Online Course: English: *Of Mice and Men*

Course Link: http://570finalenglish.weebly.com

Course Description

This online course takes an in-depth look at the novel *Of Mice and Men* written by John Steinbeck. The course begins by introducing the author and providing biographical information as the first module. The course also provides information relating to the setting of the novel, more specifically the 1930s time period through readings and videos. Lastly, the beginning of the course will introduce the topic of the American Dream and how it relates to the novel and the time period. The beginning of the course focuses on setting the background for learners to begin to apply the context of the reading as they make their way through the course.

The introductory section aims to provide necessary background information to learners who are new to reading texts relating to those time periods and topics. learners who feel comfortable with the time period and topics are encouraged to review the material provided in the introductory section before the class begins to read and look at the novel.

The course will cover a chapter or more than one chapter every two weeks. Supplemental material is embedded within appropriate chapters to help the learners when reading or to introduce information that will be helpful to learners in completing future assignments. Each week, learners will find a series of activities to complete that range from reading or viewing material, class discussions, and group projects (Absorb, Do, Connect). The tasks are aimed at providing learners with an opportunity to discuss and think deeply about the themes and messages within the text, as well as to practice necessary skills. learners will find a course syllabus detailing the entire 16 weeks, brief descriptions of assignments, and the point system for

the course. The entire course will be conducted online and can be completed at a learner's individual pace so long as the assignments meet the specified requirements and are turned in on time.

Course Requirements/Objectives

learners who sign up for this course do not need any prior knowledge relating to the novel or the time period. learners do need to know how to access the online content, how to post to discussion forums, and how to turn assignment into a dropbox. I would send out a survey before the beginning of the semester to gauge where learners are in their experience with online courses and use the responses to provide tutorials or informative links as needed. learners who do come into the course with background knowledge are still encouraged to take a look at all the provided information, but it is not necessary so long as they are able to complete the assignments and hold strong discussions with their groups.

The objectives of this course are aimed at providing learners' a comprehensive view of the novel while having them perform applications of the prevalent themes from the novel to their understanding and lives.Other course objectives include having learners practice identifying themes, character traits, and practice their writing through various activities that are completed either individually or in pre-arranged groups. By the end of the course, learners will have a deeper understanding of the novel, the 1930s time period, the perceptions of the American Dream and how they all relate to each other in this context.

Absorb Activities

Within this unit, there are 'absorb' activities in each week of the course. Specific instructions and actual documents are provided for the first four to seven weeks of instructions,

and the rest of the weeks have the general topics listed but no actual documents. The first four weeks contain two activities that include readings and videos for learners to view in preparation for the topic of the week. In week 1, learners are given a reading and video relating to John Steinbeck's life since the first week's focus is introducing the author and his life. The second and third weeks contain readings and videos pertaining to the 1930s time period and to the topic of the American Dream. During this week, learners will be reading about the Great Depression to gain a deeper understanding of the time period in which Steinbeck's novel is set. The fourth week and onward, the class begins to read the novel chapter by chapter. Each chapter is accompanied by other readings and materials that cover information relating to the content of the chapter and that will aid learners when completing assignments due that week or in upcoming weeks. By the end of the course, learners will have had various readings and videos of information that will help them in completing the final exam and the final essay for the course which will draw on what they have learned throughout.

Do Activities

Along with the 'absorb' activities, each week there are 'do' activities for learners to complete that allow them to practice identifying themes or discover relationships between the topics through group work. The first four weeks contain two 'do' activities per week that accompany the absorb activities and aim to allow learners to practice presented skills or discover more information on the topic(s) of the week. Within week one's topic of John Steinbeck's life, learners have two 'do' activities that ask them to take a closer look at the biographical information presented in the readings and create a synthesized individual and group presentation of the information. In week two, learners are presented with two more 'do' activities relating to

the topics of the week where they are asked to create presentations or explore other sources of information. Weeks four to seven include 'do' activities that relate to the chapters and the topics presented those weeks. By the end of the course, learners would have completed several 'do' activities and practiced individual skills, as well as worked collaboratively with their groups to create presentations of specific topics as outlined in specific activity directions. These 'do' activities will help learners internalize the content, particularly when referring to practical skills they need to analyze literature in relation to themes and character analysis.

Connect Activities

The last of the activity types integrated in this course are the 'connect' activities. These activities are constructed with the intention of being a final thought-provoking learning experience for individual and groups of learners. 'Connect' activities ask learners to ponder, questions, or create original work based on their learning. Each week within this course has two of these 'connect' activities that serve as the final application of the learning topics for that week. In each and every week, learners will be asked to participate in group discussions by answering the provided prompts on the discussion section of the course. Discussion questions will be provided by the instructor to allow students to discuss and develop on specific information that will benefit them as the course progresses. Along with the discussions, there will also be quizzes and other group activities such as group wiki projects that aim to help learners apply their learning in ways that ask them to create teachable content for others. The group wiki 'connect' activities are great for this course because they allow learners to cover large amount of content at once through the separation of smaller learning chunks that they research and create for other learners to use. The quizzes allow learners to connect their learning with wider themes by asking

them to answer short answer questions that ask them to analyze the provided texts or videos. The 'connect' activities are the activities that really allow the instructor to gauge how much the learners are understanding and applying as they progress through the course. This would be helpful for the instructor because any extra help can be directed towards struggling students or supplemental materials can be made accessible to the entire class and struggling students can receive the extra support they need to fully understand the topics being covered in the course.

Rationale

The creation of this course was based on helping learners move through a novel while simultaneously analyzing and applying various themes to the literature. The course also aims to help learners apply the learning to their own lives and personal experiences. Literature holds many relatable themes and topics that help learners experience the past and various events. In reading *Of Mice and Men*, learners will learn about the lives of migrant workers in California in the time of the Great Depression.

This course covers a chapter of the text every two weeks with added topics that help learners practice and master skills essential in English courses. Having learners practice interpreting themes and analyzing characters are common topics covered in English courses. Through the practice of these skills in this course, learners will be able to enhance their understanding and appreciation of literature in their future courses. Learners are able to go through the course at their own pace and accessing whatever material they feel they need to be able to complete the assignments. Learners are encouraged to take a look at all the material, but it is not required if they have previous experience with the presented topics. Learners will travel through the course until the final weeks of instruction where they will work independently on

final assignments which will need to be submitted before the deadlines to receive a final grade for the course.

Each week holds a topic or two with readings, videos, and activities aimed to help learners practice, apply, and discover meaning in the text that they can apply to their own world. The activities range from independent to group work where students take quizzes to gauge learning, create visual representations of themes, and work collaboratively with others to hold valuable discussions and create content that can be shared with the entire class to further learning and understanding. The course aims to promote a love of literature within learner and encourage them to be constantly vigilant to the themes presented in life, be it in the past, present, or future.

Conclusion

In the creation of this course, I learned much about integrating material into an online course. Because an online class is very different from a face-to-face class, activities and materials which would normally befit a face-to-face class would not fare so well in an online class, particularly due to the lack of shared space as a class. Online classes involve learners' working at their own pace and during their own free time. The key aspect of online courses are having students work together to learn and create content. Therefore, the material presented should be available in various formats to make the content easily accessible to all learners. Activities should also range from independent to group projects to illicit a feeling of a shared class and community.

I enjoyed working on this online course and thinking about how to create a course that will best relay the content and topics with which I want learners' to leave the course. The most difficult part may have been creating or deciding on the activities and assessments for the

objectives. As a classroom teacher, I automatically think about essays, final project presentations, and final exams. However, these options are not viable in an online course where students will never be in the same shared space, particularly for presentations and exams. In an online course, exams will always be open book and open notes and so the questions for these exams should be geared more towards written rather than multiple choice to allow the instructor to truly gauge learning. Presentations also may have a hard time finding place in an online course, so the best option may be to have students put most of their time and effort into writing about their learning in the course and showing what they have learned through words.

   I do feel I have learned very much in the creation of this course and hope to, one day, be able to apply online and offline elements into a classroom of my own. Not only has this final project been helpful, but learning about multimedia tools and creating quizzes and course content has been extremely helpful when thinking about presenting content to learners. Overall, this project has taught me to think outside the boxes when presenting content to both online and offline courses and I hope to continue to build this website by integrating more multimedia elements and engaging activities in the future.