

Friday, September 21, 2012

Update from Dean K. Shailer re LBST 1B04 Custom Text: Proposed Solutions

Thank you to all the students who came to the Open Discussion Session yesterday to express their deep concerns about the flawed course package (reader, two e-books) we provided for this course. I understand they were speaking on behalf of many other students who could not be there – as evidenced by the number of signatures on the online petition (which I have now read in total and am taking quite seriously).

Here's a summary of the chief concerns (and suggestions) I heard from students:

- All the blank blocks where images were meant to be was a waste of paper and poor design;
- Being expected to move between a print text and online images contained in an e-book was not a viable learning system (regardless of age or tech-savviness; also many students need a workable system to use when in transit)
- Although a number of students asked explicitly for a “more economical” e-book version of the reader, others asked simply for images and text to be in the same mode (digital or print-based) and in the same place;
- They felt like guinea pigs or beta testers for a new system that didn't work and wanted compensation;
- They worried about resale value;
- Some students wanted to revert to the former art history courses.
- Were students with disabilities being accommodated with a special-format version of the custom text? **This is being addressed - yes.**
- A number of work-around solutions were thrown out (e.g., buy Stokstad and Drucker online at used prices and sell back at end of term).

We also spent some time talking about copyright and the limitations we face with visual culture books – especially a small print run like this one. We need more discussion on this.

To be clear: My first objective is to have the material (text and images) of this phenomenal new course in students' hands in a format they feel they can use, so they can get on with the course now.

Meeting with Pearson Learning Solutions

I met later in the afternoon with reps from Pearson – including the President of the Higher Education Division of Pearson Canada, Steve O'Hearn – and from the U of T/OCADU Bookstore, as well as a number of other OCAD U faculty and staff. We laid out the concerns and asked for solutions. Pearson was highly responsive and proposed offering:

- Guaranteed end-of-term buy-back of the custom text (dollar amount to be announced next week); they want to take it out of circulation.

- Provision (free) of print copies of the Stokstad text (which contains the vast majority of missing images) to all students who have purchased the reader, to use as a print-based cross-reference; these would be the relevant volumes of the portable version of Stokstad (much easier to carry) – details on how this will roll out next week.

For next semester (LBST 1B05), we will have two possible scenarios that we'd like to poll students on. In any case there will be NO EMPTY BLOCKS OF WHITE SPACE. And for future offerings (next year and beyond): we will wait until March and further feedback from all of you before making any decisions.

We'd like to present all this to interested students as soon as possible and are scheduling a second meeting for next Tuesday afternoon. If you cannot attend, please get in touch and let me know your thoughts.

**SECOND STUDENT MEETING WITH DEAN SHAILER AND PRESIDENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PEARSON CANADA
Tuesday, September 25, 2012
2:30 – 3:30
Room 190
100 McCaul**

With best wishes,



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