LearningManagementCaseStudyPfaffenberger

Tiki at the University of Virginia

Tiki version: 1.7.1.1
Server: Red Hat Linux 8.0 (in instructor's office - the University's MySQL server is too darned slow)
URL: http://pfaff.tcc.virginia.edu/tcc401p
Educational level: University

Please note that I'm trying to go beyond merely providing Web versions of paper handouts. It is exceptionally difficult to figure out how to build technology into the learning process, and most existing practices far very short of what I'd like to achieve. Out of all the available tools, Tiki provides the best platform for developing imaginative new approaches; it's so easy to contribute content and then look at it from varying angles (Wiki pages, forums, blogs, messages, articles, etc.) I've been trying to exploit this in fresh, new ways. See the following for an example.

A Tikiwiki instructional application: Pitch and Catch

In this application enables me to eliminate the dreaded 750-word paper assignment, in which students try to "psych out" the professor (and generally write dreadful papers). Instead, they write for their classmates, and the results are built into the larger dialogue and debate that occurs in the classroom. My students LOVE this application — and so do I.

Here's how it works.

- Students are split into three groups (for a 25-person class): Gryffindor, Slytherin, and Hufflepuff.
- Readings (including a Pro and Con reading) are assigned for discussion on Wednesdays.
- On Monday night, the first group (Gryffindor) posts 750-word essays, called *pitches*, to the Forum. They are told that they shouldn't duplicate what others have already posted — what's more, they're invited to play the "devil's advocate" if doing so is necessary to enrich the diversity of viewpoints.
- On Tuesday night, the second and third groups (Slytherin and Hufflepuff) post two 250-word comments, called *catches*, on the pitches that the Gryffindors have submitted. These MUST be *constructively criticial*.
- On Wednesday morning, everyone participates in a forum devoted to framing discussion questions. Also, I read and grade the pitches and catches. By the time I meet with the students in the classroom, I know how students have responded to the material, what they still haven't learned, what they'd like to talk about, and how I can best use the discussion time.

- To see a Pitch and Catch session in action, visit http://pfaff.tcc.virginia.edu/tcc401p/tiki-view_forum.php?forumId=4.

- Also see the Pitch and Catch HOWTO (Main Menu/HOWTOs, OR http://pfaff.tcc.virginia.edu/tcc401p/tiki-index.php?page=Pitch+and+Catch+HOWTO.

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Other applications I've developed:

- Students develop individual blogs for their reading journals.
- I use private blogs (individual permissions set) to group all the feedback I give to a given student.
- All work is submitted online (to Tiki pages).
- When I grade a paper, I insert comments and post the result to the student's feedback blog. When I see writing problems, I insert Wiki links to writing feedback pages that I've developed. (To see a list

of these, still under construction, please visit Main Menu/Writing Feedback/Writing Feedback (Index).)

For instructional applications, Tiki desperately needs...

In priority order, as I see it:

- Grade management system — ideally, linked to fields in feedback blog.
- Forum post or comment author should be able to edit own contribution!
- Easier way to assign permissions to individual users. It is very tedious to create groups for every student in each class and then create private feedback blogs for them with private permissions. Suggest that new user registration process optionally creates a group named after the user as well as a user.
- Comments on tiki-view_articles.php. I am trying to encourage dialogue, but istudents get very frustrated after posting comments on articles; nobody can tell (from tiki-view_articles.php) that a comment has been posted.
- WYSIWYG editor in tiki pages and forums.