

Online Course Design

<http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/foreign-languages-and-literatures/21f-401-german-i-fall-2008/>

For this assignment I chose to redesign one of MIT's "MITOPENCOURSEWARE" specifically the German foreign language course. The home page for this online course opens up to a main page with the navigation bar on the left hand side. The main section has a listing of the different sections of when the class was taught as well the level and instructor. This information is useful, but I see no reason why the class section numbers need to be the as big as the text stating what course level it is. The section numbers would be better placed in the same section as the instructor and level.

Next I would perhaps add a few more images to the main site, currently they have a picture of three students that was taken in class. The picture has a caption stating what they are doing, but it is a very generic classroom picture and not one that reflects the actual content. An additional change that I would need to be made to this course is the projects links. The link itself states there are no examples, but upon browsing the link there are 3 examples from different groups. These examples are PDFs that students made for the course for what seems to be a PowerPoint presentation. On a side note, I state that these examples were made by the students, since no names are given, due to some of the glaring misspellings that the document has, a course instructor would not or should not be making these errors in German.

The syllabus section I would leave the same, since there isn't much there that I would want to change. This page provides all the basic information about the course. The only minor item I would change would be to add a pdf or word file of the syllabus since I have found that students sometimes like to keep a local copy of it instead of always having to go to the website.

The calendar section is also something that I think is standard and I don't think that I would change it much. Much like the syllabus area I would also include a downloadable copy for the students to use. Again having a downloadable copy especially of the calendar is beneficial to have an offline copy of it especially so that students can take notes in them. I would perhaps add the link to the downloadable calendar to the actual heading at the top of the page to make it easily accessible along with an image that clearly denotes that the file is there.

The projects area as stated above, I would keep the examples provided even if there are misspellings because it shows that the documents and examples were student created. The reason for this is that it will show future students what they can do when they take the course and gives them some form of direction if it's needed. I would though add perhaps a few more additional examples. If the students did other things besides just PowerPoint presentations I would include them as well so that students know that the presentation doesn't have to be necessarily a PowerPoint presentation. I would add multimedia/movie projects from previous students as well as perhaps a narrated version of the presentation. The narration would show students roughly what level of proficiency they would be achieving.

The study materials section would definitely receive major revisions. As it stands it is simply a table much like the syllabus and class schedule, the only difference is that it provides links to pdfs and a handful of youtube hosted videos. This page would need to be redesigned and broken up at the very least into subpages for each week's worth of material. The page as it stands is 15 weeks worth of materials that the user would need to scroll down and once at the bottom there is no way to get back to the top of the page. The user needs to scroll back up. A quick solution would be to include a floating navigation bar to make it easier to use or links next to or at the end of each week that the student could click on to take them back to the top of the page. I would preferably change the site to that each week is its own page. This would allow me to include the necessary handouts the students need to practice the grammatical structures as well as also being able to include more videos, pictures, and also some interactive activities that would provide the learner with immediate feed back on the activity they were working on.

The last section of this website is the related resources page. This page is nice to include since it's essentially links to other resources that students could use or visit. What makes this site difficult to use is once again it's simply a long list of resources. This could better be implemented into either multiple pages or at the very least have the subsections be in a bigger text as well as having page anchors to make it easier to jump to a section if resources that a student is interested in using.

As the website stands now it's more along the lines of a open LMS site where the instructor posts the resources for their own class. It provides handouts that a self-learner could use, but nothing to provide actual instruction. All of the media that would normally

be on this site would appear to be available only for lab usage. As a result I found it extremely difficult to properly evaluate this website and even begin to attempt to make a mock site with improvements since I would need to locate and coordinate all of the extra materials I would want to add with the content that exists there as well as to see what would be appropriate for the texts that are used for the course. This site does have the potential to be a useful site, but it needs major changes and finding media that can be used to supplement the material that is being presented, but creating a whole fully functional online course site that is actually beneficial to others with the material that is provided through the MIT site is outside the scope of what one individual can do with out support and in a short amount of time.