Module: International Law 341
Lecturer: Prof Annika Rudman arudman@sun.ac.za
Blended Learning Coordinator: Ms Alma Coertzen almac@sun.ac.za

Learning activity:
Active learning

Learning technology:
Various SUNLearn tools

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Context
Subject area
The module International Law 341 forms part of the LLB and BAccLLB programmes on third-year level, with classes consisting of more or less 180 students. It is presented as an introduction to international law. One of its subfields – international human rights law – is aimed at students with little or no prior knowledge in these fields. The objective of the module is to give students a basic working knowledge of international law and international human rights law, i.e. the rules governing interstate relations in the international community, the concepts, principles, sources and subjects that are relevant to this specific field of law, and basic human rights principles. The module aims to provide students with insight into the interaction between this particular area of law and the political context in which it exists. The interaction between international law and its development challenges students to think critically about the role of international law.

Intended learning outcomes
The aim is to not only to increase critical thinking around international law and, more specifically, human rights law but also to create a higher sense of learning where students retain the information longer. Another outcome is to help achieve a sense of equality in the classroom where students have the opportunity to learn in different ways and to show their potential through various forms of dynamic assessment.

Advantages associated with the integration of technology
International Law 341 is a writing-intensive module with a flexible approach to assessment. The learning strategy focuses on active learning and a dynamic assessment methodology (assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning). The idea behind this learning strategy is that most of the transfer of information takes place outside the classroom (through reading, watching online lectures and working on various related assignments) while the intense part of learning takes place in the classroom where the lecturer and students engage with the materials through discussion and questions.

Other relevant role-players
Apart from the lecturer, the educational team for International Law 341 consists of one research assistant and two tutors. Their main duty is to support students academically and to lend technical and administrative help if needed.

Learning and assessment activities
Educational approach
Sandhu, Afifi and Amara (2012) argue that interactive teaching styles or active learning leads to increased student satisfaction, better achieved learning outcomes, deeper learning and improved knowledge retention, since students' attention degrades after between 10 to 30 minutes of lecturing (Horgan, 2003). To reap the full benefit of active learning, lecturing also has to be coupled with a suitable assessment structure. Smaller, more frequent assignments can be used to track the progress of students' understanding and to serve as potential learning experiences for them.

Learning and assessment activities
There are two scheduled face-to-face sessions per week. One of these sessions is used for a traditional lecture supported by a Prezi or PowerPoint presentation, while the other is used for either a traditional lecture one week or an interactive class the other week.
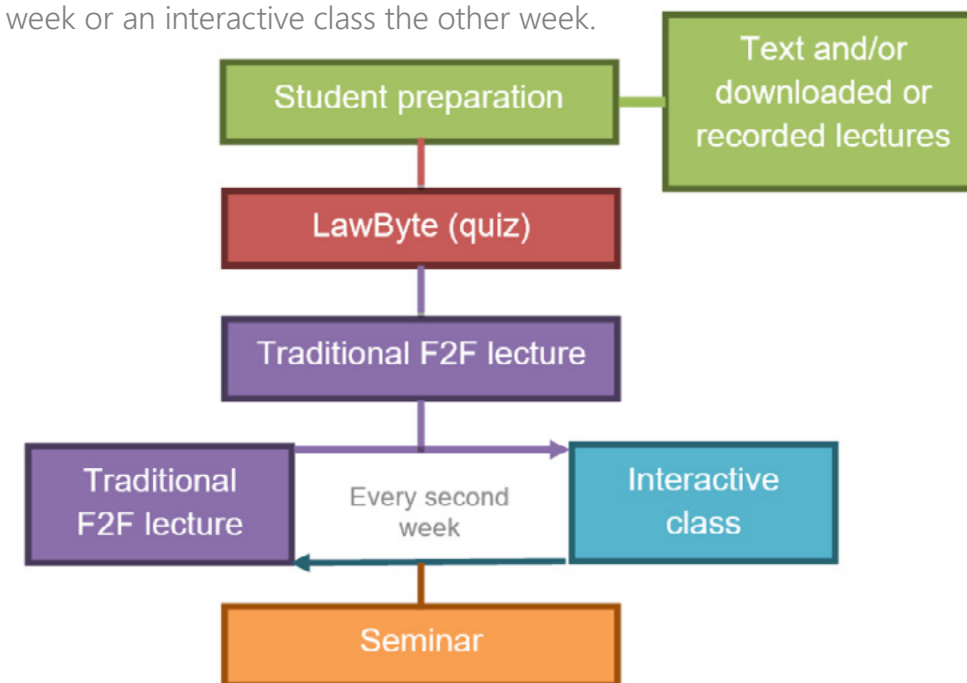

Figure 1: Structure of the module

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For the interactive class, students are divided into groups of four to five and the facilitator presents shorter explanations based on the results of that week's LawByte exercise (an online quiz), which all students had to complete. Multiple choice and case scenarios also form part of this interactive class and low-tech clickers (colour cards) are used to identify the answers or scenarios that each of the groups chooses.

Apart from the above-mentioned lectures, students also attend one seminar (tutorial) session per week.

In preparation for a specific week's classes, students study texts and other materials, such as downloadable lectures and videos (from http://legal.un.org/avl/lectureseries.html) and then complete a LawByte (online quiz) before the first class of that week. Students are advised to read and watch the online videos before attempting the assessment, as they have only one attempt but no time limit.

Figure 2: Example of a LawByte on SUNLearn

Each LawByte contains a set of general questions. The purpose of the quiz is to test how much of the concepts of that week's work students understand and where more guidance is needed from the facilitator. At least four full sessions of class are used for LawByte-related exercises. During these interactive sessions, the correct answers of that specific week's quiz are given and discussed in class. The 10 LawByte exercises contribute 30% to the final mark and students must submit 9 out of the 10 assignments to obtain the mark.

Attendance of the seminars is obligatory. The seminars focus mainly on relevant cases and other important topics that are discussed in the lectures, LawByte exercises and prescribed materials. The first seminar requires students to create a mind map and submit it online. The consecutive seminars require write-ups of one to two pages for each seminar. These write-ups are handed in as hard copy (typed and printed) to the seminar assistant at the time of a seminar. Although the write-ups are not marked, they are not accepted if they do not show that students have undertaken the required tasks and attempted to answer the questions put forward. All students have to participate in 9 out of 10 seminars and submit write-ups for 9 out of 10 seminars to obtain final marks. The first seminar assignment, the mind map, is an obligatory submission for all.
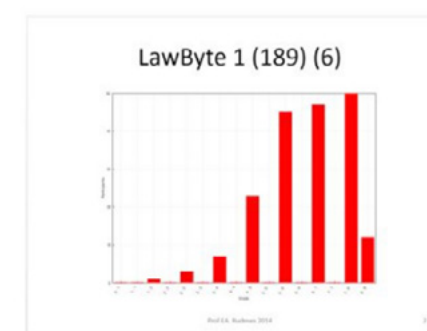

Figure 3: LawByte result analysis for an interactive class

As indicated earlier, International Law 341 is a writing-intensive module, which means that students' writing is at the centre of the teaching and learning in this course. The final learning and assessment opportunity is the research outline and the research paper. These two assessments are interrelated and follow on each other. The aim of the research outline is for

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students to design a suitable framework that assists them to conclude the research paper successfully. Students' ability to demarcate, define and plan a research project can be evaluated through this. Students choose their topics, critically analyse the subject matter and put forward preferably one research question and a corresponding hypothesis that frames the issue (or issues) at hand. The research topics are generally broadly framed and it is the students' task to limit the area and explain how they have decided to approach the topic. The outline acts as a foundation for the research paper, for which students have to apply the norms and principles that have been engaged with during the semester to a real-case scenario. The more that analytical facts and deep understanding are expressed in the research outline, the easier it will be to undertake the research paper and to execute it successfully.

The research outlines are assessed by both the students (in a peer review) and the lecturer (in an instructor review). For the peer assessments, the workshop tool on SUNLearn and digital rubrics are used. Students are randomly allocated into groups of four. All grading is done anonymously. Clear assessment criteria are given and these, along with the rubric that is used, are discussed in detail with the students beforehand. The average grades that students receive from their peers count 20% towards the final grades for the outlines and the grades of the lecturer add the other 80%.

The research papers are submitted and graded digitally through the Turnitin assignment link on SUNLearn and the rubric tool that forms part of this link. The final grades of the research papers are made available in the gradebook on SUNLearn.

In 2016, it was decided to add a final test at the end of the semester. There were several reasons for this but the most important was that, during 2013 and, increasingly, during 2014, there were indications that students were not approaching the online quizzes in an honest way: they were using different Excel spreadsheets and screenshots with the correct answers indicated. Initially, the test was approached as a 'normal' open-book test written in a 'normal' venue where students brought their compilation of international treaties with them. However, as the #feesmustfall protests gained traction during the latter part of 2016, the issue of resources or the lack thereof amongst students became a focal point. Students indicated

that they were not financially able to buy the compilation of international treaties as it was very expensive (it is published by a foreign publishing house) and were therefore at a disadvantage. To give all students an equal opportunity, the test was therefore moved to one of the computer laboratories on campus. A secure network with no access to resources outside the University's network was established and all basic documents were made available through SUNLearn.

Figure 4: Example of a digital test environment

Learning environment
Content and technology resources
In this module, the following learning technologies were used to support teaching and learning:

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Table 1: Learning technologies used for the learning and assessment activities

Learning and assessment activity	Learning technology used
Videos for student preparation	UN Audiovisual Library of International Law (http://legal.un.org/avl/lectureseries.html)
LawByte quizzes	SUNLearn quizzes
Presentations for face-to-face lectures	Prezi or PowerPoint
Interactive sessions	Low-tech clickers
Research outlines	Workshop tool
Research reports	Turnitin assignment tool and GradeMark
Digital tests	SUNLearn with restricted network environment

Student experience
Student feedback on the learning experience
Although no formal feedback was conducted with regard to the active learning and dynamic assessment, informal feedback was very positive. From the lectures' side, there was a general feeling that the grades were higher, although throughput rates remained the same.

General
Other concluding thoughts
Redesigning the module to include more active learning opportunities led to deeper learning and engaged the students more with the content.

References
Horgan, J. 2003. Lecturing for learning, in Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marshall, S. (eds.). *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education.* 2nd ed. London: Routledge. 75–90.

Sandhu, S., Afifi, T.O. & Amara, F.M. 2012. Theories and practical steps for delivering effective lectures. *Journal of Community Medicine and Health Education*, 2(6).

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