



Andrew Rivers

Course: Light, Atoms, & the Void

Students: 6

bit.ly/tx16riv

Seeding Science Literacy

Student Engagement Through Discussion Environments

Context

Science is a process, but learning about science—or any field—is a process in itself. Unlike traditional classroom construction which is meant to be self-contained and led, I incorporate a dynamic out-of-class discussion environment that would parallel class discussion, emphasize student collaboration, and give my students resources—both technological and cognitive—to carry with them into their communities. By breaking down the walls of a traditional classroom, I hope to give students the tools to learn to ask questions about what we know, and how to find answers.

Project

I tested a number of tools to enhance out-of-class participation and exploration with the hope of encouraging student involvement. These included Yellowdig, Slack, and tools within Canvas, as well as a planned collaboration with Academic Technologies for a student video project.

Results

With the introduction of Yellowdig and Slack, I have seen a rise in student participation and enthusiasm both in class and online. Through collaboration with my Academic & Research Technologies (A&RT) mentor and other members of the A&RT team—and conversations with other faculty—I've gained many ideas. Implementation is in early stages, but I will incorporate these techniques into future courses.

Lessons Learned

I've learned the value of commitment and persistence in deploying a new tool and class component. Many students took to the environment right away, posting articles of interest, commenting on other student contributions and responding to questions. Others were more withdrawn initially, but have become more active as the content on the site has increased. My own consistent engagement with articles and posts has been essential.