Course Project, Part II: Canvas Reflection

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EDU632: Learning Management Systems

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July 24, 2022

For this week's Unit 4 assignment, I created a mock course titled Public Speaking, intended for a collegiate audience. My experience was pleasant because I enjoy building websites, and I found that using Canvas is very much like using WYSIWYG website builders in the way the Rich Format Editor (RFE) works. Also, the concept of building web pages that link across a website is likened to building course components (e.g., pages, discussion boards, quizzes, syllabuses) that link together across an online learning course.

To begin the process of learning and developing in Canvas, my approach was first to read the appropriate three chapters (away from the computer) and conceptualize the teaching. Then, I watched the provided LinkedIn course, which felt more helpful than the reading. I am a visual learner, and I was able to watch the video course on one computer screen while mimicking the instructions on another. I used Word to craft the verbiage for the Canvas pages. It was easy to use one computer screen to show both Word and Canvas side-by-side because Canvas has a nice responsive web design, which adjusted the contents on the page to fit the screen of the reduced browser box.

Admittedly, I am nitpicky and can be judgmental in the painful quest for perfection, and I was surprisingly impressed by many things while using Canvas. The RFE is remarkably intuitive. For example, when doing a copy/paste into Canvas, its RFE defaulted my formatting into a 12pt. San Serif font every time, allowing for consistent aesthetics. The RFE also remembered my single-line bullet format and defaulted to this after a few times of my adjusting. I also appreciated the ability to duplicate my initial Overview (created via the Pages link) and Discussion Board (made via the Discussion link). This allowed me to use the format I created for Unit 1's elements when designing the same for Unit 2 without needing to recreate it again. I also love the clean interface with the navigation bars on the left and function buttons on the right, leaving the middle for course content—in both designer and student views.

There are a few small things that felt confusing for me. First, the book gave instructions to create assignments, pages, discussions, and quizzes before starting the module folders, while the video reversed the sequence, choosing first to do the modules. I opted for creating the module folders first. I realize now that either method works, but being new to Canvas, I wondered at first whether it mattered. Also, maybe because I am using a free demo trial, I cannot hide desired left navigation bar links from the course. In an actual class, I would perhaps want to hide links such as Pages, Discussion, Quizzes, and Syllabus, to make the course even cleaner since I would list all links necessary for the course on the Home page. For example, I linked all assignments to the Syllabus page and then made it my Home page. Likewise, the demo version did not have a Settings link to randomize the quiz answers.

Overall, I am a big fan of Canvas and feel disappointed that I don't see opportunities to use it again soon. Because I enjoyed it so much, I recognized afterward that I became overzealous with my Unit 4 assignment and followed the video instructions into areas beyond the unit's tasks. I realize now that when replying to classmates on the Discussion Board, I spoke of context apart from what we were asked to do. While I am glad that I unknowingly stretched myself into further learning, I hope I did not confuse others.

On a final, related note, I enjoyed this week's Unit 4 Discussion Board in a way I haven't before. The instructions were to share areas where we were struggling, and I did, posting additional questions after my original entry. This created a welcomed collaborative "all-in-it-together" feel in the Discussion Board, one I hadn't felt before. It felt like a working group session versus individual, silo posts stating what we learned in the week's learning. If I become an instructional designer or adjunct instructor after this degree, I want to emulate this kind of synergistic energy and effort.