

A Synchronous Exercise for Collective Syllabus Annotation

Christine D. Holmes, School of Social Work

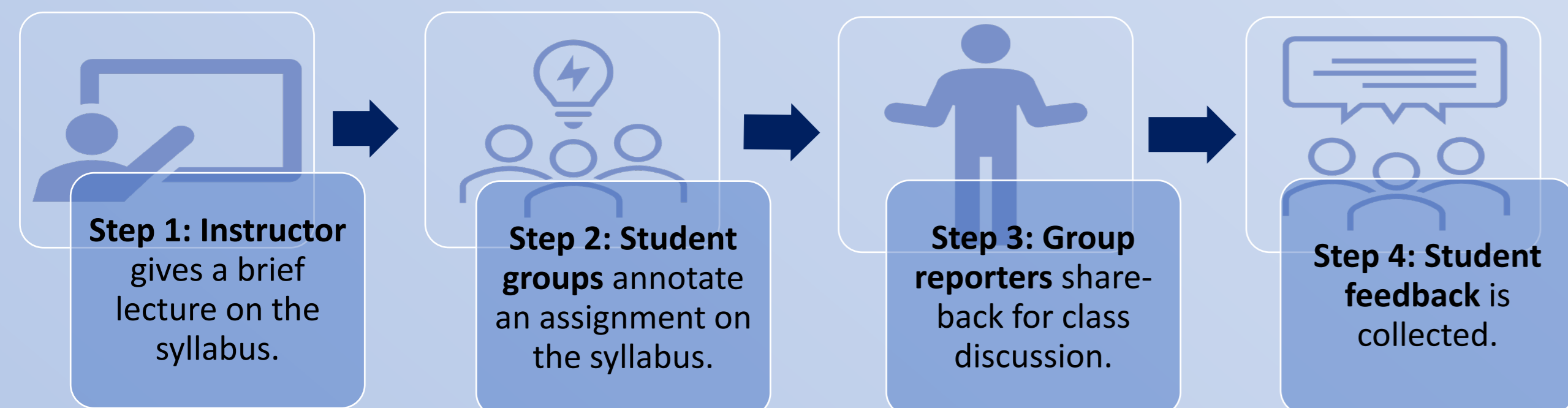
INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

Course: The innovation was used for an Advocacy course of first-year Master's of Science in Social Work students of the Online Campus. The course was hosted weekly on a virtual platform, Adobe Connect. The teaching team included an instructor and classroom technological support from a Live Support Specialist.

Challenge: The length of a traditional syllabus lecture was disengaging for students who were attending class online and subject to distractions while using their technological devices.

Innovation: To stimulate interest and promote community amongst students, students interacted with the syllabus through collective annotation on the first day of class.

MATERIALS AND METHODS



PROMOTE STUDENT AGENCY, COMMUNITY AND MEANING-MAKING THROUGHOUT.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN GROUP ANNOTATION

TECHNOLOGY: LIVE NOTES POD

Assignment: Needs Assessment

Prompts

Prepare a brief summary of the assignment

- Based on perspective of persons you serve, explore strengths and weaknesses of:
- their experiences within their community
- the organization you met them at
- US social policy systems that impact them
- Apply PROP [critical] lens to clients and the circumstances that led to the relationship

Note your group's questions about the assignment.

- What if clients are unable to communicate enough to utilize for this project?
- What if clients are short-term/have limited information available to student?
- Can we use previous clients from different [field] placements?

Advise your peers on how to prepare for this assignment.

- Identify a client that would be ideal to write about in this context
- Take note as the semester continues as you work with client to keep track of what can be included in paper

Encourages critical discussion to determine the assignment's significance.

Enables students to flag new concepts and process how the assignment applies to their respective contexts.

Advances students' preparation and spotlights their value as teachers and learners.

GROUP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



Notetaker: Records discussion.



Facilitator: Ensures all voices are heard.



Reporter: Presents group's findings.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Collective syllabus annotation can inspire student cohesion, agency and curiosity through peer level teaching and learning.

1. Promoted clarity of course assignments to prompt student action.

Students said the assignments were "very involved...so we'll need to plan ahead." Some planned to review the syllabus for the first time on their own prior to the next class, indicating that they had not reviewed the syllabus prior to the first class.

2. Facilitated community building and meaning-making of the course through collaboration.

For several students, interacting with each other to think through the assignments was one of the highlights of the class.

3. Activated student interest in the course.

There was also interest to learn more. "My takeaway from this class is that I have a lot to learn...Hopefully I will feel more confident about assignments as the class progresses."

"I took away a feeling for the broad contours for what the course load will be. I can visualize the class!"

"I liked the group work...to go over all the assignments...this helps to have us all think together."

"There is a lot of advocacy around us and using our strengths as social workers can assist those in need."

CONCLUSION

After the exercise, instructors may group students' assignment questions that require a timely response and answer them through a class email, asynchronous lecture video and/or a large group discussion in the next session. Instructor feedback should also reflect the assignment advice students offered one another to validate and integrate their contributions.

The experience of this exercise stressed how even the most taken for granted aspects of a lesson, such as the syllabus lecture, can be opportunities to engage the curiosity and intellect of a learning community.

LITERATURE CITED

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Columbia University School of Social Work, Columbia University's Center for Teaching and Learning, John G. Robertson, Taylor Eutsey and Matthea Marquart

FURTHER INFORMATION

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