STUDENT DISENGAGEMENT: WHY THEY SAY THEY DON’T COME & WHY THEY SAY THEY DON’T READ

DR DAN WEIJERS
LEARNFEST
14 NOVEMBER 2018
2 THE PROBLEM: STUDENTS ARE DISENGAGED

- Not enough students come to class or do readings
- Attendance: 75% - 25%*
- Reading: 60% - 10%*
- Even when the course is “good”
  - “Would you recommend?”
  - E.g., Yes=93%, Maybe=7%, No=0%
  - “Overall… good learning exp.”
  - E.g., Top boxes 100%
3 THE START OF A SOLUTION: ASK THEM WHY

- Questions in formal student evaluations of courses
  - **Attendance Qn:** Please answer honestly (this is anonymous): About how many classes did you miss? What is the main reason for you missing the classes you did?
  - (Qns not adjacent in survey)
  - **Reading Qn:** Please answer honestly (this is anonymous): About how many classes did you complete? What deterred you from reading more?
4 PROBLEMS WITH THE SOLUTION?

- Low response rates
- PHILO106-18A = 76%
- PHILO150-17B = 67%
- ~90% of active students in Wk12
- They will lie to you
- Maybe a bit, but they report laziness and mental health issues
- They will lie to themselves
- Yes, but we can factor that in by thinking this is best case scenario
METHODS

- Questions in formal student evaluations of courses
- I stressed the importance of honesty and detail
- PHILO106-18A = 76% (78/102)
- PHILO150-17B = 67% (88/131)
- Initial qualitative coding and subsequent grouping by me
- Eliminated responses with no justification 9-10%: most of these were students that attended all classes (75%) or read all readings (71%)
6 ATTENDANCE DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Proportion of students that did not attend class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Missed lots</th>
<th>Missed few</th>
<th>Missed none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHILO106-18A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHILO150-17B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CODING ATTENDANCE QN DATA (FACE VALIDITY)

- Time of lectures
- Health
- Mental health
- Disengaged
- Busy life
- Distance learning

**Time of lectures**

**Health**
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Personal issues

**Mental health**
- Only class, so stay home
- Not needed to pass

**Disengaged**
- Lazy

**Busy life**
- Other commitments
- Clashes with work
- Clashes with courses
- Assignments
- Family

**Distance learning**
- Live far away
- Use Panopto
8 ATTENDANCE RESULTS BY CLASS

% of respondents from class reporting issue

- Disengaged
- Busy life
- Distance learning
- Health
- Time of lectures
- Mental health

PHILO106-18A
PHILO150-17B

PHILO150-17B Breakdown
Anxiety 6%
Depression 6%
Personal issues 3%
9 ATTENDANCE RESULTS BY ATTENDANCE FREQUENCY

% of respondents from attendance group reporting issue

- Health
- Busy life
- Distance learning
- Time of lectures
- Disengaged
- Mental health

PHILO150-17B ONLY
Breakdown
- Anxiety 12%
- Depression 10%
- Personal issues 5%

Mised few  Missed lots
ATTENDANCE DISCUSSION

• Busy life (work, other assignments, family, etc.) & health probs are normal and may not result in missing many classes (unless other issues present)

• Time of lectures may be important for less motivated students (9am and 4pm both bad, but vast majority of students say 9am Monday is worst!)

• Mental health seems much worse in B

• Do many disengaged A Sem students have mental health issues in B?
READING DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Proportion of students that did the readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PHILO106-18A</th>
<th>PHILO150-17B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disengaged - self
- Lazy
- Prefer hard copy
- Never do readings
- Tech problems
- Forget
- Too much reading

Disengaged - reading
- Not interesting
- Long
- Complicated

Not needed to pass
- Not needed to pass
- Use slides/other resources instead
- Clearly explained in class

Busy life
- Other commitments
- Clashes with work
- Assignments
13 READING RESULTS BY CLASS

% of respondents from class reporting issue

Disengaged - readings
Not needed to pass
Busy Life
Disengaged - self

PHILO106-18A Breakdown
Too Long 29%
Not interesting 14%
Too Complicated 12%
READING RESULTS BY READING FREQUENCY

% of respondents from reading frequency group reporting issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Did over 1/2</th>
<th>Did 1/4-1/2</th>
<th>Did 0 - 1/4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not needed to pass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy Life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged - self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged - readings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Student Disengagement – Weijers – LearnFest 2018
READING DISCUSSION

- Readings are longer and more complex in PHILO106-18A
- Students may get less engaged and get more “uni smarts” in B Sem
- Nearly half of the students didn’t do readings because they weren’t TIGHTLY linked to assessments
- Students that read more were held back by being busy
- Students that read about 25-50% of the readings were held back by the readings themselves and not needing them to pass
- Students that read hardly any readings were held back by everything!
GENERAL DISCUSSION

- PHILO150-17B students come and read less (is course or semester to blame?)
- Reasons for not attending were similar except for mental health
- Reasons for not doing readings were quite different, mainly tough readings for PHILO106-18A
- Busy life and “good” reasons common for students that come and read more
- Disengaged (Lazy), mental illness, etc. Worrying reasons common for students that come and read less
- Are the non-attenders also the non-readers? (Can’t tell, but probable overlap)
SOLUTIONS? – MASS CULTURAL CHANGE! DESIGN COURSES TO ENFORCE WORK!

- Stress the importance of coming to class and doing the readings *directly to the worst students*

- Make reading and/or attendance be required to pass
  - Suprise in-class quizzes
  - Weekly online quizzes
  - Student response system quizzes during class
  - Give marks for participation in lectures
  - Graded cue cards
  - More essays
RADICAL / JOKE SOLUTIONS?

- Make readings shorter (etc)
- Don’t use Panopto
- Don’t explain things so well in class
- Don’t set readings
- Don’t hold lectures (just show videos)
- Pay rent-a-crowd to make lectures seem popular/important
- Put lectures in small rooms so the scarcity makes them seem more valuable
- Make readings “unlockable advancements”