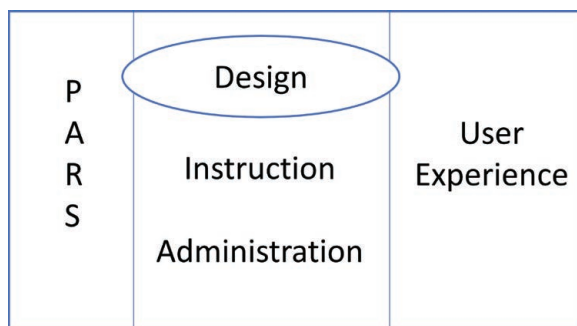




## Section I: Design

Welcome to the Design section of this collection! We selected the above golf course picture to illustrate how challenging a course can be and how one has to be strategic not to land in the sand! The golf image also illustrates how golf course designers are strategic in their choices. They plan their golf courses to be challenging and rewarding.



This is our goal for you when you think about designing your online writing courses, go for both challenging and rewarding, but always keep access in the front of your mind! This section has chapters that focus mostly on the challenges of course design and the choices we make as instructional designers. As Blythe (2001) pointed out, often online writing instructors are forced into a dual role of instructor and designer with very little professional training. The chapters in this section address this duality head on and share with you some useful tips and tricks for mitigating some of the challenges that come with designing online writing courses or programs. The audience for the chapters in this section is both

instructors who may have to design and teach their own courses, and administrators who may be looking to design the courses in their writing programs. The chapters in this section are applicable to both novice and experienced course designers. As discussed, design is one of the PARS approach layers and your course design needs to be personal, accessible, responsive and strategic.

Design is one of the first things your students will see when they log into a course. **Personal** design is important. You can make your course design more personal by doing a few quick things:

- Use colors and images on the content pages in the learning management system
- Create an introduction video.
- Put your picture on the syllabus along with your content information.
- Ensure your tone is upbeat/friendly/inviting in the text you write throughout the course including announcements, assignments, and discussion prompts.

**Accessible** design builds on ADA compliance ([ada.gov](http://ada.gov)) and allows students to better connect with content, and connect with you and with their peers. A few quick things you can do to ensure an accessible design are:

- Simplify the navigation in the LMS (learning management system) and reduce the number of clicks it takes a student to find things.
- Make sure your videos are closed caption with a written script available and that the video length is close to or under five minutes.
- Ensure you create (or adapt) assignments that allow for flexible submission formats as some students may be working only from their cell phones.
- Consider how students will access the course content and re-imagine and test assignments for digital spaces.

**Responsive** design ensures open lines of communication are maintained between you and the students. It also ensures that your students know how and when to contact you so that you don't have to work 24/7.

- Tell students how/when/where the class meets and if it is asynchronous, synchronous.
- Post office hours, days off and email response times—work-life balance is important!.
- Post a course calendar so you and your students can plan ahead for major writing assignments and smaller assignments.
- Convey to students how you'll grade and post response times for grades.

**Strategic** design pulls everything together.

- Map out your course goals and how you're going to accomplish them by using a consistent weekly or module layout, which might include things

such as a week/module overview, objectives, readings, lessons/lectures, discussion, and the writing assignment.

- Be strategic about what tools from the learning management system you plan to use, and what other external technology tools you're going to use in your class.
- Review your course materials to ensure you are providing information through various channels and including all learning styles.
- Plan out your assignments so that they are not all due at one time or due during a busy week in your personal life.

The chapters in this section model these practices and offer you ideas on how you can implement them. Crawley's chapter, for example, asks you to use Shipka's "statement of goals and choices" (2011) as a strategic framework to think about your technology tools and how you use them in your online writing courses. Geary's chapter illustrates how to design an accelerated technical writing course with the PARS framework in mind to create a course that is structured, accessible, outcomes focused, and facilitates connection among students and the instructor. Stewart's chapter addresses the challenge of time zones and digital spaces and how to design a course that is more responsive to students' needs. Sibó's chapter argues for instructors to consider reducing the literacy load of their online courses as they design and to utilize the small student cohort model in order to expand student collaboration and peer to peer learning. And lastly, Smith, et al.'s chapter illustrates how designing an online writing course using a grid-based approach to scaffolding and customizing assignment sequences can benefit instructors and administrators in a myriad of ways.

## References

- Blythe, S. (2001). Designing online courses: User-centered practices. *Computers and Composition*, 18(4), 329-346.
- Shipka, J. (2011). *Toward a composition made whole*. University of Pittsburgh Press.