

The Universal Design for Learning framework views _____ as _____ *ef* / and _____ *i a ed*. For the last two years, I have been trying to answer variations on the question “how can I get my students to actually care about what they are learning?”

In this document, I describe some of the challenges I have faced in my ongoing attempts to foster purposeful, motivated, and engaged learning in my courses as well as specific strategies I have developed. This document is a more detailed companion piece to the shorter .pdf which provides an overview of student-directed projects and which contains examples of student work and writing (shared with permission). These documents outline my use of student-directed projects in two of my courses 345-101-MQ (Knowledge) *Thi ki gi he H a i ie* and 345-102-MQ (World Views) *F d, Self, & S cie* , both of which I completely redesigned after my pedagogical/existential crisis described above. Course outlines are attached in the appendix.

I quickly realized that “_____” is a complicated question.

_____ can refer to the specific course competencies, the topic of the course itself, the specific examples or information (facts) I select and communicate, the broader concepts we explore, or the skills students develop in their attempts to master the competencies or grasp the information and concepts... or all of these combined.

_____ are unique individuals who have different personal, academic, and professional interests and goals, possess different skills and abilities, and face different challenges and barriers to their learning. Most of my student2 (s) - BT 50 0 0 50 1309 (0.2 -7 (s) 20 (e

a competency-based pedagogical perspective, the course topic and specific examples are entirely arbitrary: If students are expected to “apply a logical analytical process to how knowledge is organized and used” or “apply a critical thought process to world views,” the particular field of knowledge or world views we investigate can be *anything at all*.

Also, the general context in which humanities courses appear in a student’s life can work to frame my courses as meaningless at the outset. My courses are mandatory and fulfill a gen

competencies.

4. Projects (Knowledge Week 13 / World Views Week 15)

Each project is unique. While some students opt to write formal essays, most projects involve a mix of research and investigation strategies and involve multiple means of expression. Project excerpts (shared with permission) are included in the shorter .pdf document.

5. Learning Self-Assessment (Knowledge Week 15)

In my knowledge course, I ask students to reflect on their SDPs and their overall learning in a final assignment. Often, students submit variations on their original proposed projects. Sometimes these variations involve expanding research or including additional component and sometimes the original proposed project proves too time-consuming or difficult. This assignment gives them an opportunity to explain any changes to their proposed work and also to engage in self-reflection.

Student-directed projects target two main UDL areas: affective networks (the “
learning) and strategic networks (the “
” of learning).

1. Affective Networks

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relevant given student-directed projects. Students are able to *challenge* themselves in ways that fit with their strengths or address particular abilities (research, expression etc.) on which they want to focus. Often, students design projects that are not only interesting given their chosen topic but that also allow them to develop non-course-specific skills (writing, design) or knowledge (e.g. cinema if they want to pursue film studies, biomedical ethics if they want to study nursing). *Collaborative* are fostered in the proposal process (peer feedback) but also if students opt to create a group SDP. I model *peer-feedback* in the feedback I provide but students are also asked to provide feedback to other students during the proposal process.

During the proposal process, I speak individually with students to ensure their SDP is

rewarding. It is also absolutely necessary for the SDPs. But providing this feedback takes a lot of time, effort, and attention and so can be sometimes be exhausting. Still, given the extraordinary thought and work my students typically produce, the results seem worth the effort.

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The Student-Directed Project (SDP) provides students with an opportunity to explore a topic or to attempt to answer a question that interests them. This topic or question constitutes a 'field of knowledge' each student will explore in this course.

In the sixth week of class, each student will submit a project proposal in which they 'pitch' a topic to the instructor. *T ic ca be a hi g a all*. There are only two requirements: 1. the proposed topic must be relevant to the humanities (it must be connected to human experience and values); and 2. the topic must be relevant to the student in question (the student should *ac all ca e* about the topic). A project proposal template will be distributed and students will have class time to discuss potential topics with the instructor.

Each student must engage in research or investigation in order to explore their chosen topic or answer their question. The exact nature of student research or investigation is negotiable *b e e jec h ldi cl de e f f acade ic e ea ch* (i.e. consulting peer-reviewed publications or reliable websites). Students may also opt to analyze primary sources (e.g. philosophical texts, literature, poetry, films, artworks, video games, etc.). Other appropriate forms of investigation include self-reflection (e.g. journaling), informal interviews (e.g. speaking with friends or

The learning self-assessment (LSA) provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their work and learning in the course. Students are asked to reflect on their learning process throughout the course as well as on their completed final projects.

: LSAs should be typed and submitted as a .doc or .pdf file over Léa. Please number each answer.

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The Student-Directed Project (SDP) provides students with an opportunity to explore a topic or to attempt to answer a question related to course content that interests them.

Each student is asked to distill a question or topic related to course competencies and themes; explain why this question or topic is significant for themselves and for others; propose a research program or means of investigating their chosen question or topic, and propose a medium for presenting their thinking on this subject to the professor.
