Using Elluminate (and Similar Products) for Distance Learning Teaching

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Designed to be synchronously taught by VTC
  - Weekly three-hour class sessions
  - Summer quarter 2007, beta tested Elluminate by simultaneously broadcasting via VTC and Elluminate

Self-contained Blackboard site
  - Lecture PowerPoint slides and course materials repository
  - On-line quizzes and project

Pedagogical philosophy: Attend class in medium most useful/convenient to student
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qtr #</th>
<th>Qtr offered</th>
<th>Asynchronous Web-based Courses</th>
<th>VTE Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spring/Fall</td>
<td>(SA Cert – MSA Core) OS2080 Fundamentals for Naval Analysis (3-0)</td>
<td>(MSA Core) MO1180 Topics in Mathematics for Systems Analysis (3-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Summer/Winter</td>
<td>(SA Cert – MSA Core) OS3380 Combat Systems Simulation (3-1)</td>
<td>(MSA Core) OS3080 Fundamentals for Naval Analysis II (3-0)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Fall/Spring</td>
<td>(SA Cert – MSA Core) OS3680 Naval Tactical Analysis (4-0)</td>
<td>(MSA Core) OA4702 Cost Estimation (4-0)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Winter/Summer</td>
<td>(SA Cert – MSA Core) OS4680 Naval Systems Analysis (4-0)</td>
<td>(MSA Core) OS3211 Systems Optimization (4-0)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Spring/Fall</td>
<td>(Defense Resource Management Track) MN4053 Defense Budget and Financial Management Policy (4-0)</td>
<td>(MSA Core) OS4011 Risk Benefit Analysis (3-2)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Summer/Winter</td>
<td>(Defense Resource Management Track) MN3510 Defense Financial Management Practice (3-0)</td>
<td>(Thesis Equivalent for MSA) OS3081 Systems Analysis Cases I (3-0)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Fall/Spring</td>
<td>(Defense Resource Management Track) MN3221 Systems Acquisition and Program Management I (3-0)</td>
<td>(Thesis Equivalent for MSA) OS3082 Systems Analysis Cases II (3-0)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Winter/Summer</td>
<td>(Defense Resource Management Track) MN3222 Systems Acquisition and Program Management II (3-0)</td>
<td>(Thesis Equivalent for MSA) OS4083 Systems Analysis Cases III (3-2)</td>
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</table>
OS3080: Elluminate Usage

"I have tried/tested Elluminate."
- Yes: 89%
- No: 11%

"I have used Elluminate to attend ____ classes."
- 0: 27%
- 1 or 2: 17%
- 3 or 4: 28%
- 5 or more: 28%

"I have accessed the Elluminate recordings of lectures ____ times."
- 0: 21%
- 1 or 2: 53%
- 3 or 4: 26%
- 5 or more: 0%
"How would you rate lectures delivered via Elluminate compared to lectures delivered via VTC?"

- Significantly better: 47%
- Somewhat better: 33%
- Neither better nor worse: 13%
- Somewhat worse: 7%
- Significantly worse: 0%

"I prefer weekly class lectures conducted in Elluminate compared to attending them via VTC."

- Strongly agree: 68%
- Agree: 8%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 8%
- Disagree: 8%
- Strongly disagree: 8%
My Opinions on the Medium (1)

• Done right, an effective way to teach
  – Sometimes seemed like teaching was easier
  – I.e., hard concepts to teach in class were sometimes easier to communicate with this mode

• With good software, lecture/class administration as simple as in classroom
  – Schedule a session, upload slides, start lecturing
  – Caveat: I routinely use PowerPoint slides
    • Would be much more work for someone used to lecturing at the board
• What makes the medium work is synchronous voice and interactive lecture materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides)

• Web cameras generally not necessary (at least for lecture types of courses)
  – “Talking head” usually provides little value
  – I use at the beginning and end of lecture to “put a face on” the class
  – Overuse results in excessive file size of Elluminate recorded lectures
My Opinions on the Medium (3)

• Flexibility (time and location) a big positive with students
  – But also requires greater student commitment and dedication

• As good or better than VTE (in my opinion)
  – e-Learning more flexible, immediate, and personal
  – Main “pros” in favor of VTE:
    • Infrastructure in place & technology “stable”
    • Better for seminar-type classes where voice and video of all participants important
  – Can achieve better screen resolution than VTE
DL Possibilities

• Synchronous lectures
  – Replace or supplement VTC/VTE
• Office hours and tutoring
• Student:
  – Study groups
  – Team projects
  – Other types of collaboration
• Other meetings
  – E.g., Geographically dispersed faculty interaction
Issues

• If you have a choice, I don’t recommend simultaneous use of VTC and Elluminate
  – Can only use tools that work in both media
  – Limits you to the “worst of both worlds”

• Elluminate recordings somewhat inflexible
  – Hard for students to “jump around” in lectures
    • If you move slider backwards (even just a tiny bit), Elluminate starts all over re-downloading
  – Problem compounded with excessive use of video
    • Also, files become huge
Hints & Tips (1)

• Do some practice sessions before ever going into a live classroom
  – Get comfortable with button pushing sequences
  – Be prepared to talk students through set-up

• Get students in the habit of doing the Audio Set-up Wizard before the start of class

• Be sure to specify how you want students to use microphones
  – I allowed multiple talkers, but asked them to keep theirs turned off unless they were asking a question
• Don’t forget to record lectures
  – I always hung a note to myself on the computer
  – Also asked the students to remind me
• Tablet PC or other type of “pen input device” useful for writing on PowerPoint slides
  – Makes the presentation a bit more interactive
• I liked having a separate computer so I could see the “student view”
  – As you get more experienced, not necessary, but very useful at first
Hints & Tips (3)

• Some students may not have microphones or may have problems during a particular session
  – Let them know they can always ask questions using the chat board
  – I encouraged use of chat board either to ask me questions or for intra-student dialog

• Hard to lecture and watch chat board
  – Let students know to call out if there’s a question in the chat board I’m not answering

• Also, let students know you can see the “private” comments on the chat board
Hints & Tips (4)

• When setting up class session, pre-specify:
  – Permissions for entering students
  – Whether you want simultaneous talkers or not

• My default was:
  – Give most permissions
  – Allow simultaneous talkers
  – Signal me when someone joined

• My philosophy: trust students and give them ways to engage
My Summary Thoughts on Elluminate

• **Pros**
  – Students like the flexibility and Elluminate’s performance
  – Dedicated VTC not required
    • Makes singleton student enrollment feasible
  – My opinion: Done right, an effective way to teach

• **Cons:**
  – Student’s workplace/facilities may not be conducive to a “classroom atmosphere”
  – Likely still difficult/impossible for afloat students to effectively participate
  – Recorded lectures potentially problematic (size/inflexibility)

• **Unknowns**
  – Utility/effectiveness in seminar-style classes