

T545 Engagement and Learning: Technologies that Invite and Immerse
Spring 2009 Christopher Dede

1. What are the most valuable things you have gained from this course? Possibilities may range from acquisition of concrete skills or knowledge to changes in perspective or ways of thinking.

My independent project allowed me to work on my own, and develop my own ideas.

Understanding of EMF's broader applications, and their transferability to different educational contexts.

Knowledge on motivation and engagement factors. Exposure to research on games, simulations, and motivation/engagement. Changed my perspective on the value of video games, and how these can be used for education purposes. Exposure to different educational games and simulations and the companies that develop them.

I learned to think of my teaching in terms of engagement and motivation. As we studied the various games, I began to think how its important that my students stay engaged in order to learn the concepts I teach. Just like in a video game, learning needs to have some elements of fun.

Examining the literature on engagement and motivation was extremely valuable. These psychological concepts were applicable to multiple classes for me.

The insights into educational product designs (mostly games) that apply engagement, motivation, and flow.

Great introduction to educational theory around EMF--I have a much better understanding of the value of educational technologies.

A better understanding of engagement, motivation, and flow, and how interactive media may enhance or inhibit these attributes/states.

The class gave me an introduction to how technologies can be leveraged for education. It's encouraging to see new learning models being developed that may increase the effectiveness of our schools.

The theoretical aspects of Engagement Motivation and Flow.

I finally have some academic grounding for my belief that education has something to learn from popular media, particularly video games. This is not to say that video games should be used in the classroom but, rather, video games are excellent teachers, and their strategies should be used in formal education settings.

So much knowledge! While the readings were dense, they were also extremely useful.

Understanding of engagement, motivation and flow; application of motivation theories into learning design.

Better understanding of EMF in context of technology-based educational initiatives.

Gained a good sense for some of the major topics at work in the world of tech-ed, both on the psychology and the technology end of the spectrum.

The most important things were away to critically evaluate whether games and technology, education or otherwise, is effective in producing engagement motivation and flow.

Understanding of technology's potential in the classroom.

An understanding of psychological theories of engagement, motivation, and flow as they relate to learning.

The breadth of technologies covered in the course was considerable. My ability to analyze different technologies in terms of engagement, motivation, and flow will be a valuable skill going forward.

2. Please indicate the extent to which you would agree with the following statements. If there is a question for which you do not know the answer or that is not applicable to this course, indicate NA.

	1 - Not at All	2	3	4	5 - Very Much	NA	Total
Content							
A - Course was intellectually challenging	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (5)	50% (10)	25% (5)	0% (0)	100% (20)
B - Course stimulated me to think in new ways	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (1)	47% (10)	47% (10)	0% (0)	100% (21)
C - Diversity issues related to course content were well addressed	0% (0)	5% (1)	25% (5)	45% (9)	10% (2)	15% (3)	100% (20)
D - Course helped me understand how to apply my learning to real problems and contexts	0% (0)	0% (0)	28% (6)	47% (10)	23% (5)	0% (0)	100% (21)
Organization							
E - Course objectives were clearly stated	0% (0)	9% (2)	14% (3)	23% (5)	52% (11)	0% (0)	100% (21)
F - Course content was clearly aligned with stated objectives	0% (0)	4% (1)	19% (4)	28% (6)	47% (10)	0% (0)	100% (21)
G - Syllabus was clear, well organized and complete	0% (0)	4% (1)	14% (3)	42% (9)	38% (8)	0% (0)	100% (21)

3. Please consider specific course activities and materials (lectures, case studies, readings, written assignments, etc.). Please evaluate each item carefully and independently. If there is a question for which you do not know the answer or that is not applicable to this course, indicate NA.

	1 - None of the Time	2	3	4	5 - All of the Time	NA	Total
A - Course activities were aligned with the syllabus	0% (0)	0% (0)	14% (3)	61% (13)	23% (5)	0% (0)	100% (21)
B - Class lectures clarified the subject material	4% (1)	4% (1)	19% (4)	52% (11)	19% (4)	0% (0)	100% (21)
C - Class discussions enhanced the understanding of the subject material	4% (1)	0% (0)	28% (6)	42% (9)	23% (5)	0% (0)	100% (21)
D - Assigned readings were valuable and of high quality	0% (0)	0% (0)	9% (2)	52% (11)	38% (8)	0% (0)	100% (21)
E - Class lectures and discussions were related to assigned reading	4% (1)	4% (1)	14% (3)	57% (12)	19% (4)	0% (0)	100% (21)
F - Assignments supported and reinforced the goals of the course	0% (0)	4% (1)	23% (5)	47% (10)	23% (5)	0% (0)	100% (21)
G - Assignments promoted learning and growth	0% (0)	0% (0)	9% (2)	66% (14)	23% (5)	0% (0)	100% (21)
H - Technology was used to:							
* Illustrate and deepen understanding of subject matter	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	57% (12)	42% (9)	0% (0)	100% (21)
* Enable discussions outside of class	0% (0)	0% (0)	14% (3)	38% (8)	42% (9)	4% (1)	100% (21)
* Facilitate communication between students and instructors	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (1)	42% (9)	52% (11)	0% (0)	100% (21)
I - Course provided effective opportunities to learn from other students	0% (0)	0% (0)	15% (3)	30% (6)	55% (11)	0% (0)	100% (20)

4. What specific course activities or materials (lectures, case studies, readings, written assignments, group projects, class discussions, etc.) did you find MOST valuable? Why?

Professor Dede's lectures were always interesting, and helped clarify issues related to the course's main topics, and while the readings did not always enhance my understanding of EMF, they did give a broad overview of the interactive media landscape. The guest speakers were great as well--they helped put a face on the various projects about which we'd read, and were able to go into far greater depth on their pet topics/projects than the readings.

I felt the wiki assignment was helpful. By leveraging the research efforts of the entire class and providing a platform to share results, we were all introduced to several technologies quickly.

I did the single assignments, which meant that I wrote two papers instead of being part of a research project. While I think I caused myself more work, I also think that I got more out of the class because of writing the two papers: they really forced me to think about the theories and apply them. My hope in taking this class was to be able to analyze popular video games, and figure out exactly how they are so motivating, and writing the papers let me do that.

Presentations from students about their individual topics sparked the best conversations. The introductory readings in the first half of the course were excellent.

The visiting lecturers were remarkable as usual.

Lectures. Professor Dede's lectures are legendary, since he always gives very tight speeches. It's amazing to see him talk.

Foundational at the beginning of the course were tremendous.

The class discussion was fruitful and well moderated--readings were informative, and varied from other course work.

Even though I found them tough to do, I am glad I did two single assignments, because they forced me to read the readings in the context of my assignments. This helped me make more sense of the readings.

The readings were highly informative.

Readings as well and guest speakers. These provided great insights to the applications of engagement, motivation, and flow.

The double assignment was extremely valuable to me.

Early readings on motivation were excellent. Experiences with World of Warcraft, Virtual University, and SimCalc were most stimulating from the technology side. It was also nice hearing about our classmates' work.

When we discussed the readings and tried to unpack the complex concepts of what engagement really means, we always ran out of time. Hearing from my classmates was excellent.

The labs were extremely valuable, as were conversations with the creators of various technologies.

Brief presentations of student projects and guest speakers were valuable. Concrete examples of technology and games facilitated in understanding and reinforcing the theoretical aspects of EMF.

The speakers were great, for the most part, it was very useful to see people doing the work, and trying to tackle EMF issues. Many of the readings were very thoughtful.

I liked working on my individual project. I learned a lot by researching and immersing myself in the technology I chose for this project. I really liked the flexibility of this assignment, since it allowed me to focus on my specific interests without having to deviate from the main course objectives. I also liked the web-based class we had through Elluminate. It would be a valuable activity to incorporate as part of the course in future years.

I found writing my first assignment most helpful to me. It gave me a chance to learn to properly cite references.

5. What specific course activities or materials did you find LEAST valuable? Why?

Some of the readings were repetitive.

Some of the readings were very abstract, and I found it difficult to retain anything.

NIL.

Some of the readings towards the end of the syllabus were not as relevant to my needs (too specifically oriented towards gaming).

Discussions--I did not get much from them. Most of the time, people deviated too far from the main topics and salient points of the readings.

I would have liked to get more out of the lectures and discussion from Chris. He's done a lot of research on the topics covered, but he often relied on guest lecturers and teaching assistants to run the classes. I would have loved to hear more about his research and findings. I took the class hoping to hear more from him.

The classroom discussions were often highly unstructured, no direction, and not moderated. It was too much about how people felt about playing this game or that game, and not enough connection to the course materials and how to apply the learning to education.

Some of the guest speakers-SimCalc in particular, did not add to the course. Ed tags was not very valuable, either although it did ensure that I was looking for extra information related to the course.

The wiki project did not seem to have that much value in terms of enhancing our learning; it seemed sort of like a stopgap measure. Class discussions were stimulating, but sometimes left us with no time to discuss the readings.

When the class discussions faltered--yet continued--I did not feel they were a good use of time. It was very easy to just start saying some of the same things over and over. I thought the material would be enough to keep us going, but I think more structured discussion would have been helpful--like the first day when Kristy put some probing questions on the board, and had us categorize Engagement/Motivation/Flow.

The Wiki assignment was not particularly enjoyable or helpful in learning the course material. Betty's brain was also not useful in learning about EMF. It would have been helpful to have more time to discuss transfer and adaptation for classroom use.

The assignments could have had more structure.

I thought there may have been a few too many guests. I appreciated that Dede was trying to show us a wide range of professionals, but we really did need more time for discussion. Since this was the first time the class was taught, maybe this can be adjusted a bit for next time.

Some of the readings on game design didn't really relate to what I hoped to gain from the course.

Perhaps the half-required experience of playing World of Warcraft. Playing a game to understand the principles underlying it can be either a shallow experience or a very demanding thought process.

Class discussions, while always engaging, felt repetitive after a while. After evaluating the educational impact of Technology X, we'd evaluate Technology Y the following week. Each discussion would include the same list of observations and questions, to the point where one could practically predict the flow of discussion.

Instructor: Christopher Dede

6.1.1. Please take a moment to think specifically about the instructor(s) who taught this course. Please evaluate each item carefully and independently. If there is a question for which you do not know the answer or which you think is not applicable to this course, please indicate NA in the response area. NOTE: This section refers to the faculty member(s) teaching this course; there is a separate section that evaluates the performance of Teaching Fellows (TFs).

	1 - None of the Time	2	3	4	5 - All of the Time	NA	Total
A - The instructor established an environment conducive to learning.	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (1)	33% (7)	61% (13)	0% (0)	100% (21)
B - The instructor gave clear and well-structured presentations	0% (0)	9% (2)	4% (1)	42% (9)	42% (9)	0% (0)	100% (21)
C - The instructor effectively led classroom discussions	4% (1)	4% (1)	4% (1)	47% (10)	38% (8)	0% (0)	100% (21)
D - The instructor encouraged diverse opinions and perspectives	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	42% (8)	57% (11)	0% (0)	100% (19)
E - The instructor clearly explained how course assignments would be evaluated	4% (1)	4% (1)	19% (4)	52% (11)	19% (4)	0% (0)	100% (21)
F - The instructor provided helpful feedback on course assignments	4% (1)	4% (1)	23% (5)	28% (6)	33% (7)	4% (1)	100% (21)
G - The instructor provided timely feedback on course assignments	0% (0)	9% (2)	9% (2)	33% (7)	42% (9)	4% (1)	100% (21)
H - The instructor was accessible to students outside of class	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	42% (9)	57% (12)	0% (0)	100% (21)
I - The instructor responded to students respectfully	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	9% (2)	90% (19)	0% (0)	100% (21)

6.1.2. In what ways was the instructor most effective? Why?

Encouraged a wide variety of viewpoints, including those presented by visiting lecturers.

He gives us great autonomy and lots of options for our assignments. This allows me to research into technologies that I am interested in.

Chris is always available by email, and responds quickly.

Lectures. Professor Dede provides students with a compact learning experience that is full of information that you can effectively use in your own career. I'll probably "pseudo" quote Professor Dede the most in my career.

Professor Dede is a good facilitator--always bringing experts to talk about the latest ed technologies out there in the real world to the classroom. He is also very approachable and respectful.

Chris is very adept at facilitating productive discussions. He summarizes and extends students' points very well, and he also doesn't hesitate to rein in the discussion when it gets off track. He is very personable, very responsive over email, and obviously very knowledgeable in his field.

Chris Dede does an excellent job of encouraging students to explore their own ideas while providing an academic guiding hand. He is friendly and approachable. He respects and values student work. I look forward to continuing to share ideas with him in the future.

Chris is a wonderful lecturer, and his expertise is such a valuable asset to the class.

Professor Dede is an amazing lecturer, and so respectful of his students' opinions--especially about the course structure, as he mentioned on more than one occasion that he looked forward to our advice on how to improve the first-time course in future years. He is extremely patient and understanding when students need extra support.

Chris helped immensely in making the readings understandable. Plus he gives great insight about educational technology solutions.

Instructor was very effective in summarizing class content.

In pretty much every way--Chris is an extraordinary instructor. He's particularly adept at managing in-class discussions, and forcing his students to challenge their assumptions.

When Professor Dede moderated conversations or provided his perspective, they were always very insightful comments that went straight to the heart of the matter. I wish there was more of that.

He was a wonderful and calm teacher. He allowed us to talk, but was able to keep us motivated even when we did not.

He was very accessible outside of class and attentive to students' needs.

Prof. Dede was very thoughtful and transparent about the way the course was designed.

Extremely knowledgeable and accessible to students--it was exciting to be part of this first time for the course. I think the material showed a lot of potential for connections to practice. Professor Dede was open to suggestions and comments throughout the course.

Professor Dede is a great resource for this subject, offering amazing insight into these "new" topics. He was always available, and provided excellent support when I had questions about my project.

Always tried to encourage classroom discussions.

6.1.3. What recommendations would you make to the instructor to strengthen his or her teaching and/or make the course more valuable?

Since this was the first offering, I'd just keep on refining. In this case, I'd emphasize how focused the latter portion of the course was on gaming.

N/A.

I think Chris could push a little harder in class discussions, and encourage students to develop their ideas further rather than repeat them. This semester, he took a much more passive approach, which I think limited the depth of the discussion.

Encourage more class discussions through the use of specific questions, and use small group discussions to encourage participation, and then have smaller groups share ideas with the whole class.

It was hard to see how some of the readings were relevant--it would be helpful to bring them into class discussion more.

Maybe starting off the course with the World of Warcraft can be changed. Having one of the best-designed games in the world as the starting point, and subsequently learning about games that do not match its components is kind of a de-learning process. If we start with the more basic programs and continuously move on to better designed games, I think students will gain a better understanding of the well-designed components.

The classroom discussions need to be moderated better. This time it was too free flowing and focused on personal experienced without connecting to the reading, or to how to apply the lessons we've learned.

I would have liked more information dissemination from Chris as well as feedback throughout the semester. With few assignments and little feedback, it's hard to know if really absorbed the material I was supposed to be learning. Recognizing the course was new, the syllabus, and expectations were unclear. I think it could be tightened up for next semester.

Choose the readings carefully--sometimes it felt like we were poring over a mountain of text, when there might have been other articles that could have illuminated the same points more succinctly.

NIL.

Would have loved to learn about informal learning games. Still not exactly sure what the course is supposed to be about.

None...keep up the great work. I had heard he was a wonderful teacher, and he is.

More time for discussion of the engagement concepts and the reading would be great.

I was very unclear what the expectations were for my assignments.

Unlike last semester, this course needed more structure than readings and discussion. We needed some in-class activities (e.g. small group discussion, debates, etc.) to get things going. It was too easy to go along with the readings and just highlight the interesting points. A simple, "All curriculum should be presented through video games--Agree or Disagree" debate would have helped get things going. Also, I still think guest speakers should be limited--by half, at least. They presented interesting ideas, but we didn't dive into the engagement aspects of them to any extent. We just saw the research that said "Kids were engaged with this," and I think we needed more discussion on why...

The class sessions where we went over the readings, and compared and contrasted them, were helpful to illuminate some of the more complex ones.

It may be nice to have more time for discussions such as the one about race and video games. Perhaps include one or two fewer technologies, and have a bit more dialogue around the larger issues related to immersive technologies.

Balance class discussions with lectures/presentations. I would have loved to hear more from you and your experience researching and developing different programs. Have more small group projects and small group discussions. Have more asynchronous discussions as part of the course. Have one or two classes that meet exclusively through Elluminate.

It might be worthwhile to rethink the order of the readings. We had many readings which dealt with abstract concepts at the beginning and some of the lighter readings later. The initial four to five classes were really tough for me because of this.

7. What was your reason for enrolling in the course?

	Required	Rec. or Distrib. Req.	Elective	No Response	Total
Pct (Count)	19% (4)	42% (9)	38% (8)	0% (0)	100% (21)

8. On average, how many hours per week did you dedicate to this course outside of class?

	Percent (Count)
Less than 2 hours	4% (1)
2 to <4 hours	33% (7)
4 to <7 hours	38% (8)
7 to <10 hours	14% (3)
10 to <15 hours	9% (2)
More than 15 hours	0% (0)
No Response	0% (0)
Total	100% (21)

9. What advice would you give to students who are thinking of taking this course (about its level, the amount of work required, any prior training needed, ways to get the most out of the course, etc.)?

If you are interested in educational games, take this course. If you've never been crazy about one game in your life, carefully think about taking this course.

I think this course still needs some tweaking. I think a technology and gaming background would be helpful. I was surprised by the focus on violent games, which aren't of much interest to me. If you like Massively Multi-Player Online Role Playing Games, this might be for you.

This course provides a good introduction to educational technologies and the theory surrounding use of simulations, gaming technologies, etc., in formal education.

My advice would be to not join one of the research projects: while they were relevant to the Emerging Educational Technologies class, they seemed to tie in less well to the topic of this class.

EMF concepts are much more broadly applicable than I had anticipated. The project is of great value. Be prepared for a heavy focus on gaming towards the end, assuming the syllabus remains the same.

Be prepared to read some very theoretical articles.

Go to shopping to see what changes have been made. This class has a lot of potential, but it needs a lot of tweaks.

If you are interested in how to use games and simulations in the classroom, or how to add them as part of an instructional design, then you should take this class. If you are interested about designing games/simulations, then you'd be better off taking a class at MIT.

This is a great course for students interested in the psychology of engagement and motivation, with regards to technology or not. The project assignment structure is very open-ended and accommodating, and the teaching staff will help you figure out a project idea if you do not come into the course with one already.

The assignments are very flexible meaning that you are likely to be able to find something that really interests you. It is possible to coast through without making too much of an effort, but the course is much more rewarding if you put a lot in to it.

Do not go into the class with expectations that all your questions will be answered about how to bring technology into the classroom--this is not what the class is about.

Take it if you like to research on any areas of technological intervention pertaining to engagement, motivation, and flow.

Take it if you're interested in the content area.

If you are interested in learning about interactive media and engagement, motivation, and flow, and aren't afraid to delve into some hands-on explorations of the subject matter in activities with which you may not be immediately successful (i.e., video games), this course may be for you. The level of work is manageable, though readings are quite heavy on some weeks; the key is to not procrastinate on the main course assignments (either single or double). Some familiarity with interactive media or gaming might be helpful for contributing to certain discussions, but the class is designed so that individuals with no hands-on experience should feel comfortable participating.

Do an individual assignment as opposed to working on a research project--it is much more satisfying and applicable to the content.

It is a good course.

10. How would you characterize this course in terms of the following?

	1 - Very Low	2	3	4	5 - Very High	No Response	Total
A - Amount of Workload	0% (0)	9% (2)	57% (12)	33% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (21)
B - Benefit to You	0% (0)	5% (1)	15% (3)	60% (12)	20% (4)	0% (0)	100% (20)

11. What is your primary school affiliation?

	Percent (Count)
HGSE Ed.M./CAS	76% (16)
HGSE Ed.D.	14% (3)
Other Harvard Master's Program	0% (0)
Other Harvard Doctoral Program	0% (0)
Other Harvard Degree Program	0% (0)
Other University Degree Program	0% (0)
Non-Degree	4% (1)
No Response	4% (1)
Total	100% (21)

12. If you answered "HGSE Ed.M./CAS," what is your program?

	Percent (Count)
Arts in Education	0% (0)
Education Policy and Management	5% (1)
Higher Education	5% (1)
Human Development and Psychology	5% (1)
International Education Policy	0% (0)
Language and Literacy	5% (1)
Learning and Teaching	0% (0)
Mind, Brain, and Education	0% (0)
Risk and Prevention	0% (0)
School Leadership	5% (1)
Specialized	0% (0)
Teacher Education	0% (0)
Technology, Innovation, and Education	66% (12)
No Response	5% (1)
Total	100% (18)

13. In this space, you may add any additional specific feedback not addressed in earlier sections of this survey.

None.

Smaller group discussions in class would be useful. Threaded online discussions may also allow people to contribute their thoughts.

The course objectives need to be clarified.

Thank you for a great class!
