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Applying ACUE Strategies to Online French Literature in Translation course - Reflection

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Applying ACUE Strategies to Online French 290.

Abstract:

French 290-70 is an online course which meets the CSUSB general education requirements. The ACUE course provided evidence-based teaching practices which were examined to improve on French 290-70 as the campus transitions to a semester system. Several strategies were tested to improve general education learning outcomes, align learning outcomes with course assignments and assessments, and help underprepared students.

Some ACUE modules have been very pertinent to my French 290-70 online class: French Literature in English. More precisely, I have decided to focus on a few strategies to improve on the course as we are transitioning to a semester system.

The first set of strategies are about setting strong learning outcomes, and presenting them in a clear, student-centered way. Other strategies concern under-prepared students, specifically students who are under-prepared for online courses. What can be done to support them, inform them, and lead by example?

Here are my learning outcomes in my French literature in translation class.

"The course meets the following learning outcomes:
Critical Literacies (written communication): students will express their views in a variety of assignments, analyze short stories, novellas and films, taking care to cite works appropriately and practicing synthesizing their thoughts.
Diverse perspectives: the course introduces students to several authors presenting multiple individual viewpoints, different eras and various literary movements. Additionally, weekly articles on contemporary France provide discussion topics to examine universal issues in a comparative light.
Global perspectives: the course aims at fostering students' curiosity toward other cultures and practices. Paradoxically, our planet is more and more interconnected, and yet our world is becoming increasingly more divided and divisive. French 290 encourages learners to explore the French-speaking world, and to embrace differences rather than resent, deride, or fear them.
Collaboration: students are encouraged to collaborate effectively in small study groups, by giving their opinions about the readings, finding about the authors and literary movements, and reacting to their group mates' posts. Efficient group collaboration means participating in a timely fashion, covering all aspects of a particular story, reading the post of other participants, and reacting in a thorough and a respectful way."
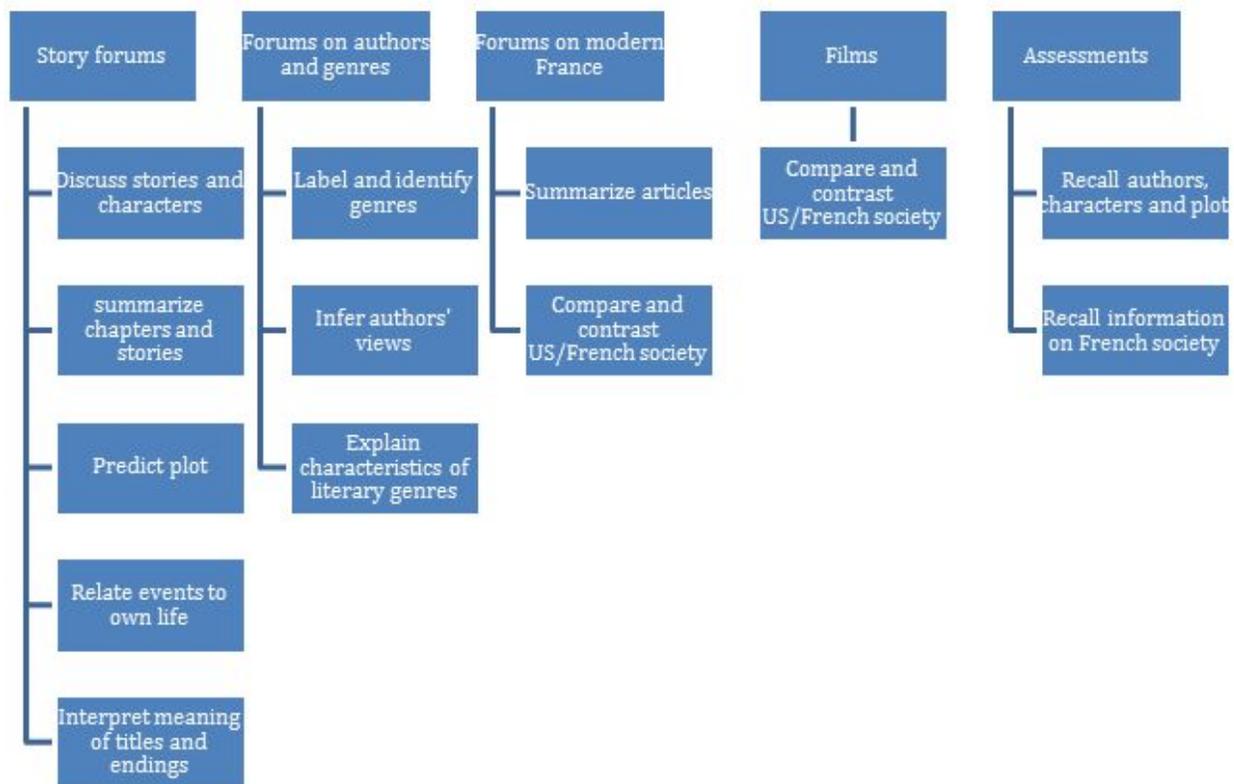
Here are the learning outcomes I have changed:

Diverse perspectives: students will examine literary movements and historical events through the lens of several authors. Additionally, students will discuss articles on contemporary France to investigate universal issues in a comparative light.

Global perspectives: the course aims at fostering students' curiosity toward other cultures and practices. Paradoxically, our planet is more and more interconnected, and yet our world is becoming increasingly more divided and divisive. In French 290, students will discover the French-speaking world, and will compare and contrast diverse francophone cultures with their own culture.

Collaboration: Students will collaborate in small groups. Together, they will create timelines, work on test reviews, give their opinions about the readings, and react to their group-mates' posts in a thorough and respectful way.

I have chosen to rewrite 3 of these learning outcomes because they were not really student-centered in the first place. My problem is that I don't want to have too many learning outcomes, and even if they aren't too many, I have the feeling that outcomes 2 and 3 are too similar. I think more work is needed. However, this is also what I already have in my syllabus:

Story forums	Forums on authors and genres	Forums on modern France	Films	Assessments
Discuss stories and characters	Label and identify genres	Summarize articles	Compare and contrast US/French society	Recall authors, characters and plot
summarize chapters and stories	Infer authors' views	Compare and contrast US/French society		Recall information on French society
Predict plot	Explain characteristics of literary genres			
Relate events to own life				
Interpret meaning of titles and endings				

I feel these learning outcomes explain what students will do for each section. They use observable and higher-order learning activities, and they are specific. In my next class, I will need to add a few sections, to mention that students create their own poem in the style of their French poet of choice, and the fact that they all collaborate on a timeline to review for their midterm. I think my next step will be to try and merge the GELOs with this graphic design.

As far as helping under-prepared students is concerned, I have communicated directly with my online students by sending them reminders, and posting encouragements. During the first couple of weeks, I send students who haven't started their weekly work a friendly reminder that they need to post in their forums. I do get messages from a couple of them in response, vouching they will do the work, and explaining why they had not done so by now. I always respond immediately with words of encouragement.

I also post announcements when things go well. Last week, I was impressed to notice that ¾ of my students had posted responses before Friday night, and this was truly amazing, so I let them know. In short, I am trying to be as present as possible.

Last week, the groups in my online class worked together to prepare for their midterm. This is the second time I have been doing this: I give each group a timeline that they

need to complete together in order to review the historical backgrounds for our stories, the literary movements, and when the authors had their most productive years. I am also thinking of opening a discussion forum unsupervised by me so students share thoughts on the stories and give each-other helpful hints.

This quarter, I have changed my grading policies in order to give heavier grades during the second half of the quarter. This gives students the time to get accustomed to an online format, and the chance to improve their grades with and after the midterm. I will definitely use this new grading policy in the semester system.

Last, the ACUE course has emphasized the importance of setting weekly objectives, of stating how these objectives are aligned with the greater course objectives, and of guiding students toward self-efficiency by giving them an estimate of the time they need to set aside for each weekly task. All these strategies are helping greatly in designing quality GE online courses.