

Advanced Methods for Building Online Communities.

This course taught us about many aspects of community-building. We learned that it is quite complicated to build an effective online community. I will incorporate many of the things we learned about community into my teaching, both online and in the classroom.



In our first project, we identified two online communities, and compared them. I chose the Disney College Program Parents group, and Hooked on Sunshine, a group that enjoys the work of one crochet designer. While these communities are quite different, they have some commonalities. They are both voluntary gatherings of people who have something in common, both depend on a sense of belonging to be effective, and they both focus on service to the community.

Our next project asked us to look at one organization's online communities in depth. Leah Shull, Susan Marie Terra and I looked at the Thirty-One Gifts community, which consists of independent consultants who sell home organization products and personal accessories. We interviewed four different consultants in various stages of their businesses: a brand-new consultant, an established consultant, a consultant who was focused on building her team, and a former consultant. It was interesting to see how different their approaches were to their own communities, as they had different goals.

The culminating project for this course was to design an online community of our own. I created a community called "The Pushy Advisor" which aligns with my dissertation topic. To implement the online presence of this community, I designed a website which was intended to provide members with the latest research on advising techniques and could link members to an interactive bulletin board, so members could exchange ideas. The third component of the community was a Facebook group page, which also linked to the website and bulletin board. The project was challenging, as it involved using research to support each decision. In addition to content, the project required creating an attractive and compelling visual display for each component.