

A Comparison of Learning Outcomes in Web-based and Traditional Lecture Format
General Psychology and Introductory Sociology Courses
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Abstract: Our overall goal is to assess the effectiveness of completely web-based distance-learning courses compared to traditional lecture-based courses in terms of student mastery of course content in two introductory social science courses. We propose to study learning outcomes by comparing scores on knowledge-based pretests and posttests of students enrolled in web-based Psychology 101: General Psychology (PSYC 101) versus lecture-based PSYC 101 and web-based Sociology 101: Introductory Sociology (SOC 101) and lecture-based SOC 101 courses during the spring and summer of 2005. The same psychology instructor will teach both versions of PSYC 101 and the same sociology instructor will teach both versions of SOC 101. Additionally, we intend to address two under-researched questions regarding web-based learning: (1) are there differences in the retention of information between students who have completed a web-based course and those who have completed a lecture-based course and (2) do students' reasons for dropping out of web-based courses differ from the reasons given for dropping out of lecture-based courses?