

Comparison of Student Performance in Online Conferencing Using Two Models of Posting



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Classes Compared



- Fall 2007
- Two sections of same course (fourth [6984] and ninth [6989] sections)
 - 6984: 27 students
 - 6989: 30 students
- IFSM 304 “Ethics in the Information Age” –Course fulfills UMUC’s “Civic and Ethical Responsibility” cross-curricular requirement; course is not required for any major
- 15-week semester
- 9 weekly discussions; I led first one; students led other 8
- Class week ran from 8 AM on Mondays

Posting Requirements



- 6984: “In each forum one of those postings must be made before Thursday at midnight each week. The second posting must be made between Friday and Monday at 8 AM Eastern (you can make both posts before Thurs, but if you post nothing before Friday, you will lose credit).”
- 6989: Two postings within the week. No time limit.



Total Messages Posted



- 6984
 - 1,821 Messages
 - 248,757 Words
 - Average of 67 messages per student
- 6989
 - 2,298 Messages
 - 285,522 Words
 - Average of 76 messages per student



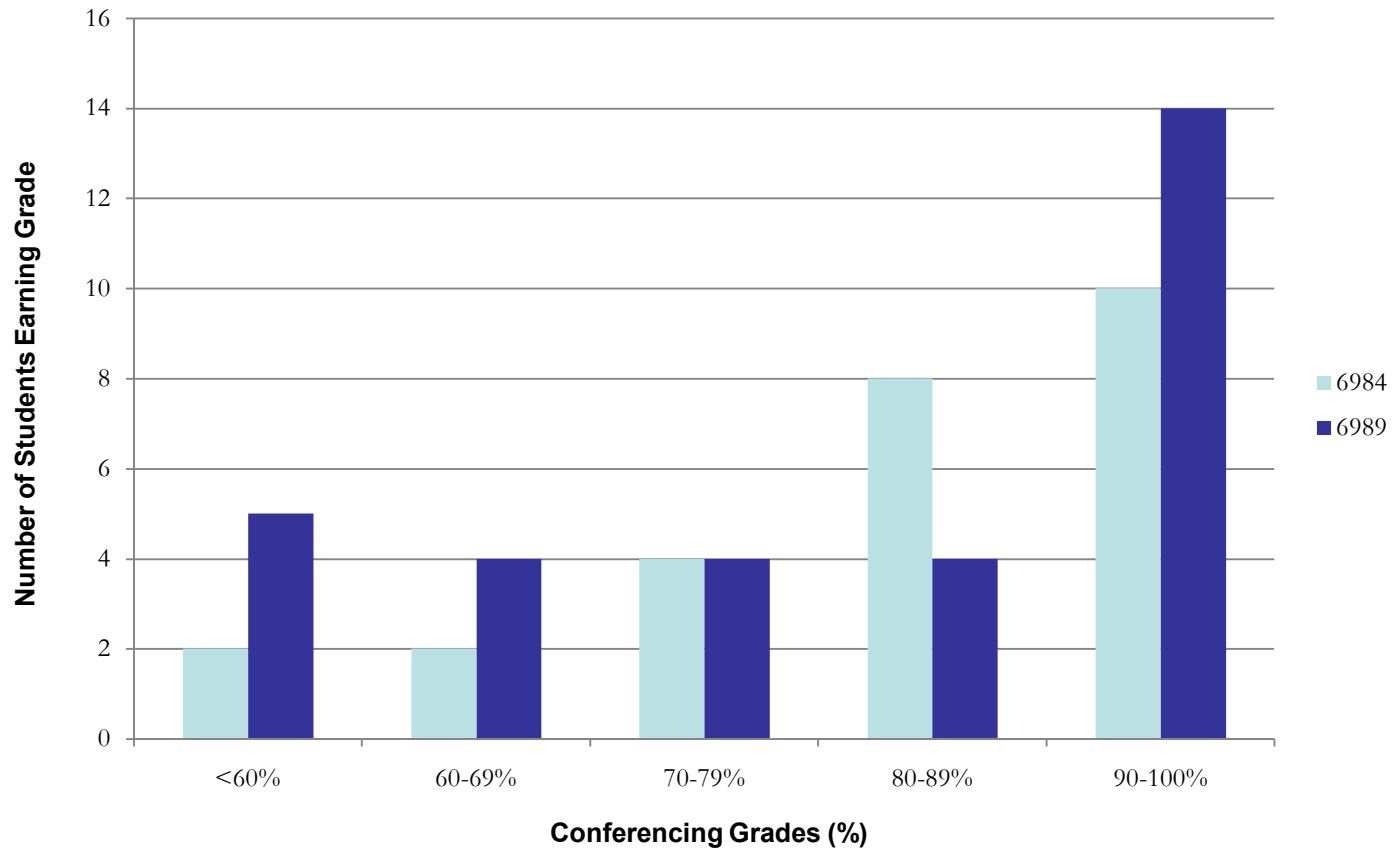
Grades



- Conferencing was worth 18% of total grade
- 6984
 - 7 grades of A; conferencing grades all $\geq 94\%$
 - 10 grades of B; 7 conferencing grades $\geq 80\%$
 - 4 grades of C; conferencing grades all $\geq 78\%$
 - 5 grades of D; 4 conferencing grades $\geq 67\%$
 - 1 grade of F; conferencing grade of 37%
- 6989
 - 7 grades of A; 5 conferencing grades of 100%
 - 10 grades of B; 7 conferencing grades $\geq 83\%$
 - 7 grades of C; 4 conferencing grades $\geq 83\%$
 - 4 grades of D; 3 conferencing grades $\geq 64\%$
 - 3 grades of F; 1 conferencing grade $\geq 67\%$



Overall Conferencing Grades



Conclusion



- There is no significant difference in the final grades of the students, regardless of the timing of postings.
- P-value for the Pearson Chi-Square = 0.798

Limitations



- Demographic data (gender, age, geographical locations) unknown
- Majors unknown
- Student class workload unknown
- Study did not examine *content* of postings (although conferencing grades reflect in part the content of postings)



Future Research



- Do demographic data make a difference?
- Did different posting requirements affect *content* of posts?
- Did students taking more classes post less?
- Did students post more on weeks when discussion was led by peer (versus faculty member)?

