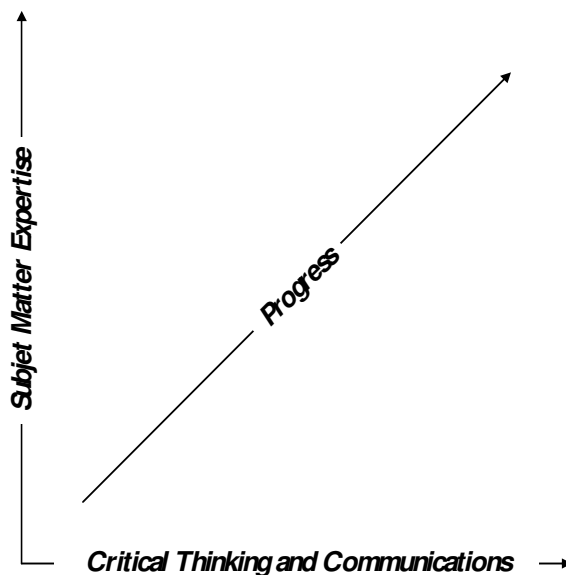


DL ala Drogan

Distance learning (the DL in “DL ala Drogan”) is available in a wide variety of guises. Each of which is a function of the teacher and his or her approach to pedagogy, the perceived capability and capacity of the students, the subject matter, and the vagaries of the underlying technology system.

What is described here may be very peculiar to my courses and should not be thought of as representative or recommended. Hence, “DL ala Drogan.”

Endgame



The intent of DL ala Drogan is for the student to show progress in thinking critically about the chosen subject and clearly communicating the results of that thinking.

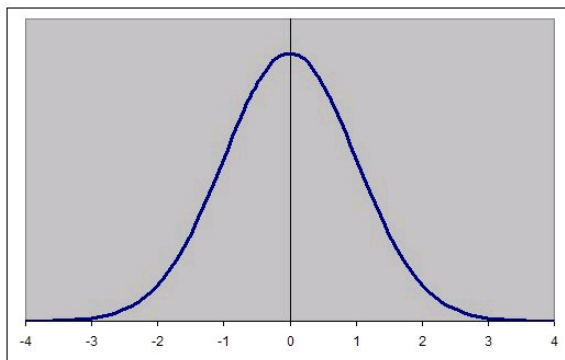
Students start from different places in the space depicted on the left, have different rates of progress, and their paths may not be as clean, straight, and even as shown here.

There is, therefore, a certain amount of heterogeneity amongst the students in a particular course. I attempt to manage this such that the greatest progress as a group is made.

As a consequence some may push in what they consider an unreasonable manner. Others may feel slightly bored by not being challenged enough.

This, of course, is not unique to DL and also occurs in classroom learning.

Still, I think it important to stake out the goal of the course – maximize the value gained by the group, represented below by the bell curve.¹



What's important is to initially establish and then constantly adjust my understanding of the distribution of the student capability and capacity for doing what I think needs to be done.

All my courses feature an initial writing exercise whereby I assess the starting points of the students. If necessary I will then adjust the lesson plan in order to make the most progress.

Constant adjustment is made possible through discussions by the students. Sometimes the adjustment can be quite radical.

¹ <http://www.racerocks.com/racerock/education/curricula/projects/normalcurve.jpg> [January 15, 2009]

Principles

There are a number of principles upon which DL ala Droган rests.

Asynchronicity

Classroom courses are marked by synchronicity. The students and teacher are in the same place at the same time on a regular basis. Classroom discussion is oral for the nature of the classroom provides easily for this communications mode.

Instant messaging, and perhaps texting on a cellphone, are further examples of synchronicity. Admittedly, however, in both cases, if the recipient isn't available, then synchronicity is not very strong.

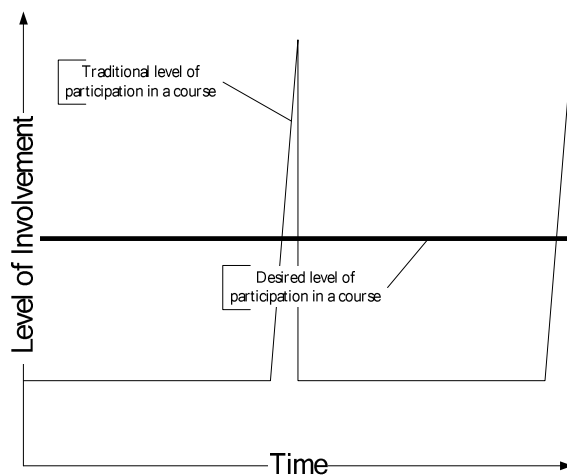
DL ala Droган is asynchronous in nature and enabled by the characteristics of the delivery mechanism (or LMS, Learning Management System). I'll take that up a bit later in this note.

Asynchronous means that you and I interact when it makes the most sense to us individually. Neither of us needs to be connected to the LMS at the same time. Nor are we in a classroom. We may be at home, in an internet café, at sea, in a hotel, and one of these days I expect to have communication with a student aboard an airplane tens of thousands of feet in the air and moving at several hundreds of miles per hour.

My habit is to schedule time for each of my courses first thing during the day. Some of my students do their work at night after they have finished the work day. Some, very, very early in the morning.

Discussions

My approach to teaching and assessment rests on discussions, projects, and teamwork. This approach arise out of my some 36 years of experience in the commercial world.²



I think that the "traditional" approach to teaching (i.e., lectures) and assessment (i.e., midterm and final) does not necessarily provoke the constant, consistent participation in the course that I believe necessary to maximize the learning.

Inasmuch as I was rarely asked true-false or multiple choice questions during my business career, I don't ask these sorts of questions in my classes.

Rather, what counted in business was one's ability to contribute to a meaningful discussion on how to resolve a particular business issue.

Hence, discussions are aimed at encouraging the necessary level of involvement. A further benefit is that these discussions help prepare you for life

"out there where the cold wind blows."

I assign a new discussion topic every four days. During the four day span I expect a student, in order to get a maximum grade for a discussion, to make three high quality contributions to the discussion. Further details about conversations can be found in the Grading section of the syllabus for any of my online courses.³ My online classes normally last eight weeks. This provides an opportunity for 13 discussions.

² More about me can be found at <http://jmsdrn.squarespace.com/>

³ These syllabi will be found at <http://jmsdrn.squarespace.com/what-i-am-teaching/>

Projects

The second major activity in the course is the project. One's ability to work on projects is another major determinant of success in the business world.

This takes the form of a case study and the students, formed into teams (usually of five people), analyze the case, perform research, draw conclusions, and make recommendations – all things one is expected to do in business.

The case study is relevant to the subject being studied and as contemporary as is practical.

The results of the project work are made manifest in a project report generally some 25 pages in length. My approach to assessment of this report can be found in the Grading section of the syllabi to which I referred earlier.

Discussions and the project paper are given equal weight and together comprise some 90 percent of the final grade.

Teamwork

The final portion of the course grade, again related to what one will find in the business world, is an assessment of the student's contribution to the project team to which s/he was assigned. The idea here is that a weak student hiding behind the work of strong students may end up forfeiting as much as 10 percent of the final grade. This is enough to bring one down an entire letter grade.

I again refer you to the Grading section of the syllabi for additional detail.

Delivery

Students write a great deal in my courses and my expectation is that the writing will be clear enough so that I can understand their understanding of the material, and organized and sufficiently concise and relevant so that I will not be bored.

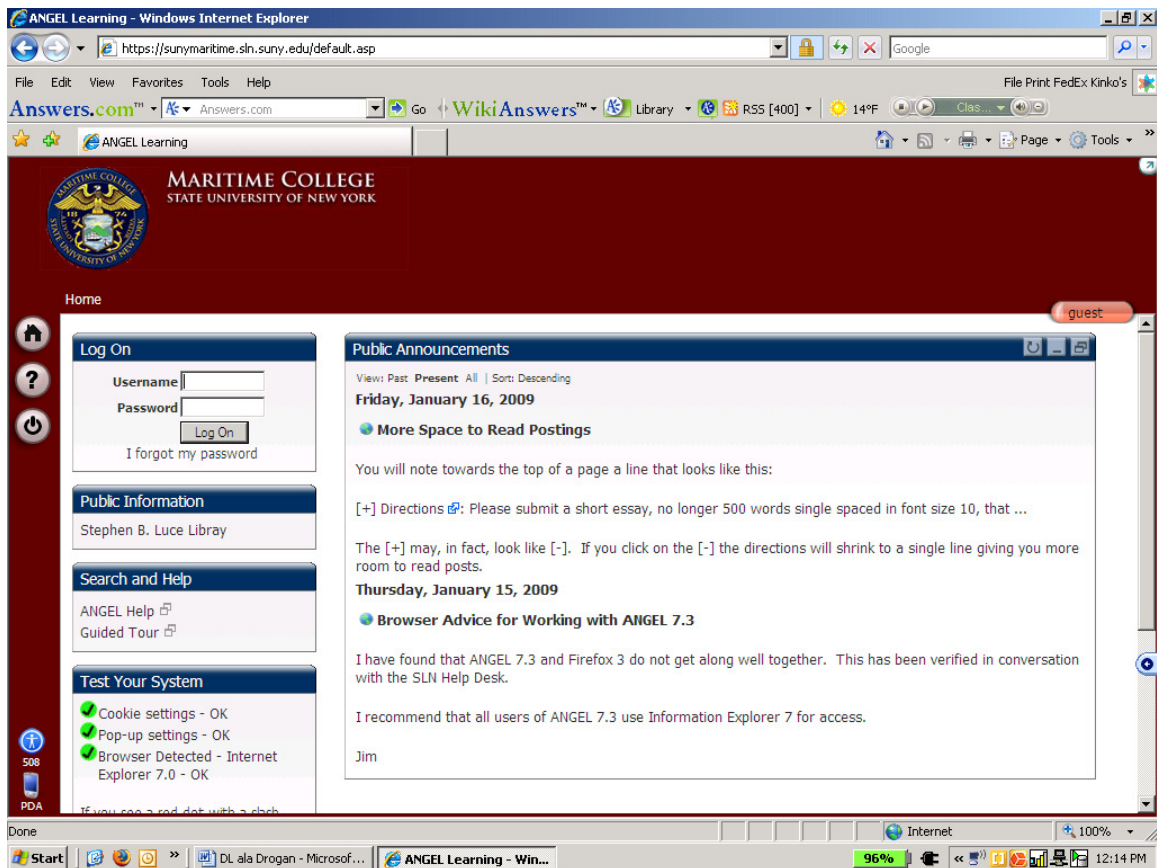
I, of course, expect the same level of performance from myself.

"DL ala Droган" is delivered by means of the ANGEL LMS.⁴ The ANGEL website will provide you with an overview and I will offer a few screenshots below to provide some background.

Access to ANGEL is through a web browser (only Internet Explorer v7 or v8, or Mozilla Firefox v2 or v3. are recommended), connected to high bandwidth communications link (e.g., cable). I organize my courses, insofar as possible, such that no special software beyond the browser is required.

You will see a screen similar to this when you access ANGEL.

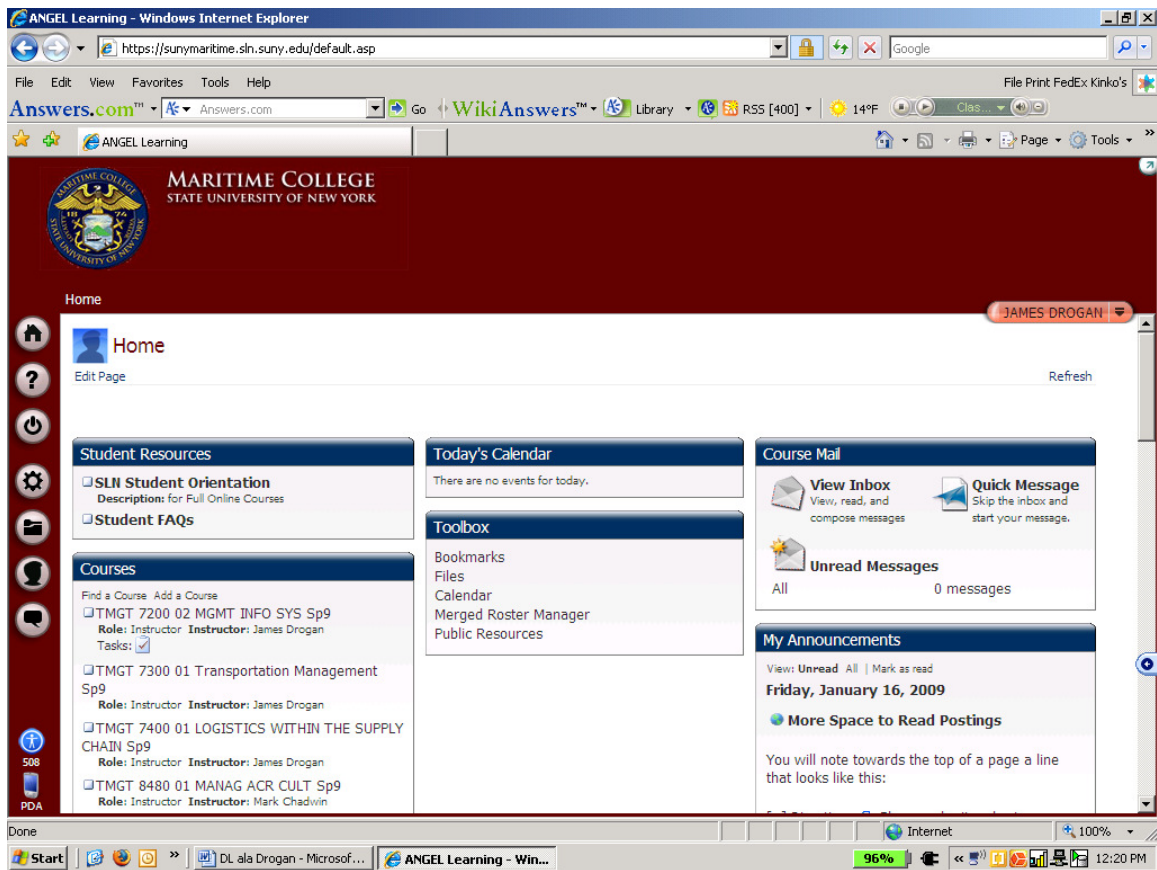
⁴ <http://www.angellearning.com/>



To logon to the Maritime College instance of ANGEL a student would use his or her Maritime e-mail id and password. ANGEL uses this information to authenticate⁵ the student.

Successful logon brings you a screen that will be similar to the following.

⁵ Authenticate means to approve the student for entry into ANGEL. You will be authenticated if you are formally registered for an online course. That is, just because you have a Maritime e-mail id and password does not automatically grant you access to ANGEL.



If you are new to ANGEL the SLN Student Orientation in the upper left box labeled Student Resources is strongly recommended. This is a short course that introduces you to the mechanics of ANGEL.

Courses for which you are registered appear in the box to the lower left labeled Courses. Click on the course in which you are interested and you will see a screen similar to this.

TMGT 7200 02 MGMT INFO SYS Sp9

Course Calendar Learning Modules Resources Communicate Report Automate Manage

Home Course

Map

- expand collapse
- Course
- Calendar
- Learning Modules
- Resources
- Communicate
- Report
- Automate
- Manage

Map What's New Tasks Search Design Help About

TMGT 7200 02 MGMT INFO SYS Sp9

Edit Page Refresh

Activity at a Glance

Logons

Day	Logons
Fr	0
Sa	0
Su	0
Mo	0
Tu	0
We	0
Th	0

Mail Messages

Day	Mail Messages
Fr	0
Sa	0
Su	0
Mo	0
Tu	0
We	0
Th	0

Discussion Posts

30

Course Announcements

View: Past Present All | Sort: Descending

Friday, January 02, 2009

TMGT 7200 02 MIS in Transportation

Welcome to the course!

If this your first contact with ANGEL, please complete the SLN Student Orientation that you will find in the box labeled Student Resources to the upper left of your ANGEL home page.

Then read and understand the information presented to you in the folder labeled Course Information.

Please pay particular attention to:

1. Student Responsibilities

Course Mail

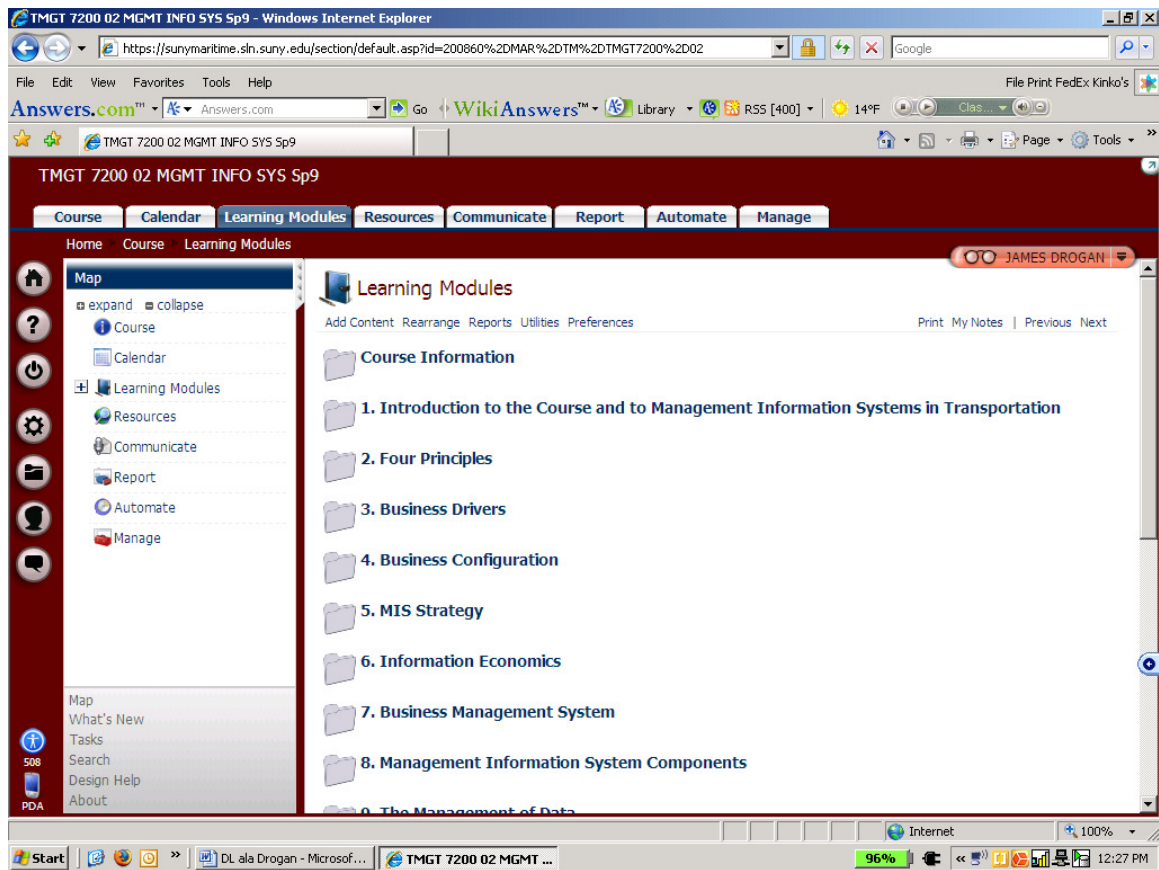
View Inbox Quick Message

View, read, and compose messages Skip the inbox and start your message.

Unread Messages

TMGT 7200 02 MGMT INFO SYS Sp9 (02) 0 messages

What is important to you, the student, are the learning modules. You can access these by clicking on the Learning Modules tab at the top of the page or by expanding the Learning Modules in the box on the left labeled Map. Here's what that expansion looks like.



The final screen shot I will show you is an example of discussions.

TMGT 7200 02 MGMT INFO SYS Sp9

Course Calendar Learning Modules Resources Communicate Report Automate Manage

Home Course Learning Modules Ungraded Items TMGT 7200.1 Written Assignment - Due 1-15-9

Tasks

- Milestones (0)
- Personal Tasks (0)
- Unread Mail (0)
- Ungraded Items (1)

Map What's New Tasks Search Design Help About

TMGT 7200.1 Written Assignment - Due 1-15-9

1. Introduction to the Course and Management Information Systems in Transportation

Settings Reports Utilities Delete

New Post Threaded View

Navigate: All posts

[-] Directions

Please submit a short essay, no longer 500 words single spaced in font size 10, that gives your views on the following issues:

- What do you consider to be the most significant business issue that needs to be addressed in a global transportation system? What factors lead you to this conclusion?
- How do you think modern information technology can be applied to resolve this issue?

Post Title	Flag	Score	Author	Date Posted	Replies	Rating
Transportation Issues and Technol	▼	5	KAHRAMAN, RESUL	1/15/2009	0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Time, Place and Cost @	▼	5	BERTHOLD II, JEFFRE	1/15/2009	0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Innovation in a Changing World	▼	5	TIMMEL, JOHN	1/15/2009	2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
RE: Innovation in a Changing W	▼	--	DROGAN, JAMES	1/16/2009	0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
RE: Innovation in a Changing W	▼	--	BERTHOLD II, JEFFRE	1/15/2009	0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Success does not always rely on te	▼	5	ROLLE, GARNETT	1/15/2009	1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
RE: Success does not always re	▼	--	BERTHOLD II, JEFFRE	1/15/2009	0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Streamline Processes	▼	5	YARNALL, WESLEY	1/15/2009	0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I have used the discussion format even though this is called a written assignment.

The directions for the discussion are given towards the top and the submissions are shown in the bottom box.

Kahraman posted a response, "Transportation Issues and Technology," replying directly to the topic. So did Timmel, but Timmel's response also prompted two replies, one from me and the other from Berthold.

Discussions happen between me and my students and between students. All student contributions are read and assessed.

Coda

An online learning page has been established on the Maritime website. You are encouraged to access this site for other information regarding online learning.



Online learning is not for every student, every subject, or every teacher. Students, for example, need to be self-motivated and well-disciplined. “DL ala Drogan” is delivered in eight week sessions and covers the same material covered in a traditional 15 week classroom course. It can be intense and taking a day off here and there is not recommended.

However, DL may be a viable educational option given all the demands that one has on his or her life. And the investment can, on occasion, return extraordinary rewards in terms of the people met, the sharing of experiences, and the breadth, depth, relevance, and quality of the interactions that take place.

Questions and comments may be addressed to me at jdrogan@sunymaritime.edu.

James Drogan
January 16, 2009