

SMARTHINKING's E-structor Response Form

(Your marked-up essay is below this form.)

HOW THIS WORKS: Your e-structor has written overview comments about your essay in the form below. Your e-structor has also embedded comments [in bold and in brackets] throughout your essay. Thank you for choosing SMARTHINKING's OWL; best wishes with revising your paper!

Hi Rose! Welcome to Smarthinking's Essay Center. I'm Christiana, and I will be working with you on your essay about what several scholars have to say about blended learning and how their views help support your topic.

*Strengths of the essay:

It makes sense to organize your discussion around the three scholars whose works you looked at. Looking at each in turn keeps your essay orderly.

You also bring out some critical features of each scholar's discussion. It does seem significant, for example, that Dr. Sims examines instructional design assuming technology will remain more or less in its current state.

Main Idea/Thesis:

As a reader, Rose, I felt that I might have had a better grip on how everything you talked about in the essay held together if I understood more about your topic. One thing I had trouble wrapping my brain around was what you meant when you said that your hypothesis is that "the blended courses require different online materials than a fully online classroom." What online materials does a fully online classroom need? What differences do you think a blended course might need?

Once you've clarified this, make sure you work it through your entire essay. Each of your paragraphs about how the scholars fit your topic should mention the materials issue.

*Rose 2591094 has requested that you respond to the Content Development:

Another way you might improve the sense of flow and cohesiveness of your essay is to work for a better match between the ideas you discuss in the paragraphs that summarize the scholars' ideas and the ones that justify how those scholars' ideas relate to your topic. I frequently found myself intrigued by what you said about a scholar in the first paragraph, and then disappointed that you didn't follow up in the second.

For example, you mentioned that Dr. Sims thinks faculty will embrace technological changes. Do you think this is true, and if so, how does it relate to your ideas about the different materials needed for blended courses?

Another thing you can do to enhance your content is to provide more concrete examples of the more abstract principles you discuss. For instance, how will the needs of professionals acquiring education online shape the selection of online materials? Give a hypothetical example to help us see what you mean?

*Rose 2591094 has requested that you respond to the Transitions:

Transitions are often about choosing the right idea to open a sentence or a paragraph with, so that the readers can easily see how the previous idea relates to the next one. For now, focus on doing that

with the paragraphs that move on to a new scholar. Think about the similarities and differences between the ideas of the scholar you just talked about and the scholar you're about to talk about, and try to work one of those similarities or differences into the sentence that opens the paragraph about the new scholar. For example, when you shift to your discussion of Dr. Sims, you say

In my second source, Dr. Ron Sims of Capella gives a presentation on a shift in the paradigm of instructional design. I find his insights fascinating and certainly could turn the idea of instructional design as I understand it, on its head!

You've just finished discussing, however, scholars who were primarily interested in varieties of learning as an important consideration in how to develop online or blended courses. How can you bring the two together in that opening sentence to help bring your reader along with you to the next topic, which focuses on how technology has changed instructional design at its heart?

For more about transitions, visit the Smarthinking Online Writers Handbook (click "academic resources" from the blue left panel of your Smarthinking home page) and find Chapter 3: Process, [Lesson 20. Developing Powerful Paragraphs](#).

Summary of Next Steps:

So, Rose, here are the steps you need to take in creating your next draft of this essay:

1. Clarify your topic.
2. Improve the fit between your explanation and justification paragraphs.
3. Add examples.
4. Improve transitions.

Good luck with your project, Rose. Instructional design of online and blended courses is an exciting new topic. I think you'll have fun working with this, and enjoy watching your discussion take shape as you continue developing your knowledge and ideas about it. –Christiana

Find additional resources in SMARTHINKING's online library:

You can find more information about writing, grammar, and usage in SMARTHINKING's student handbooks. You can visit the [SMARTHINKING Writer's Handbook](#) or the [SMARTHINKING ESOL \(English for speakers of other languages\) Writer's Handbook](#).

Please look for more comments in your essay below. Thank you for visiting SMARTHINKING. We encourage you to submit future essays.

Survey of Popular Thought as Applied to Blended Learning

While blended courses combine onsite and online, my hypothesis going into this work is that the blended courses require different online materials than a fully online classroom. Those differences might relate to the actual materials, the topics of discussion, or the organization of the material. With this perspective, I looked at three articles to consider the position of popular thought. The first by Chwen (2005), considered the method of presenting material, the second is an interview with Dr. Ron Sims (2004) of Capella presented new sources for online material, and the third highlighted trends in online training that may impact blended courses (Colteryahn, 2004).

The Chwen article (2005) considered both learning styles and different types of online learning. They designed guided exploration that would move the learner through the material similar to a GPS system with an arrow on a map. This structure of learning was used on two different types of learners to determine if the learner's style of learning impacted the used of the virtual tool. The purpose of this article is related to my topic in that learners of different styles will attend a blended classroom. If different online strategies assist learners differently, then different structures could be used in the online portion of a blended classroom.

The authors had a point of view that different learners would gain varied advantage from online structures. In other words, some learners would benefit greatly from the guided exploration while others might not. In my reading of the article, their assumptions were having additional guidance in the online material would assist learners differently. I am not sure that I agree with that assumption as most individuals would benefit from additional guidance. I was thinking that perhaps overly confident learners would ignore the guidance, but most would follow it. **[Could you perhaps give a concrete example of this so that your readers can see**

how this might play out in real life? It seems a bit abstract. Under what circumstances, for example, might a learner who could truly benefit from the guidance fail to attend to something that would be useful, and what might they then miss?] The author then thought that the consequences would be increased learning. The studied used data from an experiment where 184 high school students were learning the rules of the road for driving. The students were tested for their learning styles and then given the different methods of learning, one of which was a virtually guided course. Using the results, the authors inferred that the guided learning helped all learners regardless of learning style. This information can help many in developing more effective online learning modules by implementing guiding learning that might be able to help many learners.

The study is very applicable to the blended learning in my work as based on this work, there is encouragements that guided learning might help learners outside of the classroom and may simulate a more structured environment. Assuming that students in blended courses would prefer a fully onsite course, then the guided virtual environment may remove some of that apprehension and meet their learning needs despite being in a partially online environment.

[What idea might you use to begin this sentence so that it transitions more smoothly from the main point of the last paragraph to the topic of the next?] In my second source, Dr. Ron Sims of Capella gives a presentation on a shift in the paradigm of instructional design. I find his insights fascinating and certainly could turn the idea of instructional design as I understand it, on its head! His purpose is to demonstrate how instructional design has changed since World War II to the present and how it may change even further in the future. To solve the problem of the best presentation of online content, his point of view is that of an academic who has looked at these trends and is pointing where he believes the industry may trend in the future.

His assumptions are that technology will remain as it currently is. While he may not truly believe this, his thoughts on the future do not focus on potential changes in technology. **[This is a really significant point for you to raise, Rose. It raises questions about the way he is intentionally or unintentionally limiting the applications of his ideas regarding instructional design.]** There is also an assumption that faculty will increasingly embrace technology and new structures for teaching in the future. The implications of his thoughts is that instructional design could be more just-in-time with students contributing to the work throughout the course. He considers that students could add information and content to the online course for other students to use. His insights are based on his own experiences and his insights after following research in this field for years. While students creating course content is a new structure, he states that this one of various ways the industry might develop and infers that we might need alternative methodologies for thinking about online content. His concept grows from the idea of student-centered learning, a popular concept in today's education. **[After reading this paragraph, I have many questions about how you respond to Dr. Sims's thoughts, and my questions aren't answered by the paragraph that follows, as I had hoped.]**

This work applies very well to my work as the presentation of online material for blended courses necessitates a rethinking of the role of online material. My assumption had been that the instructor and/or institution designed the course materials for students. Dr. Sims idea of student created content caused me to dismiss this assumption. By opening the door to new paradigms, Dr. Sims' insights and inspiration can encompass the blended learning methodology. **[Does this contradict what you say about his notion that technology won't change much beyond its current state?]** His idea of having students add content to the course intrigues me as an effective means to further engage students online. If blended students yearn for more interaction to

substitute for lost classroom time, then this additional engagement might fill that need. **[Yes!**

This idea excites me, too. Could you offer an example to further flesh it out for readers who are having trouble picturing the possibilities?]

Finally, I reviewed an article on trends in employer education (Colteryahn, 2004). The trends focus on growing technology in business education and the need for ethical standards. This article applies to my topic as many older students are enrolling in courses, especially in the current economic environment. Older students often have existing employment experiences so trends in business education will impact the educational trends in academics. The focus on ethics would apply as well to the blended learning. As students work more online from home, they need to understand the ethics of completing their own work, citing sources appropriately, etc.

The authors of this article (Colteryahn, 2004) see their purpose as foreshadowing workplace issues that business training professionals will face in the future. **[I'm unsure of whether "foreshadowing" is precisely the word that best fits your meaning here. You might try working back and forth between a dictionary and thesaurus to find a better fit.]** Their view is of that of a corporate training department head or perhaps the head of human resources. **[←How does this sentence relate to the one before it? Their view of what is of a corporate training head? You were last talking about issues that professionals will face.]** There are assumptions that these professions would benefit from considering potential implications of these trends and preparing their future training with the trends in mind. There is also an assumption that the individuals interviewed for the study are insightful and as a group have a good handle on such trends. The data they collect is based on interviews with over 100 leaders and practitioners in the field of professional training. The comments from these interviews were

seen as falling into eight primary trends. The inference is that corporate training professionals should heed these trends in future training endeavors.

These trends can also apply to academics as many students are also working professionals. I would assume that trends in corporate training might also impact academic work as the same individuals will likely be involved in both training environments. Therefore, we should watch the trends of technology use in workforce training for additional ideas on how to use technology most effectively in blended courses. Further, increased use of technology opens students and employees to new ethical questions. The ethics of technology should be integral to every blended course in academics as we strive for the highest standards in our grading and behavior. Also, we can add discussion on ethics to blended courses to apply many issues to practical situations.

These three sources show a variety of popular thought on potential influences on blended courses. **[Is the thought “popular” or “scholarly”?] One show how implementing guided learning can help students follow course materials. The second highlighted the potential of student-created course materials. The last opened the consideration of incorporating business strategies and ethics into blended courses. All of these expanded my point of view on blended course implementation to new concepts and theories. [Rather than asserting that they expanded your view, you might instead find a snappy way to sum up how they helped you crystallize a new view of blended course implementation.]**

References

- Chwen J. C.; Seong C. T.; & Wan M. F. W. I. (2005) [Are learning styles relevant to virtual reality?](#) *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 38(2), 123–141. Retrieved May 5, 2007 from Ebscohost.
- Colteryahn, K., & Davis, P. (2004). [Trends you need to know now.](#) *T+D*, 58(1), 28–36. Retrieved May 5, 2007, from Ebscohost.
- Sims, Ron. “Faculty interview: Current trends and issues in IDOL.” Transcript retrieved January 7, 2010 from http://media.capella.edu.CourseMedia/ed8002/ed8002_sims/ed8002_11_ts.html.