Teaching International Law as a Partially Online Course: The Hybrid/Blended Approach to Pedagogy

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This article recounts the author’s experience of teaching International Law as a “blended” or “hybrid” course. In hybrid teaching, a significant portion of the learning activities is moved online, and time traditionally spent in the classroom is reduced but not eliminated. The article first briefly reviews the literature on international law pedagogy. Next, it describes the particular context within which the author redesigned the author’s traditional course. It thereafter highlights the key aspects of the author’s redesigned course. Finally, it shares some practical lessons that the author has learned and more general conclusions that the author has reached in hybrid teaching.

International law teaching combines the worst aspects of sex and the weather. Everyone thinks they are an expert; they complain about problems but do nothing to improve the situation. (Gamble 2007:379)

The “hybrid” or “blended” approach to instruction, which features both traditional “face-to-face” and Internet-based elements, has proven increasingly popular across multiple disciplines (Bonk et al. 2006). In hybrid courses, a significant portion of the learning activities is moved online, and time traditionally spent in the classroom is reduced but not eliminated (Dziuban et al. 2004:2). In hybrid learning, moreover, “the Web-based and face-to-face components of the course are designed to interact pedagogically to take advantage of the best features of each” (LTC, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee 2009a). In this essay, I will recount my own experience of teaching undergraduate-level “International Law” as a blended course. I will first briefly review the literature on international law pedagogy. Next, I will describe the particular context within which I redesigned my traditional course. I will thereafter highlight the key aspects of my redesigned course. Finally, in an effort to help “improve the situation” lamented by Professor Gamble, I will share some practical lessons that I have learned in hybrid teaching.

1The terms “hybrid” and “blended” have typically been used interchangeably, with “blended” becoming increasingly popular. Other noteworthy works on hybrid teaching include: Garnham and Kaleta (2002), Young (2002), Bonk and Graham (2005), Graham (2005), and Picciano and Dziuban (2006). Of course, in addition to its style of pedagogical delivery, a “hybrid” course on International Law can also be hybrid in terms of its content. Such a course can, for example, address International Law (IL) and International Relations (IR) themes and literatures. For a recent, exhaustive treatment of “International Law and IR Scholarship,” see Beck (2009). Appropriate texts for such an IL/IR hybrid course include: Beck et al. (1996), Hathaway and Koh (2005), Simmons and Steinberg (2006), Armstrong, Farrell, and Lambert (2007), and Trachtman (2008).
learned and more general conclusions that I have reached in my hybrid teaching of International Law.

The Pedagogy of International Law

In the two decades since the Cold War’s end, much has been written about the pedagogy of international law (see generally Gamble 1992a,b, 2000, 2007; Gamble and Joyner 1997; Joyner 1999; Beck and Carey 2010). Some scholars have explored “innovative” instructional techniques like mock trials/moot courts (Cady 1967; Gaubatz 1981; Hernandez 1988; Collins and Rogoff 1991; Carlson and Skaggs 2000; Ringel 2004; Ambrosio 2006; Zartner 2009), simulations (Jefferson 1999; Joyner 1999; McCormack and Simpson 1999; Johns and Freeland 2007; Zartner 2009), debates (Joyner 2003), experiential learning (Johns and Freeland 2007), the legal clinic (Edelman and Pistone 2001), the case method for undergraduate instruction (Zartner 2009), and one-week intensive immersion (Ross 2007). Others have concentrated on textbooks (Rohn, Gordenker, and Miles 1970; Diehl 1997; Hall 2003; Joyner 2008) or on particular areas of curricular content, including environmental law (Howard 1994), refugees (Patrno- gic 1989), the critical role of consent (Hey 2003), ethics (Viera-Gallo 1999), international business transactions (Jackson and McGeorge 1995; Rosen 2007), dispute resolution (Chinkin and Sadurska 1991), the Convention on the International Sale of Goods (Dodge 2000), intellectual property (Yu 2008), globalization (Blackett 1998), human rights (Rosenblum 2002), and the “bare bones” of the law (Gamble 2002). Still others have considered how the student audience’s character—its cultural milieu (Onuma 1990; Cohen 1993; Head 1994; Sanchez 1997), its familiarity with law (Schiffman 2003), its undergraduate level (Ku, Renteln, Diehl, and Zarins 1997; Hall 2008), its liberal arts orientation (Chapman 2005)—can or should affect international legal education. Work, too, has been done on: the relationship between international law teaching and research (Gamble 1985, 1989); conducting international legal research (Winer 2008); teaching “beyond the classroom” (Ku 2003); and careers in international law (Swartz 2008). A recent work has even focused on introducing high school students to public international law (Starbird, Pettit, and Singleton 2004; see also Buckingham 1995).

Perhaps inevitably, scholars have begun seriously to consider how technology may inform and enhance international law pedagogy (Buckingham 1996; Hey 2002; Tanja 2002; Beck 2008; Gamble 2008; Hoffman 2008). Most notable in this area has probably been Professor Howard Tolley (1998, 2002) whose “Teaching Human Rights Online” (THRO) Web site [http://homepages.uc.edu/thro/index.html] was recognized by the Information Technology and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association as “the Best Political Science Web site for 2001.” The American Society of International Law, meanwhile, has developed extensive collections of online materials for researchers and teachers, including the Electronic Information System for International Law (EISIL) [http://www.eisil.org/] and the ASIL Electronic Resource Guide (ERG) [http://www.asil.org/erghome.cfm]. Despite all that has been written about international law instruction, whether technology-enhanced or otherwise, the “hybrid” or “blended” approach to course delivery has thus far received virtually no significant attention by teachers of international law.3

2“Innovative” techniques construed as non-lecture-based instruction (see Gamble 1994).
3For brief discussions, see Beck (2008) and Beck and Carey (2010).
Antecedents to Blended Course Design

For over 20 years I have had the privilege of teaching “International Law” to undergraduate students at a wide array of institutions: Georgetown University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Virginia, Tufts University, and most recently the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. In that time, all versions of my course—whether face-to-face, technology-enhanced, or hybrid—have sought to maintain the same academically rigorous standards for student achievement and have shared the same core elements.

First, my course has always pursued two core objectives: (i) to teach the essentials of positive international law against the background of the realities of international politics and the normative requirements of international law; and (ii) to improve the student’s analytical ability and capacity for effective oral presentation.

Second, my course has consistently focused on seven key substantive themes: (i) The Nature, Scope, and Status Of International Law—including discussions of International Law’s legal character; custom as a source of international law; treaties, general principles, and other sources of international law; and the relationship of international law to domestic law; (ii) The Subjects Of International Law—including statehood and recognition; and nonstate entities and self-determination; (iii) Land and Territorial Sovereignty; (iv) International Agreements—including general principles and reservations; interpretation; and invalidity and termination; (v) Jurisdiction—including general principles of jurisdiction; and conflicts of jurisdiction; (vi) International Crimes and Human Rights—including international criminality and international courts; and (vii) Enforcement and Immunity from Jurisdiction—including enforcement jurisdiction and extradition; rendition; diplomatic immunity and sovereign immunity. From a substantive standpoint, my course has resembled many traditional law school-style ones, though I have not addressed “use of force” issues, a subject upon which I have focused in a separate course.

Third, also in the law school idiom, I have employed a modified form of the case method (Zartner 2009) to expose students to legal reasoning and argument. I have used roughly 50 legal cases to illustrate fundamental international legal rules and principles, requiring my students to submit formal legal briefs on 30 such cases drawn from the jurisprudence of the PCIJ, the ICJ, the US, and other states’ courts (see Table 1). For my course text, I have typically assigned a version of Henkin, Pugh, Schachter, and Smit’s (1993) classic casebook, International Law: Cases and Materials (now Damrosch et al. 2009). My course has always devoted at least half of its classroom time to the Socratic analysis of cases by students: in iterations of my course that met exclusively face-to-face, classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Assigned Cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paquete Habana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri v. Holland</td>
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<td>Charlton v. Kelly</td>
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<td>Salimoff v. Standard Oil</td>
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<td>UN Reparations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reservations to the Genocide Convention</td>
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<td>Dralle v. Czechoslovakia</td>
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time was typically split equally between case analysis and expository lectures; in my hybrid course classroom time has been devoted almost exclusively to Socratic case analysis.

To assess student learning in my course, finally, I have used three in-class examinations (including a final examination), all in the hypothetical scenario essay style favored in law schools. Here, students have been presented with a set of “facts” (for example, a hypothetical dispute between two states over title to an island) and asked to draft a legal opinion (for example, on which state has superior territorial claim to an island) based on relevant legal rules (for example, “extinctive prescription” or “cession”) as illustrated by specific cases (for example, the Island of Palmas or Eastern Greenland). When my students have demonstrated the capacity to identify, interpret, and apply relevant international legal rules and principles to hypothetical scenarios that they have never before encountered, they have achieved my desired learning outcome. In view, then, of its objectives, themes, teaching approach, and assessment strategy, my International Law course might reasonably be characterized as a conventional “law school-style” offering, though it has been offered in departments of Government and Political Science.

Like many university faculty members in the mid-1990s, I became fascinated by the emergence of the Internet and began then to incorporate email and dedicated Web sites into my teaching [http://people.virginia.edu/~rjb3v/rjb.html]. In 1996–1997, moreover, I spent a very pleasant academic year at the University of Virginia as a University Teaching Fellow [http://trc.virginia.edu/Programs/UTF/UTF.htm] under the mentorship of the distinguished diplomatic historian Melvin Leffler, exploring a range of strategies to enhance my instruction. It was not until a decade later, however, that I had occasion to begin converting my traditional International Law curricular materials into what would eventually constitute the core of a formal hybrid course.

In the spring of 2007, I was invited to participate in the “Podcasting Pilot Program” of the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee’s Learning Technology Center (LTC). Under the pilot, I began creating Microsoft PowerPoint presentations with accompanying narration (“Voice-over-PowerPoint”) for my spring 2007 International Law (Pol Sci 316) class. As the semester progressed, I produced 12 individual “mini-lectures” in both video podcast (.m4v) and Macromedia/Adobe Flash video formats. These presentations addressed the following topics, ones I had traditionally covered in face-to-face lectures: “Custom as a Source of International Law,” “Treaties and Other International Law Sources,” “International Law and Municipal Law,” “Statehood and Recognition,” “Government Recognition,” “Sovereignty over Territory,” “Treaties: General Principles and Reservations,” “Treaties: Interpretation, Invalidity and Termination,” “Jurisdiction—General Principles,” “International Criminality and International Courts,” “Conflicts of Jurisdiction,” and “Enforcement Jurisdiction and Extradition.”

My “mini-lecture” on “Government Recognition,” for example, was roughly 38 minutes in duration and composed of 42 narrated slides. It addressed the legal implications of government recognition under international and US law, discussing such seminal cases as the 1924 Tinoco Claims Arbitration (Great Britain v. Costa Rica), Salimoff & Co. v. Standard Oil Company of New York (New York Court of Appeals, 1933), and Upright v. Mercury Business Machines (Supreme Court of New York, 1961). It concluded with an exploration of three significant rights enjoyed by governments that have been recognized by the United States. My “mini-lecture” on “International Criminality and International Courts,”

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4For recent work on podcasting, see Evans (2008), Fernandez, Simo, and Sallan (2009), and Lonn and Teasley (2009).
meanwhile, was roughly 35 minutes in length and featured 51 slides. The presentation began with a review of the historical antecedents of contemporary international criminal courts, including the International Military Tribunal (IMT or “Nuremberg Trials”) and the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE or “Tokyo Trials”). It turned next to a discussion and critical assessment of post-Cold War developments: the Ad Hoc Tribunals (the Ad Hoc International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia or ICTY, the Ad Hoc International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or ICTR, the Special Court for Sierra Leone or SCSL) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The lecture finished by offering a number of conclusions about the nature and implications of modern international criminal law and related institutions.

For convenient access by my students, I hosted the Flash versions of the “mini-lectures” in the university’s course management system, Desire2Learn (D2L), and the video podcast (“vodcast”) versions in UWM’s dedicated “iTunesU” site. My case-method-based course continued to meet regularly (twice weekly 75-minute sessions) on a face-to-face basis. Nevertheless, in compensation for the significant amount of online media that I had assigned, I shortened some class meetings and canceled three others. For my spring 2007 course, the digital materials simply represented very extensive online supplements to my conventional classroom-based instruction. Even so, I felt the need routinely to remind my students to attend class and to consider the online materials as “required reading.” Notably, although I created an open “discussion forum” for student use in the D2L course management system, I did not grade or formally require online discussion participation. [I would require weekly participation in online discussion in my Fall 2007 hybrid.]

I had not offered a “blended” stricto sensu International Law course in the spring 2007 semester, but rather a substantially technology-enhanced conventional course. Nevertheless, from two anonymous surveys given at the middle and end of the semester and also from personal observation, I gleaned an array of important lessons upon which I could draw for my subsequent hybrid course design effort. These lessons were related to the following themes, among others: (i) To what extent did the students find the online materials worthwhile? (ii) Which digital file formats did the students prefer? (iii) What qualities of the online materials did the students find noteworthy? (iv) Did students prefer face-to-face instruction over online-based instruction? and (v) What technology problems did the students encounter?

The Desire2Learn-administered surveys, which featured seven specific questions (see Tables 2 and 3) and an identical open-ended invitation for student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Survey 1—February 2007—71 Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the D2L site’s Flash version</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the video podcast (&quot;vodcast&quot;) from iTunesU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in both the D2L site’s Flash version and the video podcast (&quot;vodcast&quot;) from iTunesU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I did not view the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were easily accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope that this course continues to feature Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
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comment, yielded a wealth of insights. The vast majority of my 71 enrolled students (90% or more) found the Voice-over-PowerPoint mini-lectures “helpful” and “easily accessible” and wished them “to continue.” Flash proved the preferred viewing format for my online lectures, though vodcasts were nevertheless viewed by significant numbers of students. In both surveys, the vast majority (67.61% and 77.46%, in the first and second surveys, respectively) reported viewing the mini-lectures exclusively in Flash format, though many viewed the vodcasts either exclusively (11.27% in the first survey) or together with the Flash versions (15.49% in the second survey, by which time the number of vodcast-only viewers had reduced to 7.04%).

Various themes emerged in student comments, moreover, in response to the surveys’ relatively open-ended solicitation of feedback: “Please offer any additional comments on this course’s Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures.” (Fifty-two comment responses were made by students to the first survey and 42 to the second.) Of those students who submitted additional comments, for example, a significant number expressed appreciation for the “convenience” of the online materials (25% and 10% of respondents, respectively), and the ability to view those materials “repeatedly” (12% and 7%, respectively). Perhaps reflecting these perceptions, a significant number of respondents commented that they believed the online materials had improved their comprehension (12% and 17%, respectively). Nonetheless, in responding to the open-ended solicitation for comments, some students expressed a preference for traditional face-to-face instruction (13% and 7%) while some found viewing the mini-lectures “too time-consuming” (6% and 7%). It is notable that the students in my spring 2007 course had not enrolled in a formal “hybrid” course per se, a status that is formally conveyed to prospective students by UWM’s student information system. Furthermore, though I had assigned a substantial amount of newly created online material, I had not dramatically reduced the amount of face-to-face course time. Accordingly, the expression of some student preference for a traditional instructional approach might have been anticipated. A final noteworthy comment made by a modest number of students (8% and 5% of respondents) was that they had experienced trouble accessing materials. This response seems likely related not to problems of student access to Flash/iTunes Voice-over-PowerPoint mini-lectures, but rather to two QuickTime-format streaming videos, which were optionally viewed online. Various students reported to me in email messages over the course of the semester that their home computers had

<table>
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<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the D2L site’s Flash version</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the video podcast (“vodcast”) from iTunesU</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in both the D2L site’s Flash version and the video podcast (“vodcast”) from iTunesU</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I did not view the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were helpful</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were easily accessible</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future versions of this course should continue to feature Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
<td>69</td>
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</table>
encountered difficulties playing QuickTime streams. Moreover, 98.59% of the respondents to my end-of-semester survey question reported that the “Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures” had been “easily accessible.”

Though their survey responses did not directly address this matter, I nevertheless personally observed that students were confused somewhat by the availability of the mini-lectures in two different digital formats. In several instances, I needed to emphasize that the content of a given mini-lecture (for example, on “Government Recognition”) was identical, whether it was delivered in Flash or vodcast format, and also that iPods were not required to view the online media: one could either view the Flash version or view the vodcast on an Internet-connected computer upon which iTunes was installed. Furthermore, based on my own observation and reinforced by Learning Technology Center guidance, I concluded that at least one of my online presentations was too lengthy to be viewed attentively in a single sitting and that it should therefore be separated into multiple, shorter units. Finally, personal experience confirmed what other teachers had already found: that creating significant online materials appropriate to a hybrid style course can prove an “unfamiliar and time-consuming” process (Sands 2002; see also Dziuban and Moskal 2001; Johnson 2002).

In the summer of 2007, I took part in the “Sloan Blending Life & Learning—Faculty Hybrid Course Redesign Program” at UWM. Administered by the Learning Technology Center, an organization nationally recognized for its hybrid course-related faculty development, the summer-long program itself modeled the blended instruction approach: it featured integrated online assignments, three day-long face-to-face workshop sessions, and online discussion. Faculty participants drawn from a wide range of disciplines—including Criminal Justice, Biology, Film, Occupational Therapy, Engineering, and Sonography—were given opportunities to interact with experienced hybrid instructors so that we might see that hybrid courses genuinely “worked” and that the benefits were considerable. My participant colleagues and I were allowed to learn and to practice new teaching skills needed for hybrid instruction, particularly skills not encountered in the traditional face-to-face classroom, including the facilitation of online discussion. In the end, we left the course redesign program with concrete results: a draft syllabus, a course assessment plan, one or more learning modules, a strategy for supporting students with the challenges of blended learning and with the course technologies chosen, and a plan for continuing the redesign process (LTC, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee 2009b).

Blended Course on International Law

Based on my participation in the “Sloan Blending Life & Learning” Program, I decided to reduce by half (from two sessions to one) the total number of weekly face-to-face class sessions I would convene for my first hybrid “International Law” course in the fall of 2007. This reduction in onsite meetings necessitated the creation of five additional online mini-lectures: “Grenada Invasion: A Case Study of Law’s Policy Relevance,” “Nonstate Entities as Subjects of International Law,” “Jurisdiction over the Irregularly Obtained (Extraordinary Rendition),” “Immunity of State Representatives,” and “Sovereign Immunity.” For ease of viewing and to enhance the likelihood of student attentiveness, I also separated my previously produced not-so-mini mini-lecture on “International Law and Municipal Law” into three separate, shorter Voice-over-PowerPoint Presentations.

My participation in the summer 2007 Sloan Program, though, shaped my International Law course in far more profound ways. First, my course syllabus explicitly articulated my four-fold student-centered rationale for using a hybrid approach to teach “International Law”: to accommodate the varied “learning
styles” of students; to allow self-paced (and multiple) reviews of substantive course materials; to ensure an opportunity for weekly, systematic discussion with peers of challenging subject matter; and to enhance schedule flexibility for the student. My personal rationale for a blended course was unarticulated, however; this course style freed me from the “limitations of the face-to-face classroom” (Aycock 2009): while being held to the same learning standards (and slightly raised workload standards), my students could now view/listen to my traditional lecture materials when they judged themselves most motivated and attentive; all could now participate actively in every class discussion—in a less-daunting online setting and when they felt adequately prepared to contribute.

Second, my syllabus made an explicit connection between my course’s learning objectives and the means by which assessment of student progress toward those objectives would be undertaken. For example, one course goal was for students to gain an understanding of international law case decisions, including the relevant facts, rules, and legal rationales, and I assessed their learning through review of type-written case briefs submitted to the D2L “Drop Box.”

Furthermore, my course now featured a “low stakes” (Elbow 1997; Winkelmes 2007–2008) weekly online “course discussion” requirement, with an explicit and detailed rubric offered in my syllabus. A “high quality” discussion post, for example, was characterized by its sufficient length, the topicality of its content, and its substantial character (accuracy, sophistication, and insight.)

Fourth, as both a “Classroom Assessment Technique” (CAT—see Angelo and Cross 1993) and a means clearly to connect my student’s online experience of the course to the face-to-face meetings, I added as a requirement the weekly submission of a “Muddiest Point” (Mosteller 1989; Angelo and Cross 1993) related to the given week’s online mini-lecture. Each week’s muddiest points were submitted to our course management system on Wednesday, compiled, and served as the basis for exposition and discussion in Thursday’s 75-minute face-to-face session. In response to my online mini-lecture on “Custom as a Source of International Law,” for example, students proposed “muddiest points” such as these: (i) In the S.S. Lotus case, did Turkey win? (ii) What specific customary state practices, and what scholarly writings, may be considered by courts? (iii) How do courts determine if a customary law is universally accepted? (iv) What consequences may result if only one state decides not to accept a customary rule? (v) How much deviation from a custom is allowed before it ceases to be a custom?

Another crucial addition to my syllabus was a multi-page section devoted explicitly to hybrid course-specific matters including my expectations, identification and highly detailed explanations of relevant technologies, and “tips for success.” Finally, my participation in the “Blending Life & Learning” Program informed my decision to create a highly detailed weekly course calendar (see excerpt below in Table 4). The calendar was printed in my syllabus and also “shared” online as a subscription-based calendar through UWM’s “PantherLink” (Zimbra) collaboration suite. It featured a day-by-day review of student responsibilities, assignments, face-to-face class meetings, and tests. As the LTC had emphasized in its summer 2007 Sloan program, the hybrid format poses “scheduling and communication challenges” and instructors must therefore “be prepared to help students understand their active role in the hybrid [course], assist students in keeping their work on time and on track, and be prepared to offer strategies for trouble-shooting new course technologies” (LTC, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee 2009c).

**Practical Lessons**

I learned an array of practical lessons from teaching my first hybrid International Law course in the fall of 2007. As in my spring technology-enhanced 2007
course, these lessons were related to the following themes: (i) To what extent did the students find the online materials worthwhile? (ii) Which digital file formats did the students prefer? (iii) What qualities of the online materials did the students find noteworthy? (iv) Did students prefer face-to-face instruction over online-based instruction? (v) What technology problems did the students encounter? A sixth lesson learned through my personal observation of student behavior was related to this question: How important for effective hybrid learning is student ‘‘time management?’’

As I had done in the spring of 2007 for my technology-enhanced course, I once again administered two anonymous surveys near the middle and end of the semester (see Tables 5 and 6). From these, I confirmed that the vast majority of my enrolled students (88% or more) had found the Voice-over-PowerPoint mini-lectures ‘‘helpful’’ and ‘‘easily accessible’’ and wished them ‘‘to continue.’’ As had been the case for my spring 2007 technology-enhanced International Law course, Flash was the preferred viewing format for my online lectures, but vodcasts were nevertheless viewed by significant numbers of students. In both surveys, the vast majority (81.82% and 78.85%) reported viewing the mini-lectures exclusively in Flash format, though many viewed the vodcasts either exclusively (11.27% in the first survey) or together with the Flash versions (17.31% in the second survey, by which time the number of vodcast-only viewers had reduced to 1.92%). This suggests that those instructors planning soon the hybrid delivery of International Law curricular materials might seriously consider using either Flash technology alone (which does not require an iPod or iTunes installation on a student user’s computer) or Flash in combination with video podcast, but perhaps not video podcast alone. Certainly, the Flash versions of my mini-lectures were easier for students to see because of their much larger display size: computer screen versus iPod screen. They were also more readily controlled and reviewed because of the Flash version’s interface, which allowed slide-by-slide navigation, thumbnail views of slides, and keyword searching. As iPods and iPhones proliferate, the mobile convenience of vodcasts could render their use more attractive for hybrid learning. Even so, recent studies suggest that most students access podcasts primarily or exclusively on their computers rather than on their mobile devices (Malan 2007; Evans 2008; Wallsa et al. 2010).

Themes reminiscent of those evinced in the spring 2007 surveys emerged in student responses to my fall 2007 surveys’ invitation of ‘‘any additional comments

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**Table 4. Excerpt from Weekly Course Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>September 17–18</th>
<th>September 19</th>
<th>September 20</th>
<th>September 17–21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Materials</td>
<td>To Read or View</td>
<td>Submission of ‘‘Muddiest Point’’</td>
<td>Cases to Brief</td>
<td>Face-to-Face Class Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Monday or Tuesday of Week</td>
<td>Submit to D2L Before Thursday, 9:30 AM (Monday through Wednesday)</td>
<td>Participate Through-out Week in D2L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 20</td>
<td>Paquete Habana</td>
<td>S.S. Lotus</td>
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<td>Custom</td>
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Robert J. Beck
on this course’s Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures.” (In the fall of 2007, 44 responses were offered by students to the first survey and 50 to the second.) Of those students who decided to submit additional comments, a significant number once again noted the “convenience” of the online materials (5% and 18% of respondents, respectively), and the ability to view them “repeatedly” (30% and 6%, respectively). Once more, a number of respondents volunteered that they believed the online materials had improved their comprehension (14% and 4%, respectively). As in the spring, however, in responding to the open-ended solicitation for comments, some International Law students expressed a preference for traditional face-to-face instruction (7% and 16%) while a modest number judged the mini-lectures “too time-consuming” to view (0% and 6%). Since the students in my fall 2007 course had enrolled in a course formally designated by UWM’s course enrollment system as a “hybrid,” this expressed partiality of some students for the face-to-face model seems noteworthy. It might suggest that some simply preferred features of the conventional model of instruction: the absence of technology use requirements, traditional levels of in-person interaction with the instructor and classmates, and the relatively modest need for self-scheduled course engagement. Alternatively, or additionally, it might suggest that students’ expectations of blended learning may not yet be uniformly sophisticated, so the special character of hybrid courses may not always be clear to students when they decide to enroll (cf. Reasons et al. 2005:90). It must be reiterated, though, that in the fall 2007 end-of-semester survey, the overwhelming majority of International Law students judged the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures “helpful” (88.46%), “easily accessible” (98.08%), and worthy of continuation in future course iterations (88.46%). As in the spring 2007 surveys, a modest number of students (5% and 8% of respondents) noted in their additional comments that they had experienced difficulties with online materials access, a response I attribute once again to problems of QuickTime streaming playback on home computers.5

During my fall 2007 semester as instructor of “International Law,” I observed first-hand a quality of hybrid courses that has practical implications for pedagogy: given a hybrid course’s substantial online elements, some students can prove especially prone to falling behind on their assignments. To be sure, the general problem of failing to remain abreast is not unique to hybrid or online teaching: some students enrolled in conventional face-to-face courses also fail to attend lectures or to complete assignments such as conventional textbook readings. Still, the possibility that some students fall behind seems higher in hybrid teaching since the relative amount of outside-the-classroom work is greater. Moreover, because the course materials remain available “24 x 7,” and students can therefore listen to and/or view the materials at their convenience, some may be seduced by that ease of access into procrastination. For my hybrid International Law course, I made strenuous efforts to articulate my expectations for student engagement and assignment completion—in class, in a very detailed syllabus, in regular email messages to my student, and in routine posts to the course management system’s “announcement board.” Even so, some students seemed to lack sufficient discipline to manage their work in a blended learning environment. It may well be that as blended courses become more commonplace, students will become more familiar with the special pace and workload dimensions of such courses (cf. Reasons et al. 2005:90–91) and will therefore become more uniformly apt to timely and active course engagement. Meanwhile,  

5For online course-related video, I have since moved to Flash-based streaming video, the highly popular technology required for YouTube viewing.
as has already been observed, an instructor’s emphasis on “time management” by students is vital for successful blended learning.

**Broader Conclusions for Teaching**

My fall 2007 experience offered some more general “hybrid course” conclusions as well. These were associated with: student feedback/participation, low-stakes assessment, course redesign’s implications for substantive curricular change, instructor satisfaction, the value of institutional support, and pedagogical rigor. The conclusions are not specific to any particular technology tools. Moreover, they should be of interest to all instructors of International Studies-related courses. Let me address each of them in turn.

In 20 years of teaching International Law, I had never received so much feedback or in such a systematic fashion as I did in my fall 2007 hybrid course. The required “muddiest point” exercise proved highly valuable here. In principle, one could certainly employ such an assignment in a traditional face-to-face International Law course (or indeed, in any International Studies/IR course). Nevertheless, had I not redesigned my course as a hybrid, I might never have added this valuable aspect, though I had been introduced to this Classroom Assessment Technique while a university teaching fellow at the University of Virginia. My traditional face-to-face International Law course, moreover, had never featured such routine and broad-scope student participation in discussion, a conversation that was readily searchable, digitally archived and remains accessible to me even after the semester’s end. Perhaps the most attractive benefit is that the more typically “quiet” students in the face-to-face discussion context are required in a hybrid to participate, often to the great benefit of them and their fellow classmates.

An arguably more consequential lesson of my hybrid International Law experience was related to “low-stakes assessment” (Winking and Bond 1995; Knight, Aitken, and Rogerson 2000). My blended course featured many low-stakes assignments spread over the course of the entire semester, including 30 legal case briefs, significant participation in 10 online discussions, and the identification of 10 “muddiest points.” The cumulative effect of offering so many of these assignments was to provide an incentive for regular student engagement and also to mitigate the potentially negative final grade impact of my three law school-style “hypothetical scenario” examinations, a testing approach with which my undergraduate students have historically been unfamiliar and have therefore found quite challenging. Low-stakes assessment can certainly also be conducted in traditional face-to-face courses, and there is much to commend its use there. Nevertheless, the blended course format, with the technology that informs and supports it, greatly facilitates this compelling assessment strategy.

Fundamental redesign of my International Law course brought substantive curricular improvement as well. In building my multimedia mini-lectures, for example, I revisited materials that I had not considered for years. I sought out photographs, diagrams, and maps to enliven the case exposition. I had never before seen a photograph of the S.S. *Lotus*, for example, a central feature of the classic Permanent Court of International Justice case illustrating principles of jurisdiction, legal positivism, and the role of customary international law. In the process of ultimately finding a photo of that famous vessel, though, I was surprised to discover (perhaps naively so) that *Time* magazine had featured a fairly detailed story about the *Lotus* incident and its international political context. In “Foreign News: Scandalous Attitude,” *Time* reported: “French editors grew indignant en masse last week at the scandalous attitude of Turkey in retaining under arrest in Constantinople one Lieutenant Demons, chief officer of the French steamer *Lotus*, which collided with a Turkish coal ship on the high seas”
(September 20, 1926). I have since included this news magazine account in my treatment of the case as exemplary of post-World War I French attitudes toward the vanquished former Ottoman Empire.

Another noteworthy benefit of my blended course was largely personal: I thoroughly and consistently enjoyed the face-to-face class meetings of my International Law Course. I could feel confident that the more foundational “nuts and bolts” material had already been systematically delivered in my online mini-lectures, and that virtually all my students had already identified their primary areas of difficulty with that material. Accordingly, I could focus my face-to-face energies on those areas of greatest student difficulty. Furthermore, freed from the more mundane aspects of traditional lecturing, I could concentrate on the more dynamic, interactive, and therefore exciting aspects of case method teaching that practitioners of the method so well appreciate. These personal benefits will provide a lasting reward for the significant amount of curricular material production and course redesign work that preceded my first blended course in International Law.

### Table 5. Survey 3—November 2007—44 Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the D2L site’s Flash version</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the video podcast (“vodcast”) from iTunesU</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in both the D2L site’s Flash version and the video podcast (“vodcast”) from iTunesU</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the first exam, I did not view the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were helpful</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were easily accessible</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope that this course continues to feature Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6. Survey 4—December 2007—52 Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the D2L site’s Flash version</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in the video podcast (“vodcast”) from iTunesU</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I viewed some or all of the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures in both the D2L site’s Flash version and the video podcast (“vodcast”) from iTunesU</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the course of the past semester, I did not view the Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were helpful</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures were easily accessible</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future versions of this course should continue to feature Voice + PowerPoint mini-lectures</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This observation underscores another key conclusion: because of the labor-intensive nature of designing and building a media-rich blended course, whether on International Law or another subject, the active support of one’s academic institution is highly desirable (Voos 2003; Dziuban et al. 2004). Had I not participated in both the “Podcasting Pilot Project” and the “Sloan Blending Life & Learning” Program at UWM, I would very likely have lacked the capacity independently to redesign my conventional course. My department’s generous provision of a Teaching Assistant for my typically 70-student course, moreover, facilitated my assignment of online student work since that TA could help to track online discussion and to collate my students’ muddiest points. Furthermore, my role as Chief Information Officer of the College of Letters & Science facilitated my access to necessary software and hardware.

When considering matters of technology-supported pedagogy, finally, instructors are rightly concerned about the maintenance of high standards—in terms both of student achievement and teaching quality. Technology must not be employed as an expedient, permitted to “dumb down” a course or to diminish the quality of its instruction. While my experience of offering International Law in traditional face-to-face, technology-enhanced face-to-face, and formal “hybrid” settings has thus far been limited, it may nevertheless be suggestive, especially when viewed within the broader practice of hybrid/blended pedagogy. As already noted, all my International Law courses have featured the same objectives, themes, case method approach, and hypothetical exam assessment. My students have been exposed to the same amount of curricular material and they have consistently been required to brief the same cases; meanwhile, my substantive lectures, whether delivered in-person or electronically, have remained based on essentially the same PowerPoint slides. Furthermore, from semester to semester, my examinations have also remained constant—in the number and hypothetical scenario-style of the examinations administered, in the number of questions featured in particular examinations, and even in the substantive issues addressed in those examinations. In this context of self-conscious continuity, I have found that in the move from face-to-face to de facto hybrid, and then formal hybrid teaching, my “overall instructor” rating by students has continued to be strong (see Table 7). Much more importantly, my students’ overall performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School term</th>
<th># of Students completing all exams</th>
<th>Teaching method</th>
<th>Overall instructor rating (Scale of 1–5)</th>
<th>Average % of all possible examination points earned by students during the course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2006</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Exclusively Face-to-face</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2007</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>De facto Hybrid</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Formal Hybrid</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Formal Hybrid</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Teaching and Learning Outcomes

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6Results of formal, scantron-based departmental evaluation of course, administered at semester’s end.

7Average of all examination points earned as a percentage of all possible examination points. Includes all enrolled students who completed all three required examinations during the given semester. The examination formats were identical for all courses.

Course Point basis: For the Spring 2006 and Spring 2007 semesters, the course point basis was as follows: Submission of Case Briefs (20 points) + First Examination (20 points) + Second Examination (20 points) + Third Examination (40 points) = 100 total possible course points. For the Fall 2007 and Fall 2008 semesters, the course point basis was as follows: Submission of Case Briefs (15 points) + Online Submission of Muddiest points (5 points) + Online discussion (10 points) + First Examination (20 points) + Second Examination (20 points) + Third Examination (30 points) = 100 total possible course points.
on their examinations has remained robust in my de facto and formal “hybrid” International Law courses, with the average exam scores in the Spring 2007, Fall 2007 (and also the Fall 2008) semesters exceeding those in my traditional face-to-face class in the Spring of 2006 (see Table 7). Such outcomes are very encouraging insofar as “[c]ourse grades have traditionally been effective indicators of student learning (performance)” (Reasons et al. 2005:90). My own experience thus far of blended teaching’s potential benefits, moreover, is consistent with results recently reported by scholars from other disciplines (Utts et al. 2003; Dziuban et al. 2004; Garrison and Kanuka 2004; Reasons et al. 2005). A teaching approach that holds the promise of increased instructor satisfaction, enhanced student access to curricular material and peer discussion, and the maintenance of rigorous learning standards is well worthy of serious consideration by teachers of International Law and other International Studies courses.

Acknowledgments

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