

Protocol Summary

Online learning modules for introductory media large lecture course

Purpose

While the large lecture format is a staple of higher education and can be an effective method for student learning, it can limit the amount of student engagement with course material to in-class lectures and out-of-classroom reading assignments, especially if the class size is also large. Educational research has shown that students often need to employ multiple learning formats in order to best grasp course content. Integrating blended learning (or hybrid) methods with the lecture format can provide students with additional opportunities to engage with course material that cannot be offered during lecture. The idea of using blended learning in an online setting is to bring learning methods available in small or mid-size classes, such as class discussion, application-oriented assignments, and response writing, to the large lecture class. One well-established blended method is the online learning module, which is a structured but self-directed initiative that can deepen student comprehension of course material and help prepare students for knowledge assessments.

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of online learning modules for student learning in a large lecture format class. The hypothesis for this study: Student who complete the online learning modules will score better on course quizzes than class average score.

Participants

All students, aged 18 or older, enrolled in CJN 255: Introduction to Media during the Spring 2014 semester will be eligible for participation. No more than 80 students will participate.

Procedure

Students will be provided with an Informed Consent Form (ICF) describing the goals of the study and the nature of their involvement. (see Appendix A). In order to minimize coercion, students will be invited to participate in the study by a Research Assistant (RA) without the instructor/Principal Investigator in the room. The RA will explain the details of the study, underscoring the voluntary nature of participation. After students have the opportunity to read the ICF and ask questions, students will be instructed to either sign the form (if they wish to participate) or leave it blank (if they do not) and to place it into a sealed envelope. This envelope will be collected and stored by the RA until the semester is over and grades have been submitted. At that point, the investigator will “break the blind” by opening the envelopes and determining whose data can be used for research purposes.

The procedures for this study are routine in that students will attend lectures, read course material, complete study guides, and take quizzes. These tasks will be familiar to most students enrolled at Suffolk or at any institute of higher education because these tasks reflect the standard educational practices of college-level learning. As part of these routine tasks, students will have four opportunities to complete four online learning modules, one for each course quiz. The modules will not be graded individually nor factored into a students overall course grade. Each learning module will be available for approximately three weeks prior to each accompanying quiz.

The experimental procedures of this study involve the comparison of students' quiz scores between those who use the online learning modules and those students who do not use the online learning modules. The online learning modules used in this study are made available to students via Blackboard. Student participation is voluntary. They may choose to complete an online module, start an online module but not complete it, or not attempt an online module at all. The quiz grades of students who provide informed consent will be compared to the average quiz scores for the entire class (aggregate scores for each of the four quizzes), and thus the individual quiz scores for non-participating students are not included in the analysis.

The Blackboard learning management system tracks student progress and completion of online learning modules, including data such as time it took the student to complete the modules, percentage of the modules completed and (if relevant) the student's score for the module. Since the modules created for this course will not be graded, scoring is not relevant nor will it be collected.

Each of the four online learning modules will take between 60 minutes to 2 hours to complete. Student will be asked to do one or more of the following for each module: read articles, visit websites to collect data, watch videos and listen to audio files, review Power Point slides, complete true/false and multiple choice questions about the reading and in-class lecture material, write brief responses to open-ended questions about the reading and in-class lecture material, and contribute to online, closed (enrolled students only) discussion boards about topics relevant to readings and in-class lecture material. These tasks are routine and will be familiar to most students enrolled at Suffolk or at any institute of higher education because these tasks reflect the standard educational practices of college-level learning.

Protected Health Information

No protected health information will be collected

Incentives

No incentives for participation will be provided.