

Chapter 27

From Blended to Fully Virtual: Redesigning a High School Humanities Course

Kathleen M. Jasonides

American Community Schools (ACS), Athens, Greece

Amalia Zavacopoulou

American Community Schools (ACS), Athens, Greece

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to document the transformation of a blended, high school Humanities course to a virtual course that maintains a strong academic focus and preserves the core values of a human-centered education. The authors share the process of redesigning the course content, learning activities, and assessment, using specific examples from their experience and their research. The authors evaluate their experience by presenting the challenges and benefits of this undertaking. Ultimately, the goal of the authors is to assure that the Humanities Program at the American Community Schools Athens will continue to adapt to the digital world, making wise use of educational technology to provide our students with a broad, humanistic, liberal arts education that will serve them well in any field of endeavor.

INTRODUCTION

In 2008 we began our journey of transforming a Face-to-Face Humanities course into a completely new model based on the blended i²Flex methodology that guides teaching and learning at the American Community Schools (ACS) Athens. ACS Athens is a large, private JK-12 international school located in Athens, Greece. The school embraces the American education philosophy and follows the American curriculum. Created 40 years ago at the ACS Athens, this interdisciplinary, team-taught course continued to be a standard offering due to its innovative approach of exploring essential questions through the lens of several disciplines and a variety of field studies. However, we began to realize that the delivery of the course needed to be more aligned with the digital world of our students. Although we were eager

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7760-8.ch027

to adapt to changing times, we did not want to lose sight of the core values of the Humanities course. In the process of transforming Humanities into the i²Flex model, we searched for ways to adapt to changing times while maintaining the integrity of the course through thoughtful, effective use of educational technology in reaching our teaching/learning goals. Now, some years later, we are using this experience as we again adapt to changing times and work on a further transformation of the Humanities course.

DESIGNING A HUMANITIES COURSE THE i²Flex WAY

We describe how we first met this challenge in the chapter “The Humanities Program: An Innovative Classic” (Jasonides, Karvouniaris & Zavacopoulou, 2016) which was included in the book *Revolutionizing K-12 Blended Learning through the i²Flex Classroom Model* (Avgerinou & Gialamas, 2016). The chapter documents how we redesigned the Humanities course in two separate formats, one format to meet the needs of students enrolled in the year-long ACS Diploma course and another format to meet the needs of a wider range of students who are not enrolled in the year-long course but are interested in taking Humanities as an enrichment course that focuses on preparing them for an 8-day field study experience.

The ACS Diploma Course and the Enrichment Course shared the same core values: a liberal arts education delivered through a team-taught, interdisciplinary approach that includes Literature, History, Art, Philosophy and Music. In each course the essential question “What Makes Us Human” remained as the guiding force, and the field study experiences continued to support the authenticity of our exploration of this question. In both courses the content remained focused on the influence of Greece in Western Civilization. However, the Humanities Enrichment course presented this in less detail, since it was not a year-long course and it was focused on preparing students for an 8-day field study trip to either France or Italy.

The major challenge, of course, was redesigning learning activities based on what we thought would work best in the Face-to-Face classroom and which activities could work better in an independent but teacher-guided online session. We began by redesigning the Moodle platform so it was set up more like websites familiar to students. In the ACS Diploma course we used the Face-to-Face sessions as a way to develop critical thinking through group and class discussions of the ideas they explored during the online learning sessions. Finding or designing our own engaging but also effective online learning activities became even more challenging in the Humanities Enrichment course since it was delivered completely online except for the culminating field study experience. Over the years we included a variety of effective online learning activities in the Humanities courses, and we continued to explore virtual learning activities and digital educational tools that might be useful in helping us maintain the core goals of the Humanities course.

ONE STEP FURTHER

In the spring of 2019 we took one step further in our journey when we began to consider how to redesign the Humanities Enrichment course so that it could be accepted by ACS Virtual, a new online program that was beginning its first year with a variety of authentic high school courses offering ACS high school credit. We decided to make this next step for several reasons. Not only did we want to support the ACS

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/from-blended-to-fully-virtual/275586

Related Content

Active Blended Learning: Definition, Literature Review, and a Framework for Implementation

Alejandro Armellini and Brenda Cecilia Padilla Rodriguez (2021). *Cases on Active Blended Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-22).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/active-blended-learning/275671

The Exploration of Automated Image Processing Techniques in the Study of Scientific Argumentation

Bo Pei, Henglv Zhao, Wanli Xing and Hee-Sun Lee (2019). *Cognitive Computing in Technology-Enhanced Learning* (pp. 175-190).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-exploration-of-automated-image-processing-techniques-in-the-study-of-scientific-argumentation/228496

Academics' Perspectives on the Challenges and Opportunities for Student-Generated Mobile Content in Malaysia

Shamsul Arrieya Ariffin (2016). *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* (pp. 49-64).

www.irma-international.org/article/academics-perspectives-on-the-challenges-and-opportunities-for-student-generated-mobile-content-in-malaysia/162724

Proactive, Preventive or Indifference?: Reaction Modes of Faculty towards Use of Personal Mobile Devices in Courses

Alona Forkosh-Baruch and Hagit Meishar Tal (2016). *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* (pp. 72-84).

www.irma-international.org/article/proactive-preventive-or-indifference/152276

Active Blended Learning in an Undergraduate English for Academic Purposes Program

Chris Harwood (2021). *Cases on Active Blended Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 122-148).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/active-blended-learning-in-an-undergraduate-english-for-academic-purposes-program/275677