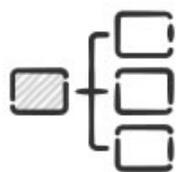# Teaching a course?
Take a course!

One of the most common questions we receive from faculty in our iTeach workshops is "what does an online course look like"? We all have years—and in some cases decades—of experience forming expectations of face-to-face learning experiences, but for those who are new to teaching online, it is often difficult to imagine how it all works. Learning experiences are complicated. How do you, as a faculty member, present yourself? How do you share your expert knowledge, how do important human interactions occur, and how do students demonstrate their understanding?

One great aspect of online education is the overwhelming opportunities to independently explore a variety of online learning experiences. You can peruse hundreds if not thousands of online courses from a variety of institutions and see for yourself how some of these core aspects of learning experience design are addressed.

Even if you're a veteran online instructor, it can be helpful to take a look at what others are doing in their online courses. Yes, tools and capacities continue to evolve dramatically, and it is good to see some new applications. More importantly, instructors are continuing to rethink how students can effectively demonstrate their understanding in fresh and engaging ways through modes that represent understandings more comprehensively than traditional quizzes, papers, and exams.

Thankfully, many faculty make the choice to teach online *in the open* or in such a way that their course and its content are available for perusing. Open education allows prospective students to preview a potential learning experience and enables faculty to advertise their knowledge and expertise (and potentially their creative learning experience design). The best strategy for finding these courses is often a Google search for courses in your subject area. Being more specific helps narrow the field, ie. a search for "Limnology Course" is likely to yield better results than a search for "Natural Resources Course." You can also try adding the words "open course" or "free course" in your search. We have several examples of UAF open courses you can view at community.uaf.edu/cat/open-course/

If you want to search further afield, try these open course clearinghouses:

- Open Education Database - www.edx.org
- CSU - als.csuprojects.org/free_online_courses
- Open Culture's - openculture.com/freeonlinecourses

Likewise, you might try enrolling in one of the free "massive online open courses" hosted by the following providers:

- Edx.org
- Coursera.org
- Udacity.com

Some of these courses feature stronger pedagogical models while others are weak. Pay attention to the design for interaction between instructor and students. How do students demonstrate their understanding? Some offerings are merely audio or video lecture series, which are more like textbooks than complete courses. While ohers are much more like our own instructor-led, highly interactive learning experiences. The time commitment here can be as great or as small as you like. Even thirty minutes in another course can be highly informative.

Also, consider using your UA tuition waiver and enrolling in or auditing an online course taught by one of your colleagues and offered through UAF eLearning. There are some great opportunities including everything from Accounting to Master Gardening.

Lastly, if you're interested in exploring additional online courses and in seeing a variety of models and design possibilities, stop by our open lab sessions.

If you've never taught online before, take a course or skim a few. *What factors affect the experience of the online student? What methodologies seem effective and what practices do you find lacking?*

Viewing the examples of others can give you invaluable perspective and save you a great deal of time when designing your own online course. Trying a few courses can be an important step toward building your fluency with the medium of online instruction.