

Dr. Reilly: We thought it would be useful for Tony to query me about the types of assessment criteria that I used for a book design project that my students did in Document Design in the spring of 2010.

Dr. Atkins: Thank you, Colleen. In Professional Writing we do lots of really neat projects like this, and so we're really interested for you to describe the kind of book project that you did in this particular class.

Dr. Reilly: This was a client-based project in which my students worked for other groups of students in an English and a philosophy class and their faculty members to come up with a design for a book that the students were putting together related to reflections on the art of living from a rhetoric and a philosophical perspective.

Dr. Atkins: So, what kinds of assessment criteria did you include on it, and how did you develop those?

Dr. Reilly: Well, I wanted the student submissions for this project to be relatively uniform so students worked in groups of three or four to come up with a design for the book project. And I wanted the different groups of students to create designs that were somewhat similar in that they contained particular types of design elements and particular types of content, and so then the client would only have sort of a limited range of designs from which to choose and they would all contain certain design elements as outlined in the grading criteria that you see in front of you.

Dr. Atkins: This is a really neat project. I was wondering what prompted you to rethink and reconsider your assessment criteria for this particular project.

Dr. Reilly: Well, the assessment criteria ended up functioning too much like a checklist so that the students would go through under "format" and they would say, "Okay, we have multiple columns, we have full quotes, we have images, we have a footer and so we're done." And it really limited and constrained the students' creativity and innovation in developing their designs. And what was really telling was that the group that was chosen by the client in the end actually violated a couple of the formatting criteria that I listed there; for example, they only had a single-column format but the client actually preferred that design, so this was something that really led me to start rethinking the types of assessment criteria that I would use with this sort of project.

Dr. Atkins: And if you were doing this kind of project again, and certainly I'm sure that you will and many other people will take on projects of this nature, how might you change the project or how might you rethink the project if you were doing it again?

Dr. Reilly: Well, I would work with the students to come up with assessment criteria that were more flexible and allow the students to decide what are the essential design elements and what are design elements that are more optional and allow for more creativity and difference in the types of designs that the different groups would come up with for the project. And doing this sort of project really led me to rethink the way in which criteria for assessments should be developed for these types of multimedia projects and led me to the kinds of ideas that you and I talk about in this chapter.

Dr. Atkins: Great, well thanks for talking to us and describing the project and helping us to understand a little bit about assessing digital projects like these.

Dr. Reilly: You are welcome!