The Power of Student Agency: Innovative Strategies to Integrate Voice and Choice in the Online Classroom

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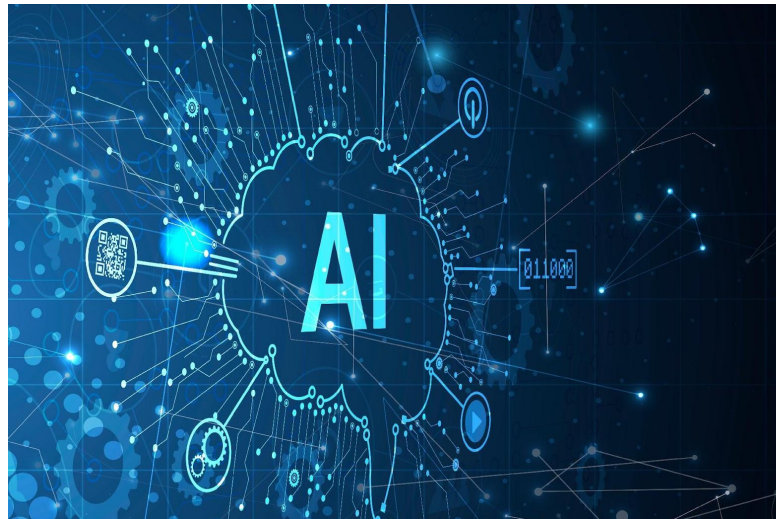Executive Director, Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching

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Modern world is changing "learning"...

The key to deep, engaged learning are activities that require:

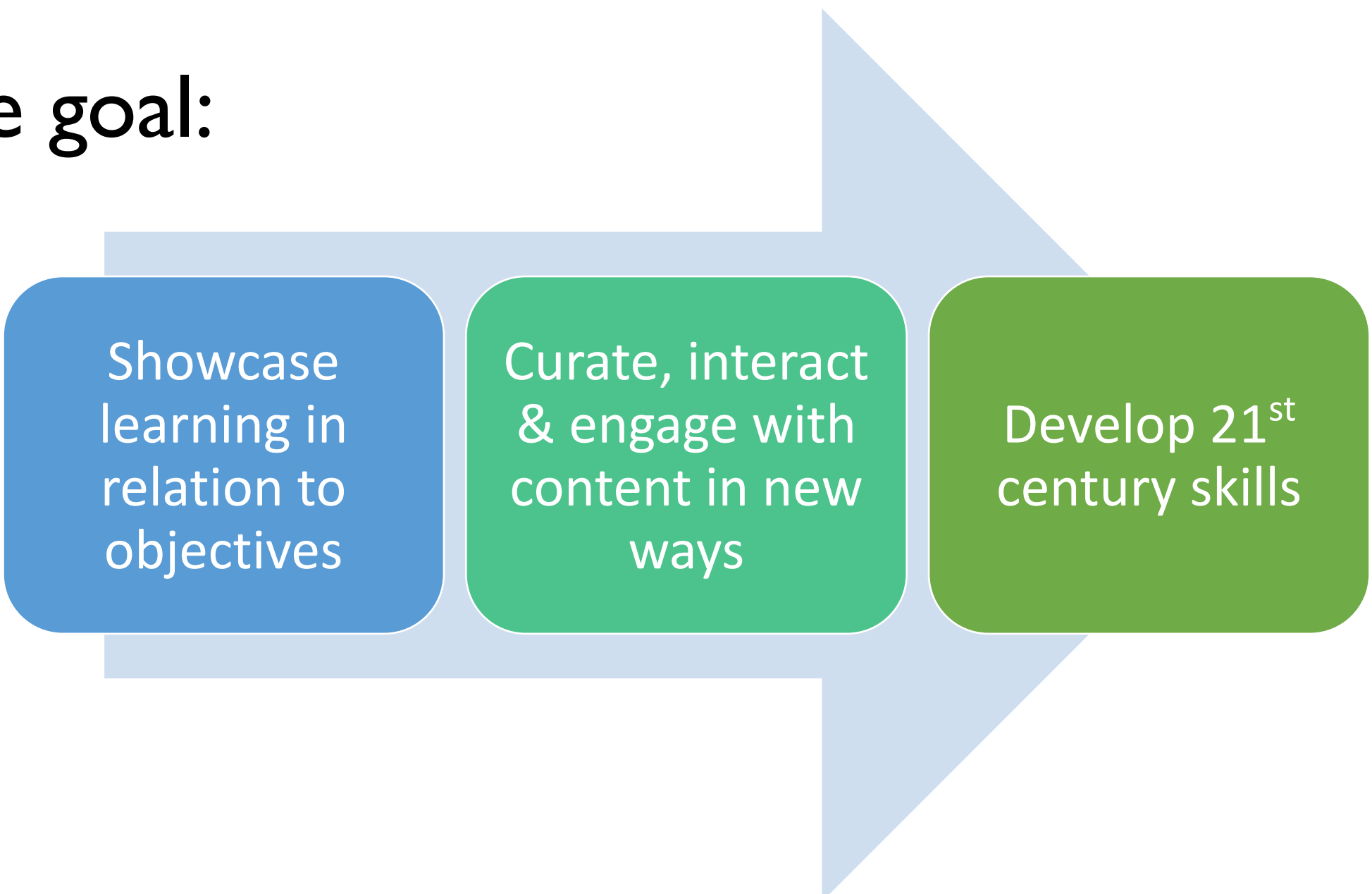|				
Research skills	Understanding	Critical analysis	Weighing evidence	Information literacy
Synthesis	Application	Creative thought	Active processing	Decision-making
Comparative analysis	Immersion	Multimodal processing	Connection	Authentic use

The goal:

| Showcase learning in relation to objectives | Curate, interact & engage with content in new ways | Develop 21st century skills |

Meaningful student engagement relies upon tapping into students' individual:

passions ➤ purpose ➤ interests

Students value educational experiences aligned with personal and professional goals.

VOICE

CHOICE

Engagement increases when the learning experience can be tailored toward **individually relevant outcomes**.

Student agency rests upon creating learning that is:

Meaningful and relevant to students

Directed by students' individual interests

Supported through guidance of the instructor

Students' Core Psychological Needs:

Competence
- Knowledge, skill or ability to do something successfully

Relatedness
- Meaningful connections

Autonomy
- Ability to initiative and regulate one's own actions

Tap into student differences…

Different abilities, and learning preferences

Different experiences and levels of practice

Unique skills and interests

True, deep, meaningful learning must tap into individual:

- Passion
- Purpose
- Focus
- Choice

To get started…

Identify your primary learning objectives

Pinpoint your skill, connection, or growth objectives

Promote authentic engagement

- Share assignment rationale with students
- Address the "why"
- Promote student agency

Traditional Assignments

Assignment Shifting

Adaptable Assignments

Choice Menus

UnEssay

Assignment Shifting

All students complete the same assignments; choice in the order or timeline that they will submit

The interest inquiries are your opportunity to dig deeper into course concepts that you find particularly interesting. **You will complete three different interest inquiries throughout the course.** In Units 2, 4, and 6, you will choose a different interest inquiry to complete.

The three choices are:
• <u>**Psychobiographical Infographic**</u> - In your psychobiographical infographic, you must research a particular individual, school of thought, or psychological system from history (you must select a different topic than you use for your mini-lecture). You must provide a history of your topic, identify main influences leading up to the topic, highlight important contributions of your topic, and describe the influence of the zeitgeist. In general, you want to showcase what lead up to the topic/event/theory, show how your topic/event/theory was influenced by the social era, and highlight the value of the topic/event/theory for modern psychology.
• <u>**Mini-Lecture**</u> - The mini-lecture is your opportunity to select and investigate a specific person, theory, or aspect of psychology that we cover in this course (you must select a different topic than you investigate for your psychobiographical infographic). You will job create a 10- to 15-minute mini-lecture using PowerPoint, Prezi, or similar presentation program as the basis of your presentation. You must provide full audio (or video) narration of your mini-lecture. The goal of your mini-lecture is to teach the class more about your selected topic than what is in the textbook.
• <u>**Research Article Annotation**</u> - For the research article annotation, you will select one of the classic primary documents in the history of psychology from Classics in the History of Psychology. Using Hypothes.is, Perusall, GoogleDocs, or another annotation software, you will annotate the article to provide insights, thoughts, and reflections concerning "Why is this important in this history of psychology?"

You may complete these in any order; but you must complete one of each assignment option by the designated due dates.

Adaptable Assignments

All students complete the same assignments but choose the focus of their work within established guidelines

Mini-Lecture

- The mini-lecture is your opportunity to select and investigate a specific person, theory, or aspect of psychology that we cover in this course.

Video Exploration

- The video exploration is your opportunity to investigate ONE selected course topic in more detail. Your task is to learn more about the topic than what is presented in our textbook. You will then create a video of yourself sharing the information you found.

Current Event Analysis

- The current event analysis is designed to allow you to further explore psychology in the real world. Submit an identification of the psychological concepts relevant to your current event and an explanation of how the psychological concepts apply.

Combination:
Assignment Shifting AND Adaptable Assignments

Required of all students:	Choice of one of the following per week:
• Weekly Mastery Quiz • Final Exam Review • Final Exam	• Discussion • Journal • Research Analysis • Video Exploration • Current Event Analysis

|	
Discussion	• Online discussions explore the application and analysis of psychological concepts. You must post your response to the initial discussion question and a minimum of 4 peer replies.
Journal	• The journal is your opportunity to apply course concepts in an analysis of the world around you. Journal entries should be 250-500 words.
Research Analysis	• The research analysis requires you to read a selected journal article and analyze its value/relevance. Each research analysis includes 20 multiple-choice questions and 1 essay designed to test your ability to understand and evaluate research.
Video Exploration	• The video exploration is your opportunity to investigate ONE selected course topic in more detail to learn more than what is presented in our textbook. You will then create a video of yourself sharing the information you found.
Current Event Analysis	• The current event analysis is designed to allow you to further explore psychology in the real world. Submit an identification of the psychological concepts relevant to your current event and an explanation of how the psychological concepts apply.

Distribution of Schedule:

- Course is divided into 3 blocks; each block contain 5 weeks/chapters

- Students select and complete 1 of each assignment type per block

- At the end of the course, each student has completed 3 of each assignment type (for a total of 15 assignments)
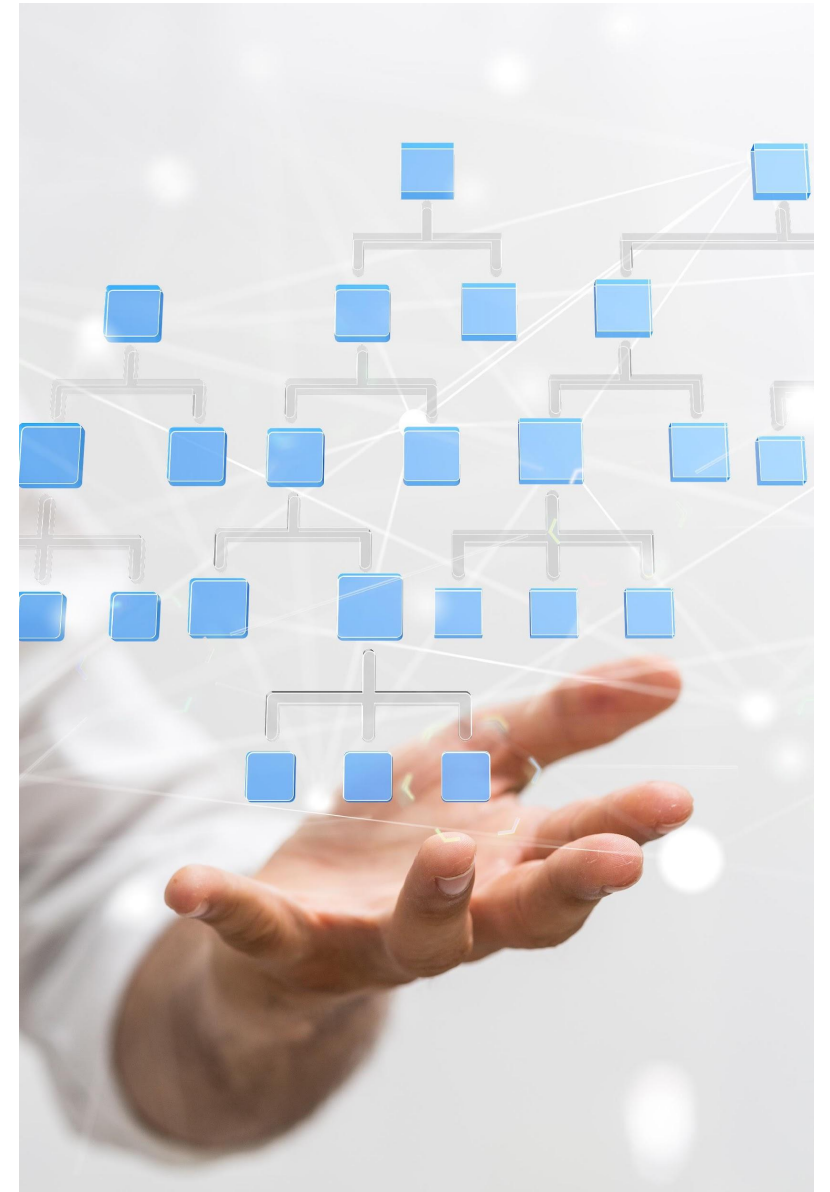
Block	Week	Topic	Mastery Quiz	Final Exam	Journal	Discussion	Research Analysis	Video Exploration	Current Event Analysis
1	1	Course Overview	X						
	2	Introduction to Psychology	X						
	3	Research Methods	X						
	4	Brain & Nervous System	X						
	5	Sensation and Perception	X						
2	6	States of Consciousness	X						
	7	Human Development	X						
	8	Learning	X						
	9	Memory & Decision-Making	X						
	10	Intelligence & Language	X						
3	11	Emotions, Motivation & Stress	X						
	12	Social Psychology	X						
	13	Personality	X						
	14	Mental Health	X						
	15	Therapy	X						
	16	Review & Final Exam	X	X					

Choice Menus

Students are given a list of options from which they can select how they will demonstrate their understanding

Learning Objective(s) → Rubric

- Paper
- Video
- Experiential project
- Journal
- Discussion
- Infographic
- Presentation

For the review project, you will select ONE of the following options to show a comprehensive understanding of the various schools of thought covered throughout the course:

- **<u>Musical Review</u>** – For each chapter covered in the course, select a song that meaningfully represents a key component of the history of psychology. List your song selection along with an explanation of why this event is important and how the song represents it.
- **<u>Social Media Dialogue</u>** – For each chapter covered in the course, select one (or more) key theorists. Create a hypothetical social media dialogue (using the normative style of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) that illustrates their key contributions to the history of psychology.
- **<u>Dinner Party</u>** - For each chapter covered in the course, select one (or more) key theorists. Create a hypothetical script of casual dinner party conversation that captures each individual's theory and key contributions to the history of psychology. Your dinner party conversation should start with the question, "What are your thoughts about how society is handling the COVID pandemic?"
- **<u>Current Event Analysis</u>** - The current event analysis is designed to allow you to apply what you know about the different theories and systems in psychology to explore psychology in the real world. For the current event analysis, you must analyze a current event using a minimum of 10 different psychological theories or systems of thought.
- **<u>Pecha Kucha Presentation</u>** – The Pecha Kucha is a 20x20 presentation (20 slides that each have 20 seconds of explanation-a total of 400 seconds - no more, no less!) in which you will identify 20 key contributions to the history of psychology (you must have at least one from each chapter) and highlight their significance. The presentation style is conversational, concise, image-drive, and focused on preparation!

Example: Choice Menu Rubric

	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	2	Benchmark 1
Determine the Extent of Information Needed	Effectively defines the scope of the research question or thesis. Effectively determines key concepts. Types of information selected directly relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis completely. Can determine key concepts. Types of information selected relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis incompletely. Can determine key concepts. Types of information selected partially relate to concepts or answer research question.	Has difficulty defining the scope of the research question or thesis. Has difficulty determining key concepts. Types of information selected do not relate to concepts or answer research question.
Access the Needed Information	Accesses information using effective, well-designed search strategies and most appropriate information sources.	Accesses information using variety of search strategies and some relevant information sources. Demonstrates ability to refine search.	Accesses information using simple search strategies, retrieves information from limited and similar sources.	Accesses information randomly, retrieves information that lacks relevance and quality.
Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically	Chooses a variety of information sources appropriate to the scope and discipline of the research question. Selects sources after considering the importance of the multiple criteria used.	Chooses a variety of information sources appropriate to the scope and discipline of the research question. Selects sources using multiple criteria.	Chooses a variety of information sources. Selects sources using basic criteria.	Chooses a few information sources. Selects sources using limited criteria.
Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources. Intended purpose is achieved.	Communicates and organizes information from sources. The information is not yet synthesized, so the intended purpose is not fully achieved.	Communicates information from sources. The information is fragmented and/or used inappropriately. so the intended purpose is not achieved.

UnEssay

Each student selects their focus and strategy for demonstrating their understanding in any manner that is meaningful to them

Learning Objective(s) → Rubric

Tips for integration:

Use rubrics	• Create clear and measurable grading criteria
Give examples	• Provide exemplar UnEssay projects
Integrate reflection	• Ask students to reflect on the learning process
Utilize scaffolding	• Break UnEssay projects into deliverable steps
Options	• Allow students the option of writing a traditional essay
Share	• Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing and feedback

Considerations:

- Course level
- Class size
- Learning management system
- Learning objectives
- Rubrics
- External standards

Encourage active, deep engagement:

Don't assume students are digital natives

Utilize available resources to help with new delivery modes

Allow for student voice and choice in application of assignment guidelines

Provide guidance on proper attributions for digital projects

- Consider supplemental bibliography

Keep primary focus on the learning objectives

- Be explicit about primary and secondary learning objectives
- Utilize rubrics to focus attention

Teaching is a creative profession, not a delivery system. Great teachers *mentor, stimulate, provoke, engage*.

Sir Ken Robinson

Questions? Comments? Ideas?