow of the course, by understanding how to navigate in the appropriate way to complete the course. An instructor who provides a welcome message encourages a

student to enter the course space, then use one of the additional links to access the space within the course. So a student entering the course to complete a discussion board post will open to the home page, then can use the menu navigations to either select Discussion or Module (based on previous experience with course organization). This student views the information provided on the Home page as the opening space, and quickly navigates to their desired space. An instructor who defaults the Home page to announcements encourages students to view the opening Home page as space for the instructor to communicate information to students. A student in this course may stop to read the information, or at least check the dates of the announcements to ensure no new information exists. As another alternative, an instructor can default the Home page to the Modules page, highlighting the importance of course modules within the course. Leaving this page in the default settings allows Canvas design to dictate what portions of the course communicate navigational importance to students, while an instructor who changes this setting determines that navigational importance themselves. In all cases, this link influences overall course flow and understanding.

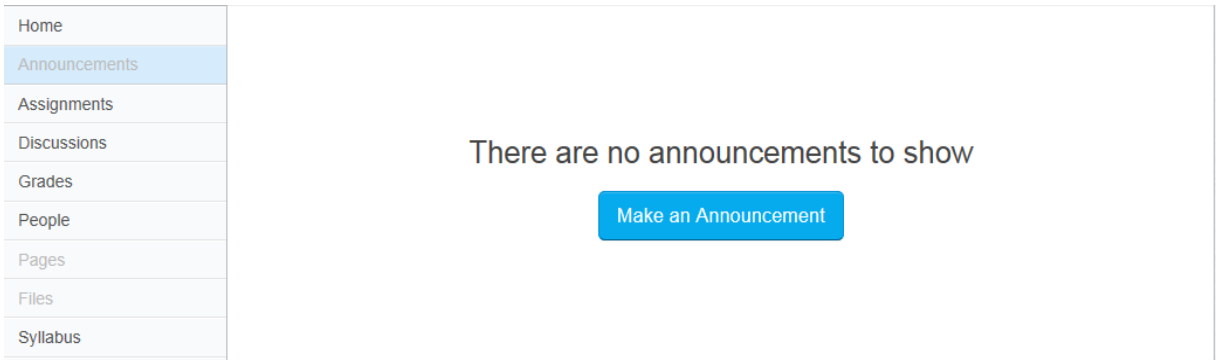

Figure 2.10. Instructor view of the announcement tool before an instructor has created any announcements for a course.

As seen in Figure 2.10, by default the Announcement tool is second in the Canvas menu list. Listing this tool second shows how the space values communication with the students in the course. It also emphasizes the importance of the instructor to student communication within the space. As instructors build and teach their course, and as students interact within it, the order of these links displays a hierarchy of importance.

As instructors communicate information to students with the Announcement tool, students learn to associate the space with specific forms of communication from the instructor. If an instructor regularly sends Announcement communications to students in the beginning of the semester, most students will associate this area with regular communication from the instructor. An instructor who continues to send regular announcements through this tool will meet the expectations of their students. If an instructor changes the usage of this tool later in the semester (using the tool more or less), it may take a while for students to catch on to the new usage since they've been engaged in the course for a time with one understanding of the tool. This tool, and the use of this tool not only communicates course related information to students, but encourages students and instructors to view and understand the use of the course space in specific ways based on the information communicated to students, the frequency of communication, and where an instructor ultimately lists this tool in the Canvas menu hierarchy. By default, Announcement design encourages instructors to send short messages to students.

Listing it second in the menu encourages the tool to be used frequently to communicate information to students.

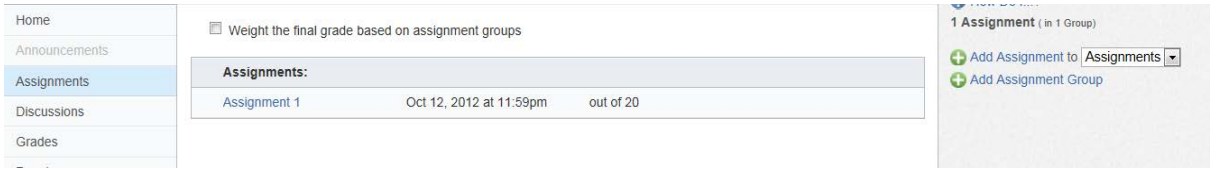

Figure 2.11. Instructor view of the Assignments tool with one assignment loaded to the course.

The third tool provided to instructor resides in both the Canvas menu and the Next Steps box. The Assignments tool is the only tool repeated in multiple locations, demonstrating the value placed on this tool by Canvas design. Figure 2.11 shows the options available to instructors through the assignment tool, including creating an assignment, creating an assignment group, and weighting grades. For instructors, this tool has administrative features, grading and weighting grades, as well as course content features in creating assignments for students to complete as assessment of their learning progress. As the third tool provided in the list, the Assessment tool demonstrates the value of assessing learning within the Canvas course space.

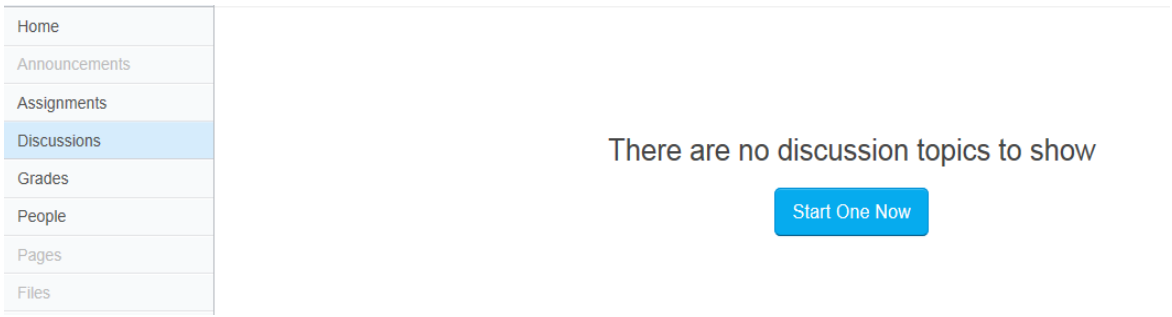

Figure 2.12. Instructor view of the Discussions tool with no discussions created.

The fourth link provided within Canvas, and shown in Figure 2.12, is the Discussions link. This link allows for instructors to create space for students to respond to discussions, to interact with each other, or to post their own publicly viewable course material in the online course. Being fourth in the hierarchy, just below Assignments, indicates a value on not only interaction within the online course, but with student created content. Instructors can implement this tool in a variety of ways to encourage student interaction, posting interesting questions for students to respond to, and requiring peer responses as part of the assignment. Instructors of online composition courses often use weekly discussion boards as a way to engage students in discussions, the kinds of discussions that would exist in face-to-face courses. In this way, the Discussions tool encourages students to interact with each other, and develop an understanding of the space as one that fosters interaction. Discussions can have a second purpose in online courses of tracking attendance. In many online classes, instructors use Discussions to implement mandatory department attendance policies. By creating Discussions each week, and requiring student participation with initial posts and peer responses, or by creating multiple Discussions each week with different due dates, an online composition instructor can use the Discussion participation as a way of verifying student interaction or attendance.[4] By implementing Discussions that require a

[4] Some departments have attendance policies for students enrolled in courses offered by the unit, policies that have not been updated to meet the affordances of online courses. The community college discussed here has not updated attendance policies to accommodate the new online learning environment.

student to log in twice per week, the completion of this interaction becomes similar to saying “present” in a face-to-face course during roll call (obviously there are variations on this). Logging in to the course no longer counts for attendance the way appearing on time to a face-to-face course counts for attendance. Interaction and measurable student product become the way for instructors to count attendance. Missing this assignment, failing to post on time therefore counts as an absence, negatively affecting the grade of a student. Not all online instructors use Discussions in this way. However, some may not use them in this way consciously. On the surface, Discussions seem to provide a way to create face-to-face course interaction in online space. This particular tool can shift the way a student views their participation within an online course. It also shapes the interactive nature of online courses, a necessary feature that often makes online courses more work for both instructors and students since so much writing is involved.

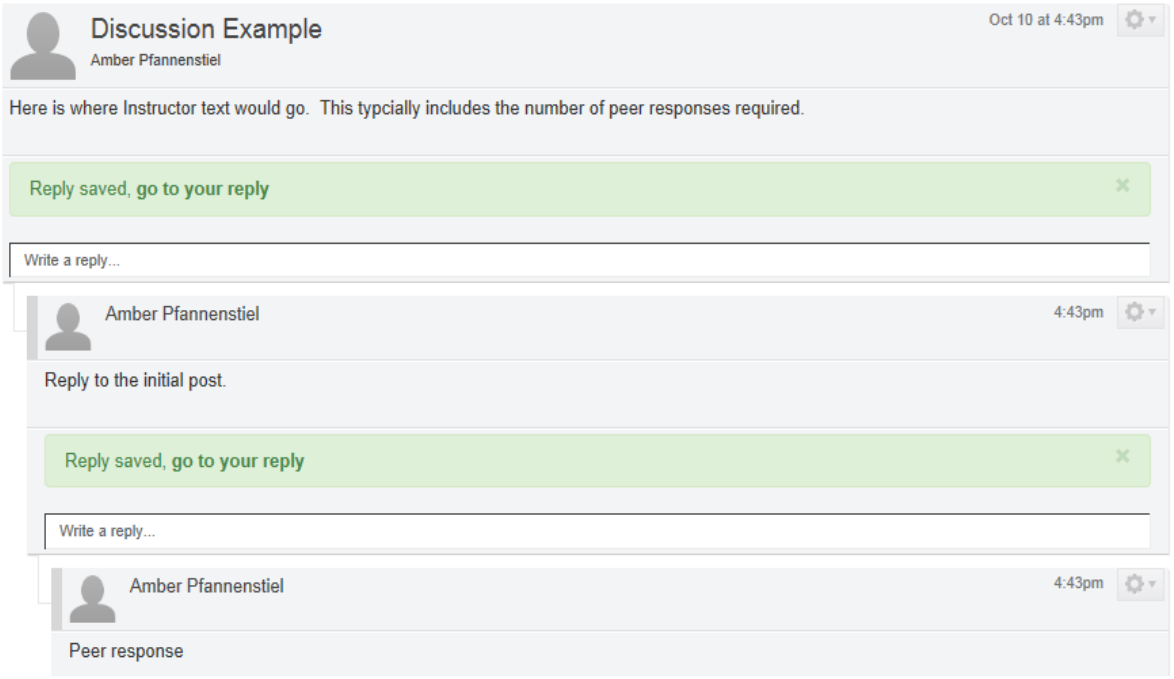

Figure 2.13. Discussion board example with threaded posts. Canvas discussions display the response text not a link.

As enrolled students in an online course, students understand the use of Discussions based on the use by the instructor. Responding once to two discussions every week, or responding once to a discussion and then logging in later in the week and responding to two peers becomes part of how a student understands how to be a student in a specific course. Through repeated use of Discussion, it is expected that students understand how to read Discussions and threads, so they can respond appropriately to their peers and the initial post. Figure 2.13 shows a typical threaded discussion board in Canvas, with the margin of replies moved toward the left further than the initial post. Students and instructors learn to read these visual cues within Discussions as part of the social conventions of the online course. For this particular tool, instructors must determine if they will use it and then how to use it. Then, instructors decide if they will use the tool as an aid to tracking attendance

participation for their course. Students learn to use the tool as implemented by the instructor, then they may need to learn the ramifications of their interaction for their attendance (which could determine whether they remain enrolled in the course), then they may need to understand how to read the posts within the space so they can respond appropriately as determined by the instructor.

Figure 2.14. Grades link with instructor view where student grades would be shown and calculated.

The fifth link is the Grades link, shown in Figure 2.14. Here students and instructors view student progress through the course and student grades on assignments within the course. Instructors see all students listed alphabetically, with all assignments listed within a course appearing in the grade book. All graded assignments show their final grade and the overall course grade for each student. A student sees their grades on individual assignments and their overall course grade based on graded assignments. Grades are often very important to students. This tool can help a student track their progress. This tool also allows an instructor to load grades for non-assignments, grades or points for attendance for instance, so it can replace grade books used outside the Canvas system.

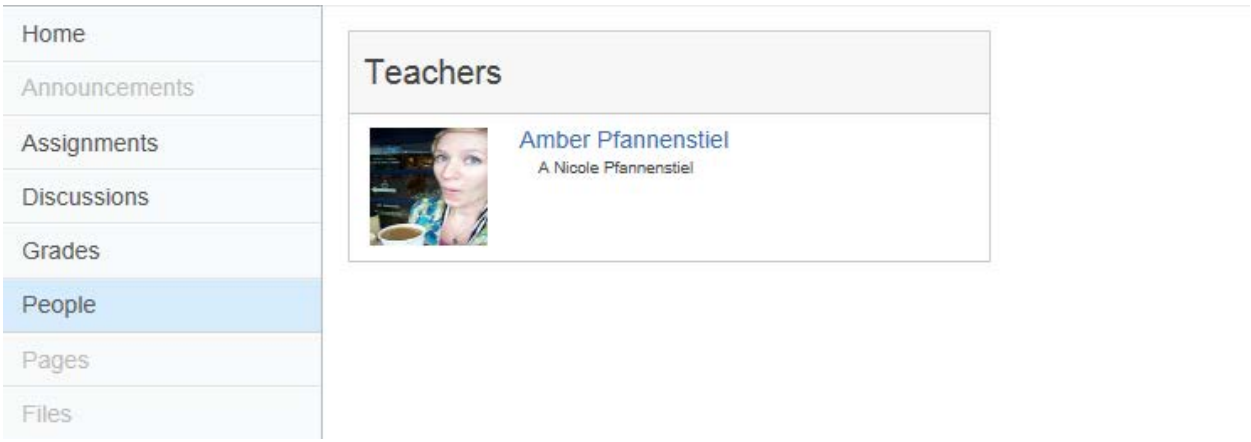

Figure 2.15. People link for a course with no student enrollment and contact information removed.

As shown in Figure 2.15, the next tool provided is the People link. This link provides students and instructors with a list of all students enrolled in the course, and their college email address. By including this link, Canvas design emphasizes the possible need for students to interact with each other and contact each other. In an online course, this also represents a space where students can see who else is enrolled in the course so they possibly don't feel isolated.

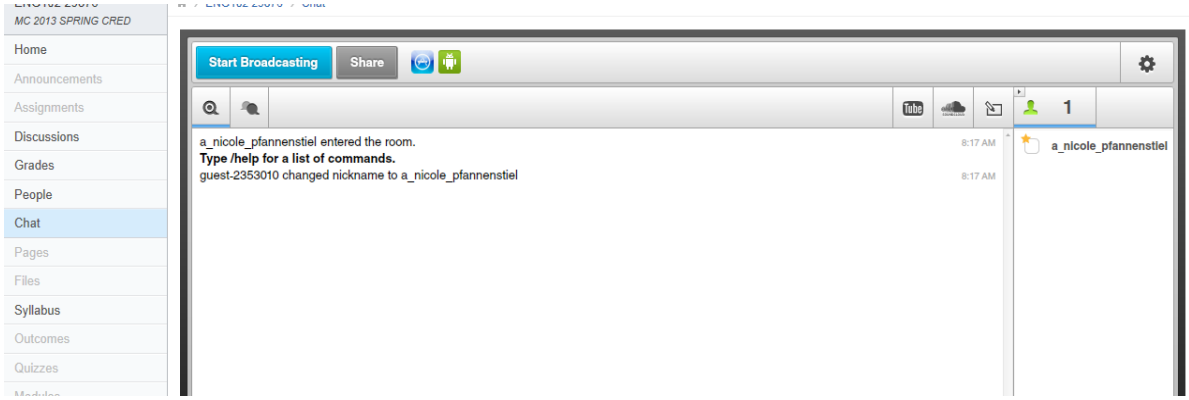

Figure 2.16. View of the Chat tool when a session is started.

The next tool provided is the Chat tool, as shown in Figure 2.16. This feature allows instructors and students to engage in synchronous chat sessions. This can be used for office hours, student paper conferences, or group meetings among student groups. Students and instructors familiar with instant messaging services will find the interaction with the tool familiar. This tool provides a way for an instructor to hold virtual office hours, a way for students to schedule a meeting with their instructor, or a way for students to schedule meetings with each other. As a link in the course, students will view this as a way to access their instructor for meetings if they need additional guidance, and they may see it as a way to engage with their peers if they coordinate schedules. By including this tool, developers are creating a space for office hours in online courses, demonstrating the space value of face-to-face, one-on-one interaction between the instructor and student when there are problems.

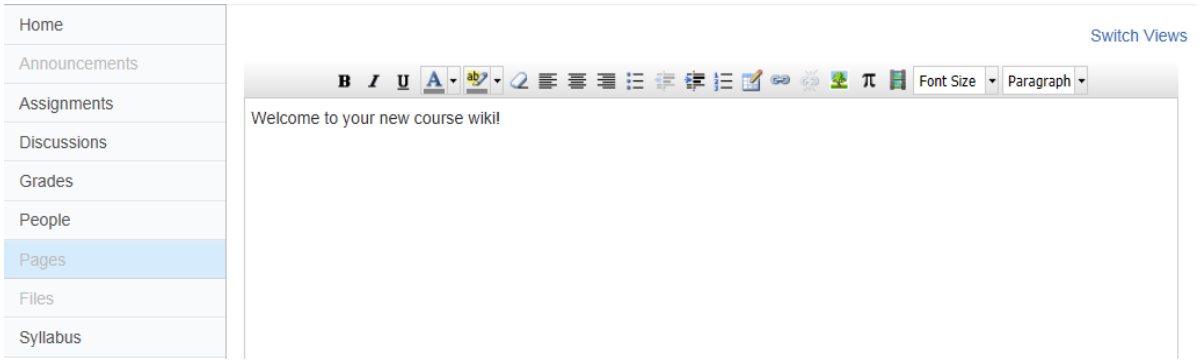

Figure 2.17. View of the Pages tool with the edit information open.

The seventh tool provided to instructors is the Pages tool. Shown in Figure 2.17 is the Pages tool after clicking edit, allowing an instructor to paste or type course

content. This tool allows instructors to display content of their choosing to their students. In the menu hierarchy Announcements, Assignments, Discussions, Grades, and People reside in places of higher importance within the online course. This demonstrates that, by default, assessment of students and communication within the course rank higher in importance than course content, as all those features reside in menu places higher than Pages (and Files, the other course content tool which is next). Instructors can alter the menu order if they choose to. By defaulting to this particular order, Canvas design stresses the importance of assessment within the system.

HTML code underlies the Canvas Pages tool. When editing a Page, menu options similar to Microsoft Word appear, making it seem easy to copy and paste course content from Microsoft Word documents on the instructor computer desktop into the course. However, html coding does not read the Microsoft Word macros, so no content pastes with proper formatting. Instructors who reuse assignment sheets they've previously created in Word will probably use the Files tool and upload the entire document as a file so they are not forced to retype, or fix the formatting errors on the Pages within their Canvas online course. Typing information into a Canvas Page, then copying and pasting that into a second Page will transfer formatting. Instructors may decide to use either the Pages tool or the Files tool for their course content based on their familiarity with web design, and the ease of use of each tool.

Figure 2.18. View of the Files tool with the navigation to upload a file open.

The Files tool and the Pages tool afford very similar options to the instructor, so many of their features will be discussed together. As shown in Figure 2.18, the Files tool allows instructors to upload files such as Word documents, PDF documents, and PowerPoint files for student access. This tool, like Pages, allows an instructor space to provide course content to students. Unlike Pages, the Files tool allows an instructor to maintain the course content on their own computer (or a place of their choosing), making that information usable across semesters.

Both Pages and Files open course content within the course shell so students do not need to download a file to access content. By design, both pages open content next to the menu, under the Canvas heading, so the content visually appears as part of the course, no matter which approach an instructor uses. Files offers the student a link at the top of the content page allowing a student the opportunity to download the file if they want to. This is the only minor difference in these two approaches.

In further assigning value within the space, the Pages and Files links remain grey until a content pages exist. Unlike Pages and Files, the Assignments link remains the darker color even when no assignments exist. This difference in color

demonstrates the higher value placed on assessment within the Canvas space. While the Assignments page provides detailed information and instructions to instructors on organizing assignments into groups, so they flow within the course, the Pages and Files tools do not have similar instructions.

When used separately, or in combination, students and instructors learn to associate lectures, course information, course instruction, handouts, notes and so much more with these two links within the Canvas menu, both text based. Instructors may upload audio and video lectures through the Files tool, an internet format more resembling verbal lectures in face-to-face courses; however, instructors deliver much of the course content through text. This requires students to become more familiar with learning course content through available text on their own. If instructors choose to use these links, students associate Pages and Files with course content, with classroom learning at their own pace. If instructors choose to reorganize the course, they will most likely list Pages and Files above Assignments and Quizzes in their organization (most likely within Modules). In this way, students associate Pages and Files listed higher than Assignments and Quizzes with content that will be assessed through the Assignments and Quizzes. Similar to course flow, students begin to understand the flow of content information based on the use of tools, and the hierarchy of tools. If an instructor follows the Next Steps box and chooses not to reorganize the links, or not to use Modules, students will need to understand the syllabus so they know when to access which pieces of information to complete the necessary assessments to complete the course. Pages and Files become

an important part of that completion, and students must learn to understand their place within course flow to successfully complete the course.

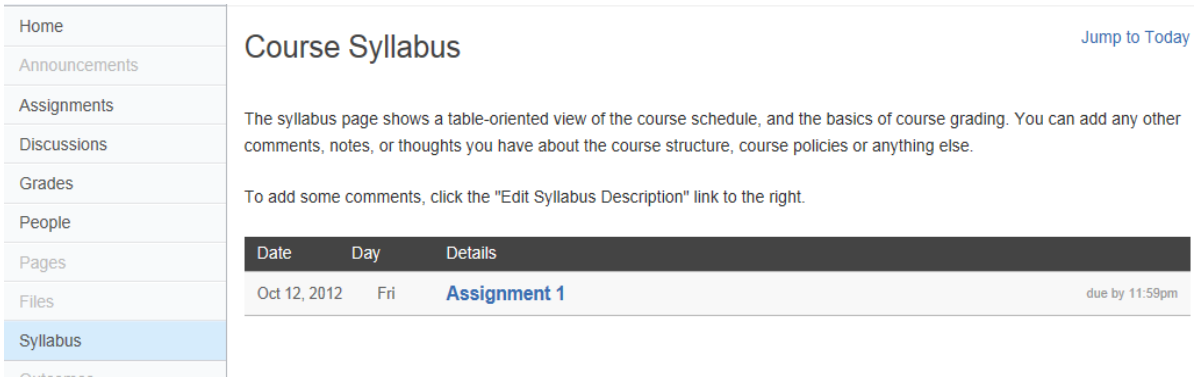

Figure 2.19. Syllabus tool with one Assignment created.

The next link available for use is the Syllabus link, shown in Figure 2.19. Typically, syllabi include more than just assignments, due dates, and the flow of the course. They often include basic course requirements, course policies and procedures, departmental requirements, course goals, and other sections. In Canvas, the Syllabus tool allows an instructor to add Assignments to their course. The Syllabus tool does not allow instructors to enter any additional information beyond Assignments and their due date. When used, students may no longer associate basic course information, guidelines, policies and procedures with a course syllabi. This link provides the third method for instructors to load Assignments to their online course (the first being Assignments in the Next Steps box, the second Assignments in the Canvas menu). By providing three different ways for instructors to load Assignments to the Canvas course demonstrates the high value places on Assignments as a method of assessment within the course. By simplifying the idea of the syllabus down to just the Assignments required, the administrative aspects of the

syllabi are overlooked within the space. Students focus on the product within the course to earn the grade they desire.

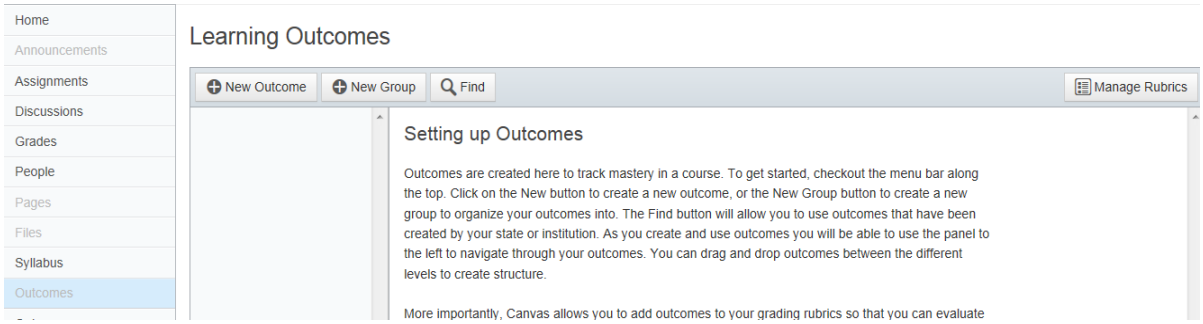

Figure 2.20. Outcomes tool open with default information.

As shown in Figure 2.20, the next tool provided is the Outcomes tool. Similar to the Files tool, this tool remains grayed out until outcomes have been created. In this system, the outcomes tool provides a template for instructors to grade a student. The outcomes functions like a rubric, allowing individual line entry and point entry so the instructor can create unique outcomes for various Assignments. Since the space already places extra emphasis on product, providing this tool also shows the products created need to be graded. This space provides a forum for grading. Instead of simply assigning a grade value to the product created by students, this tool allows instructors to create more 'meaningful' grading on the products created. If an instructor chooses, they can provide extensive feedback on assignments through the outcomes tool; adding comments about papers, or other assignments, so the student knows their strengths and weaknesses. If an instructor creates Assignment space for drafts of papers, the Outcomes tool can be used to provide feedback on drafts of papers.

For instructors, this tool becomes a way to understand grading and commenting within the Canvas course. They can consider the fields they wish to grade students on, and load them into the course so students become aware of how assignments are graded. For instance, instructors can create a rubric where they grade on: clarity, unity, and supporting details. They set the total point value for each, so 5 points per category. Then the instructor can break down each category and say to earn 5 points in the unity category, each paragraph in the paper must be unified. To earn 4 point, there can be minor issues with unity in the body paragraphs, etc. This allows the instructor to select the point value earned, with the comments essentially pre-loaded. Alternately, an instructor can set a maximum point value, then leave each field open for comments, so the instructor can explain to an individual student exactly why they only earned 3 points in the unity category. Since the Outcomes appear as soon as they are created, the students immediately know the goals of a given assignment.

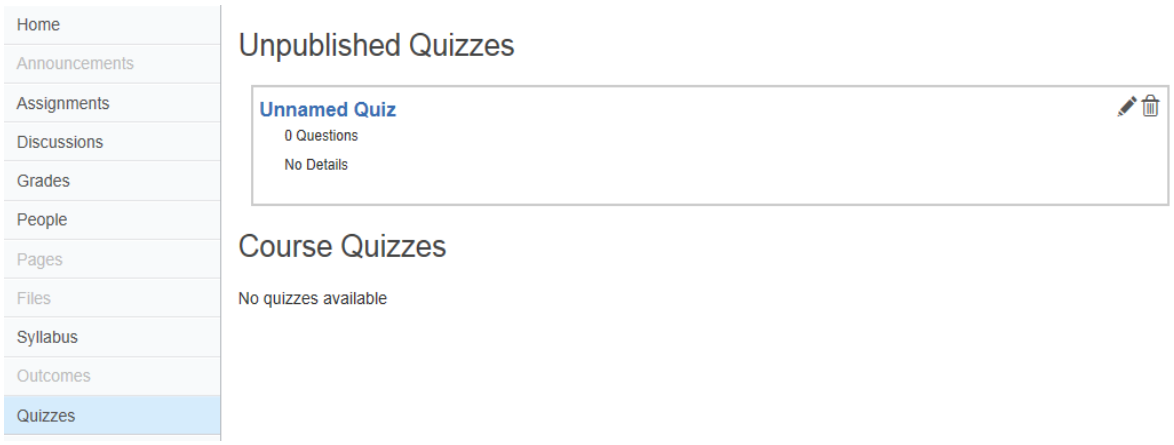

Figure 2.21. The Quizzes tool displayed with no quizzes created.

The eleventh tool provided, Quizzes, shown in Figure 2.21, allows instructors the tools to create multiple choice, short answer, fill in the blank, and essay quizzes.

I've mentioned this previously, listing this tool as eleventh in the list demonstrates the higher value placed on Assignments for assessing student learning. Again, depending on organization within the course, or the students' understanding of the syllabus, the Pages, and Files listed above the Quizzes, or the reading pages assignment and communicated to the student become associated with Quizzes and the content they will assess the student on.

The Quizzes tool also provides the instructor space for instructions, quiz time limits, quiz open and close dates, quiz due dates, and control over the points of each question. The quiz instructions allows an instructor to publish information to the student about the quiz, to further help them understand what the quiz will cover, or the types of answers expected. The quiz open and close dates allow an instructor control over when a student can access a quiz, the due date notifies students when the quiz is due and notifies the instructor if the quiz was submitted late. The quiz time limit allows the instructor control over how long a student can have the quiz open. Time limits operate by automatically submitting a quiz once the time limit has elapsed, designed to limit the feasibility of open book quiz taking in online courses. Instructors implementing time limits typically place them to allow a student sufficient time to complete the quiz assuming they know the information, while not allowing the student sufficient time to look up each answer in the book as the quiz progresses. Time limits depend entirely on the time instructors believe a quiz will take, and can be set to any amount of time. Before a student begins a quiz they can see how many questions, how many points, and how much time are available on the quiz. They learn to associate time limits and quiz questions with how much of the

information they must know before completing a quiz. Additionally, instructors can determine whether students can complete the quiz more than once.

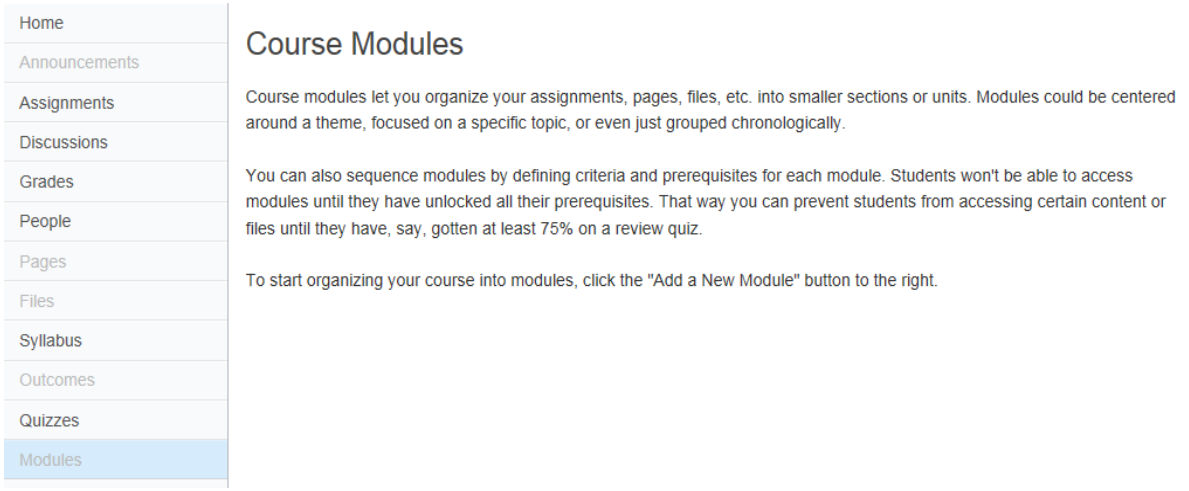

Figure 2.22. The Modules tool displayed with instructions.

As shown in Figure 2.22, the next tool available is the Module tool. This tool allows instructors to organize their course into sections, by weeks, by theme, or by assignments. Essentially, an instructor can group Assignments and content pages (Files or Pages) under a broad heading (such as Argument paper) to create units within the online course. This allows students to understand the flow of pages and assignments within a specific section of the course. All the tools provided within Canvas, Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, etc, can be grouped under a heading based on the instructor's desire. This allows an instructor a new way of organizing the course by content area, paper, and subject area to aid students in understanding course content and flow within the online course. For instance, an instructor can create an Argument Paper module that contains Pages with information about argument, Pages with notes about the reading material covered in the text book, Quizzes on both those, Discussions to allow students space to discuss text book

content, Discussions to allow students space to discuss topics related to argument, Pages with assignment information, Files with additional writing help (such as information on writing as a process), Discussions or Collaborations for peer review, and Assignments for uploading papers. With this organizational method, students associate groups of links within Canvas with overall topics within the course. An instructor can default the Home page to the Modules, or they can refer the student to the Modules to access all course information, highlighting the organizational method to aid students in understanding navigational flow within their online course.

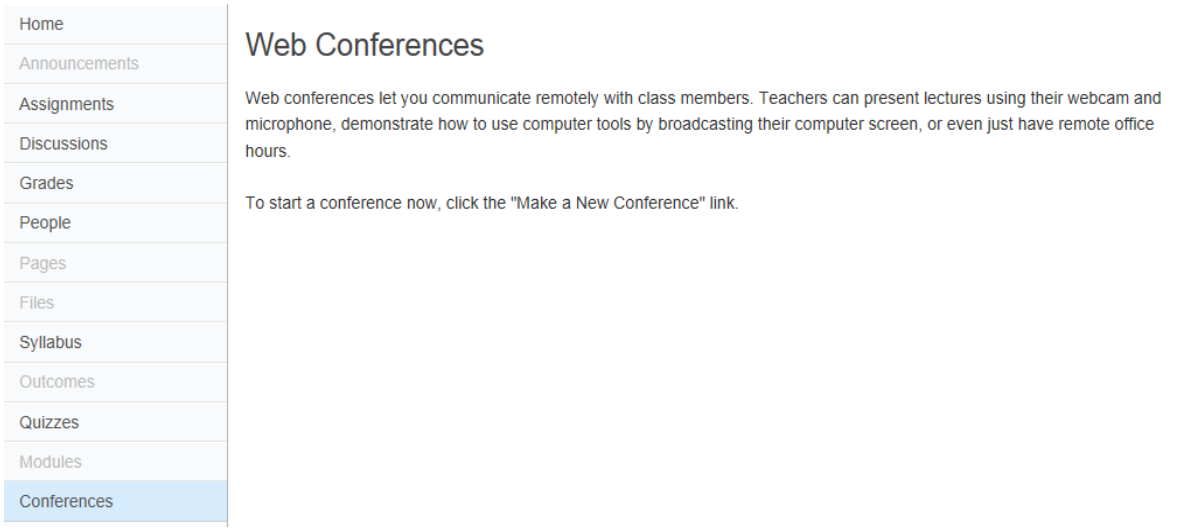

Figure 2.23. The Conferences tool displayed with instructions.

The next tool available to instructors is the Conferences tool, shown in Figure 2.23. This tool allows instructors to hold conferences with their students through text chat, webcam and microphone, or a combination of those tools. Essentially, this tool allows instructors of asynchronous online courses to hold synchronous meeting time with the students. The tool instructions emphasize the use for lectures, valuing the use of the tool for synchronous communication. Instructors can create presentations projecting their own desktop, so instructors can include Youtube

videos, presentations of the Canvas system from their desktop and other videos as desired. If used, this becomes a tool students must plan in advance to access, spending small or lengthy periods of time watching the videos uploaded by the instructor.

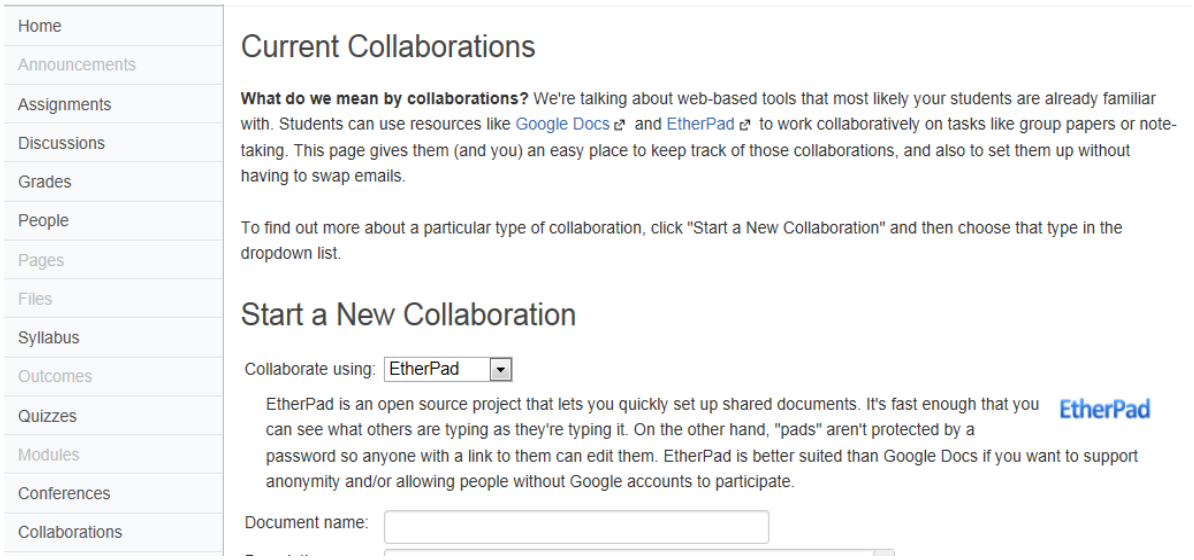

Figure 2.24. The Collaborations tool displayed with instructions.

Figure 2.24 shows the next tool, the collaboration tool. This tool allows students to work in groups collaboratively on a paper, project, or other group assignment. Besides setting up groups, this tool requires very little effort on the part of the instructors. The documents look like Word documents, so they should be very familiar to most online instructors. Instructors (or students) create collaborations, and add students to them, so the collaboration appears to those students when they click the Collaborations menu link. Once the new page opens, students have a large blank page to work with. Drafts of essays can be loaded, comments created, chats conducted. The collaboration document assigns a color to each student, all text entered is highlighted with that color clearly identifying which student(s) created

text. Margins also assign line numbers to assist students when leaving chat messages, specific aspects of the text can be referred to by line number. Students may learn to enjoy or despise this space depending on their previous experience with group work and peer review, as well as their experience while enrolled in the online course. Instructors may choose to use Discussions for peer review, instead of Collaborations. Canvas does provide two separate tools for students to collaborate with their peers.

The next two tools provided link students to support pages within the college web space. These links can be customized by college to link students directly from classroom space to support within the institution. The first link, Online Tutoring, directly links students to tutoring services provided at the college. The second link, Library resources, directly links students to the college Library homepage.

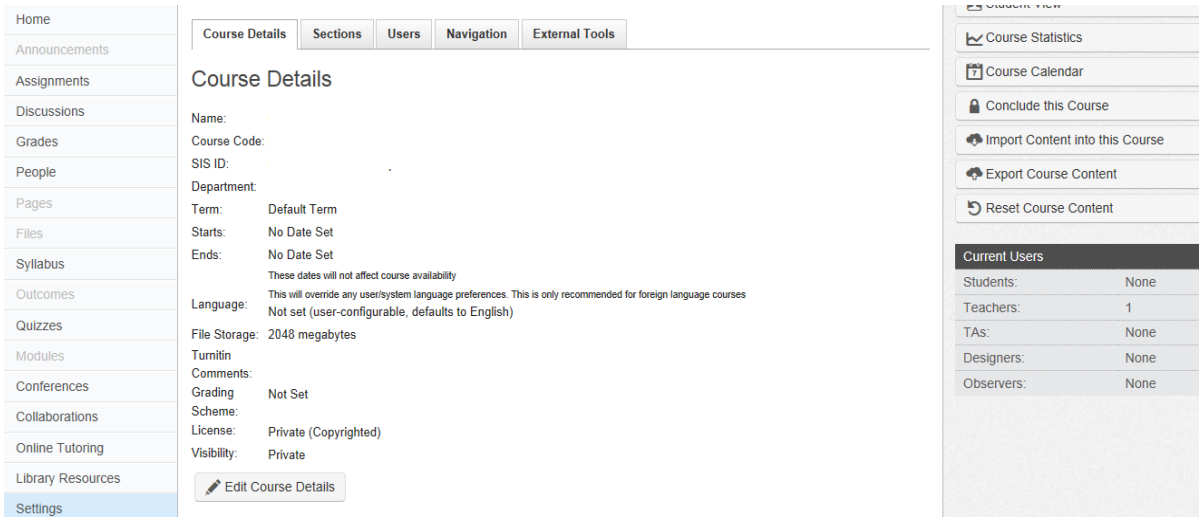

Figure 2.25. The Settings tool with identifying information removed, all settings options displayed.

The final tool available to instructors is Settings, shown in Figure 2.25. This tool allows an instructor another way to change navigation of the menu, and modify

specific user settings. It provides tools to the instructor for analyzing progress of students through their course, for linking external tools like Twitter or YouTube with their online composition course, for importing and exporting course content after the course is published and the Next Steps box no longer appears. In listing this tool as the last on the list, Canvas design assumes many instructors will not use settings options.

In understanding Lane's claim that learning management systems are not neutral, we can see the expected uses of each of the tools provided by the Canvas menu. The way each instructor chooses to implement each tool influences how a student understands navigation within the course, how a student accesses various pieces of information within the course, and how a student completes the course. Instructor use of these various tools influences how a student understands how to be a student in that particular online composition course. While the tool options in Canvas are limited to those discussed here, instructors can choose to employ any combination of these tools in their course to deliver course content and assess learning. With so many studies focused on specific tools to meet specific course learning goals, I instead focus on the choices instructors make within the learning management system to teach their course. Understanding how to use the tools selected requires more than just learning navigation within the system, for that reason I also look at the syllabi each instructor used to understand the course policies. These policies help instructors inform students how to understand the tools available in the online course. In discussing how to use each of the tools provided by Canvas, we begin to see the many different ways instructors can create courses using

the tools provided by Canvas, and the many different ways students must learn to navigate as students within that course design. A student within an online course that uses Modules must understand how to navigate to the modules, how to follow the course content pages provided, how to upload or complete the assessment tools provided. Again, this pattern may be different for each course the student enrolls in, even if all courses use the Modules feature. A student enrolled in a course using Modules must understand how to access the Discussions twice per week, to create the text required for attendance within that particular online course. In this way, the student will purposely log in to the course, for example, at noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays to complete assignments, review course content, and leave messages in the Discussions for that week. The student navigated to the appropriate tools, and they followed the pattern designed by the instructor for meeting course policies, they 'attended' class twice per week to meet the requirement. The student demonstrates their understanding of course design and course policies by attending class in the Discussions. In this way, not only is Canvas not value neutral as discussed by Lane, it also allows instructors to create unique course space that requires students to learn how to be students within that online course uniquely within each course. Even instructors who choose not to modify the default settings may use the provided tools in slightly different ways, or use a different combination of them, changing how a student understands how to use the course. This requires the student to not only learn the course content of each online course, but they must also determine (quickly) how to be a student in the space to meet the needs and goals of that course.

To better understand some of the tools utilized by instructors of online composition courses, I next discuss the methods used in this study. The next chapter reviews the choices made by instructors in their syllabi and in their Canvas courses. How these choices impact how students understand how to complete the course, and the implications for course design will then be discussed.

Chapter 3

STUDY DESIGN

This study investigates the choices made by instructors in online composition courses. I conducted a case study to understand the technology tools used inside the Canvas learning management system, and outside the system, by online composition instructors. I collected syllabi from and interviewed three current online instructors at a community college to investigate how these instructors design and implement their course.

I selected this community college for this case study because the college adopted a new learning management system in late Spring 2012. The community college transitioned from WebCT to Canvas. Canvas provides new technology tools to instructors, capabilities not available to them in the previous learning management system. With the introduction of new tools, instructors may or may not alter their approach to online courses; at a minimum, instructors will need to learn a new vocabulary (discussion boards are now called Discussions). Canvas became accessible to instructors March 2012, for courses beginning March and later. All instructors interested in using the district supported learning management system were required to transition to Canvas beginning Fall 2012. The instructors surveyed in this study began using Canvas Fall 2012, the same semester this study was conducted. Despite their difference in experience with online teaching, these instructors were new users of the Canvas learning management system. None of them taught late start Spring 2012 or Summer 2012 courses. This situation places each instructor on somewhat equal footing, as each needed to explore some of the

tools provided within Canvas to determine which met their needs. The syllabi were collected and the interviews conducted between October 2012 and December 2012. All questions related directly to the instructor use of the Canvas learning management system in their online composition courses for the Fall 2012 semester.

Syllabus updates in online courses

Syllabi communicate course expectations and guidelines, an overall course outline, basic assignment and grading information and much more to students (Graves, Hyland and Samuels 2010). Syllabi are important in online courses, which operate in a text rich medium, as they communicate basic course structure information to students more than in face-to-face instruction. In addition, most instructors communicate to their students through text in online courses, making a text based syllabus important for informing students about the online course.

The English department at the community college I investigate does not supply additional information to online instructors or syllabi guidelines for online courses even though Instructors must complete two courses to be eligible to teach online. The college designed these required courses for Instructors from all colleges and departments. While both courses address syllabi concerns a bit, the course focuses more on general design using technology than how to use technology to teach discipline specific content. Of the previous literature on online composition courses, only Warnock (2009) provides some guidelines on revisions to syllabi used in online courses specific to composition courses.

In his chapter on syllabi revisions, Warnock addresses: course information, instructor information, textbook information, course description, course policies, and the schedule. Based on these suggestions to updates, and how they align with the areas of the syllabi I investigated, I had certain expectations for updates. For instance, I expected instructors to include the ISBN number with the textbook information. Online students may or may not reside close to the campus at which they attend. Providing ISBN number may increase the chance the student will purchase the correct book. Warnock makes a very similar suggestion in his discussion on textbooks. While Warnock provides helpful guidelines, they are not perfect. In chapters 4 and 5 I offer suggestions based on this research for guidelines to help online composition instructors select tools and create syllabi that create the classroom space they desire.

The online courses discussed by instructors in this study are all asynchronous, so presumably syllabi should detail to students the overall time pattern telling students when assignments are due and how to submit them, behavior expectations that tell students how to log in and how often or how not to communicate (i.e. in all caps), and assignments like discussion board posts and papers for the online course. This course specific information helps shape what it means to be a student in that specific online course. In reading through the syllabi attendance policies, posting expectations, and required materials, general guidelines for student expectations, expected student behavior, tools students will be expected to use and understand, and course content begin to shape what it means to be a student in that course. As students read through the syllabus, and interact with the Canvas course, instructors

expect them to recognize these details and appropriately interact with the course. In addition to course specific information, syllabi detail college required course information like course number and course title, expectations for student and instructor behavior as outlined in college provided manuals, making close analysis of course specific aspects of the syllabus important to understanding how instructors design the online course for students to complete, and how instructors communicate that to their students (Higbee 2002, Parkes and Harris 2002). Many instructors supplement the syllabus with additional information during the course, offering further guidelines and expectations as necessary, but the syllabus is the first method of contact for outlining this information, so it sets the tone for the course. For this reason, this study looks at the syllabi the instructors provided to their students to discuss which aspects of the syllabus instructors updated for online instruction, how instructors outlined expectations for the online course, and how instructors outlined student learning for the online course.

The course specific sections of the syllabi communicate course specific uses of technology and of the learning management system to students. The syllabi collected demonstrate some of the student behaviors and student learning being promoted by instructors within their online composition courses. Looking specifically at something like the attendance policy (since there are no formal class meeting times in the asynchronous courses being discussed in this case study), the syllabus may communicate to students the expected student behavior required to demonstrate class participation. The actions a student takes may differ across learning management systems based on the tools provided by the technology system, but the

behavior requirement may remain the same. In this way, aspects of the syllabus become important ways for instructors to communicate course expectations within online courses.

Study Design

To collect the syllabi I emailed all twenty four instructors of online composition courses at the college who were teaching in the Fall 2012 semester. I asked for voluntary participation in the study, and asked instructors to email a copy of their syllabus with contact information removed. Six instructors volunteered to participate. However, three of the volunteers followed through by supplying their syllabus and scheduling an interview. To maintain confidentiality, I refer to the participants as Participant A, Participant B and Participant C based on the order they replied to my email. Each participant volunteered for participation at a different time, so I worked with one participant at a time. First I looked through their syllabi, then scheduled the online chat interview, then conducted the chat interview. In this case analysis, the syllabi analyzed were submitted to me by the instructors via email, while students of the online composition courses typically access the documents through the learning management system. Each instructor provided a copy of the syllabus to me in Microsoft Word, the same file type provided to their students electronically through Canvas. I saved a copy of the syllabus as record keeping and printed a copy of the syllabus for coding and analysis. In online composition courses, students have the option to do this as well and must decide for themselves whether they will download and print the syllabus.

I designed this study to analyze the content of the syllabi to determine the subheadings modified for online courses, and how these may impact student behavior and expectations. I consider labeled and unlabeled information in the syllabi a subheading. In some cases, such as in Participant B's syllabus, instructions to students about specific aspects of the course were placed in the syllabus under no heading. I consider this an unlabeled subheading. To analyze the syllabi provided, I modified the Syllabus Assessment Instrument (SAI) developed by Madson, Melchert and Whipp (2004), including categories developed by Eberly, Newton and Wiggins (2001) in their syllabus analysis. Madson, Melchert and Whipp developed the Syllabus Assessment Instrument to examine the course description, course objectives, and course activities subheadings of the syllabus rating them based on their inclusion of targeted skills as explicitly stated, implicitly stated, or not at all (p. 553). Madson, Melchert and Whipp developed the Syllabus Assessment Instrument to "assess exposure to and use of skills in a specific domain of learning within courses in a higher education curriculum" (p. 553). Madson et al focus on whether technological skills are 'explicitly,' 'implicitly' or 'not at all' discussed in the course description, course objectives and course activities subheadings of the syllabi. For this study, I use the Syllabus Assessment Instrument to assess whether instructors 'explicitly,' 'implicitly' or 'not at all' reference the online nature of the composition course in these three subheadings of the syllabus. For instance, in the attendance subheading, instructors should notify students how to meet attendance policies as the courses are asynchronous. Instructors should inform students of the need to log into the online course and participate somewhere. I look at what the instructors

write about the online composition course in these sections to discuss how they shape the policies and use technology tools in online courses.

Before beginning this study, I had experience as an online instructor. I know more than just course description, course objectives and course activities subheadings of syllabi are often updated to accommodate online differences. Additionally, Warnock suggests instructors consider updating and/or modifying many aspects of the syllabus. For this reason, I expanded the categories of analysis. I base the additional categories of analysis on Warnock's suggestions and on the analysis of Eberly, Newton and Wiggins. Eberly, Newton and Wiggins look at information in syllabi to discuss how the inclusion of these subheadings aids student-centered learning in college classrooms. For this study, these additional syllabi subheadings will be discussed based on the Syllabus Assessment Instrument for how they shape functional, critical and rhetorical literacies. For this case analysis, I look at the course description, course objectives, phone numbers, office location, office hours, email address, contact instructions, attendance and participation policy, course behavior, course organization, technology required and learning management tools used to determine if instructors address the online nature of the course in these sections.

As most research and discussion about online composition courses revolves around tools that can be used in the course, I set out to understand what choices instructors of online composition courses make. The syllabus communicates a lot of information about the choices instructors make. I use this information to discuss how a change or lack of change influences student behavior. Once I finished coding

the syllabus, I scheduled an interview with that instructor. I completed the syllabus analysis and interview with Participant A before working with Participant B. I finished the interview with Participant B before Participant C submitted their syllabus. In this chapter I present the data in the order I reviewed it.

Each interview was conducted in Adobe Connect, with just the participant and I present. I provided the weblink to each participant through email once the date and time were agreed upon. I asked each participant to log into the Adobe Connect system with an alias. During this web interview, Adobe Connect was used to display a sample course within Canvas, allowing each participant to see the tools available to them. The interview was conducted through Adobe Connect chat, so all communication was written. This allowed me to download and print each chat session for analysis. I saved a copy of the sessions to my computer, and then erased the session from the Adobe Connect space. I used the exact same weblink to the exact same Adobe Connect space for each interview, with the chat space starting blank for the beginning of each interview. I labeled each participant A, B and C, for reporting results, while the participant used their own alias during the Adobe Connect chat interview. I present the results of each question together, although each interview was conducted separately.

When scheduling the interview with each participant, I looked at their faculty status with the community college to determine if each was a full-time residential faculty or a part-time adjunct faculty. This information was obtained for comparative purposes, to see if any major differences appeared among the syllabi

and responses depending on the job status. Participant A was adjunct faculty, Participant B and C were residential faculty Fall 2012 at the community college. [5]

Instructor Contact Information

Table 3.1

Data coding for instructor contact information provided in each syllabus.

Syllabus Review/Participant	Phone number	Office location	Email Address	Office hours
Participant A	not at all	not at all	explicit	explicit
Participant B	explicit	explicit	explicit	explicit
Participant C	explicit	explicit	explicit	explicit

When reviewing each syllabus, I first looked at the instructor contact information. Then I looked for instructions throughout the syllabus that informed students of preferred contact methods. When requesting participation I asked instructors to not include their direct contact information. Each instructor removed their contact information leaving the headings. Warnock suggests instructors include contact information in the syllabus, considering their student population as they include the information they provide. For this reason, I expected each instructor to include contact information. While the Syllabus Assessment Instrument was designed to notate if syllabus subheadings included additional information about technology, I use the instrument to notate the inclusion of information in the phone number, office location, office hours, and email address subheadings. I coded phone number "explicit" if a phone number was included,

[5] See Appendix C for the data coding sheets.

"implicit" if no phone number was included, "not at all" if no phone number was included, and "miscellaneous" for anything unexpected. I coded office location "explicit" if an office location was provided, "implicit" if the location was implied, "not at all" if the location was not included, and "miscellaneous" for anything unexpected. I coded office hours as "explicit" if the instructor provided office hours, "implicit" if the hours were implied, "not at all" if the instructor did not provide hours, and "miscellaneous" for anything unexpected. Finally, I coded email address as "explicit" if the instructor included an email address, "implicit" if the address was implied or if Canvas email was mentioned as the email contact method (no email address is necessary through Canvas email, just the instructor name), "not at all" if the instructor did not include email address, and "miscellaneous" for anything unexpected. I then looked through the syllabus for contact instructions provided to students, informing them of the preferred method of contact. I coded contact instructions as "explicit" if the instructions to the student state preference for online contact methods, "implicit" if the instructions inform students that physical office hours or online contact methods may be used, "not at all" if the instructor provides no instructions to students, and "miscellaneous" for anything unexpected.

As shown in Table 3.1 I first looked for a phone number subheading, then an office location subheading, next I looked for an email address subheading, then I looked for an office hours subheading, finally I looked for instructions about how instructors expected students to contact them. I did not expect online instructors to include all this information, as some online students cannot attend physical office hours since they do not live in the same city as the college they attend, but I did

expect instructors to include at least some of it. Additionally, with the possibility for many different contact methods - the community college provides each student and instructor an email address, and Canvas provides an email tool outside the course, but inside the learning management system - I expect each instructor to provide contact instructions to the students through the syllabus. Since I look specific at syllabi for online composition courses, I expect the instructors to recommend students contact by email.

Participant A does not include a phone number, office location, or office hours so these syllabus portions were coded "not at all." Participant A includes the email address, so this portion was coded "explicit." Participant A includes contact instructions in two different portions of the syllabus. First, instructions are included across the top of the syllabus in an unmarked portion directly below the contact information. Participant A tells students "for online classes, the professor checks [their] email a minimum of two-three times during the work week (Monday-Friday) but is generally unavailable on weekends." Second, Participant A includes additional contact instructions in a portion of the syllabus labeled "HELP!" Within this portion, Participant A instructs students to "email me or set up a telephone appointment if you wish to discuss issues connected with this class and/or your performance." Under contact instructions, I included both the unlabeled instructions and the "HELP!" portion of the syllabus, coding both sections of the syllabus as "explicit" for providing direct instruction to online students regarding how to contact the instructor electronically. Participant B included a phone number, office location, and office hours in their syllabus. I coded these syllabus portions as "explicit" for

providing contact information to students. Participant B included an email address in the syllabus, so I coded this syllabus portion as "explicit" for the online contact method. Participant B included instructions in the syllabus, toward the top in an unlabeled portion instructing students: "Please do not leave messages about absences, email me or see me when you return. It is best to reach me via email or by phone during my office hours. I will respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving your response, except on weekends. You can also reach me via the discussion board." I coded contact instructions as "implicit" for not indicating a preference for face-to-face contact or online contact. Participant C included phone number and office location in the syllabus, so I coded these sections "explicit" for including the information. Participant C included an office hours section in which the instructor simply listed "online." I coded this portion of the syllabus "explicit" for providing information in this section. In addition, Participant C included an email address; I coded this portion of the syllabus "explicit." Participant C has no additional contact instruction information in the syllabus; I coded contact instruction "implicit" since the "Office Hours" portion of the syllabus listed "online" as the method of contact. This implies to students the online method of contact, without directly informing them how to contact electronically (email, online hours through chat, through Canvas, etc). I discuss the implications of this information in chapter 4.

Course Description and Objectives

Table 3.2

Data coding for instructor syllabi Course Description and Course Objectives subheadings. In this category I look specifically for updates to these subheadings that address technology as a large component of the online composition course.

Syllabus Review/Participant	Course Description	Course Objectives
Participant A	not at all	not at all
Participant B	not at all	not at all
Participant C	not at all	not at all

As mentioned earlier, Madson, Melchert and Whipp developed the Syllabus Assessment Instrument to discover if instructors at their university revised Course Description and Course Objectives syllabus subheadings to include technology used in the classroom in addition to including course content information. Madson, Melchert and Whipp found revisions to the Course Description and Course Objectives in the syllabi they analyzed, so I expected to find such results. Additionally, Warnock discusses the Course Description and Course Objectives subheadings of the syllabus in his discussion. In this section he briefly questions whether instructors should include additional technology related information and/or skills in the Course Objectives at least as the online class, by nature, requires additional computer work when compared to the traditional face-to-face course. Ultimately, he leaves the decision in the hands of the readers of his book. For this reason, I look at the two subheadings to determine if the Participants of this study update information in these subheadings to include additional technology related information/skills based on the online context of the course.

If the instructor discussed the course as an "online writing course" I would mark the Syllabus Assessment Instrument as 'explicit,' if the instructor discussed "additional computer skills" implying the online nature of the course I would mark the SAI as 'implicit,' if there was no mention of the course being online the SAI would be marked 'not at all,' and if the course description or course objectives did not fit into these categories, the Syllabus Assessment Instrument would be marked 'miscellaneous.' As shown in Table 3.2, Participant A designed the syllabus with "Course Description and Objectives" as the first major heading of the syllabus. Participant A includes only one subheading, "Course Description and Objectives" in which the instructors includes no additional information about technology in the online composition. For this reason, I coded these two categories as 'not at all' since Participant A did not include any additional information. Participants B and C each included a "Course Objectives" subheading, but no course description subheading. Participant B designed the syllabus with the "Course Description" portion as the third major heading, after "Required Textbooks" and "Required Supplies." Similarly Participant C includes a portion of the syllabus labeled "Course Description," but no portion labeled course objectives. Participant C includes the "Course Description" portion of the syllabus as the ninth heading, below "Meeting Time and Location," "Required Texts and Materials," "Required Technologies," "Other Resources," "Campus Resources," "Online Writing Resources," "Online English Language Learner (ELL) Resources," and "Student Responsibility." Similar to Participant A, Participants B and C did not include any additional technology related information

in this subheading, so I coded these categories in the Syllabus Assessment Instrument as 'not at all.'

Required Materials

Table 3.3

Data coding for syllabus review of required course materials. In this category, I look specifically for the inclusion of information specific to online students.

Syllabus Review/Participant	Required Course Materials	Technology Required
Participant A	explicit	explicit
Participant B	not at all	explicit
Participant C	not at all	explicit

After looking at the Course Description and Course Objectives subheadings, I next look for subheadings related to required materials in these online courses. I chose to look at these categories because students may not be purchasing textbooks in the manner most common to instructors. Many students no longer purchase their books at the college bookstore, even when students do purchase books there, they may rent them instead. Other students turn to web retails instead. With these many different buying options, instructors may need to begin including additional information in their syllabi about the textbook (for online and face-to-face courses). Warnock discusses the need to include additional information about the required textbook based on the type of students in an online class, online versus distance learning. I'll discuss the specifics of Warnock's recommendation more in chapter 4; however, my experience with students purchasing online textbooks and Warnock's

suggestion led me to investigate whether instructors chose to provide additional information to students in the syllabus to assist them with textbook purchasing. Additionally, online classes may require students to have access to specific software to open and view the class notes supplied by the instructor. Therefore, I included Required Materials and Technology Requirements categories in the Syllabus Assessment Instrument used for this study. I looked through each syllabus to determine if instructors chose to supply information to the students on software necessary for the online course. If an instructor included information in the Required Materials specific for online classes, such as the ISBN number for the textbook, I coded the category as 'explicit.' If the instructor included extra information that provided details to help online students, like referring the students to the college bookstore to purchase the textbook, I coded that as 'implicit.' Finally, if the instructors did not include any additional information beyond the textbook details, I coded the category as 'not at all.'

As shown in Table 3.3, all three Participants provided information to their students about the required textbook for the course. However, only Participant A included the ISBN number. For this reason, I coded Participant A's syllabus as 'explicit' for including information necessary for online students to find and purchase the correct textbook. For Participants B and C who did not include anything beyond title, author and edition, I coded this category 'not at all.' In addition to including textbook information in the Required Materials subheading of the syllabus, Participant B also informed students of the need for a pocket folder for submitting papers and to bring their book to class every day.

Next, I looked through each syllabus for information on software necessary for the online course. In his syllabus recommendations, Warnock mentions that including this information could be helpful, but is unnecessary. If the instructor included specific software information, such as "students will need access to a personal computer with internet access," I coded the category as 'explicit.' If the instructor included vague information, such as "students will need word processing programs," I coded the category as 'implicit.' If the instructor included no software information, I coded the category as 'not at all.'

To code this category, I first looked through each syllabus for a subheading specifically for technology requirements of the course. As shown in Table 3.3, both Participants A and C include a subheading detailing specific software and computer requirements for the online composition course. I coded the technology requirements category as 'explicit' for both Participants A and C since they included online specific information in their subheadings for technology requirements. I next read through the entire syllabi looking for any information specific to technology requirements of the online composition course. As also shown in Table 3.3, Participant B included some vague information in the "Posting Days and Times" subheading. In this subheading Participant B stated that students need "up-to-date word processing programs." Since this information can be useful to online and face-to-face students and is vague about the software I coded this category as 'implicit' for Participant B.

Course Behavior

Finally, I looked through each syllabus for subheadings and information regarding course behavior. Since online courses have no face-to-face component, all interaction, class time, peer review, and discussion occur in the learning management system, instructors typically communicate information to students about online specific behaviors. Warnock recommends including information to online students outlining expected course behaviors. For this reason, I included a course behavior category and an attendance and participation category in the Syllabus Assessment Instrument. Instructors can include instructions about course behavior in more than one subheading, so I intended to include as many instructor subheadings as necessary in this analysis.

For course behavior, I looked for subheadings in the instructor syllabi that included information about expected course behavior. If the instructor included information specifically about expected online behavior, such as "don't type in all CAPS, it looks like yelling online," I coded the subheading within the category as 'explicit.' If an instructor included information about expected student behavior, and the behavior could be online or face-to-face, such as "be respectful of other students," I coded the subheading within the category as 'implicit.' Finally, if the instructor included information in the syllabus specifically about expected face-to-face classroom behaviors, I coded the subheading in the category as 'not at all.'

Table 3.4

Data coding for syllabus review of course behavior subheadings. In this category, I look specifically for the inclusion of information specific to online students.

Syllabus Review for Course Behavior/Participant	Instructor Heading	Coding	Instructor Heading	Coding	Instructor Heading	Coding	Instructor Heading	Coding
Participant A	Student Expectations	explicit	Academic Misconduct and Course Behavior	not at all	Attendance and Participation	explicit	Plagiarism	implicit
Participant B	Posting days and times	explicit	Public nature of class	implicit	Writing Assignments	not at all	Plagiarism	not at all
Participant C	Homework expectations	explicit	Discussion Posts	explicit	Safe Class Environment	not at all	Plagiarism	not at all

I first looked through each syllabus for a subheading or subheadings that spoke directly about expected course behaviors. As shown in Table 3.4 each instructor included multiple subheadings. Participant A included four portions of the syllabus that speak to student behavior expectations, "Student Expectations," "Academic Misconduct and Classroom Behavior," "Attendance and Participation Requirements," and "Plagiarism." I coded the "Student Expectations" portion of the syllabus "explicit" as it details to students how "to be successful in an online course." I coded the "Academic Misconduct and Classroom Behavior" portion of the syllabus

"not at all" as it made no mention of misconduct or classroom behavior specific to online courses. I coded the "Attendance and Participation Requirements" portion of the syllabus as "explicit" as it detailed how often to log into the class and where to post. Finally, I coded the "Plagiarism" portion of the syllabus as "implicit" as it directed students to submit all major papers through Turnitin.com for plagiarism detection, then to submit that report as part of the final paper submission. This implies electronic submission of the papers as part of an online course. Similar language could be used in a face-to-face course for electronic submissions of papers. So while the instructions direct students to use technology and influence student behaviors, the submission practices are not unique to online students so I considered this "implicit" language. Participant B included four portions of the syllabus related to student behavior, "Posting Days and Times," "The public nature of class writing and discussion," "Writing assignments," and "Plagiarism." I coded the "Posting Days and Times" as "implicit" as it directed students in how often to post, and where, including a due time. Instructors can employ learning management systems in face-to-face classes with electronic discussions supplementing face-to-face discussions. For this reason, I considered this "implicit" language. I coded the "Public nature of class writing and discussions" as "not at all" since the instructor made no reference to the online nature of the course, nor to online writing in public forums like discussion boards. Instead this section focused on peer interaction, interaction that could be face-to-face or electronic, with no medium specified. Next, I coded the "Writing assignments" portion of the syllabus as "implicit" since it stated "all papers are due during the regularly scheduled class times. Submitting papers by email is

not an option in this class." Based on this wording, students should use the assignments submission section of the Canvas course. In addition, this implied a due date and time which are often necessary in online courses. However, it appears this language functions better in a face-to-face or hybrid course with set class times since Participant B specifically mentions class time. Finally, I coded the "Plagiarism" portion as "not at all" as it made no reference to the online nature of the course nor to online writing. Next, Participant C included six portions of the syllabus that made reference to course behavior, "Homework Expectations," "Discussion Posts," "Safe Classroom Environment Statement," "Disruptions of the Learning Process," "The Public Nature of Classroom Writing and Discussion," and "Plagiarism." First, I coded the "Homework Expectations" as "explicit" as it specifically discussed the additional time required for online courses versus face-to-face courses, and outlined the amount of time a student should expect to spend on an online writing course per week. Next, I coded the "Discussion Posts" portion as "explicit" as it specifically discussed the use of the discussion board feature to recreate face-to-face discussions in this online course. I coded "Safe Classroom Environment Statement" as "not at all" for making no mention of the online nature of the class, and the different way respect may occur in an online course. I coded "The Public Nature of Classroom Writing and Discussion" portion as "not at all" for making no mention of the specific written interactions used in an online course that a student needs to consider public and consider topics discussed appropriately. Finally, I coded the "Plagiarism" portion as "not at all" for not discussing any online specifics about plagiarism or checking for plagiarism. I discuss the implications of including several syllabus

subheadings speaking of student behavior that never address online student behavior in chapter 4.

Table 3.5

Data coding for syllabus review of attendance and participation subheadings. In this category, I look specifically for the inclusion of information specific to online students.

Syllabus Review/Participant	Attendance and Participation
Participant A	explicit
Participant B	explicit
Participant C	explicit

I next looked for subheadings of the syllabus related to attendance and participation, and coded them under the Syllabus Assessment Instrument heading attendance and participation. These portions of the syllabus inform students of how often they need to complete course requirements, and how to be students in an online course since there are no regular class meetings. Additionally, these subheadings inform students of ways to use the course to meet attendance needs, most often informing students of required posting practices. If the attendance and participation subheadings of the syllabus informed students they must log in a specific number of days per week and complete online assignments, I coded these subheadings of the syllabus as "explicit." If the attendance and participation portions of the syllabus provided information that implied attendance and participation requirements were met through online interaction, but did not provide details on how often, I coded these subheadings as "implicit." If the attendance and participation portions of the syllabus did not provide information on meeting

requirements electronically, I coded them as "not at all." Anything unexpected I coded as "miscellaneous." Participant A labeled this subheading of their syllabus "Attendance and Participation Requirements." Participant A informs students: "although this class does not meet on campus, students are required to attend class by logging into their virtual classroom at least 3 times a week." I coded this subheading of the syllabus "explicit" for direct mention of the online nature of the course and how the student should attend the virtual class, including how often. In addition, this section of the syllabus informs students of what constitutes an absence in the online course specifically stating "students who fail to login to Canvas **and** submit assignments for more than one week during the course will be at risk for being withdrawn" (emphasis in the original). Participant B includes two separate sections in the syllabus, "Policy on class attendance" and "Posting Days and Times." Both specifically mention the online nature of the course, with "Policy on class attendance" discussing posting as a way to show attendance, and "Posting Days and Times" explicitly discussing when to post in the class, so I coded the attendance and participation portion of the Syllabus Assessment Instrument "explicit." Within the "Policy on class attendance" section, Participant B informs students of face-to-face courses and online courses of the attendance policy, with the online specific information bold and underlined. Participant B informs online students: "for online classes, four (4) absences are allowed—your absences based on completion of tasks (discussion board posts, drafts of papers, quizzes, etc) in Canvas. If you don't post, you are absent." Additionally, the "Posting Days and Times" section details to students the number of times per week the student should log into Canvas to

participate, telling students "this class will be run similar to a class that meets twice a week. You will be responsible for completing work in Canvas every Tuesday and Thursday." Participant C labels the attendance and participation section of the syllabus "Attendance." Participant C instructs students "since we never meet face-to-face, your –class meeting requirement is met by logging into Canvas and participating, as well as by submitting work on time." Participant C also details lack of participation results in an absence. For the attendance and participation portions of the SAI, Participant C specifically mentioned the online posting and lack of posting so I coded this portion "explicit." I will discuss the relationship between attendance and participation further in chapter 4, explaining these results as student interaction with the tools used by the instructors in the online learning management system.

Course Organization

Next, I looked through each syllabus for information provided about the organization of the course. Since online courses can be completed in any manner over the course of 15 weeks, how often a student should log in, when assignments are due, and when a course should be completed must be detailed to students so they'll know how to use the course. I coded the Syllabus Assessment Instrument as "explicit" if the instructor specifically detailed an organizational pattern as part of the syllabus, "implicit" if the instructor provided basic course information then referred the student to the Canvas course for course organization information, "not at all" if the syllabus provided no information about course organization, and

"miscellaneous" if the syllabus included anything not mentioned above for course organization. Participant A included a portion of the syllabus labeled "Course Calendar" which detailed course assignments, assignment structures, due dates, and assigned reading information. I coded this portion of the syllabus as "explicit" for specifically detailing organizational pattern, where in Canvas to find information, how to log in, and which days most assignments were due. In the "Course Calendar" provided to the student as part of the syllabus, Participant A organized the course information into weeks, detailing what must be read and completed each week of the semester. Participant B included a "Daily Syllabus" portion that organized the course by weeks in the semester. Within this week organizational structure, Participant B included dates for Tuesdays and Thursdays of that week, further organizing each week of the semester as a face-to-face Tuesday/Thursday class would be organized. Specific readings were listed as due on the Tuesday and other readings due on the Thursday within the week structure. Participant B described the organizational structure, so I coded this portion of the SAI "explicit."

Finally, Participant C included a portion of the syllabus labeled "Class Structure" I coded as "explicit." This portion of the syllabus organized the course into modules, with weeks of the semester associated with each of the four modules. It included the quizzes, writing projects, discussion posts and homework assignments associated with each module.

Syllabus Quiz

Table 3.6

Data coding for interview question "how do you ensure students read your syllabus."

Interview Question/Participant	How ensure use Syllabus	Canvas tool	Explanation
Participant A	Explicit	Quiz	covers youtube video and Calendar
Participant B	Explicit	Quiz	
Participant C	Explicit	Quiz	must get 100% to move on

.

Since the syllabus is a foundational document for the course, I asked each instructor in the interview how they ensure students read their syllabus. This was the first question asked during the interview. Underlying this question is the assumption that instructors require students to complete some activity to demonstrate they've read the syllabus. Warnock suggests instructors require students acknowledge they've read the syllabus by sending an email. Warnock's suggestion confirms my assumption that instructors require online students to acknowledge they've read the syllabus with some activity. For this question, each instructor responded saying they require their students to complete a quiz in Canvas. For this question, because each instructor requires an online quiz, and because they mentioned that quiz, I coded each answer as 'explicit' for discussing Canvas specific tools used to check that students read their syllabus. Based on my assumption that instructors would require the completion of some activity, and based on Warnock's

suggestions, these results met my expectations. In addition to answering the question naming the tool, Participants A and C provided more information. Participant A added that the quiz covers not only the syllabus, but a Youtube video introduction to the course, and the course calendar. Participant A also mentioned that they build the quiz to be open note/book. Participant C added that they require all students take and retake the quiz until they earn 100%. While all three instructors require a Canvas quiz, Participants A and C add different information about their expectations for the quiz. I'll discuss this information further in chapter 4.

Online Literacy

Table 3.7

Data coding for interview question "do you teach online literacy?"

Syllabus Review/Participant	Do you teach online literacy?
Participant A	No
Participant B	Yes
Participant C	Yes

I asked each participant if they felt they taught online literacy as part of their online course. I did not provide a definition of online literacy, instead letting each instructor expand on their yes or no answer as a way to understand what online literacy means to online composition instructors, and whether they feel they teach it. When asked about teaching online literacy, Participant A reported "No" then added "but I do address this in the beginning." Participant B reported "Yes" and called

online literacy the "hidden curriculum" of online courses. Participant C reported "Yes" and added "definitely." Each instructor provided examples of their definition of online literacy in their explanation. I will discuss these answers further in chapter 4.

Tools

Finally, I looked through each syllabus to determine which tools within Canvas the participant mentioned to students in the syllabus. The syllabus only mentions a few of the tools used in the course, so I asked each instructor questions about their tool use, and how they use the learning management system as the final questions of the interview. I had an idea about a few of the tools based on the syllabus review, however I asked the instructors to provide a complete list as part of the interview. First each instructor was asked to provide a complete list of all Canvas tools they use. Next, each instructor was asked to provide a list of all tools used outside of Canvas. Next, I asked each instructor how they directed their students to use Canvas. Finally, I asked each instructor how they build their courses. This concluded the interview portion of their participation in this study. In each case, the instructor was asked to provide a list or explanation so I did not code the data for these questions.

First, I asked each participant which aspects of Canvas they use. This list contains all the tools the instructors use within the learning management system to create the shell of the course. As detailed in chapter 2 some of these can affect attendance and participation, others can affect how students access learning

materials. For this question, each participant simply listed the aspects of Canvas they used, providing some commentary where they felt necessary. I did not ask about aspects they choose not to use. Participant A reported using Voice recording, Assignments, Pages (also called Screens in the Calendar), Quizzes, Modules, Surveys, Podcasts, Announcements, Discussions, Canvas email (conversations), Gradebook, and the Speed Grader within the Gradebook including the commenting on drafts feature of Speed Grader. Participant B reported using Modules, Files, Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, Pages, Announcements, and email. Finally, Participant C reported using Modules, Discussions, Announcements, Quizzes, Collaborations, Grades, Library Resources, Email, Video/Audio media, Conferences, Notifications to social media, Course set up checklist, Course Analysis, Files and Pages. Some of the features described by Participant C are only available in the Settings tool.

I then asked each instructor what technology besides Canvas they used in their online courses. This list contains all the tools the instructors use not provided by the learning management system to teach their online composition course. I discuss the implications of these tools further in chapter 4. Participant A reported using PowerPoint, Youtube, NPR audio and written essays. In addition, Participant A created his/her own website that has web pages dedicated to writing information and instruction, online resources, documents for the essays created in class, rubrics, sample essays and Youtube videos. Participant B reported using Word Documents and PDF documents. Participant C reported using video documentaries, podcasts, PDF documents, Youtube and Jing/Camtasia (for essay feedback).

Next, each participant was asked how they direct students to use their course. Participant A reported including a note in Canvas to read the first announcement posted, directing students to a Youtube video on their website with an introduction to the course and a link to the Calendar (Pages within Canvas). In addition, Participant A emailed the students with all this information. Participant B modified the Home page of Canvas to provide contact information and to direct students to the Modules to begin the course. Participant C reported emailing students telling them to log in and navigate to the Modules.

Finally, each participant was asked how they build their course. This pattern of development can impact how students access course materials. Participant A reported using a personal checklist that details all necessary steps to build the course. Participant A designed this personal checklist to ensure the entire course, and administrative steps are complete prior to the first day of classes. Alternately, Participants B and C reported building out the entire shell of the course. Participant B explained content is added to later Modules after students complete earlier Modules so additional writing help can be added as necessary based on the needs of the students. Participant C described building out the entire course, but restricting access to later Modules, allowing for content modifications at a later time if necessary.

Each instructor reported a different combination of in Canvas technology tools, and outside Canvas technology tools. Additionally, Participant A reported directing students to use the course in a slightly different manner from Participants

B and C based on the addition of an outside website. I discuss the implication of these tools, and the implications for course behavior in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

SYLLABI AND TOOL USE IN ONLINE COMPOSITION DESIGN

As I explain in Chapter 3, each instructor was asked to supply a syllabus and answered interview questions about an online writing class. Within the syllabus, instructors inform students of the design choices they've made in the online composition course. I analyzed these choices, and asked each instructor about these choices.

The college where I conducted this study requires instructors to include specific subheadings of information in the syllabus, but does not provide specific details on the information that should be contained within that portion. For instance, all syllabi must include an attendance policy, but each instructor may set their own rules. Neither the college nor the department provides information to online instructors on additional syllabi information that should be included to aid online instruction. For an example of what should be included in an online syllabus, I use chapter five of Warnock's (2009) Teaching Writing Online: how & why. This chapter focuses only on revisions to preliminary subheadings of the syllabus common across English departments in the US. Warnock provides information on revisions online instructors can make to their curriculum and curriculum delivery in other chapters. Warnock focuses on informing instructors why they need to pay special attention to specific areas of the syllabus for online courses, noting "course information," "your information," "texts," "course description," "schedule" and "course policies" all need to be carefully considered with the online context in mind (p. 39-45). Within the "course policies" section of his text, Warnock specifically

recommends instructors consider “rules of an online class,” “accountability,” “disabilities,” “escape clauses,” “document conventions,” “rules for incomplete or late assignments,” “skill sets,” and “technology” as these subheadings should provide course policies specific to online students so they will understand how to be students in online courses. Of these, all except the “course description” directly influence the 15 subheadings of the syllabus I analyze.

Within each section Warnock provides general guidelines for what instructors should consider when updating that portion of their syllabus for their online course. I discuss each recommendation in detail with the results. As a quick example, in the section on “course policies” Warnock finds a need to “include language to inform students of their increased accountability” in an online course (p. 43). Recommendations for revisions of this nature allow individual instructors reading the book to make their own choices for their online writing course, and allow the guidelines to be applicable across learning management systems. While vague recommendations provide extensive flexibility in the use of syllabi guidelines across colleges, universities and learning management platforms, the vagueness also leaves syllabi subheadings open to interpretations. While I use Warnock’s suggestions as a guideline for information that should be included in the syllabus, I also expected differences in the choices the instructors made for their courses to be reflected in these subheadings of the syllabi.

To assess these syllabi subheadings for how they communicate information to students on the choices made by instructors, I modified the Syllabus Assessment Instrument (Madson, Melchert, and Whipp, 2004). Madson, Melchert and Whipp

designed the instrument to assess student's exposure to technology skills in face-to-face courses based on the course description, course objectives and course activities portion of syllabi. They looked at these three syllabi subheadings and determined if the instructor 'explicitly,' 'implicitly' or 'not at all' communicated about specific computer skills that would be taught in the course in addition to course content. While Madson, Melchert and Whipp used these syllabi subheadings to draw conclusions about the skills students learned in the actual courses, I use the Syllabus Assessment Instrument to determine what choices instructors made about technology in their online course and how they communicate this through the syllabus. In listing the choices in various syllabi subheadings, the instructors draw attention to technology, and its place in the virtual classroom. I expanded the subheadings of syllabi analyzed for a broader understanding of the choices instructors of online composition courses, as I found the categories used by Madson, Melchert and Whipp would not include revisions to the syllabus made by online instructors. For example, online asynchronous courses, like those taught by the Participants, do not have regular meeting times, so potions of the syllabi that discuss attendance should be updated to include information on what a student needs to do for attendance purposes. I included syllabi subheadings from Eberly, Newton and Wiggins (2001). In their study, Eberly, Newton and Wiggins assessed syllabi subheadings for evidence of general education guidelines included in the syllabi to understand general education at a university. I used the additional subheadings of syllabi discussed by Eberly, Newton and Wiggins to better understand the choices online instructors make. These additional subheadings closely aligned with the

recommendations made by Warnock for subheadings that require updating for online writing courses. Based on the recommended updates described by Warnock, and in combining the syllabi subheadings of these two studies I analyzed the following 15 subheadings of the syllabus for how they communicated online information about the course to students: phone number, office location, office hours, email address, contact instructions, policies on late work, attendance and participation, information on course behavior, information on assignments, learning management tools used, course description, course objectives, required course materials, technology required and course organization. The college requires instructors include attendance information, instructor contact information (phone number, office location, office hours, email address), course description, course objectives, and required course materials in their syllabi but does not provide directions for how to modify this information for online courses.

In addition to the syllabus analysis, I interviewed each instructor. This online interview asked the instructors more information about how they build their online courses, what tools they use in their online course, and how they teach online literacy. Answers to each question add further insight to the choices instructors made about the tool choices made in the online course.

Table 4.1 shows the 15 syllabi subheadings analyzed for this study and the questions I asked of each instructor.

Table 4.1

Categories of assessment to understand the choices instructors made in their online writing courses. Subheadings of the syllabus required by the college are shown in red.

Phone number	Late work	Course description
Office location	Attendance & Participation	Course objectives
Office hours	Course behavior	Required Course Materials
Email address	Assignments	Technology required
Contact instructions	LMS tools used	Course organization
Interview: Technology used	Interview: Online Literacy	Interview: Build Online Course
Interview: Syllabus Quiz		

Syllabus Quiz

To begin many face-to-face composition courses, instructors read through the syllabus with their students, highlighting important subheadings, helping students understand the format, and providing an overview of the course through the syllabus. In online courses, the online format changes how instructors communicate information about the course, especially through the syllabus. To create similar space, the Participants of this study require a syllabus quiz instead.

Unlike the Participants of this study, Warnock includes a section at the end of the syllabus chapter called "Make It a Contract" (p. 46). In this section, Warnock recommends instructors emphasize the importance of the syllabus in courses - Warnock mentions using this practice in face-to-face as well as online courses - by treating the syllabus as a contract. With this outlook, Warnock requires all students to email him indicating they have "read carefully the policies of the course and that

they agree with them" (p. 46). In having students complete this Warnock feels he "sets a tone I try to develop all term: we are working together in a partnership of mutual understanding" (p. 46). This section provides an example of a way to encourage students to read the syllabus, allowing instructors to stress the importance of the policies and course information contained within. While the Participants of this study required their students to complete a quiz, the goal remains the same: place emphasis on the information contained within the syllabus as a way to encourage student familiarity with online courses from the first day of the semester. Warnock explains how his choice influences the tone of the course. The choices made by the Participants of this study influence how students understand the course, and demonstrates tool use within the course. Since the order of accessing tools by including a syllabus file, then a quiz can influence students understanding of how to use the learning management system, familiarizing them with the system, I find Warnock's suggestion of an email surprising. While I agree with the other syllabi suggestions he makes about necessary considerations for online courses, I disagree with requiring students to access a system outside the learning management system to prove to their instructors they read the syllabus. This email may require the student to leave the learning management system to access their own student email to fulfill the requirement. While Warnock finds the email approach to be helpful to his classes, the approach does not emphasize the tools of the learning management system online students will use to complete the course.

All three Participants reported requiring a syllabus quiz at the beginning of the semester as a way to encourage students to read through the syllabus.

Participant A referred to this quiz as an "open-note-open-web quiz." Additionally, Participant C specifically mentioned requiring students take and re-take the syllabus quiz until they earn a 100% before students have permission to access the remaining course content materials. In requiring students to earn a 100% Participant C also considers this quiz "open-book" allowing students to re-read the syllabus, access it again, or simply have it open while completing the quiz. In choosing to require a syllabus quiz, all three instructors begin to demonstrate tool use within the online course. In each case, the student must access a document file within the Canvas course system, open it and read it. Participant A also requires students to access a secondary site with a Youtube video. All three Participants then require all students to access a quiz using the navigation of the Canvas menu, or accessing the next available tool in the module list to complete the online quiz. In this case, each instructor chooses to use the tools provided by the learning management system, demonstrating the tools to students, and demonstrating assignment completion order. While Warnock recommends treating the syllabus like a contract, requiring students to email a specific line to him, these instructors use the tools provided by the learning management system to familiarize students with how to use the system. Participants A and C choose to use the quiz as "open-book" setting the tone for the course and how the quiz tool operates in the course. Students of their courses must decide what this means for them, leaving files open, pasting text into a word processing program to make it searchable, etc. How this choice affects students would require a different study from this dissertation.

The choice of providing the syllabus in a file format and requiring a quiz using the learning management system provided tools aids students in experience online course skills required for them to successfully navigate the online course interface. Instructors draw attention to the content of the File by requiring a Quiz – a graded test – after students access the File.[6] Within these courses, this initial File then Quiz format may become expected by students as a way to 'prove' they completed the required reading. While students are not the focus of this study, it is important to note how the choices made by instructors within the learning management system interface have implications for students of the course. In this case, the choices made by these instructors early in the semester focus not just on course content, but on the skills necessary to complete the course through the interface. Instructors can introduce students to the online course interface, the tools, how to use the tools to complete assignments and how to mechanically use the tools while also helping students pay attention to course policies. In addition to drawing attention to the policies in the syllabus each Instructor wants the student to know, these Participants draw attention to the functional skills required of students in the online course as they meet their own educational goals through the choices they made regarding the syllabus.

Instructor contact information

When discussing instructor contact information (labeled "your information"), Warnock immediately raises the difference between online and face-to-face courses.

[6] In this case, File represents the tool link provided by the learning management system Canvas. Likewise, Quiz represents the tool link. Where quiz represents the assignment, questions, and grade associated with a quiz, not the tool.

Warnock reminds instructors that "in an onsite class, the assumption is that students know exactly where you will be two or three times a week" (p. 39). Presumably, students of face-to-face courses with questions can raise them before, during or after class, so they do not need to attend office hours, send an email or call the professor. Since asynchronous online courses do not meet, these online instructors must determine how to communicate contact information to their students. Warnock points out that the choices made by instructors have specific implications for how students perceive the course. First, Warnock discusses office hours, raising the idea of distance learners. Online students may take one online class and mostly face-to-face courses, they may take several online courses and several face-to-face courses, or they may take entirely online courses. Students taking all their courses online may or may not live close to campus. When an instructor includes face-to-face office hours, they ask students taking some face-to-face courses to make extra trips to campus, or they ask students taking no face-to-face courses to come to campus with questions, something a student not living close to campus may not be able to accomplish. To accommodate students making the trip to campus, Warnock recommends selecting office hour times "when you will be there" so students do not make the trip with no results (p. 40). In addition to office hours, Warnock discusses email address. Many online instructors prefer email communication from students, but Warnock warns that online students may email at all times of the day expecting immediate responses. Additionally, many learning management systems provide tools for email, and colleges also provide email addresses. Warnock recommends clarifying the preferred method of email (p. 40). Next, Warnock discusses phone

numbers, warning instructors calls may come at all times of the day so personal cell phones, or college provided cell phones may be bad numbers to provide students. Finally, Warnock briefly discusses "chat, IM and other modes of synchronous contact" (p. 41). While Warnock does not provide personal IM information to students, he does use the chat feature provided by the learning management system to monitor student questions prior to an assignment due date. Warnock raises concerns instructors should address when communicating contact information to students. While I agree with many of these concerns, presenting office hour information first, then briefly discussing chat tools in the learning management system privileges outdated face-to-face methods of contacting instructors in an online course.

Table 4.2

All contact information syllabi subheadings including subheading labels used by Participants in their syllabi. Blank boxes indicate the information was not included by the Participant.

Participant/ Sub-headings	Phone number	Office location	Office hours	Email address	Contact instructions
Participant A				E-mail address	unlabeled instructions
					HELP!
Participant B	Office Phone Number	Office Number	Office hours	e-mail	unlabeled instructions
Participant C	Phone	Office Location	Office Hours	Email	Office Hours: Online

To understand the contact information Participants provided to their online students, I looked through each syllabus for phone number, office location, office hours, email address and any contact instructions provided. Table 4.2 shows the subheadings used by Participants of this study in their syllabi when detailing contact

information to students of their course. The blank spaces in Table 4.2 show Participant A chose not to include fields of information provided by other Participants. Additionally, Table 4.2 shows the subheadings used by the individual instructors. The college requires instructors provide contact information, but does not specify what contact information, or how to present it to students. Table 4.2 shows the variety of subheadings used by instructors to supply similar information to students of online courses.

I looked at contact information provided by instructors within their syllabi. As mentioned by Warnock, since online courses have no physical class component the information provided by instructors to students on how to contact them indicates contact preferences. When problems arise in an online course, students need to use computers effectively to address the problems. Part of addressing those problems could be communicating with the instructor. In this way, the information provided to students on how to contact the instructor influences how a student will address problems that arise. Participant A included only an email address. Participant B and C included phone number, office location, office hours and an email address. Based on subheadings it appears Participants B and C included the same information in their syllabus, however Participant B provided face-to-face office hours in their office while Participant C listed "Office Hours: Online." In including only online contact information, Participant A chooses to provide online contact information to students. In including face-to-face office hours, Participant B demonstrates the assumption that online students are capable of attending physical office hours, which may disadvantage students not living close to campus.

To better understand the information provided, I next looked through each syllabus for instructions on contacting the instructor. Participant A included a few sentences at the top of the syllabus informing students to email with questions. This further emphasizes the choice of electronic means of contact. Additionally, Participant A included instructions in a portion of the syllabus labeled "HELP!" informing students of how to schedule an appointment if an email won't suffice to have their questions answered. Participant B included a note at the top of the syllabus asking students not to leave a phone message, but to email or use the discussion board for contact. While Participant B includes physical office hours, this note instead emphasizes electronic contact with any problems. With the variety of choices provided to students, students of this online course would need to decide on the best method of contact to meet their educational goals. Or, they would need to ignore the face-to-face information instead relying on the note in the syllabus to use email or the discussion board for contact. Participant C included no additional instructions, so students of this course must determine based on the office hours how to contact the instructor outside of class for help. With these three syllabi, each instructor provides different information to the students of the course about how students should contact the instructor with questions or problems that affect their learning of course content. While Participant A and C both provided online contact information, Participant B provides face-to-face with instructions for online contact. This variety of contact details provided, and the very different contact statements used by these instructors raise questions on how students perceive different contact information. I will address these more in Chapter 5.

Course description and objectives

Table 4.3

Course Description and Course Objectives syllabi subheadings including subheading labels used by Participants in their syllabi. None of the Participants included a standalone Course Objectives subheading in their syllabi.

Participant/ Sub-headings	Course Description	Course Objectives
Participant A	Course Description and Objectives	
Participant B	Course Description	
Participant C	Course Description	

When designing the Syllabus Assessment Instrument (SAI), Madson, Melchert and Whipp specifically look at both course description and course objectives subheadings of syllabi at their institution to determine if instructors modified these sections to include computer skills, and to determine what types of computer skills instructors included. I modified the Syllabus Assessment Instrument for the methodology of this study, so I included both subheadings in my analysis. While these two subheadings existed as two separate entities at the university studied by Madson, Melchert and Whipp, at the college where I conducted this research these instructors (myself included) do not separate this information into two separate subheadings. While the college requires Course description and Course objectives, they place emphasis on providing the information contained within each to students, and do not require both subheadings to exist in the syllabi. As an example of information to consider, Warnock provides guidance to instructors

in a section labeled “Course Description” (p. 42). Warnock recommends instructors “remember, this course probably will have a much heavier component of writing than did your onsite courses. Is that something you should explain in your course description?” (p. 42). For these reasons, I looked at the course description and course objectives of the syllabi to determine if instructors modified these sections to include information about computer skills, or about the online nature of the course and what the student may need to know, in addition to the content specific information provided.

In their study, Madson, Melchert and Whipp found many instructors at their institution revised these syllabi subheadings to include information about the computer skills and subject matter course content included in the course. Warnock recommends instructors include additional information, at least about the additional writing in an online course. As shown in Table 4.3, I found very different results. In this study, none of the Participants updated these subheadings of their syllabi for their online courses. Instead, each instructor included catalog information about the composition course. The college and department do not require instructors include the catalog description for the course; instructors at the college may make changes to meet their needs. Instructors included one or both of these sections in their syllabi in very different locations. Participants A and B included course descriptions (Course Description and Objectives, and Course Description respectively) close to the top of their syllabi on the first page, while Participant C included Course Description (no course objectives) lower on the second page of the syllabi. The location of course description in Participant C’s syllabi indicates less emphasis on the information

provided within this portion, since so many other headings come before course description.

Each instructor chose not to include additional information about the online nature of the course. Additionally, they chose not to include information about additional writing, changes to assignments, and technology requirements due to the online nature of the course. This choice indicates these instructors consider the composition course to be generally the same, no matter the format (online, face-to-face or hybrid). In choosing to not add additional information about online skills gained through the online composition course, these instructors downplay these functional skills, focusing instead on the course catalog composition course description, stressing the similarity between courses no matter the medium. This raises interesting questions about Warnock's suggestions, and the results found by Madson, Melchert and Whipp. Madson, Melchert and Whipp specifically looked at the course description and course objectives during a time period at an institution experiencing a focus on technology skills. As the focus waned, the results they found may not be replicable in that new environment. Additionally, Warnock suggests mentioning the heavier writing component of online courses, something that may have students questioning the superiority of a medium of delivery for a writing course. I looked at these syllabi subheadings to determine if instructors chose to make revisions for online courses to convey additional information to students of the course. When designing the study I expected revisions to these subheadings, as Madson, Melchert and Whipp found such significant revisions in their study, and Warnock suggests revisions in his discussion of online composition syllabi.

However, I do not personally modify this portion of my syllabus for my online courses, so I was not surprised that other instructors made no adjustments. I'll further discuss the implications of updating and not updating the course description and course objectives information in Chapter 5.

Required Materials

In his discussion of possible revisions to online composition syllabi Warnock discusses distance learning and student access to the bookstore in a section titled "texts". Warnock reminds instructors to "remember in distance learning that your students might not have access to the campus bookstore" (p. 41). For this reason, instructors should include "ISBN and edition number" so online students can purchase the correct book. Warnock does not discuss any other course related materials. I agree with Warnock, ISBN and edition number can help students purchase the correct edition of the book. While it's not foolproof, and students may ignore this information, providing ISBN may help a majority of the students.

Besides the ISBN number, Warnock discusses technology related to the online composition classroom in a subheading labeled "document conventions." This subheading, "document conventions," focuses on how students name their files so they can be easily submitted to the professor. Within this section, Warnock mentions that "an OWcourse [online writing course] is about a regular exchange of documents" therefore students must usefully name their files for class. Additionally, Warnock mentions that readers should refer to the chapter on organization for more information on file naming tips for students. In this section, Warnock assumes files

will be emailed to instructors, requiring instructors manage the large number of documents being sent. When using learning management system tools, especially the assignment tool, students upload the files to the learning management system which does not require the instructor to manage 20 or more student files through email. When instructors utilize system tools to aid in file management, naming conventions play a smaller role in the overall course. For this reason, I found these suggestions irrelevant to this study, since I look at learning management system use. I also find this information to be confusing for new online instructors as they may attempt to cover this material, teaching their students to save files with specific names, then use the system grading tools rendering the file names irrelevant. Additionally, Warnock's opening comment that online courses are "about the regular exchange of documents" places emphasis of the online course on the products created by students, instead of using the tools for learning. While Warnock spends time in his book discussing student learning and engaging student learning (especially in chapter 4), broad statements like this indicate Warnock truly cares about providing instructors with the necessary information for them to create a strong enough online class for students to create and submit essays, focusing more on the product of the essay than the learning about how to write the essay.

While Warnock includes a subheading called "technology," this section raises issues regarding policy and how it affects student behavior in online courses. Additionally, Warnock includes a subheading labeled "skill sets" which raises questions about student computer use. I will discuss these sections more in the student behavior section and computer literacy section of this chapter. I raise this

here, however, because the syllabi revisions chapter never discusses how to communicate to students the software necessary to be successful in accessing these regularly exchanged documents of online composition courses. In my review of syllabi I specifically looked for subheadings of the Participant syllabi that informed students of technology necessary for the course. These Participants inform students of the required technology in various ways, and the necessary revisions information provided by Warnock does not provide instructors a more concrete way to include this information. In chapter 5, I will discuss why providing concrete software information to online students from the syllabi could help them learn better in an online composition course.

Table 4.4

Required Materials and Required Technology syllabi subheadings including subheading labels used by Participants in their syllabi. This Table shows the similar subheadings used by each instructor to discuss Required Materials, namely textbooks, but each instructor used slightly different subheadings to inform students of required technologies.

Participant/ Sub-headings	Required Materials	Required Technology
Participant A	Course Materials	Computer Requirements
Participant B	Required Textbooks	Posting Days and Times
	Required Supplies	
Participant C	Required Texts and Materials	Required Technologies

Table 4.4 shows the subheadings used by the Participants to communicate required materials (specifically textbook) information to students of the online writing courses. Participants A and C limit their required materials to one subheading of their syllabi, while Participant B includes two subheadings in their

syllabi. Of the four syllabi subheadings, only Participant A includes an ISBN number for the book. Participants B and C include the full title, all authors and the edition number, but no ISBN. To understand the problem with not including an ISBN number, I searched Amazon (amazon.com) for the book required by Participants B and C. Even using the full title and edition number I found numerous entries for each textbook, editions that may have variations in page numbers. Students with the incorrect printing of the correct edition will not be able to read the correct page numbers in the assigned reading to fulfill the assignments of the online course. Participant B and C may not experience issues with this; however, the benefits of including one additional line seem to outweigh not including it. This presumes students will purchase the required textbook at the college affiliated bookstore, or a similarly affiliated bookstore to obtain not just the correct edition, but the specific edition required for the course. However, students, especially online students, may never visit the school affiliated bookstore (even online). In this case, instructors need to consider how students purchase book, and how online students specifically purchase books to be sure to provide accurate information to them.

Participant B includes information necessary for a face-to-face classroom, including requiring a pocket folder to submit papers. Based on information provided later in the syllabus (and discussed in a different section of this chapter) all papers must be submitted electronically. Additionally, Participant B requires a notebook for journaling, while later informing students about required discussion posts. In this additional, unexpected, subheading, Participant B provides conflicting information to online composition students. With this information, students must ignore the

additional materials, assuming the instructions apply only to face-to-face courses, or the students will purchase the materials and never use them. This unnecessary information points to an important point about online composition syllabi – instructors need to check that the information applies only to their online students. Unnecessary and conflicting information will only confuse students the instructor never meets. I will discuss this further in chapter 5.

Next, I looked through each syllabi for information on required technology for the online composition course. As shown in Table 4.4, Participants A and C clearly point out to students the required technology in subheadings labeled "computer requirements" and "required technology." In the "computer requirement" syllabi subheading, Participant A informs students of the need for an up-to-date operating system, current version of Firefox, Windows Media Player or Real Player (with links to download these for free), email, word processing (specifically recommending Microsoft Word but not requiring), and a Word Viewer if the student uses a Mac. Participant A also notes that while library computers can be used to complete an online course, most students should have access to home computers with reliable internet. Similarly, Participant C includes a subheading labeled "required technologies" (shown in Table 4.4). Participant C informs students of the need for access to their own computer with internet access and an internet browser, additionally students need a word processing program "that can export to RTF (rich text file)." To aid students Participant C includes links to Open Office as a free word processing program so students with limited funding can have access to necessary programs. Finally, Participant C informs students of the need for Adobe Reader, and

includes a link for students to download the reader. In addition to providing the required technologies of the course, Participant C includes a link and telephone number for the help center on campus, and links to digital writing resources for students.

Unlike Participants A and C, Participant B includes only one line about technology requirements for the course, and buries this line in the syllabi portion labeled "posting days and times." Within this syllabi portion, Participant B mentions that students should "have up-to-date word processing programs." With these syllabi subheadings, the instructors communicate different information about required technology to their students. While Participants A and C provide a list of software, essentially informing students of the software they need to be familiar with using to participate in the course, Participant B provides a short, buried statement about a program students need, one which face-to-face students probably need as well. In this way, Participants A and C inform students in the syllabi of the necessary software to be functionally literate students of their online composition courses. They provide the software list assuming students will acquire the software and/or skills necessary as the course begins so they will answer fewer questions about those particular programs. They also inform students from the beginning of the course the functional technology requirements of their respective online courses.

Again, each participant instructor communicates course requirement information very differently to students, with very different subheadings, however, the type of information communicated to students by Participant A and C, and again, Participant B mixes face-to-face requirements with online requirements when

communicating information to online students. This changes the emphasis on technology and the place of technology in the online classroom for each of these courses. Participants A and C aid students in understanding the skills necessary for successful completion of their courses by providing a list of the technology requirements. In both cases, and unlike Participant B, these Participants make a choice in their syllabi to inform students of the mechanical skills in software necessary to complete the online course. This emphasizes the functional skills of successful students of these online courses. Instead of focusing on providing information on necessary mechanical skills for the online course, Participant B chooses not to focus on the technology required for the course, which then requires students to learn the technology needs as they experience the course. To better understand the choices instructors made, I asked each instructor if they taught online literacy to their students.

Online literacy

Before reading through each instructor syllabi, I designed the interview to include asking each Participant about any online specific student behaviors/skills they taught to students. I chose to ask the Participants if they taught/addressed online literacy. I use the term online literacy broadly, and did not define it for the Participants to better understand what this term means to them, and what choices they make to meet their goals. Similarly, Warnock recommends revisions in a subheading labeled "skill sets." Within this subheading, Warnock suggests online instructors consider skills necessary for students to complete online composition

courses. Warnock then suggests instructors include "these expectations in the syllabus, including any links that might help them" (p. 44). With this suggestion, Warnock asks online instructors to consider the skills specific to online courses, with using the learning management system, with accessing class notes, with accessing technology tools across campus (like the library), then suggests instructors include this information in their syllabi. To understand how instructors make their skill set obvious to students, I decided to ask them about online literacy. It wasn't until after I read each syllabi and talked about online literacy with each instructor that I realized how interconnected these two ideas are. So while I agree with Warnock, informing students in the syllabi about technology requirements (like those in the previous section), I also think instructors end up demonstrating the skills in discussions toward the beginning of each semester in their online courses through the choices they make with tools.

When asked about teaching computer literacy, two of the three instructors responded in the affirmative. Participant A responded no, but did add "but I do address this in the beginning." Participant A clarifies this statement by describing an online learner readiness quiz created by the college that the Participant asks all students to complete. The quiz asks about existing computer skills, time commitments, time requirements of online learning, and software and computer access. Through this quiz, students of Participant A's class make the decision about their own readiness for the online composition course. In this case, using the quiz about online learning Participant A focuses on the functional aspects of literacy in the discussion of online literacy. The online learner preparedness quiz asks students

to reflect on their functional abilities to be students of online courses. In referring students to this quiz as the method of addressing online literacy, Participant A demonstrates an understanding and use of online literacy as skill based. Between the extensive technology requirements of the syllabus, and the online learner preparedness quiz focused on online student skills, Participant A provides quite a bit of information to students of the course about technology related skills necessary to be an online learner.

Unlike Participant A, Participants B and C both responded yes. Participants B and C reported that they address file saving, file uploading and Canvas usage early in the semester. Similar to Participant A, Participants B and C discussed online literacy as a series of skills necessary to be successful in the online composition course, framing their skill discussions around tasks relevant to their individual courses. Also similar to Participant A, each instructor indicated they address online literacy toward the beginning of the semester. In addressing online literacy early in the semester, Participants then assume students were comfortable with the skills for the remainder of the semester.

After completing all three interviews I noticed just how Participants A and C focus on the functional skills of computer use when including technology requirements in their syllabi, and when discussing online literacy in their interviews. While Participant B included little technology requirement information in the syllabus, in the interview Participant B's response focused on functional skills. This raises questions about how much instructors should include in the syllabi, and how

that might assist with online literacy discussions toward the beginning of the semester. I will discuss this further in chapter 5.

Tools

When starting to design an online composition course, colleges typically provide a shell for the course in the college supported learning management system. This shell provides the instructor with all tools available within the system for them to use. While Warnock discusses revisions necessary to online syllabi, he does not specifically discuss tools and how to use them as learning management systems vary by university. Warnock aims to help instructors understand how to convert their face-to-face pedagogy into an online setting, never specifying a learning management system. Instead, Warnock discusses broader concerns like organization and ways to explore learning management systems to organize individual courses. In this way, the issues raised by Warnock apply to online composition courses, instead of applying specifically to online composition courses delivered through Canvas. Instead of a broad application through general discussion, I looked for specific mention of Canvas tools to understand the combination of tools used to create the course. Unlike Warnock, I raise general questions about online composition courses, based on the choices made within a specific system by these Participants.

To understand the tools provided by Canvas, I discussed each of the tools in Chapter 2. Now I will discuss the tools instructors report using. As face-to-face courses vary from instructor to instructor, I expect the tools choices to vary amongst

the Participants. Collecting information about the choices they make speaks to how they make sense of the Canvas shell, and how they shape those tools into an online composition course. I searched through each syllabus for information about the Canvas tools used, and asked each Participant to tell me which tools they chose to use.

Table 4.5

This table shows a list of tools used within the Canvas learning management system as reported by each Participant of the study. I've listed the tools reported by the Participants in an order to show similarity of tools reported. Participants A and C reported more tools used so I show tools on multiple lines for easier reading in the table.

Participant/ Canvas tools used							
Participant A	Discussions	Quiz	Announcements	Assignments	Turn it in	Modules	Pages
	Voice Recording	Gradebook	Speedgrader				
Participant B	Discussions	Quiz	Announcements	Assignments	Files	Modules	Pages
Participant C	Discussions	Quiz	Announcements	Assignments	Files	Modules	Pages
	Collaborations	Gradebook	Conferences	Upload video/audio media			

As mentioned in Chpater 2, the Canvas shell defaults to a screen promoting the use of an "Import Content" tool. Participants report using the Assignments tool (also promoted within the Canvas shell), but did not use the Import Content tool, instead building Pages, Files and links as they built the Modules for the course.

Table 4.5 shows the tools reported by each Participant of this study, with Participant A and C reported on multiple lines.

First, all three Participants report using the Discussions tool provided by Canvas. Participant C even includes a subheading titled "Discussion Posts" which describes how Discussions take the place of class discussions common to face-to-face courses. I think many online instructors feel this way as well, so employ Discussions so students can interact. Ultimately, the Discussion tool provides space within the Canvas learning management system for online students to hold face-to-face class debates and/or discussions. Warnock finds discussion boards preferable to face-to-face discussion as they afford students space to carry on discussions through writing, a critical component of composition courses (p. 68). Based on Participant C's words about Discussions, and Warnock's discussion of the advantages of discussion board use in composition courses, using the Discussion tool in these courses can help students think about the institutional forces influencing the use of such a tool (Selber, p. 120). When a student posts in a Discussion, their post contains a date time stamp. When a student logs in to view Files or Pages when writing their papers, the system does not log a date time stamp. In this way, the use of Discussions encourages students to understand how to interact with the learning management system and how to interact with their peers in discussion format through writing in the learning management system space, meeting what Selber terms educational goals (p. 45). Additionally, Discussions take on a deeper meaning as the use of the tool by students can also associate the tool with attendance recording, completing peer interaction and original writing with a recorded date time stamp to prove they

'attended' class when required. I will take up this discussion further in the course behavior discussion below as the attendance policies of Participants also factor into the critical understanding of the Discussions tool.

Next, all three Participants reported using the Quiz tool. Instructors using this tool can create quizzes with a variety of question types, including: short answer, essay, multiple choice, true/false and more. Similar to the Discussions tool, in using this tool, these Participants can record attendance through a submission date time stamp. The type of quiz (essay versus multiple choice) has implications for pedagogy, but I did not take up that issue in this study. Instead, the choice made to use the Quiz tool shows the instructors using additional tools with date time stamps that help record student log in activity in addition to helping teach the composition course. Additionally, the Quiz tool can check reading comprehension, which provides a way for instructors to know if students have read the textbook material and/or the lectures notes provided by the instructor. Similar comprehension checks often occur in face-to-face settings with instructors asking leading questions about the material read and/or presented. For an online instructor, Quiz tools often provide easy ways to check the comprehension of each student. Discussions could allow students to discuss specific ideas, but may allow students to discuss without reading. In face-to-face courses instructors can ask pointed questions to students to determine comprehension (or use quizzes in class or online). Similar to the Discussion tool, the Quiz tool allows online instructors to use learning management system tools in ways similar to face-to-face classes. With similarity in functionality,

instructors and students must learn a new way of navigating to and interacting with the interface to achieve that similar functionality.

The Announcement tool allows instructors to send information to the entire class in short bursts. All three Participants report using Announcements to communicate with their class of students. This tool has a date time stamp for when instructors send out messages, not for when students read the message. For this reason, choosing to use this tool can shape the course in how instructors deliver information to students outside Files, Pages and Modules. In using this tool, Participants send information to students off schedule, outside the curriculum space of the Modules. Both instructors and students must then make sense of how to incorporate this information into their understanding of the course.

Next, as shown in Table 4.5, all three Participants report using the Assignment tool in Canvas. Additionally, in their syllabi all three Participants mentioned a due time for assignments in Canvas. Participants employ the tool to accept uploaded documents from students for the various papers and projects they use in the course to meet course goals. As an online asynchronous course, the use of the Assignment tool with a date time stamp helps the Participants determine timeliness of assignment submission within a course. The same tool can be used in a face-to-face course to accept assignment submissions and to ensure the timeliness of online submitted assignments. However, in most cases the due time of the assignment coincides with class time, where no class time for an online class means due time is at the discretion of the instructor. For this reason, I turned to the syllabi to better understand the use of this tool by these Participants. In their syllabi, both

Participants A and C specifically point out due time on assignments in their syllabi, and how the Assignment tool notes submission time. In these cases, both Participants specifically mention the Assignment tool to students when mentioning due time. Unlike these Participants, Participant B tells students not to email the assignment, and provides a due time for assignments, but provides no instruction in the syllabus on how to submit and where to submit assignments. Participant A and C mention the tool in the syllabus, which can familiarize students with the terminology of the learning management system. As all three Participants use Modules for organization, not mentioning the tool by name does not raise any concerns. Students in Participant B's course instead see a message when they enter Canvas directing them to the Modules.

Asynchronous online composition courses essentially have 15-17 weeks for students to progress through the course. An online instructor then must find a meaningful way to organize the course so students complete the requirements in a timely way. Canvas provides instructors with the Module tool to help them organize the content of their course. This tool allows for other tools to be organized under a broad heading, and chunked together to visually represent the connection. For instance, a Module can be used to introduce a section, a personal narrative paper. First an instructor can introduce the module with information on Pages. Then the instructor can list a Discussion and a Quiz over reading assigned for this paper. Next, the instructor can include Pages and/or Files with information on brainstorming, outlining, and peer reviewing the personal narrative. Instructors can then open Discussion forums for peer review. Many instructors will end the Module

with an Assignment, allowing the student to upload their final paper. When a student logs into the course, they will see all these links in order, under one heading helping to make the connection between the various tools. All three Participants of this study report using Modules to organize their course. When a student attends face-to-face courses, they appear in the same room (for the most part) at the same time on specified days during the week. That repetitiveness is part of how classes operate, and students learn to function within that repetitiveness. For online classes, Modules can allow instructors to create similar repetitiveness in online courses, helping students quickly understand how to functionally operate within the learning management system by requiring the use of just one link, Modules, and visually displaying the order of tool use in chronological order, making it easier for students to understand and operate within the system. While Canvas does not offer any other organizing tools, instructors do not need to use Modules to organize. Instructors could rely on their syllabus weekly assignments to let students know which tools to access on which days to complete assignments throughout the semester. In using Modules to organize the course, these Participants reduce the need for students to learn navigation. In listing all components of a topic within a Module, students refer to the Module for the list of requirements to complete. For example, in their syllabus, Participant C includes a subheading labeled "Class Structure." Within this section Participant C explains that the course "will be divided into four learning modules." Participant C then lists the 7 assignments, in sequential order that must be completed for each of the four Modules. By including this information, and organizing in this fashion, these Participants select a specific way of functionally

navigating the tools used within the course. This raises questions about how online composition instructors organize online courses. Since I did not observe a class, or interview students I have further questions about how effective they find this organizational pattern and how it may impact student participation. Further research studies would be needed to better understand the impact of Modules. Of the few learning management systems I have taught in, all included a module or chunking tool of some sort for organization. While Warnock recommends organizing by weekly assignments (which I will discuss further in attendance and participation), also visually aligning tools in sequential order under a topic heading in a module seems to make course organization easier to build for the instructor and easier to understand for the students. But is this the best way? Do these tools exist because of the visual appeal? In overall course organization, Modules resemble face-to-face instruction in creating virtual space for notes, assignments, tools and discussions to be associated under a particular heading. In many face-to-face courses, instructors organize notes for a given lecture around a particular theme, and then progress through them orderly. So notes for a personal narrative occur around the writing of a personal narrative not before students write an argument paper. Modules organize tools in similar ways in the learning management system.

Table 4.6

This table shows the tools outside the Canvas learning management system reported by each Participant of the study.

Participant/ Technology tools used					
Participant A	YouTube	Personal Website	PowerPoint		
Participant B	Word docs	PDF			
Participant C	Youtube	Podcasts	PDFs	Videos	Jing/Camtasia

Table 4.6 shows the tools these Participants use outside Canvas to teach the course. Table 4.5 shows all three Participants use the Pages tool, and Participants B and C reported using the Files tool. As a group of tools, all these final tools aid instructors in teaching their online course. These instructors use these tools to deliver course content, course information, general information, notes, and lectures. The Pages tool allows instructors to create a page of content in the learning management system, similar to a website. The Files tool allows an instructor to upload a file (Word, PDF, etc). Similar to the other tools these Participants mentioned using; each of these teaching tools allows instructors to recreate their face-to-face teaching using an electronic tool in the online classroom space.

As shown in Table 4.5, the Participants A and C also reported using various tools provided by Canvas to teach their courses. Both Participants report using media tools, Participant A reported using a Voice Recording tool while Participant C reported using an Upload video/audio media tool. In each case, this alters the online course to include the actual voice and/or image of the instructor teaching, instead of

just a textual instructor presence through Files and Pages. Additionally, Participant C uses Collaborations and Conferences, tools that allow collaboration between students (Collaborations) and between student and instructor (Conferences). These tools require additional functional understanding of the course interface. For students to effectively manage the course, they must navigate to Files and Pages with notes, and they must access media files. In Participant C's course, students use Discussions, and Collaborations and Conferences. These students must access media files, and they must understand interaction and collaboration through multiple tools used in the course.

Looking at all the choices these instructors made when selecting tools for their online composition course it becomes clear that most of these tools mimic face-to-face courses in a learning management system. In selecting tools that provide a similar pedagogical experience for students, whether consciously or unconsciously, these instructors create online classroom contexts where teaching seems similar lowering the effort students must commit to understanding the online course.

After I asked the Participants about their tool choices, I asked each instructor how they built their online composition course. With 15-17 weeks of available course time, and no physical meetings, students could access the course on the first day, and complete the entire course in one day. To direct students through the course in an approved manner, many instructors build out their course in various ways to direct students through Modules at a more appropriate pace. Both Participant A and C said they build out the entire semester before the semester begins. Participant A described a personal checklist used to ensure all pieces were built. Participant C

specifically mentioned restricting access to later Modules until later in the semester, so while the instructor loaded all the information to the course, the instructor restricted student access to ensure they completed the course as an approved pace. Additionally, this allowed Participant C to modify course content as necessary for the students of the course. Unlike Participants A and C, Participant B built out the shell for the course at the beginning of the semester by identifying future units with Modules. Participant B then added content to later Modules as the semester progressed. In face-to-face courses, instructors can modify daily content to meet the needs of a specific class of students, possibly discussing the use of they're, their and there in a particular class if the students struggled with usage in a paper. When instructors build out an online class before the course begins, modifying content later and including additional information to aid students in their writing becomes more problematic. Participant A's approach to building the course allows for little flexibility. Instead, the instructor relies on the resources housed on the personal website to fill in gaps as necessary. Participant A can refer an individual student to a specific document or set of documents to address issues in their writing, like their use of supporting detail examples, or Participant A can refer the entire class to specific documents. With Quizzes prebuilt, Participant A can gauge the effectiveness of this referral in future papers, but not check for immediate results in a Quiz, since they have already been built. Unlike Participant A, Participants B and C approach the online Canvas shell leaving more room for flexibility. This approach more closely matches the face-to-face approach. In both cases, the Participants predetermined the total papers, the topics of papers, the number of discussions that will occur and

listed all the information in their syllabi (the department does not require specific papers from all composition courses). Participant B then created a shell to reflect this pattern to match the syllabi, while Participant C restricted access to later content. Both Participants can add future content to the course, they can make modification to dates (due dates perhaps), they can also keep students on pace together, in their approach to building the course. In face-to-face courses, students can read ahead, try to start papers early, but for the most part, the regularly scheduled class times help students stay on pace with each other in the course. In delaying the roll out of an online course, Participants B and C recreate this approach in an online setting.

The tool choices of instructors teaching in the Canvas learning management system is limited. The interface only allows instructors to use specific tools in their course. For this reason, I expected the Participants to make similar tool choices when designing their course in Canvas. The double use of tools for pedagogical purposes and attendance purposes raises questions about how much learning management system design relies on the tools to track student participation and attendance in the course. I will discuss this more in Chapter 5.

Course Behavior

Asynchronous online courses mean students have no regular class meetings, no official time to appear for class, to have reading completed and papers printed to be turned in. Students interact with each other differently, almost exclusively through written text in a learning management system interface. The movement of

the composition course to online space requires instructors to provide information to students on expected behavior in the class. Warnock breaks this into eight subcategories, recommending instructors make updates to their syllabi to include new rules, attendance, disabilities, student drop, document expectations, incomplete and late assignments, technology, and finally a subcategory labeled "skill set."

Warnock titles the first subsection "Rules of an Online Class." Warnock immediately mentions that online courses require a more extensive list of rules in the syllabi, even mentioning that "students might refer to their online syllabi more frequently than they did their onsite course syllabi" (p. 42). Additionally, Warnock finds that instructors should provide specific details about the tools used, including "how e-conversations should take place, when they [students] should complete the readings, how they [students] should contact you, and so on" (p. 42). In this subsection, Warnock very briefly informs instructors of the need to provide extensive instruction to students on expected student behaviors in the online class, but provides little detail on what this means. He details the need to provide guidance in how to communicate with other students, and then also details the need to provide a schedule. Here, I look specifically for information in the Participant syllabi on how students should communicate with each other, and how they should use the course interface. Additionally, in a subsection labeled "Accountability," Warnock describes language included in his own syllabus outlining the additional accountability required of an online student. Warnock does not include a subsection, or even information on attendance and/or participation policies. General information about updates to policies for online courses – and the probable need to revisit these after

experiencing teaching online for a semester to overcome any difficulties encountered – is provided, but no information on how students should participate and how to explain this to them. Finally, Warnock ends this Course Policies section with a discussion of "skill sets" and "technology" related to the online course. Within these sections, Warnock raises questions and concerns not just about access to technology, but about instructor expectations for technology use and student behaviors in the online composition course. As a whole, Warnock raises important issues for online courses. Instructors should modify their syllabi to inform students of expectations specific to the online composition course. However, Warnock does not raise issues of attendance, which I feel should be raised. I looked at each instructor syllabus for subsections that discuss attendance and participation and course behavior to understand the choices instructors made and how they communicated these choices to students.

Table 4.7

Subheadings used by the Participants in their syllabi to communicate attendance and course behavior information to students. Each of these subheadings specifically mentions online course behavior.

Participant/ Sub-headings	Attendance & Participation	Course behavior
Participant A	Attendance and participation requirement	Student expectations
		Academic Misconduct and Classroom Behavior
Participant B	Policy on Class Attendance	Posting days and times
	Posting days and times	
Participant C	Attendance	Homework expectations
		Discussion Posts

As shown in Table 4.7 for Attendance and Participation, each instructor included at least one subsection in their syllabus for attendance, with Participant B including two subsections. For this category, I looked through the syllabi for subsections that informed students of the required behavior to meet attendance and/or participation requirements for the online course. Despite Warnock not mentioning attendance updates to the syllabus in the syllabus chapter, all of the Participants explicitly discussed attendance and/or participation specific to online students. In these subheadings, each participant included instructions to their students on how often the student should log in and complete online work for attendance requirements. The instructions to students center around logging the course interface and completing all work on time. As these Participants include

information on behaviors and on where they expect student to take action (which tools to actually use), the focus is on mechanics within the course interface.

Participant B included two subheadings, titling the second subheading "Posting days and times" a subheading that clearly indicates to students the posting requirement of an online student to meet attendance and participation requirements. Participant B's decision to include two separate subheadings in their syllabus, "Posting days and times" as well as "Policy on Class Attendance" was a surprising find within this category. Including information in two separate locations requires that the student read about expected student behavior in two separate sections. For ease of communicating expectations to students, it seems only one section outlining expected student behavior would be preferable, and both Participant A and C limit their information to one subheading each. Additionally, the "Policy on class attendance" subheading used by Participant B includes general attendance information for students attending face-to-face courses in the Fall and Spring semesters, with a bold, underlined note for online students. Within this section, after describing the number of absences for a Monday/Wednesday/Friday class and a Tuesday/Thursday class, Participant B writes "for online classes, four (4) absences are allowed—your absences based on completion of tasks (discussion board posts, drafts of papers, quizzes, etc) in Canvas. If you don't post, you are absent." After the discussion of face-to-face attendance, Participant B draws the online attention to not just logging into the course interface – which would be a more accurate comparison to arriving for a face-to-face class - but interaction with the course interface that leaves a mark. Participant B chose to create the course

interface using specific tools, then builds the attendance policy around the student use of those tools. If Participant B did not use Discussions and Quizzes, it would be much harder for an online student to demonstrate their attendance, as there would be no way to leave a mark in the interface. Instructors and students begin to understand the social uses of the tools chosen by the instructors and how those choices impact the rules of the course.

The data shows that all three Participants draw attention to the fact that to be considered present in class, students must log in to the interface and use specific tools selected by the instructors. Each of these Participants provides explicit instructions to students on posting information on specific days to prove attendance in the course. In this way, the tools selected for use by the instructor directly impact the attendance policy set by that instructor. If an instructor requires attendance three times per week, similar to Participant A, there should be enough tools being used in the course to allow the student to interact with the interface to meet the attendance policy. From a student perspective, as they become more comfortable with the social conventions of the tools, the number of times per week they log in may become less than the actual attendance policy. Participant B adds in the "Policy on class attendance" subheading "if you need to work ahead a little, that's fine" indicating to students that assignments do not necessarily need to be completed on the day they are due, but may be completed ahead of time. It would then be up to the instructor if they actually check completion day when students submit assignments in a timely manner. I did not ask these Participants about this practice. Further research would need to be done to better understand how much attention

instructors actually pay to completion day and time of on-time assignments. Further, these subheadings of the syllabi raise questions about what it means to attend an online course, and what (if any) is the difference between attendance and participation. I will discuss this further in chapter 5. Additionally, these subheadings draw attention to the syllabus used by Participant B and how one syllabus is used for online and face-to-face courses.

Next, I looked at each syllabus for subheadings that discussed Course behavior. Table 4.7 shows the subheadings used by each instructor. Participant A and C both included two subheadings with information that specifically discussed expected course behavior in an online class, and Participant B included one. Unfortunately, I included "Posting days and times" in both the attendance and participation category, as well as the course behavior category for Participant B. In the "Posting days and times" subheading, Participant B draws attention to expectations for students interacting with the learning management interface, and informs students of the expected days to post information for the course (attendance in an online class). So while attendance and participation requirements seem complicated, Participant B further complicates them in the syllabi by using one subheading to discuss both. As described by Warnock, online course syllabi policies require revision and extra attention because "course policies will be different because the students' experience will be different" (p. 42). Online courses take place within the electronic learning management system as the instructor designs and implements the tools they choose to use. Students cannot raise their hand to ask a question. They do not show up at a regular time for class, so I expected to include a

large number of syllabus subheadings for analysis. For this reason, I expected to find attention to policies in the syllabi, including direct instruction on how to interact with fellow students. Instead, I found very few subheadings that directly discussed expected course behavior in an online course.

The Participants included information in their subheadings that discussed expected student interaction in the discussion boards. Participant A included this information in the "Attendance & Participation Requirement" portion, Participant B implied behavior expectations in the "Posting days and times" portion, and Participant C also included this information in the "Discussion Posts" portion of the syllabus. Participant A elaborates on this by saying "students need to plan on spending about 3-4 hours per week accessing the course materials, reading and writing in the discussion area, and working on assignments, alone or with classmates." With this line explaining attendance and participation to the students, Participant A focuses on student interaction with the tools selected to design the course interface. Participant B explains attendance further by saying "you will be responsible for completing work in Canvas every Tuesday and Thursday, unless otherwise indicated on the syllabus." With this Participant B alludes to student interaction with the tools selected in the course interface, but does not draw as specific attention to the functional interaction with those tools. However, Participant B clearly focuses on the functional aspects of attendance in the course interface. Finally, Participant C states "you will be asked to post your thoughts/opinions on different reading selections." Similar to Participant A, Participant C also directly addresses the action of posting, as the action for

participating in appropriate course behavior in the course. All three instructors draw attention to the functional aspects of the tools used in course design to inform (or imply to) students of how to interact with the tools as part of the course, helping elucidate what Selber describes as social conventions within the online composition course.

Conclusions

While the Canvas learning management system provides a set list of tools to instructors, these Participants each use a different combination of tools to design their online course. However, despite the different choices, all Participants focus on how to use tools, and how to understand the purpose of tools within the course interface. These instructors focus on providing information to the students on how to use the course interface to meet the policies set forth by the instructor. Their choices impact how the course operates.

Chapter 5

FUTURE ONLINE COMPOSITION COURSE DESIGN

In a recent survey, Allen and Seaman (2011) found that American higher education institutions report 31 percent of their students enrolled in at least one online course Fall 2010. To accommodate such a large number of students, a large number of instructors currently teach online courses.

At many institutions, online composition course offerings increase every semester. Training courses, book manuals, and journal articles can provide information to new and seasoned instructors about teaching composition online (Peterson, 2008; Blair and Hoy, 2006). Other articles discuss the impacts of online composition courses, such as the amount of time spent creating and teaching the courses (Reinheimer, 2005), how students feel about online courses (Boyd, 2008), and other researchers discuss best practices in online courses (Frost, Myatt and Smith, 2009; Hicks, 2009; Kittle, 2009; Richardson, 2010). Each of these researchers investigates aspects of online courses, attempting to better understand and better teach the courses. While these studies raise important issues about learning, technology and teaching, they do not address how to construct the course through the syllabus. For this reason, this study discusses syllabi for online courses and learning management system tools used by instructors to understand the choices instructors make.

As an online instructor, I struggled when creating my syllabus for my first online composition course. I constantly questioned, what needs to be changed?

What should I mention to students? What do I think they already know about technology? What new policies do I need for the online course? Doolittle and Siudzinski (2010) find that there is "no singular set of syllabus components accepted by all, or most, higher education researchers or practitioners" (p. 31). Additionally, Afros and Schryer (2009) find that "the syllabus reveals that the social creation of knowledge taking place in the course draws on lectures, textbooks, and other in-class and out-of-class learning/teaching" based on the information instructors choose to include (p. 231). Similar to Afros and Schryer, I explored the syllabus to understand how instructors discuss the use of technology as the classroom within the syllabus in online composition courses. As I analyzed the syllabi I used Warnock's (2009) syllabus recommendations to investigate the updates instructors did and did not make to their syllabi. While Warnock's recommendations are not perfect, they do point out a huge gap in online instructor education: recommendations for updates to syllabi specific to online instructors in each discipline. When I began teaching online, the college required each instructor to complete preparation courses, which briefly touched on syllabus requirements. After completing these courses the department let each individual instructor determine how best to teach in the online environment. The department does not supply recommendations to new or continuing online composition faculty on possible updates to their syllabi, on aspects that should be emphasized or modified due to the online nature of the course. A technology center within the college provides broad recommendations, even less specific than those provided by Warnock. They offer recommendations like, tell students what you expect. Clearly writing expectations in the syllabus certainly aids

students in completing courses, but this comment doesn't help instructors critically analyze the difference between face-to-face composition courses and online courses so they can clearly enunciate all their expectations in their syllabi. While the learning management system provides a set list of tools to choose from, how instructors employ them to meet course goals can differ, again altering expectations for a given composition course. To understand why I find that departments should offer some guidance to their online instructors to help instructors make the transition I will first discuss the implications of the tools the Participants of this study choose to use, and how those choices impact their course policy designs in their syllabus.

Tool choices and the syllabus

In analyzing the syllabi, I found that these Participants make choices about tools they will use in their online composition course, and they communicate to students about those choices in the syllabus. In focusing on tool use in the syllabus, instructors begin conveying to students how the composition course will differ when delivered through an online system. Additionally, the choices made by these instructors emphasize to students how to use the learning management system as employed by the instructor for that specific course. Each instructor provides policy information and tool choices to help students succeed in online composition courses. This raises questions about the purpose of a syllabus in online courses. Parkes and Harris (2002) focus on three purposes of syllabi, describing the contractual nature of syllabi, describing how the syllabus serves as an administrative record of the course, and describing how the syllabus teaches students about the course. When describing

how the syllabus teaches students about the course, Parkes and Harris state "a well-designed syllabus can provide information that assists students to become more effective learners" (p. 58). In describing the syllabus this way, Parkes and Harris suggest syllabi can provide information to aid student learning outside the classroom space, in other classes, and in life. In the online classroom, based on the choices made by these Participants, the syllabi function more to aid students in learning using the tools of the course, a more short sited learning goal. To illuminate this, I will now discuss the individual choices made by the instructor, and how they alter the function of the syllabus in online courses.

Syllabus Quiz

In each syllabus analyzed, the instructors require students to complete a quiz covering information contained within the syllabus. As previously mentioned, Warnock recommends requiring a syllabus quiz to ensure students "have read carefully the policies of the course and that they agree with them" (p. 46). Warnock's recommendation of requiring a quiz emphasizes the importance of the information contained within the syllabus, aligning with Parkes and Harris purpose of a syllabus as contract. However, these participants choose to implement Warnock's suggestion using a tool available in the course management system Canvas. In emphasizing the use of this tool and the requirement of this quiz during the interview, and in listing the quiz prominently in their syllabi, these instructors emphasize the importance of properly using the tools of the course management system, instead of focusing on the content of the syllabus. With this approach to emphasizing the syllabus, each

instructor functionally sets up students for the structure of the class. Whether consciously or not, each Participant begins to familiarize students with expected student behavior and begins to familiarize students with the tools used in the course. Students, especially those in the course taught by Participant C, access course documents, teaching materials in PDF and Word documents, read them then complete a Quiz. As online learners, students learn to associate Files, Word documents, PDF documents and Pages as course content or teaching materials[7], the information they access and reference as students of the online composition course. Then requiring a quiz covering the content demonstrates to students of the course the order of tool use, access Files or Pages then complete a Quiz over the content. This format demonstrates how these instructors expect the tools they use to be understood to meet the educational goals within their online composition courses. Essentially, this format begins to familiarize students with the format of the course, and emphasizes aspects of the syllabi instructors would have emphasized verbally in a face-to-face course (Thompson, 2007).

Instructors need to consider how an activity like a syllabus quiz alters the purpose of their syllabus. Thompson finds that "when covering the rules in the presentation of the syllabus the teacher kept it short so they did not become the focus of the presentation" (p. 63). Further, instructors lightened the tone of their voice during the presentation to strike "the balance between being a strict authoritarian and someone students look forward to working with during the

[7] In this case, teaching materials includes Word documents, PDF documents and other file types, the Pages tool in Canvas, and external pages that help a student with material in the course. Teaching materials in an online course are typically written files that take the place of lectures and face-to-face interaction, and can address a variety of topics.

semester" (p. 63). In this way, instructors focus on the important aspects of the syllabus they want their students to remember for the duration of the semester (p. 65) with specific verbal cues to lighten the stress. None of the Participants of this study 'present' their syllabus in the online context, each uploads the document, tells students to read it, then complete a quiz. No lightening strategies make the rules and policies focused on in the quiz less daunting for the students completing the course, the way voice tone would lighten the presentation in a face-to-face course. As an online instructor, I find a quiz over syllabus content helps ensure students read the content of the syllabus; however, the focus on policies with no presentation to modulate the harshness of the rules may influence how students perceive the course. While the syllabus quiz seems like a great course management system tool to focus on policies in the online course the way a presentation can focus on policies in a face-to-face course, instructors need to consider:

- When tone of voice cannot lighten the harshness of policies, like the attendance policy, could other methods of presentation help students feel less intimidated by the rules? Instead of simply uploading the syllabus as a document (Word or PDF) should the syllabus be accompanied by a presentation to ensure students focus on the important aspects without feeling intimidated?
- Does the format of presenting a document then requiring a quiz meet with your pedagogical goals for the course? Is it important to you to emphasize this usage of the course from the very beginning?

- Why do you require the quiz? Could this purpose be met in a way that more closely aligns with your pedagogical goals?

If instructors continue to use a syllabus quiz to test students on the content of their syllabus, they should also consider:

- Do you phrase your questions in a tone students may misread? Do you consider how this quiz (the phrasing specifically) may influence student's perception of your identity and role as an instructor in the online composition course?
- Does the quiz help students learn anything about being an online student in the course? Does being able to regurgitate the attendance policy, or correctly answer multiple-choice questions about the rewrite policy aid students in the differences they need to be aware of as online students in that composition course?
- Could you ensure students understood the important aspects of your syllabus without a quiz? Could you transition the face-to-face teacher presentation into the course management system?

Instructors who consider these questions when designing their syllabi, presenting the syllabus online, and determining how to effectively employ the syllabus can begin their course in a way that aligns with their teaching pedagogy instead of aligning with the tools provided by the course management system. Colleges and departments that provide support for their instructors, and aid their instructors in determining best practices in aligning pedagogy with the course management system should have more successful online courses. The choices made by the instructors of

this study demonstrate the need for instructors and departments to question their decisions. Each Participant quickly answered that they required a syllabus quiz, almost as if the answer was obvious. Thompson found many different methods of presenting syllabi in face-to-face courses, through this study I found one way of presenting syllabi in the online course. As instructors of online courses, we need to consider the implications of our choices and be sure these meet the needs we expect.

Instructor contact information

Contacting the instructor seems like it should be easy for an online class. Institutions provide email addresses and access to both students and faculty, and learning management systems provide email access to both students and faculty. Additionally, instructors often hold office hours in a physical location. The internet provides free access to interacting tools like Instant Messenger and Skype providing tools to allow instructors to hold virtual office hours. Providing instructor contact information to students of online courses is not that simple. Parkes, Fix and Harris (2003) specifically point out that what instructors choose to include and what they omit communicates information about the course to students. In online composition courses, the information included on how to contact the instructor and what information instructors omit communicates information to students about the type of students the instructor envisions enrolled in their course. Including physical office hours moves the online class from strictly online interaction to the possibility for face-to-face contact with students who encounter issues in a given course. Online students may not have schedules that accommodate physical office hours, so they

may not contact the instructor when problems arise since they cannot physically attend office hours. Students would need to determine whether to ignore the physical hours and email the instructor, or simply not get the help they need. Ultimately, the contact information provided communicates more about how the instructor sees the student than it provides access to the instructor. In future syllabi, instructors should consider

- Who their students are. Students completing courses in a combination of face-to-face and online may be able to attend physical office hours, or may have more accommodating student schedules that allow for set online hours. Students completing mostly online courses may not have flexible schedules so set office hours may not be feasible.
- If no virtual and no physical office hours will be held, what information needs to be communicated to students and how do you expect them to contact with questions?
- Consider what you accomplish with students during office hours. Are there ways of accomplishing these same goals virtually? Asynchronously?

The choice an instructor makes about office hours has implications for the social conventions in the course. As students learn to use and interact with the tools the instructor used to design their online composition course, not using tools for contacting an instructor may seem counterintuitive. Warnock discusses various contact methods to help instructors consider the implications of the tools they choose for contact. This suggestion would help clarify some of the information

provided to students by the Participants of this study. Department guidelines should recommend online instructors consider the contact information they provide, and consider what it means for their course design.

Course description and objectives

As mentioned earlier, the choices instructors make to include or omit information in their syllabi communicates information to students (Parkes, Fix, Harris, 2003). In choosing to not mention additional functional skills used in an online composition course in the course description and course objectives, the Participants downplay the medium. In choosing to add information or omit information instructors should consider

- The experience of their students. Students in lower level courses may have less experience in the online setting, and may not understand how technology tools influence student behaviors. Instructors should consider drawing attention to the technology and its place in the course to familiarize students with expected student behaviors in the online course.
- Could describing technology usage in the online course as it relates to the course description and course objectives aid students in understanding the expectations of the online course? Is expected student behavior addressed elsewhere so this would be repetitive?

- Does omitting technology information focus students on the content? Does omitting technology information cause the course objectives and description to be incomplete pictures of the course?

Additionally, departments and college s may find that instructors use technology similarly, therefore a more general update to the course description and objectives specific to the place of technology may be appropriate. Further research, and a larger sample size, would help determine if other instructors at the college update their course objectives and course descriptions. However, instructors teaching online composition course should carefully consider what their course descriptions and course objectives tell students about their course when they include and do not include information about technology.

Required Materials

Student book buying behaviors have been changing lately. Online book retailers continue to offer comparable books, including rentals and buy backs, so many students no longer purchase books from their campus bookstore. In face-to-face and online courses, relaying information about the required textbook will begin to change to accommodate this behavior as students come to class with incorrect editions which cause misaligned page numbers. Adding in the ISBN number will become more common to attempt to alleviate this situation (although students will continue to purchase incorrect editions). I have taught online for three years, and have included ISBN information since the second year. I still have some students who purchase the incorrect book, but I see fewer students purchasing the incorrect

book now than I did before I began including the ISBN. As this is simply observation, further research on how useful the ISBN number actually is, and whether student book buying has changed as dramatically as it appears to have changed. Considering online students – typically students living at or near a college and taking one or more online classes – versus distance learners – typically not near the campus at all – could also aid instructors in including appropriate information in their syllabi. Distance learners do not have the same level of access to the campus bookstore, so additional information should be included as they will most likely purchase their books in a different manner. Warnock similarly makes this distinction between online and distance students when recommending the inclusion of additional textbook information, including the ISBN number.

The required materials subheadings of the Participant syllabi also brought to light a surprising find. While one Participant included face-to-face specific information, the remaining two participants included access to technology useful to the composition course, with links to free versions of each. Instructors should consider

- What materials are necessary for students to complete my online course?
- How am I distributing information, notes, lectures, and what technology is necessary to access these course materials? How can students obtain this software? Is instruction in how to use the software necessary?
- Am I including only materials relevant to the online course?
- Are there software programs students need? Should I include links?

- If my students are unfamiliar with expected online student behaviors should I include access to the internet, a computer and this course in the list of requirements to stress the difference in online courses?
- Should I address basic computer literacy skills like internet navigation or file download and upload, so students will be aware of the technical requirements to aid them in being successful in my course?

As instructors look over the choices they make in syllabi, they should also plan to update those choices at the end of each semester based on the successes and failures of the online course. Department guidelines should recommend to instructors that they include a list (with a caveat that more software could be used at the instructors discretion), with links so students can download up-to-date systems. Instructors need to consider not just how to get their notes to students, but of informing them from the beginning of class, here's what we're using, here's what you need, may be updated later, let me know if you have questions. This approach aims to reduce the number of questions throughout the semester when students don't meet the goals. In this study, Participant B had the most to say about teaching online literacy during the interview, calling the teaching of online literacy at the beginning of the online course the "hidden curriculum" in online education. In contrast, Participant A initially responded no to teaching online literacy, but did provide examples of teaching and resources available to aid students with learning how to use the course. Of the two syllabi, Participant A provided the most extensive software information in the syllabus, while Participant B included little information, buried in a subheading on posting. If other instructors focus on software information early, and provide

extensive information in the syllabus, there may be less need to focus on teaching students to use the course software toward the beginning of the course. This early focus on functional uses of software in the course could help students use the course more effectively to meet their educational goals as the course progresses. Participant A's response is evidence of this. Encouraging instructors to question the software in their class could reduce the need to teach online literacy and instead the class could focus on the course content.

Tools and Course Behavior

Looking at all the choices these instructors made when selecting tools for their online composition course it becomes clear that most of these tools mimic face-to-face courses in a learning management system. When designing online courses, the tool choice matters, but so does the overall design of the course in influencing student understanding of the course policies. When the learning occurs online, the syllabus still communicates information about the course and course policies, but it also communicates information about the tools the instructor uses within the course management system. If an instructor builds out the entire semester, and requires students to log in three times per week, they may work ahead to meet attendance requirements, then have no Discussions to participate in the last few weeks of the course (Participant A organized in this way). If an instructor releases course content in a more timely manner, the students stay on pace with each other, they must learn to interact with the current course material to meet attendance policies, and the instructor has flexibility for later modules in case students require additional

information. Instructors need to carefully consider how the choice of tools in the course and their chosen organizational pattern impact their course policies and how students enact those policies in online courses. General guidelines by departments could help instructors consider this connection between enacted course behavior, tool choice, and course organization:

- Are there sufficient activities/discussions/assignments/quizzes to meet attendance requirements for the online course?
- Is your course organized in a logical manner?
- Have you recreated tools similar to face-to-face courses to aid student content learning, or simply to meet policies?
- Is your course organized in a manner that allows for flexibility?

Considering the connection between course policies, course organization and tool selection can help set more realistic goals within online courses. Additionally, these considerations can help instructors consider the time markers in online courses. In face-to-face courses, classes have set times that they meet. Online, asynchronous classes have no set meeting time, so attendance policies and due dates become the equivalent of time markers in the online course. While these time markers aid students in progressing through the course at a mediated pace, they also require instructors to plan and build a course so students can meet the required time markers. The attendance policy becomes a participation policy, and instructors place additional emphasis on assignment completion, making the online course more product focused. In a face-to-face course, students may realize they can fail to submit an assignment or two and still earn the desired C. In an online course, failing

to complete an assignment not only affects attendance points, because assignments become time markers for attendance, but places extra emphasis on the submitted product since it has points for the assignment and points for attendance. Time markers become so tied to tool choices that assignments may become a driving force in an online course, which may not reflect an instructor's pedagogy. Instructors and departments should consider attendance policies, participation policies, and the purpose of assignments within an online course to ensure online course design matches their pedagogical goals.

Limitations and future research

Despite the important findings regarding the need for guidance when creating syllabi for online composition courses, limitations exist. A limitation of using syllabi to understand the choices instructors make in online courses is that I do not know what they do in the course management system as the course progresses. Course management systems supply numerous tools to instructors as they teach their online courses, policies may play out through that tool usage differently than the instructor communicates the policy through the syllabi. Despite this disadvantage, the message communicated to students through the syllabus still needs further consideration by instructors, departments and colleges to ensure instructors communicate the message they intend. Additionally, I conducted this study at just one college. Collecting syllabi samples from multiple colleges and/or universities may vary the results and raise more questions about the purpose of the syllabus in an online

composition course and how instructors communicate to students through the syllabus.

Universities with online courses often offer more than just composition courses in the online format. Parkes, Fix and Harris (2003) find "important differences in syllabi between course levels and disciplines" (p. 76). To understand the recommendations for syllabi updates provided in this study beyond the scope of composition courses, this study could be expanded to analyze syllabi from many different disciplines and many different course levels to understand how instructors of various online courses construct their syllabi, and what message they send to students in their construction. For example, an online math class may place more emphasis on accessing documents and completing quizzes, so they may omit an attendance policy entirely. This emphasizes the importance of the course work to students of that online course. Or, the math class would include an attendance policy, which emphasizes the importance of access the notes provided even when the instructors cannot or do not track students accessing those documents. Expanding the scope beyond composition courses could raise questions about the purpose of a humanities syllabus instructors have not considered.

With significant talk about Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), online course offerings will continue, and the student cap may become a fond remembrance instead of a current practice. The findings of this study begin conversation about syllabi reflect policies, practices and tool uses in online courses, and how that affects the course. As student numbers increase, these questions about how technology accurately reflects pedagogy will become more important. In recent news, some

instructors of large MOOC courses have removed writing assignments after 2,000 students failed to complete a paper, just to keep student numbers high. Other courses focus on peer-reviewed writing with an instructor never reading let alone commenting on paper drafts and finals. While these courses provide access to a significant number of students, the design of the course privileges the notes and lectures of the instructor, deemphasizing or removing all forms of assessment due to the volume of students. This shifts the pedagogy of these courses from student-centered back to instructor-centered, emphasizing the knowledge the instructor can provide the students. Questioning course design, tool choices, and syllabus design can help instructors consider these shifts when introducing technology to their content.

Final conclusions

Based on some of the choices made by these participants, questions to guide instructors through the relevance of subheadings in their syllabi for online courses would help instructors use tools more effectively, and make more appropriate policy decisions based on the online environment. There is great need for departmental and institutional guidelines to help guide instructors through these questions, specific to the institutional learning management system. If departments decide to adopt guidelines to aid online instructors in creating syllabi and designing their online courses, they must provide guidelines that help instructors metacognitively consider their choices in their online course, not provide guidelines that proscriptively tell instructors how to design their online course. Departments could

provide guidance explaining the pros and cons of requiring a syllabus quiz or using Discussions. Warnock suggests students email a specific line, while the Participants of this study required an in learning management system Quiz. In requiring a student email, students become familiar with reaching out to the professor, maybe they will be more likely to seek out assistance if necessary during the semester. Likewise, the Participants used an in system tool, which familiarized students with the pattern of the course, read documents, complete a Quiz. While not emphasizing one over the other, departments could provide resources that let instructors know of different options available and how these options impact the students. This will allow the instructors to consider how their choices affect the course they design. Additionally, I found variation in attendance policies. Departments could provide information on what attendance policies mean and what they look like within the learning management system. Additionally, departments could provide information on useful ways for group work to function in online classes. None of these directly impacts how instructors teach the course, but raise further questions instructors should address as they prepare their online courses, nor do these guidelines determine which tools they would like to use. The goal of these guidelines is not to prescribe a proscriptive list of guidelines for how an instructor should teach a course, but to provide general comments on choices instructors have to make, and the way those affect course design. Drawing from Selber's critical literacy, this raises questions about design choices that allow an instructor to be metacognitive about design and policy decisions, and to consider how their tool and policy choices accurately reflect their course. These recommendations should offer broad questions

that promote metacognitive reflection on the choices made within the learning management system. Most instructors use Discussions as a way to encourage student interaction about reading, to take the place of in class discussions. The general guidelines should ask instructors (as an example for one particular tool):

- What is the goal of Discussions?
- How can this electronic tool meet those goals?
- In what ways will you implement the Discussions tool to meet your goals? Consider topics, how often you expect students to use the tool, and how you expect them to use it.
- Consider your attendance and participation policy – if you require students to log in multiple times per week, is the Discussions used to meet those goals? Do you plan to use the tool often enough to allow students to meet your attendance requirements?
- Are there interaction concerns you should talk to your students about: i.e. ALL CAPS, the type of interaction you expect, appropriate topics for discussion, etc.

Again, variation will exist among online courses, just as variation exists among face-to-face courses. These guidelines would help instructors consider their choices as they design their online composition courses to ensure instructors feel their course design accurately reflects their pedagogy.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

Maricopa County Community College District
2411 West 14th Street
Tempe AZ, 85281
TEL: (480) 731-8701
FAX: (480) 731 8282

DATE:	October 24, 2012
TO:	Goggin, Peter, English
	Pfannenstiel, Amber, English
FROM:	MCCCD Institutional Review Board
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Literacies in Online Composition Courses
FUNDING SOURCE:	NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	2012-10-235
FORM TYPE:	NEW
REVIEW TYPE:	EXEMPT

Dear Principal Investigator,

The MCCCD IRB reviewed your protocol and determined the activities outlined do constitute human subjects research according to the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46.

The determination given to your protocol is shown above under Review Type.

You may initiate your project.

If your protocol has been ruled as *exempt*, it is not necessary to return for an annual review. If you decide to make any changes to your project design which might result in the loss of your exempt status, you must seek IRB approval prior to continuing by submitting a modification form.
If your protocol has been determined to be *expedited or full board review*, you must submit a continuing review form prior to the expiration date shown above. If you make any changes to your project design, please submit a modification form prior to continuing.

We appreciate your cooperation in complying with the federal guidelines that protect human research subjects. We wish you success in your project.

Cordially,
MCCCD IRB

APPENDIX B

LIST OF QUESTIONS

Questions for instructors:

1. What is your status with MCC?
    a. Adjunct versus faculty
2. How long have you been teaching online?
3. How do you direct students to use your course in Canvas?
4. What (if any) services besides Canvas do you use?
    a. Videos, powerpoint, PDF docs, Google Docs, Google sites?
5. What features of Canvas do you use?
    a. Quiz
    b. Discussion board
    c. Content page
    d. Modules
    e. Syllabus
    f. File upload
    g. Assignments
    h. Announcements
    i. Grades
    j. Chat
    k. Files
    l. Conferences
    m. Collaborations
    n. Library resources
6. How do you ensure students read/access your syllabus?
7. Do you build out the entire semester before the semester begins and roll out pieces, push out all the content, build the course as you go, or another method of deliver?
8. Do you think you teach, or need to teach online literacy in your online classroom? What does this look like? Why?

Syllabus questions:

1. Attendance
    a. Attendance policy and how attendance is measured by the instructor
2. Policy on getting back to students (24 hours, 48 hours, etc)
3. Office hours/contacting instructor
4. Class behavior/netiquette
5. Tools
    a. Discussion Board
    b. Paper assignments
    c. Quizzes
    d. Reading response
    e. Group assignments
    f. Additional assignments as necessary

APPENDIX C

RAW DATA

	Participant A		Participant B		Participant C
course description	not at all		not at all		not at all
	"Course Desc & Obj"				
course objectives	not at all		misc		misc
	"Course Desc & Obj"		none		none
phone number	not at all		explicit		explicit
	not included in syllabus		included in syllabus		included in syllabus
office location	not at all		explicit		explicit
	not included in syllabus		included in syllabus		included in syllabus
office hours	not at all		explicit		miscellaneous
	not included in syllabus		included in syllabus		"online"
email address	explicit		explicit		explicit
	included in syllabus		included in syllabus		included in syllabus
contact instructions	explicit		implicit		implicit
	unlabelled instru top		phone or email with instru		"Office Hours: Online"
	of syllabus				
	explicit				
	"HELP!"				
attendance and participation	explicit		explicit		explicit
	log in 3x per week		"policy on class att"		"attendance"
	"att and part require"		"posting days and times"		
course behavior	explicit		implicit		explicit
	"student expectations"		"Posting Days and Times"		"homework expectations"
	not at all		not at all		explicit
	"Academic Misc and Class Beh"		"publ natur of class writ&disc"		"Discussion Posts"

	explicit		implicit		not at all
	"Attendance & Part Req"		"writing assignments"		"safe class env statement"
	implicit		not at all		not at all
	"Plagiarism"		"Plagiarism"		"disruptions of learn process"
					not at all
					"publ natur of class writ&disc"
					not at all
					"Plagiarism"
required course materials	implicit		miscellaneous		implicit
	includes ISBN #		"Bring book to class everyday"		book info only
tech required	explicit		"Required Supplies"		explicit
	"computer requirements"		explicit		"Required Technologies"
			"Posting Days and Times"		
course organization	explicit		explicit		explicit
	"Course Calendar"		"Daily Syllabus"		"Class Structure"
LMS tools used	modules				Modules
	discussion boards		Discussion Boards		Discussion Boards
	turnitin				
	assignments				assignments
	Pages				
	Quiz		Quiz		Quiz

Key
Explicit
Implicit
Not at all

Misc

	Participant A		Participant B		Participant C
faculty status	Adjunct		Residential		Residential
how long teaching online	6 years		6 years		3 years
online literacy yes/no	No		Yes		Yes
	"But I do address this in the beginning"		"hidden curriculum"		"definitely"
Outside Canvas Tech	PowerPoint		Word Docs		video documentaries
	Youtube		PDF docs		podcasts
	NPR - audio & written essays				PDF
	Own Website - web pages with information on writing, online resources, documents, rubrics, sample essays, Youtube videos				Youtube
					Jing/Camtasia
Canvas tools	Voice recording		Modules		Modules
	assignments		Files		Discussions
	pages (calls screens on Cal)		Assignments		announcements
	Quizzes		Discussions		quizzes
	Modules		Quizzes		collaborations
	Surveys		Pages		grades
	Podcasts - tried but didn't work even with CTL help		Announcements - with EC early on to ensure students read them		library resources
	Announcements		email		email
	Discussions				video/audio media
	Canvas email (conversation)				conferences
	Gradebook				notifications to social media
	Speed Grader - including the comments that can be left on a draft and in a rubric				course set up checklist
					course analysis
					files

					pages
How direct students	Note in Canvas to read announcement		Home page of Canvas provides contact info - directs to Modules		email students - tell them to log in and go to modules
	explanatory Youtube video on website				
	Calendar link (pages)				
	email to students with these instructions				
How ensure use Syllabus	Quiz		Quiz		Quiz
	covers youtube video and Calendar				must get 100% to move on
How build out course	Personal checklist to build		Build out shell from the beginning - then first modules, adds content to later modules appropriate for students in course		build out entire semester and restrict access to later parts
	builds out everything from before the semester begins				