CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION FORUMS WITH A HYBRID COURSE
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GAY AND LESBIAN LITERATURE
- Undergraduate, 200-level
- Taught as a hybrid course
- Elective in English and Gender Studies
- Fulfills Gen Ed diversity requirement
- Usual enrollment is 19

SUMMARY
Although I initially thought using Blackboard’s discussion forums in a hybrid course would be the same as using them with an online course, that turned out not to be the case. This poster describes some pros and cons—including one wholly unanticipated con that might be a “deal breaker” for some teachers.

PEDAGOGY PROs: INTRENISC MOTIVATION, MORE LIVELY CLASS TIME
- Choice in what they learn and how to demonstrate knowledge helps preserve and create intrinsic motivation
- Moving some presentations (and presenters) out of the classroom helps preserve the vitality of class time

EFFICIENCY PROs: MORE INFORMATION, MORE READILY ACCESSIBLE
- Online presentations are free of the class meeting constraints that limit the amount and variety of content presented
- Presentations done online can be accessed again by any class member at any point in the semester

CON: COMPROMISED STUDENT PRIVACY AND SAFETY
In person, students may use gender or ethnic identities at odds with their name in Blackboard.
- Blackboard gets names from ISIS. Neither students nor teachers have the power to edit the names.
- Student’s Blackboard names sometimes reveal things students would prefer to keep out of the classroom. Two of many possible examples:
  - A transgendered student my appear male in class but have a female name.
  - A student may come from a Middle Eastern or Muslim family but be assumed by peers to be Christian and/or white.

Possible effects might include distraction, learning disruption, heightened DWF risk, and compromising the student's sense of (or actual) safety.

MY HYBRID ASSIGNMENT USING BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION FORUMS
The most common assignment was a presentation, although I did not call it that. Instead, I said, “Find out something interesting about X and tell us about it.” The Blackboard discussion forum was one possible venue for the “telling.”

WHAT IS A HYBRID COURSE?
Hybrid courses attempt to combine the best of both digital and face-to-face teaching strategies.

The idea of a hybrid course is often discussed alongside the idea of a flipped classroom because both rethink defaults to ensure we use the “best tool for the job.”

HOW TO BE AN ALLY IN A HYBRID CLASS
A hybrid class by definition foregrounds both physical and digital identities. Teachers have the power to help minimize the conflicts between the two.
- Don’t require students who know each other in person to interact on Blackboard. Make it an option, and provide a venue for making comparable contributions in person.

BEST WAY TO CALL ROLL ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS
1. Show up early.
2. Write a note on the board that says, “When I call roll, I’ll say your last name. Please respond with the name you like to be called. If you want to come to the podium now and give me any advice about pronunciations, preferred names, etc., please do.”
3. Call roll as outlined above. If you find anyone’s name difficult to pronounce, don’t make a big deal about it: just ask for advice and then make a note of the phonetic pronunciation so you can say the name correctly next time.

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Roger Whitson’s idea for creating a Twitter backchannel for his classes was a real game-changer for how I thought about technology in a face-to-face class.
Roger’s write-up appears here: http://www.rogerwhitson.net/?p=651

I also owe a debt to the THATCamp brain trust, which is always ready to take a pedagogical risk and tell me honestly about what happened next, whether the result was victory or defeat. In particular, I am grateful to
- Sean Michael Morris’s work on participant pedagogy. Sean is @slamteacher on Twitter.
- Jesse Stommel’s commitment to play and intrinsic motivation. Jesse is @jessifer on Twitter.

Sean, Jesse, and Roger all publish regularly in the journal Hybrid Pedagogy.