

Students are different! *A Lesson from my Enviro Issues Class*

For more than a decade, I have been posting multiple choice and true-false questions from old exams on our class web page. I tell students that the best way to prepare for the m/c and T/F part of an exam is to look at the old exams. (I think, by now, that I have just about every possible question there, and the coverage is close to 100%.) Until this year, the exams were in Word or pdf format. So students could look at them on-line, or print them off (but very few do print them). And, I do not give correct answers to the m/c questions - they have to figure out the correct answers themselves.

This year, I started a new way of providing the same thing. I took all the old exams and made on-line quizzes using those questions. There are hundreds of questions. Students take a 20 question quiz and then get graded. If they have a question wrong, they still are not told which is the correct answer. But, they can take the quiz as many times as they wish. They get random questions each time. The questions and (in the case of multiple choice questions) the answers are shuffled each time.

The results? Many more students say they are studying significantly more. I have survey data for this year and last year - check out the charts. The top two diagrams are for last year. The bottom two for this year. (For those who don't trust what students tell us on surveys - I have some automatic ways of counting who accesses what and for how long, and the results are close to what the students told me they did.)

So, for some reason, students prefer on-line quizzes - and are more motivated to study if they can click on computer keys instead of having to think or write.

What does it mean? I am not sure. I have not changed anything except the way students access the study materials. They just appear to be more comfortable or more tuned in to electronic games than old-fashioned ways of studying.

What do you think? What are the implications?

