

First offered during the spring 2008, I migrated the Department of Psychology's PSYC 242 Biopsychology course into a Web-only online format organized around flash videos incorporating course lecture audio. This project was supported by an Online Program Grants Initiative, received in January 2007.

As PSYC 242 Biopsychology is one of the more challenging courses psychology majors are required and reluctant to take despite their reserved 'excitement' related to learning about the role of the brain in everyday life. Thus, in addition to covering the technical content of much of the material, this course represented a particular challenge with respect to not only making it accessible to students in an online format, but engaging, as well. As with any online course, there is the issue of providing students with the *sine qua non* of the classroom experience in a Web-only course. Absent the face-to-face venue, I was concerned about how to create a community of learning among students who will never meet around course subject matter most of them take with dread and only because it is required.

The value of lecture is to do what the text cannot—to create a frame of reference and context that makes the material immediate and interesting to students—the equivalent of writing a text about the text. The current availability of both the hardware and software resources in conjunction with Blackboard has made it feasible to accomplish this in an online venue.

Using an Olympus Digital recorder, I recorded (with a lapel microphone) all of my lectures in this course over two semesters then downloaded the lecture audio files in Microsoft WAV format directly into my computer where I could parse and edit the audio files. Adobe Captivate 3 was used to organize and combine PowerPoint slides (which included the graphics and explanatory material consistent with the audio) and the results were published as Shockwave Flash Movies (SWF) to the Blackboard learning management system. Copyright permissions to use their graphics were acquired from the text author and publisher as well as from two online sites that were willing to offer quality graphics, without cost, for the purpose of teaching this course as part of a password protected learning management system.

While this has been a time-intensive undertaking, indeed comparable in many respects to writing a text, the end product yielded over seventeen hours of streamlined, high content dense lecture modules—312 modules were produced, ranging in length from 1 to 7 minutes. The modular format not only makes it easy to continually edit, revise and update material, but students can view the material in manageable chunks as their time permits. Students are required to view and listen to these modules, in addition to doing assigned text readings, and are encouraged to relate the material to their personal lives as well as to its broader implications for science, medicine and the humanities, through forum discussions and writing assignments. Students have responded well to this Web-course format (no one has reported difficulty downloading and viewing the SWF movies) and the level of engagement with the students continues to be both stimulating and exciting—they participate far more actively than is typical in a face-to-face classroom.