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New web courses give OU students more flexibility

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University students now have the option of taking classes from the comfort of their own home at any time of day or night as of the Winter 2001 semester.

For the first time, OU is offering online courses, which allow students to use their home computers to view course material, participate in group discussions and take exams. Ten courses - across a variety of disciplines, including accounting, art history, computer science and engineering, economics, health science, management information systems, nursing, political science and psychology - are being offered via the Web this semester. All of the courses currently are full, with a total enrollment of about 300 students.

In most classes, there is no face-to-face interaction, but instructors have the option of meeting with students up to three times during the semester.

The initiative to develop online courses grew out of the university's desire to meet students' needs, said web course organizer Mark Ludorf, Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives.

"We realized last spring that some students have needs that we weren't capturing. We wanted to provide an alternative mode of course delivery," Ludorf said.

Online courses not only provide more flexibility for students, but also for the instructors.

"Like the students, I don't have to be in class every Monday, Wednesday and Friday," said Ludorf, who is teaching Foundations of Contemporary Psychology online this semester. "I can assess where students are and customize my course for them in terms of my assessment. There's more emphasis on their learning than my teaching."

As with most online courses, students in Ludorf's class participate in online group discussions and take quizzes to assess their understanding of course material.

"Everyone must respond to discussion questions and must actively participate," Ludorf said. "It's asynchronous in that the students respond to each other at different times, but dynamic in that they respond in turn to what's been posted. Self-tutorial quizzes can assist them in seeing how well they understand lecture material. Through this they can provide themselves with some feedback."

Proposals for new online courses will be solicited in the Spring/Summer and Fall semesters.

"I would hope to get somewhere between 10 to 20 into development," Ludorf said.

For more information on online courses at Oakland University, go to <http://www2.oakland.edu/webcourse/> .

SUMMARY

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