



CTL Featured Assignment Form

Your name & email: Darryl Phillips dphilli2@conncoll.edu

Name & number of course: CLA 101 / HIS 108 Greece

Name of assignment: Wiki Assignment

Class size: 41 students

Last time class was taught & when it will be taught again: *Spring 2015 (offered next in Fall 2016)*

Description of the assignment (e.g., when you give the assignment, if you scaffold the assignment):

Throughout the semester, students in the course work together to build a course-specific wiki. The wiki includes all of the major concepts, key terms, and important historical events covered in the course. Each week of the semester, a new wiki page is posted and students contribute postings and edit each other's entries. The result is a comprehensive, student-created study guide that students can draw upon throughout the semester, and use as a review guide for exams.

Learning goals of the assignment & briefly how they relate to the goals of the course:

A major challenge in learning the history of the ancient Greek world is gaining a basic level of comfort and familiarity with names, dates and key concepts. Too often the mastery of these points becomes the focus of course. The wiki assignment provides a mechanism to ensure that all students develop a working knowledge of foundational materials; with this foundation established, class discussions, student papers, and examination essays are able to reach a higher level. Students are able to actively employ these terms and concepts as they engage in an analysis of the civilization. Their explorations reach a deeper level as a result. In short, the wiki provides a scaffold for all other assignments and activities in the course by providing students with the foundation necessary to engage in higher order analysis.

What you like about the assignment & why you think it is effective:

The wiki assignment provides a mechanism for the students to help each other master the material. It provides a structure for active engagement outside of the classroom, extending their learning and facilitating collaboration. Students see the power of democracy in action – by making just six posts each throughout the semester, students get to share in a rich and comprehensive review document.

The wiki assignment is particularly effective in this large introductory course that fulfills a GE requirement. Students at all levels and with widely varying interest, backgrounds, and abilities are enrolled in the course. The wiki helps to ensure that all students have a way to review and reinforce material covered in the readings, class discussions, and lectures.

Although class participation and active discussion is expected on a regular basis in the class, some students are less willing to participate in a larger class such as this. The wiki provides a lower-stakes opportunity for students to engage with the material and one another. The wiki also helps to develop confidence – working with the wiki throughout the semester, students master the terminology and basics that give them the confidence to contribute to class discussions.

As I have used the wiki assignment in this class over the past few years, I have seen the quality of class discussions improve and student essays have deepened. Students now confidently draw upon specific examples to develop, illustrate and support their own ideas.

PBWorks (the internet host that I use for this assignment) offers a free and easy to use workspace for the wiki. I receive e-mails that document changes to the wiki, allowing me to grade student contributions individually and provide feedback. The work involved for the instructor is minimal; for students it is invaluable.