American Idol Comes to the Classroom
Using a Multi-tiered Class Competition to Increase Student Collaboration and Comprehension

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Abstract

This study consists of a multi-round competition where teams of two to four students prepare and deliver exam review presentations. Teams move ahead in the competition based upon the quality of their presentation and the reviews that they receive. In doing this, we hope to increase the amount of collaboration in the classroom and to encourage its use as a learning tool.

Background

Student life outside the classroom now includes many different types of activities that symbolize a transition of a portion of a student's life online. Social networking tools have become an important form of interaction replacing other forms of communication such as email and face-to-face contact. Blogs provide students with news, forums provide a space to share ideas, and wikis provide facts and information.
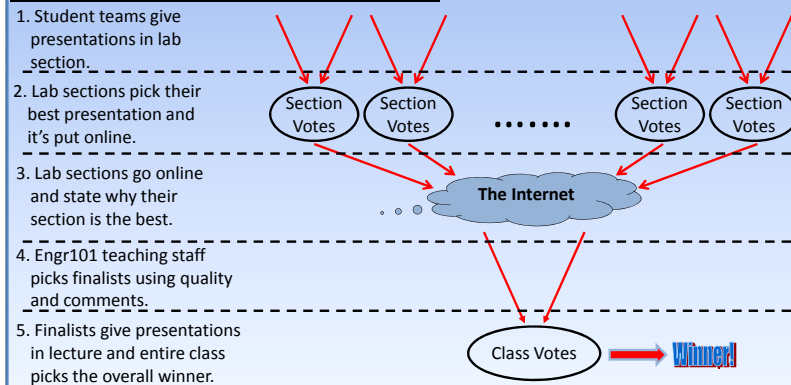
While there are many critiques of this phenomenon, it nonetheless represents a dramatic shift in the life of a student and offers new opportunities to increase active learning both inside and outside the classroom. This research makes use of these types of interactions with the goal of increasing student involvement and understanding of the course material.

Competition Details

The competition consists of several rounds:

➢ Round 1 – Teams of two to four students prepare exam review presentations and deliver them in front of the students in their lab section. After the presentations are given, all the students in the section select a winner by vote.

➢ Round 2 – Section winners post their presentations online where the rest of the class may view and rate them. Course instructors select finalists based on the quality of the presentation and the comments that it receives.

➢ Round 3 – The finalists present in front of the entire class where an overall winner is again chosen by vote.

Competition Flowchart

1. Student teams give presentations in lab section.
2. Lab sections pick their best presentation and it's put online.
3. Lab sections go online and state why their section is the best.
4. Engr101 teaching staff picks finalists using quality and comments.
5. Finalists give presentations in lecture and entire class picks the overall winner.

Results

The student teams generated a variety of presentations that encompassed many different learning styles. The results showed that students favored a presentation format that:

➢ Delivered the content clearly and effectively
➢ Contained representative and realistic examples
➢ Provided an entertaining experience

Instructional Benefits

The competition provides several key points of information that can be used to improve the quality of the overall course:

➢ Areas of confusion can be identified.
➢ Omissions of key material can be discussed.
➢ Popular lecturing styles can be used in the future.

Acknowledgements