cerns and perspectives are important. It validates discussion of gender, race and sexual orientation (both in and outside the classroom) as appropriate to the study of contracts. It enlists student energy in searching for places of intersection between diversity issues and the first-year curriculum. Finally, it enlivens the classroom and can offer fascinating insights. For example, a gay student once remarked to the lecturer that, because of his experience with societal norms, he found the reasonable-person standard 'terrifying'.

Second, from time to time use hypotheticals involving same-sex partners. Although some legal issues require opposite-sex couples, many do not, and teachers should include same-sex examples in their repertoire. Since most students assume that any couple will be of opposite sex, the point has to be made explicitly. This recommendation is analogous to the battle over gender-inclusive language fought 20 years ago.

Third, discuss LBGT issues at several points in the course and include issues, cases, and hypotheticals not linked to criminality. In Contracts, for example, LBGT issues could be included in a discussion of palimony cases. Since marriage is prohibited to same-sex couples, contract provides a mechanism (admittedly a poor substitute) for ordering personal affairs. In Torts, can a same-sex partner witnessing an injury to his or her mate recover for negligent infliction of emotional distress? Can same-sex partners recover for loss of consortium? Teaching LBGT cases and hypotheticals not linked to criminality is an important step in educating non-gay students about the full spectrum of LBGT lives.

Fourth, invite upper-level LBGT students into the classroom. This facilitates casual dialogue between straight and LBGT students. While race and gender are commonly discussed by students outside the classroom across lines of gender and race, straight students may not know even a single classmate who is a visible member of the LBGT community. Second, it empowers the upper-level students who

teach the class and encourages dialogue about LBGT issues between students and faculty.

Most of us understand that gender issues are not solely women's issues and that issues of race are not solely the concern of people of colour: these are societal issues, and everyone has an opportunity (if not an obligation) to battle gender and race discrimination. Likewise, LBGT issues are societal issues: members of the LBGT community should not be the only ones concerned with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Issues of diversity are too important to be discussed only in Constitutional Law and upper-level specialty courses. They need to be part of the first-year curriculum. Enlisting upper-level students to discuss LBGT issues in first-year courses educates all students about those issues, facilitates dialogue between non-gay and LBGT students, empowers the students teaching the class, encourages dialogue between students and faculty, and reduces the sense of isolation felt by LBGT students.

TECHNOLOGY

Te(a)chnology: web-based instruction in legal skills courses

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Law professors increasingly are using the Internet to supplement their course materials and enhance their teaching skills. They are using it to create interactive, educational computer software, to provide a forum for peer review of student work products, to encourage collaborative learning, to provide a structured out-of-classroom learning environment, to foster a tighter community of educators, to extend office hours, to supplement and update class materials, and to promote faculty collegiality.

We developed a thesis that Web-based technology can improve student

learning and satisfaction in skills-based courses because it allows students to choose among various sensory stimuli according to their own learning styles. Our goal was to explore a variety of technologies and attempt to accommodate a variety of learning styles instead of teaching to the prototypical law student.

Tailored instruction often occurs in primary and secondary education. In contrast, law students are subjected to a one-size-fits-all teaching approach. They are expected to learn by reading casebooks and attending classes taught by the Socratic method, and to demonstrate their learning in essay exams and multiple-choice tests.

A first-year law student is required to take courses she may or may not find interesting. She must also work with course materials whose style varies little from course to course. Most textbooks are compilations of appellate cases, followed by notes and problems. Unlike undergraduate textbooks, law books do not typically include photographs, charts, or colour-coded graphs. They appeal primarily to a student who learns by reading and writing; they are not geared toward the visual learner. Our premise was that by using Web-based instruction we could teach more effectively to all types of learners.

While traditional classrooms are based on precepts of passive learning and highly structured course delivery, typically centred around lecturers and reading assignments, the hallmarks of a Web-based environment are flexibility, interactivity, visual appeal, kinaesthetic movement, and sequential segments. Web-based instruction allows students to take an active role in learning and control their own learning environment. Students who learn best by reading can read the material sequentially as chapters in a book. Students who learn best by thinking aloud can discuss the materials in class or online, perhaps in a chat room. Visual learners can look at videos, charts, graphs and slides. Kinaesthetic learners can learn through computer simulations

and tutorials that guide them through the materials. Students who learn best by writing can create outlines online and participate in online discussions.

In traditional legal education, materials are presented linearly; that is, there is a single path through the material, and the order of the material is entirely controlled by the instructor. Web-based instruction allows each student to choose the route he wishes to take through the materials. Concepts and course materials are organised logically, but the student is not restricted to a linear order.

Most law school instruction is synchronous; that is, it involves a two-way interaction in real time. Typically, synchronous communication implies that the instructor is present during the instruction. Asynchronous communication involves non-interactive communications in delayed time. Further, information is available on the Web long before it becomes available in printed form.

We chose the Web environment to house the class materials for several reasons. First, the multimedia nature of the World Wide Web, with its graphics, audio, video and interactivity, stimulates many different types of learners. Another advantage of the Web is that it allows hypertext links.

One of the more challenging aspects of incorporating technology into a classroom is to do so without destroying traditional course structure and protocol. We found that computers lessened students' sense of accountability: they obviously perceived some level of anonymity and privacy as they communicated electronically. Students were far more likely to push the boundaries electronically than in a traditional classroom. To combat this problem, we defined a set of guidelines for electronic communications. A professional tone was used in communications and familiar language and first names were avoided. Personal or inappropriate topics were not tolerated in the e-mail or interactive WebBoard.

Another problem concerned the training and support available to the students. Our survey indicated clearly that students felt they had not received enough help with the new technologies. Web-based instruction does have a few challenges. As with any technology, sometimes the server fails to function, and both students and teacher need to be prepared with a backup plan. Some students seem to attract computer problems and continue to have problems no matter how much help or instruction they receive.

Despite these negatives, Web-based instruction is one of the most useful and energising teaching tools/techniques that the authors have encountered. It gives the instructor more access to the students, it provides more up-to-date real-world materials, and it allows students to effectively critique each other's work and learn from each other in a controlled environment. Furthermore, the authors hypothesise that technology can be an effective tool for various types of learners. After reviewing the initial survey data, they were convinced that the technologies used had a positive impact on the teaching and learning in the classroom. As the authors all become more experienced and the technologies continue to improve, they foresee that technology will continue to enhance the education experience and redefine the traditional classroom environment.

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THE AUSTRALASIAN LEGAL EDUCATION YEARBOOK 1999

The 1999 Australasian Legal Education Yearbook will give you comprehensive statistical information on legal education and training in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. It is your 'one-stop-shop' of information on legal education and related matters.

There are chapters on undergraduate and postgraduate students, practical legal training, continuing legal education, admissions to practice and the number of lawyers holding pratising certificates. As well, there is extensive information on university law libraries.

All of the information is drawn from Australia-wide, and many of the tables also include information from New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

Almost none of this information, compiled on a national basis, is available elsewhere and thus this handy reference is an essential resource.

The 1999 edition of the Yearbook is now available for purchase. For further information on the yearbook, please visit our website at:

http://www.law.newcastle.edu.au/cle/pubs/ybook.html