

Backward Design Your Online Discussions

Tom Cantu
Instructional Designer
Montgomery College



THE
Teaching
PROFESSOR
CONFERENCE

JUNE 7-9, 2024 • NEW ORLEANS

Presented by

Tom Cantu

Instructional Designer

Montgomery College, MD

tom.cantu@montgomerycolleg.edu



Backward Design Your Online Discussions



Download the PPT and Worksheets from the Conf App.

Before We Begin



Think of 1-2 discussion prompts that you would like to revise.



When you teach those topics in-person, what are your favorite teachable moments?

Resources for Planning Online Discussions

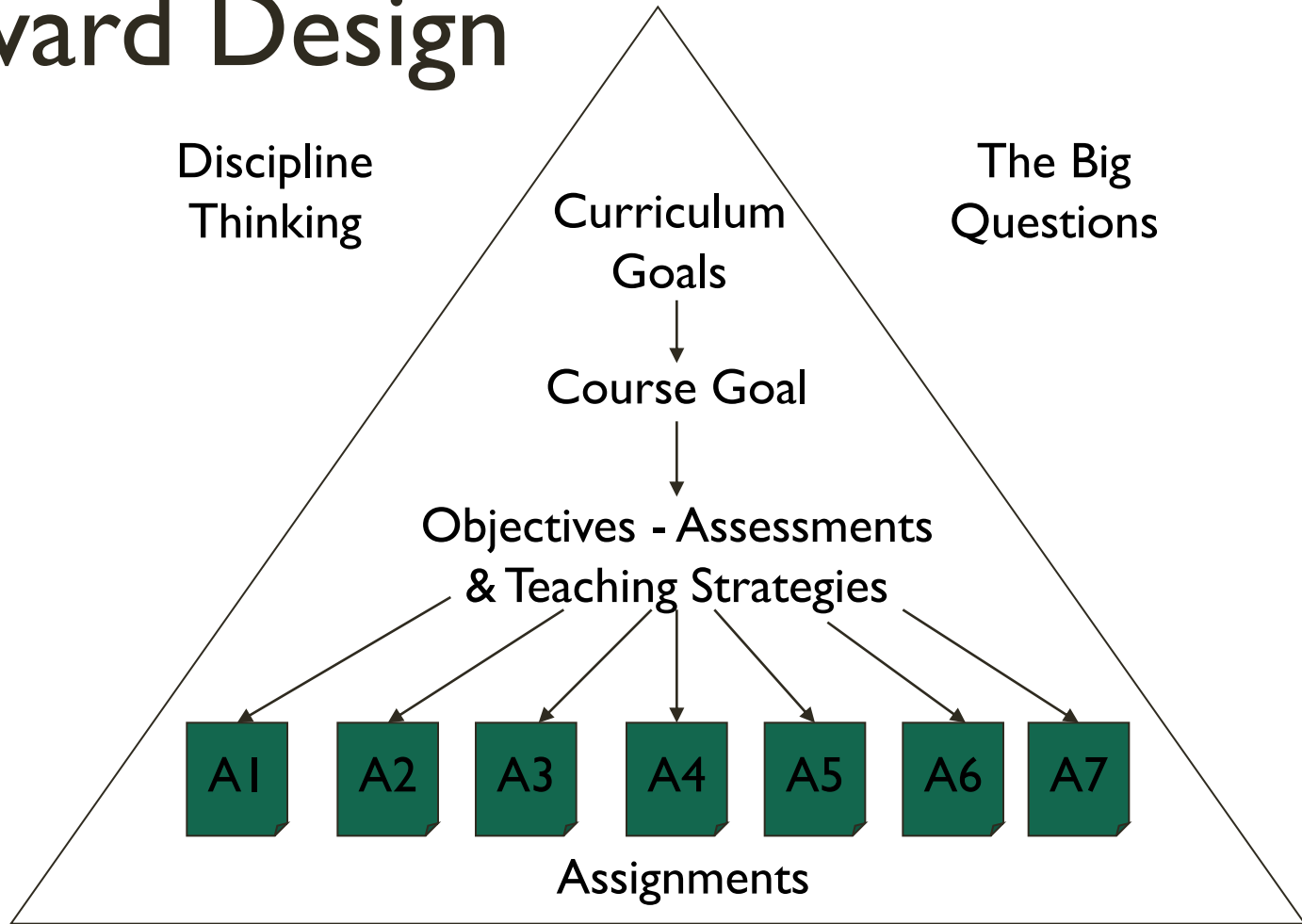
- [Answers to Key Questions on Designing Effective Online Discussions](#) The K. Patricia Cross Academy
- [Discussions in Online Courses: Best Practices and Expectations](#) Johns Hopkins University
- [How Many Faculty Discussion Posts Each Week? A Simply Delicious Answer.](#) Faculty Focus
- [The Secret Weapon of Good Online Teaching: Discussion Forums 6 ways to lead meaningful class discussions in an asynchronous online forum](#) by Flower Darby

Key Elements

1. Course Goal (p. 1)
2. Identify KSA's (p. 2)
 - Backward Design from your Goal
 - KSA's for Assessments
3. Disciplinary Thinking (p. 3)
4. Discussions as Scaffolding (p. 4)



Backward Design



Example 1

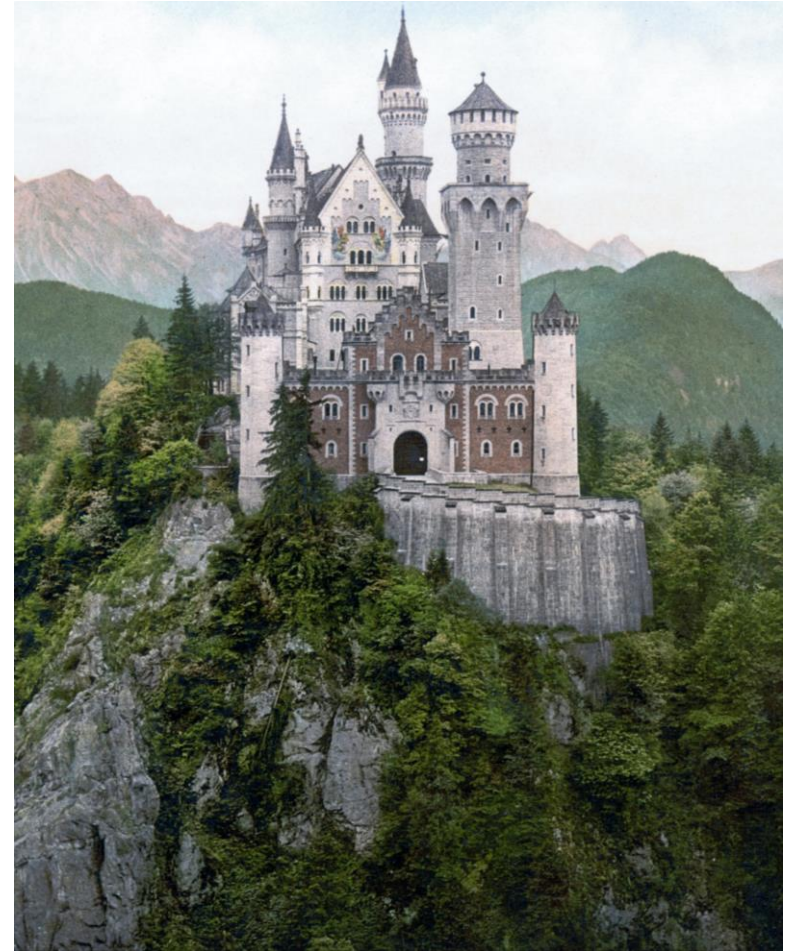
The Online Teaching Training

My Goal (p. 1)

Your first experience teaching online for MC is a good one.

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

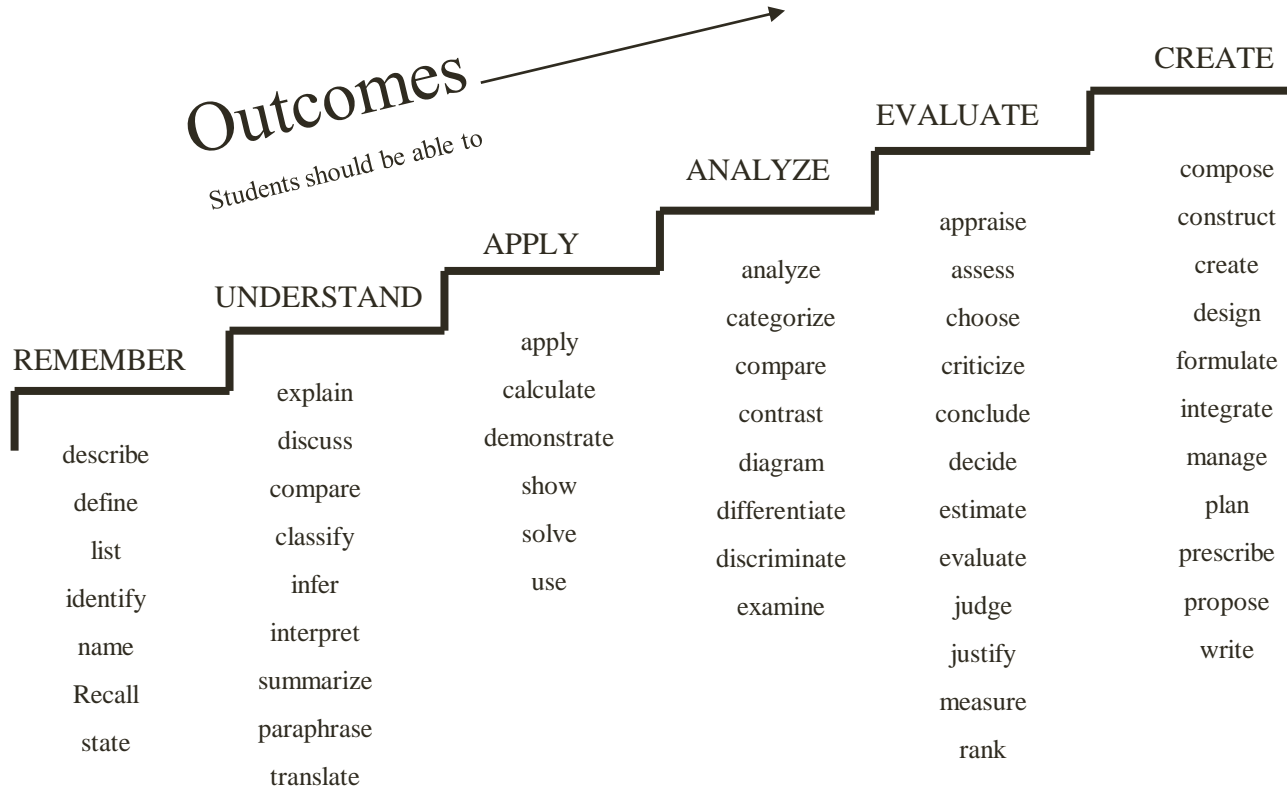
~Henry David Thoreau



Course Goal

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

~Henry David Thoreau



The Online Teaching Training

Backward Design from my Goal (p. 2)

#1 My Goal:

Your 1st experience teaching online for MC is a good one.

#2 When the goal is achieved, you should be able to

- **Plan**
 - Syllabus & schedule
- **Build**
 - Module + Orientation
 - Model & page templates
- **Prepare to teach your course**
 - Habits to be present & responsive with your students

The Online Teaching Training **Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSA's)** (p. 2)

#1 My Goal:

Your 1st experience
teaching online for MC
is a good one.

#2 KSA's

Knowledge: Bb, Yuja & video
quizzes, accessibility

Skills: create pages with style, JIT
supports, strong teaching presence...

Attitudes: Believe it can work &
want to teach online.

The Online Teaching Training

Disciplinary Thinking (p. 3)

What kind of thinking do I teach?

- Create Community
- Shift from solitary work to have students post to work in discussions
- Moderate your discussions
- Use deadlines to set the rhythm of the course

How I teach it

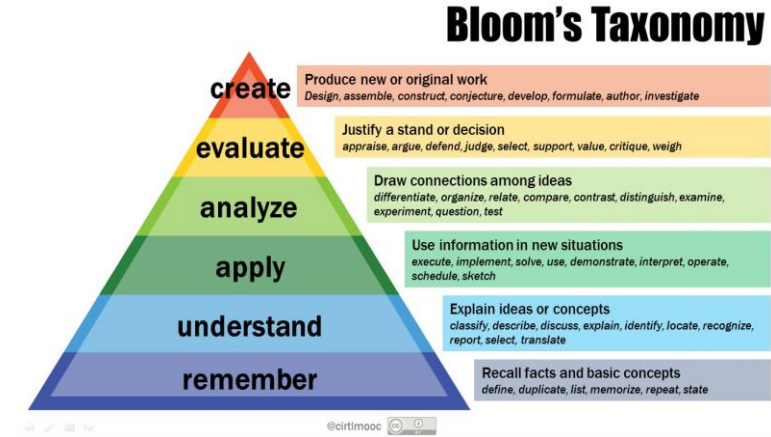
Experience it to believe it

- Engaging online learning
- Robust learning community
- Engaging discussions

The Online Teaching Training Discussions as Scaffolding (p. 4)

#4 Discussions as Scaffolding

- Build the habits you will need
- Draw out misconceptions
- Share their work in discussions
- Experience a robust learning community
- Discussion area becomes "the classroom."



This Photo by Unknown author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#).

Example 2

Student Success Course: Study Skills

Student Success Course

Backward Design from the Goal

The Goal (p. 1)

Teach students to become college-level learners who can succeed at MC and at a transfer institution.

When the goal is achieved, students should be able to (p. 2)

- Take notes
- Manage time
- Study effectively for the type of course
- And so much more...

Student Success Course

Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSA's) (p. 2)

The Goal (p. 1)

- Teach students to become college-level learners who can succeed at MC and at a transfer institution.

KSA's (p. 2)

Knowledge:

- Cornell Notes
- SQ3R study method
- Time management
- Study Strategies

Skills:

- Use Cornell Notes, SQ3R, time management and study strategies...

Attitudes:

- Focus on students' personal and professional goals

Student Success Course

Disciplinary Thinking (p. 3)

What kind of thinking do you teach?

- What does it take to be successful in your college courses at MC and at a transfer institution?

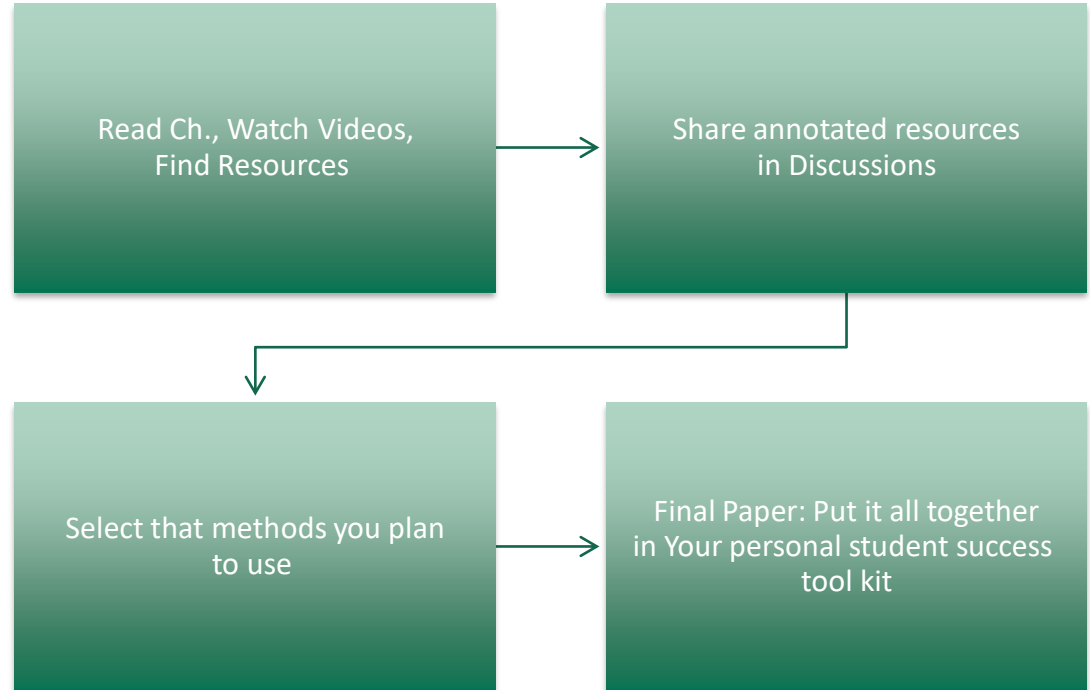
How do you teach it?

- Goal setting
- Skills practice and reflection
- More self-assessments



Student Success Course

Discussions as Scaffolding (p. 4)



This Photo by Unknown author is licensed under CC BY-SA.

Define Your Course Goal (pg. 1)

You don't take a course. You take a professor...



Key Question:

Page 1 Define Your Course Goal

- Does your goal make you smile?

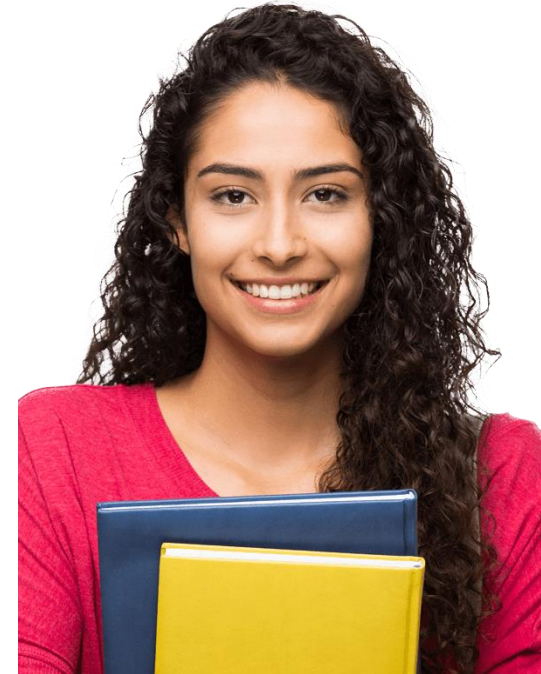
Backward Design from Your Goal & Identify KSA's (pg. 2)

Translate the Course Goal into Outcomes p. 2

- If a student achieved my course goal, s/he would be able to...

Or

- Given an “A” student and a “F” student, the “A” student would be able to...



Disciplinary Thinking (pg. 3)



Key Questions:

Page 2 Identify KSA's

- How well does this assignment or activity move students toward your goal?
- Does this assignment / activity teach, practice, and assess the KSA's students need to be prepared for the final assessment?

Page 3 Define Disciplinary Thinking

- How can you use every discussion to **teach, practice, and assess** disciplinary thinking?

Discussions as Scaffolding (p. 4)

- Progressive Dialog
Think: MWF
- 1 or 2 mid-week deadlines



In Pairs: Review Your Thinking (p. 4)

1st Person:

- Share your course goal. *Does it make you smile?*
- Describe
 - #2 Backward design from your goal and KSA's or
 - #3 Disciplinary thinking in your course.
- Share your discussion prompt.



Course Goal



Knowledge, Skills,
& Attitudes (KSA's)



Disciplinary
Thinking

2nd Person:

- Ask any (or all) of the Review Your Thinking Questions.



Scaffolding



Teachable
Moments

Swap roles.



Resources

- Defining a Course Goal

- Mager, R. (1997) Goal Analysis: How to Clarify Your Goals So You Can Actually Achieve Them. Atlanta, GA. CEP Press.
- [What Will Students Remember From Your Class in 20 Years? \(chronicle.com\)](https://www.chronicle.com/article/What-Will-Students-Remember-From-Your-Class-in-20-Years-/20180930) by James Lang. Sept. 30, 2018.

- Backward Design

- McTighe, J. Wiggins, G. (2005) Understanding By Design 2nd Edition. Alexandria, Virginia, USA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Disciplinary Thinking

- Pace, D., Middendorf, J., Editors. (2004, Summer). Decoding the Disciplines: Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 98. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass
- Miller-Young, J., Boman J., Editors. (2017, Summer) Using the Decoding The Disciplines Framework for Learning Across the Disciplines. Directions for Teaching and Learning, 150. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass
- Developing students' disciplinary thinking (n.d.) Center for Teaching, Learning & Mentoring (CTLM) Instructional Resources KnowledgeBase. Retrieved from <https://kb.wisc.edu/instructional-resources/122245>