**Syllabus: ADLT 640**
**Theory and Practice of eLearning Integration into Adult Learning Environments**

*(note: first course in the three-course Teaching and Learning with Technology elective track in the M.Ed. in Adult Learning)*

**Professor Information**
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**Office Hours**
By appointment

**Course Description**
Pre-requisite: ADLT 601or permission of instructor. Note: This is a hybrid online class.

Innovations in educational technology over the past several decades, especially technologies available via the web, offer adult educators a multitude of new ways to deliver learning in organizational and educational contexts. With the increasingly ubiquitous access learners have to the web through home computers and mobile devices, teachers and facilitators are no longer limited to simply choosing between either online or face-to-face delivery. Now, eLearning can fall anywhere along an educational spectrum that runs between these traditional categories, allowing adult educators to create richer and more complex educational environments for their adult learners.

This course explores the theory and practice of integrating eLearning into adult learning environments and addresses the many factors that need to be considered in the design and delivery of eLearning. And while it offers a great deal of promise to both adult educators and learners, eLearning must be implemented appropriately, and its use integrated into well-established and well-researched pedagogical practices, in order to be effective.

ADLT 640 will provide learners with a theoretical foundation and rationale for the successful integration of eLearning into formal and informal adult learning environments. This course begins with an overview of educational theory and social constructivist teaching philosophy before addressing the fundamental issues instructional designers should consider when designing, delivering, and assessing eLearning.

**Course Objectives**
By the end of this course, the learner will have:

1. Examined the theoretical constructs and philosophical orientations that support knowledge construction in eLearning environments.

2. Explored the way in which a philosophy of eLearning practice can be translated into content developed for adult learners in various settings and contexts.

3. Discussed the specific affordances as well as levels and types of interactivity offered by various forms of eLearning by contrasting eLearning with traditional face-to-face delivery of instruction.

4. Identified design elements, instructor roles, community building strategies, and the role of feedback and assessment in creating a culture of eLearning that supports learner-centered instruction.

**Textbooks and Course Materials**

Anderson, T. (Ed.) (2008). *Theory and practice of online learning* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Athabasca University Press. Available http://cde.athabascau.ca/online_book/

Palloff, R. & Pratt, K. (2007). *Building online learning communities: Effective strategies for the virtual classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

In addition to these central texts, I will provide a number of articles and chapters for you to read throughout the semester.

**Course Topics:**

A. Theory & Philosophy of eLearning

B. Design & Development of Effective eLearning

C. Interactivity & Learner Engagement

D. Practical Considerations for eLearning Delivery

E. Developing Effective eLearning Assessments

F. Assessing and Evaluating eLearning

G. Fostering Self-directed and Transformative Learning in an eLearning Environment

**Assignment Grading**

Participation/Attendance/Engagement (15% of grade)
Assignment 1 – Reflective Essay (15% of grade)
Assignment 2 – Online Facilitation (15%)
Assignment 3 – Analysis of Social Presence and Learner Engagement (20%)
Assignment 4 – eLearning Assessment Plan 25%)
Assignment 5 – Final Blog Post- Learning Integration (10%)

**Assignment # 1 – Reflective Essay: Developing a philosophy of practice that reflects how adults learn in an eLearning environment (15%of course grade).**

eLearning has been touted as providing a host of advantages to institutions and organizations and their learners: just-in-time learning; increased access to educational content; removal of situational barriers such as time and location; cost effectiveness, greater accountability, increased interaction, skill development, enhancement of self-directedness in learning.

However as eLearning has become more widely adopted in workplaces and educational settings, critics of eLearning have questioned many of the purported advantages of eLearning.

Kanuka (2007) asserts a growing list of concerns, including the increased commercialization of teaching and learning, lack of face-time between students and teachers, devaluing of oral discourse and discussion practices, concerns that deep learning cannot be achieved without real-time class experience, concerns about the growing digital divide, and practices that transfer costs to students to obtain/maintain equipment and supplies related to the eLearning experience.

Amid these conflicting claims, where does the facilitator of adult learning stand regarding a philosophy of practice for eLearning? How does the adult educator accommodate andragogical principles and theories of adult learning including constructivist thinking and the concept of connectivism when designing and delivering an eLearning experience?

In this assignment you are to write about your developing philosophy of practice in facilitating eLearning for adults. Your paper should be at least 5-7 pages, double-spaced, and written according to APA format. You should reference relevant literature, including chapters in the Anderson text on *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning.* This assignment is due the 2nd week of class.

## Assignment # 2 – Facilitation of an online session of ADLT 640 (15% of course grade).

ADLT 640 is the foundational class in a three-course strand that prepares you to design and deliver effective eLearning to adult learners in a variety of formal and informal contexts. One important your role as an online teacher is to develop the facilitative skills you need to create and nurture a community of learners in a blended or online environment.

For this assignment, you will facilitate an online session of this class in order to develop your skills as an online teacher. Using techniques for effective online facilitation discussed in class, you and a partner will prepare and lead an online class session of ADLT 640.

During the first week of class you will select which online class session you will facilitate. Working with your partner in class and online, you will plan the session you will facilitate. You may use Blackboard as your platform, or choose another, web-based platform. Your session can be either synchronous or asynchronous.

While the class topic and many of the readings will already be assigned, you and your partner are expected to:
- assign additional readings, videos, podcasts, or other course material relevant to the class discussion
- develop a set of discussion questions related to the week's readings, assignments, and other class materials and post them to that week's discussion forum
- facilitate the class discussion by regularly responding other students' posts and questions
- use Blackboard or another online forum or platform

In addition to your facilitation experience, you are also to write a substantial blog post reflecting critically on your experience preparing for and facilitating your session. This can be a personal account that describes any challenges, surprises, and successes you encountered in designing and facilitating your session.

## Assignment # 3 – Exploring Social Presence and Learner Engagement (20% of course grade)

This assignment is intended to begin around the second week of class and continue until the last week of the semester, at which time each student will submit a substantive 10 to 15 page paper analyzing his or her experience in participating in an online or virtual *learning* community. The purpose of this assignment is to have you experience the concepts of social presence and learner engagement firsthand by joining an online community, observing how social presence is (or, perhaps, is not) accomplished, and evaluating your own personal engagement that results from your participation.

The instructor will help you identify appropriate virtual learning communities open to new membership. An example of one of these virtual communities is Work Literacy (http://workliteracy.ning.com), a social networking site created by and for adult learning professionals in the workplace. Please note that sites such as Facebook or MySpace are not considered learning sites. An appropriate site should provide the opportunity for you to engage with others who share your interests and participate in the learning activities involved. It should have some form of participant-led facilitation so that you can observe the facilitator role in action, regardless of whether this role falls to one person or is shared among community members.

During your participation in this online community, you should ask the following questions, incorporating your observations into your final paper:

- What makes this learning community work well (or not?)
- How does this site create community among its learners?
- How would you describe your level of engagement? Where you an active participant? Did you initiate dialogue or respond to requests by others to engage in the community? What actions by the facilitator or other members contributed to social presence and learner engagement?
- What practical uses do you see for this site or a similar site for the learners in your work setting?

Your goal is to reflect critically on the practices observed that contribute to social presence and learner engagement. Your paper is due the last week of class.

**Assignment # 4 – Creating an eLearning Assessment Plan for a Unit of Instruction (25% of grade)**

For this assignment, you are to consider a unit of instructional content that you are familiar with (either as the instructor or as a participant/ learner) and design an assessment *plan* for this content when it is delivered in an eLearning format. This means you will need to conceptualize the instructional content as it might be delivered in an online or hybrid situation even if the content is currently being delivered in a traditional, face-to-face setting.

Your plan should include at least three of the many different strategies for assessment discussed in your texts and in class (i.e., e-portfolios, wikis, blogs, tests, quizzes, instructor evaluation, self-assessment, etc.). For each strategy, describe the directions you would provide adult learners for carrying out the assessment. Develop a rubric, if appropriate, that you might use to evaluate the assessment process. Your final product should be a written paper (APA format) that contains these elements:

- A brief description of the instructional unit, its purpose, and the intended learners and learning context
- A description of three different assessment strategies that you would use; when and how

they would be administered (timing, sequence, etc.); the purpose of each assessment strategy
- The descriptive wording/audio/video that you would use to introduce the assessment strategy to the adult learners who are completing this instructional unit
- The rubric that you design (if appropriate) for the assessment strategy

This assignment is due in week 7 of the course.

## Assignment # 5 – Final Blog Post: Integration of Your Learning about eLearning (10%)

For this final blog post, write a narrative that integrates and synthesizes your learning experiences in the course. This is intended to be a reflection of what you have learned, written from a personal perspective. Address what you have learned and how you conceptualize the nature of adult learning in an eLearning environment.

Since this is a hybrid class on the topic of eLearning, include in your reflections the aspects of this course that you felt demonstrated good eLearning practice, and why. Likewise, describe aspects of the course that you feel didn't model effective eLearning practice and detail ways they might be improved for the next class.

This should be a substantive post, more than a paragraph or two.


**Evaluation and Assessment of Student Work:**
Written papers and presentations will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Is information presented clearly and concisely?
Is knowledge of the subject demonstrated?
Does the paper represent a review of related literature from a variety of sources?
Does the paper take a critical approach, suggesting implications for adult learning?
Are grammar, spelling, punctuation, and APA style used correctly?
Was the paper / blog post submitted on time?


**Grading Scale**
A = 90-100

- Performed at graduate level of excellence on all fronts.
- Participated actively in class discussions and activities, appropriately referencing credible resources from class/external readings and introducing personal/anecdotal/experiential comments that contributed to a heightened awareness of the topic under discussion.
- Engaged in scholarly debate with others.
- Made substantial contributions to completion of an excellent group project and project presentation.
- Submitted timely, impeccable and well-written documents/papers related to assignments.

B = 80 - 89

- Performed at graduate level on most fronts, but did not rise to the level of excellence in all areas.
- Participated actively in class discussions and activities, but with less displayed familiarity

with the literature (class and external readings).
- Made ample contributions to completion of an excellent group project and project presentation.
- Submitted well-written documents/papers related to assignments that contained only minor errors/problems.

C= 70-79

- Participated in class discussions and activities on a limited basis or did so from an uninformed/personal perspective only.
- Made limited contributions to completion of the group project, or group project was of average quality.
- Submitted written documents/papers related to assignments that were less than comprehensive, inadequately researched, or inclusive of important grammatical errors.

D= 60-69

- Performed in a substandard manner on several assignments.
- Made minimal contributions to completion of the group project, or group project was of substandard quality.
- Failed to demonstrate a basic understanding of concepts and/or failed to adequately contribute to the class.

F = Below 60

- Engaged in academic dishonesty plagiarism, or other Honor Code violations, or
- Stopped participating altogether, or
- Failed to meet the requirements of the class.

**Adult Learning Program Portfolio Requirement**

The requirement for a reflective journal and e-portfolio assessment in the Adult Learning program has evolved to a weblog format. Each student in the program should keep a blog as an ongoing reflective journal; the blog can also be set up to host your "best work" from each class. Near the end of your program, you should schedule a meeting with your faculty advisor to discuss what you have learned during your time in the program through your reflective practice. Prior to your meeting with your advisor, you should complete a ten-page, double-spaced, reflective essay on the overall program experience and post it to your blog. Your blog as an e-portfolio can be an asset for job entry and career advancement purposes, much as an artist carries a portfolio of his/her best work to a job interview. It can be useful in preparing for job interviews, and can be added to your resume as an internet link for prospective employers to review.

**Supplemental Bibliography and Electronic Resources**

Bransford, J., Brown, A. & Cocking, R. (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school.* Washington, DC.

Chickering, A. & Ehrmann, s. C. (1996, October). *Implementing the seven principles: Technology as lever.* Retrieved March 16, 2009 from http://www.tltgroup.org/programs/seven.html.

Dixon, J., Crooks, H., & Henry, K. (2006, Spring). Breaking the ice: Supporting collaboration and the development of community online. Canadian *Journal of Learning and Technology, 32*(2). Retrieved March 16, 2009, from http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/51/48.

Dubrovsky, V., Kiesler, S., & Sethna, B. (1991). The equalization phenomena: Status effects in computer-mediated and face-to-face-decision making groups. *Human-Computer Interaction, 6*(2), 119-146.

Garrison, D. R. (2002). Cognitive presence for effective online learning: The role of reflective inquiry, self-directed learning and metacognition. Invited paper presented to the *Sloan Consortium Asychronous Learning Network Invitational Workshop*, Lake George, NY, September.

Garrison, D. R. & Anderson, T. (2003). *E-learning in the 21st Century: A framework for research and practice*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Katz, J. E. & Rice, R. E. (2002). *Social consequences of Internet use: Access, involvement, and interaction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kop, R. & Hill, A. (2008, October). Connectivism: Learning theory of the future of vestige of the past? *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 9(3). Accessed March 28, 2008 at http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/viewArticle/523/1103.


Lombard, M. & Dittton, T. B. (1997). At the heart of it all: The concept of presence. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(3).

McLuhan, M. & Fiore, Q. (1962). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Siemens, G. (2005). A learning theory for the digital age. *Instructional Technology and distance Education, 2*(1), 3-10.

Spivack, N. (2007). Minding the planet: the meaning and future of the Semantic Web. Lifeboat Foundation special Report. Retrieved March 16, 2009 from http://lifeboat.com/ex/minding.the.planet.

**VCU Policies and Procedures**


**Email Policy**: Electronic mail or "email" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective, and environmentally aware manner. *You are required to use your official VCU email account for email communication in this course.* This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the University as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of University-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety: http://www.ts.vcu.edu/policies/webemail.html

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**: The *VCU Resource Guide* states: "Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission as an institution of higher education.

*"Therefore, it must act to maintain these values, even to the point of separating from the University those who violate them. [The VCU honor system policy] describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. All persons enrolled in any course or program offered by VCU, and all persons supervising the learning of any student are responsible for acting in accordance with the provisions of this policy."*

VCU has recently revised its honor policy. Students should review that policy as described in the *VCU Resource Guide*: http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/Honor_system_policy.pdf

In this class, because coursework will at times be collaborative, particular issues of integrity arise. Students should not copy or print another student's work without permission. Any material from another source must be credited, whether that material is quoted directly, summarized, or paraphrased. In other words, students should respect the work of others and in no way present it as their own.

**Student Conduct in the Classroom**: According to the *VCU Resource Guide*,
*"The instructional program at VCU is based upon the premise that students enrolled in a class are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other students. Accordingly, in classrooms, laboratories, studies, and other learning areas, students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner so that the faculty member can proceed with their [sic] customary instruction. Faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) may set reasonable standards for classroom behavior in order to serve these objectives. If a student believes that the behavior of another student is disruptive, the instructor should be informed."*

In addition, the University Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having
*"...in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..."*

Certainly the expectation in this course is that students will attend class with punctuality, proper decorum, required course material, and studious involvement. The *VCU Resource Guide* contains additional important information about a number of other policies with which students should be familiar, including Guidelines on Prohibition of Sexual Harassment, Grade Review Procedure, and Ethics Policy on Computing. It also contains maps, phone numbers, and information about resources available to VCU students. The *VCU Resource Guide* is available online or through the Division of Student Affairs**.**

See  the *VCU Resource Guide* for more information
(http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/conductguide.html).

**Students with Disabilities:** *SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require that VCU provide an "academic adjustment" and/or a "reasonable accommodation" to any individual who advises us of a physical and/or mental disability.  If you have a physical or mental limitation that requires an academic adjustment or accommodation, arrange a meeting with me at your earliest convenience. Additionally, if your coursework requires you to work in a lab environment, you should advise the instructor or department chairperson of any concerns you may have regarding safety issues related to your*

*limitation(s). This statement applies not only to this course but also to every other course in this University.*

**Religious Observances**: It is the policy of VCU to accord students, on an individual basis, the opportunity to observe their traditional religious holidays. Students desiring to observe a religious holiday of special importance must provide advance written notification to the instructor by the end of the second week of classes.

**Cell Phones and Beepers**: Please be advised that cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. Also, University Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone "to have in his/her possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorized of the President of the University…" (see http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7rp.html).

For a complete listing of "Policies of Special Importance to Students" go to http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/.

**Emergency Preparation**: What to know and do to be prepared for emergencies at VCU:

- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify). Keep your information up-to-date.

- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.

- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.

- Know where to go for additional emergency information (http://www.vcu.edu/alert).

- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects