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TEACHING RESEARCH ON COURSE RELATED ACTIVITIES IN FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH LITERATURE

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

♦ What is the impact of a course designed to promote student engagement using course related activities?
♦ What is the effect of such a course design on the frequency of student engagement in those activities?
♦ What is the effect of such a course design, and subsequent engagement, on changes in students’ attitudes towards, and interest in, English literary studies?

Course design refers to how the course readings and assignments are assigned and discussed. Course related activities refers to voluntary activities that supplement the course readings and assignments. For the purposes of this study, web-based resources are also considered to be course related activities because they are non-mandatory and access to them occurs outside of class time.

RESEARCH STUDY

Two 2007-8 ENGL 020E sections were designed to promote on-campus activities and web-based resources that are directly course related. At the end the Fall term, students completed an online survey in which they self-reported attitudes changes towards literary studies resulting from engagement in course related activities. Survey results that reveal some relation between course related activities and increased positive student attitudes towards literary studies (Fig. 1) may suggest the benefits of integrating course related and IT-based learning experiences into introductory English course design and the value of future research in this area.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS*

♦ Online Survey, 27 Likert Scale Qs, 24% resp.rate (53/212)

Q21. In the future I am likely to participate in voluntary activities that are directly related to my courses.

Q22. Overall, I would recommend ENGL 020E to others students because it encourages participation in course related activities:

Q23. Overall, I am more interested in studying literature now than when I started ENGL 020E as a result of the course related activities:

Q27. I am interested in taking another English literature course that promotes the following course related activities:

- Author Meet/Reading 80% Facebook Group 42%
- Film Screening 78% Poetry Reading 42%
- Class Field Trip 70% None - I would not take
- Theatre Performance 68% another English course 8%
- Web-CT 60% None - I prefer in-class
- Web Resources 58% learning only 0%

* Complete research findings will be presented at Western’s April 2009 Teaching Research conference.

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