

Chapter 2

Developing Global Sensibilities through a Technology- Enabled Active Learning Anthropology Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The current global human environment is a diverse mixture of cultures and technologies, and university educators face daunting tasks to help their students develop competencies with both human and machine attributes of the modern world. This chapter presents the historical foundations, the pedagogical theoretical underpinnings, and illustrative examples from the implementation of a curriculum of technology-enabled active learning within the undergraduate anthropology program at a moderately sized, commuter campus in the Midwestern United States. Technology-enabled active learning has demonstrably improved the experience of undergraduate students who enroll in anthropology classes as majors, minors, or general education students by affording them new abilities, including the recognition of global information resources, the contextualization of their education in spatiotemporal terms, the development of an understanding of sociocultural and politico-economic connective webs, and the skilled capacity to productively create and critically analyze information with a peer cohort through networked information technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2010, the Anthropology undergraduate program at Indiana University South Bend (IUSB) has engaged in long-term experiments and imple-

mentations of technology-enabled active learning (TEAL) in order to boost the global, scientific, cultural, and technological competencies of both major and non-major students. TEAL strategies were originally developed at the Massachusetts

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Institute of Technology for implementation in introductory science courses, however we have found them invaluable for both the physical and social science aspects of anthropology. As such, the IUSB Anthropology TEAL Initiative helps to meet important pedagogical goals in the development of global sensibilities through the framework of anthropology as a globally-invested discipline that spans across both the hard sciences and the humanities in order to investigate the human condition in all times and places that people have existed. The combination of anthropology and TEAL is particularly well suited to achieve goals in global citizenship education articulated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013) that seeks to expose young minds to a world of diverse and convergent values and attitudes, among a global population of people who are increasingly immediately interconnected and interdependent, and facing a variety of anthropogenic and natural global challenges. In brief, our TEAL implementation is a strategy of networked student learning about global topics and issues from the deep-time past of human evolution (ca. 55 million years BP) to the current and near-future world of today's most important sociocultural and political developments. TEAL lessons are enacted through information-literate problem-solving and research, supported by an instructor who provides brief lectures, structured individual and group assignments, and information and communication technology (ICT) tools that are robust and pertinent to the learning experience.

The authors became interested in TEAL processes because of perceived deficiencies in introductory classes, including poor preparation in global concepts, student inability to communicate with their cohort, failure of group assignments, and a general lack of information literacy in class populations. TEAL has become an increasingly important component of our curriculum, and one which has demonstrated excellent results for introductory courses of mixed major and non-major students. The measured success of TEAL

implementations to improve student learning in introductory classes has compelled us to migrate appropriate best practices from those courses to teaching at every level. The TEAL curriculum at IUSB has been designed to be accessible, cheaply maintained, and as open as possible to set the lowest possible technical and cost thresholds for implementation.

TECHNOLOGY ENABLED ACTIVE LEARNING BACKGROUND

TEAL courses were initially developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as an alternative to large lecture courses involving the one-way presentation of physics information to classrooms of up to 700 students (Abelson and Long, 2008). TEAL development was one of several pedagogical experiments conducted at MIT in the years on either side of the last millennium at the behest of the university administration that sought innovation within semester courses and at larger institutional scales of programs and infrastructure. MIT, as a global leader in technological development and education, saw the use of networked computing as a valuable and pervasive tool which would facilitate learning between faculty and small groups of students. The overarching MIT initiative during this time period was known as the iCampus, a collaboration with Microsoft Research that involved using Web services to deliver and share information, as well as to revitalize classrooms from static and passive experiences using ICTs. It was under the auspices of the iCampus that TEAL was introduced. TEAL strategies involve use of shared installed computers or laptop computers (Barak and Dori, 2005; Barak et al., 2006; Breslow, 2010; Fried, 2008) by groups of students to enable hands-on problem solving and exploration of Internet information, provide directed feedback by giving students a software structure for their work, enable multiple visualizations and reproductions of abstract concepts, and

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