**Stan Leasure:** Hello everyone my name is Stan Leasure I teach in the college of business in the department of finance and administration. I’m a lawyer and I teach legal related courses at COBA. Most of the time I teach a course involving negotiation, mediation, arbitration business. That’s the course I’m going to be talking about today that I redesigned over a period going back all the way to 2007 until now. So let’s begin, let me tell you about the development of this course. First of all what is the course? It’s a course that I brought with me from my legal practice that deals with alternative dispute resolution which is a set of non-litigation processes for resolving disputes. The ones I talk about in this course are negotiation mediation and arbitration. I teach this from the perspective of future business executives. I’m not trying to teach mediators or arbitrators, I’m trying to teach future business executives about negotiation mediation and arbitration. I deal with this course from theoretical perspective with the underpinnings of the theory behind negotiation in particular. But I’ve also added another dimension to the course dealing with the application of some skills and some skills that we learn in the class that will help these students in their careers. This course goes back to 2007 when with the help of my Department Head Kent Reagan, we developed the course as a seated course and a lecture course. I taught the course pretty much like you would any lecture course. With lectures, readings, textbook, periodic quizzes and the course quite frankly was an abject failure. I run into students who took that course in this phase, now they are probably graduate students on campus; they don’t hardly look at me. It was not a good course. I knew that the material was important and I want to try to revise it, so the first thing I did was took this course and took it out of the lecture format and made it an experiential course. It was seated at that time and during the period of 2008-2010 I taught it from that perspective. We still considered and studied the theoretical underpinnings of the negotiation process but we also turned it into a more hands-on type course using negotiation role plays and journaling in the class almost to an exclusive extent. The role plays allowed the students in the class to pretend they were negotiating certain disputes; there were 8 or 10 that we negotiated at that time, ranging from the purchase of real property to internal business disputes involving a disgruntled employee, all manner of disputes. At this phase, the experiential seated phase; the students pretty much did negotiations or other hands-on type of activities everyday with periodic lectures often given by the students themselves, and as I mentioned the grade was almost entirely based on journals they kept about what they were learning and what they were experiencing, things they thought they could do better in the future part of the course. Well, that went on until 2010 and then it came time for different reasons for me to take that course online. I was going to take a course that was highly hands-on dealing with a lot of day to day negotiations involving a great deal of student interaction and try to turn it into an online course. In preparation for doing that I did a number of sessions with my current students, focus groups, to see what they thought about the online version of the course and what might work and not, and they were pretty unanimous in saying I must be crazy; somebody must be torturing me to do this because they didn’t think it would work. Well, we went ahead anyway and took the course online, beginning in the fall of 2011. And we’ve had four sections of the course from then until now. And in this course, it was going to be again, an experiential type of learning environment, but online. The things I wanted to
preserve in the online setting were the best parts of the seated class. I wanted to preserve the negotiation role plays; I wanted to preserve the negotiation debriefing that took place with the students after each negotiation. The classroom discussion was another significant part of the seated experience, and I also wanted to continue journaling as a means of assessment. So I had a lot of standards and things to accomplish, but things I’d never even thought of or even heard of before. I wanted to try to preserve all the very best parts.

Well, how did it work? So far it has worked well. Each time I teach the class, I add and change things. It’s developing and moving along at least according to the feedback I am getting from the students; very well. How do we do the negotiation role plays? We use Skype for the first negotiation role plays of each semester to give the students a little bit of training in the face to face nature over the internet without the added stress of knowing the negotiations were going to be recorded and uploaded onto blackboard. But pretty soon into the semester, pretty soon we switch over to adobe connect and continue with our role plays but this time, the students get together at their convenience, they schedule their own times to work together to do negotiations, but using adobe connect we record the negotiations and then we upload them to blackboard for everyone to look at. So in this piece we have preserved the negotiation role plays face to face through either skype or adobe connect, and then in the adobe connect part, everyone gets to look at it. So that’s how we handle the role play part of it.

What about the debriefing? The students in my seated class thought that one of the most important parts of it was that after the negotiations, getting to talk about it, to analyze what happened, and what went right or wrong. Here’s how I tried to deal with that. First we have a participant peer review. If two students negotiate with each other on adobe connect, or on Skype each of them does a peer review of the other negotiator, their negotiating partner if you will. And they post those and they turn them into me. So we have peer review within each negotiation session. Secondly, with the adobe connect negotiations being uploaded on Blackboard, all of the other students have a chance to look at them and review them and they select two from each negotiation session to do a non-participant peer review and include that in their journals, so we have done, I think a pretty fair job of preserving the debriefing piece of the seated class in this online environment through the participant peer reviews which are recorded and documented as well as the non-participant peer reviews done off of Blackboard.

The next piece was also very important to us and that involved the classroom discussion phase. In the seated class in this particular course, there was always classroom discussion between the students and I was eager to try to preserve that. That was a little more difficult. I had never used a discussion boards in any of my classes but I thought this was one way we could accomplish a classroom discussion without the classroom. And so each of the 15 weeks of our class I assigned a discussion board topic and the students in each section of the class are assigned to participate in that discussion. The posts are rigorously graded by me for substantive content, for citations to authority for the position they are taking in the discussion, and for substance, these are not simply chat rooms that students get to
participate in without a lot of preparation and without a lot of thought; these are very substantive parts of the courses. Many students think that this is particularly good substitute as best we can in the online environment.

Lastly we kept the student assessment piece primarily based on journals that the students keep. These journals require a great deal of writing, it’s not unusual at all over the course of the semester for the better students to produce seventy five or eighty pages of writing dealing with what they observe and what they learned and what they thought of the different elements of the course. That’s the biggest part of the grade. The discussion board is significant, it’s a 20% part of the grade and I do grade it quite rigorously. And finally these peer assessments constitute the last 5% of the grade. So that’s how we assess the course. The student reactions to this has been awfully good, it is surprisingly good based on the focus group feedback I got before we did this. Most of the students feel the class is a worthwhile class with a great deal of work but a great deal of reward on the back end. The PowerPoints with this presentation I’m giving you now will be available for you to look at and I won’t read you the student reactions but you can see them for yourself.

Lastly, where are we going to go from here? One of my students actually provided me some feedback this semester that I think I’m going to try to incorporate next semester and that is to take the peer review and observation one step further, I’m going to experiment next semester with actually including four people in the adobe connect parts of the process where two students will do a negotiation and two students will be their participating synchronously together to do the peer review and evaluation in provide the negotiators feedback right then and all of this of course will be recorded for us on adobe connect and uploaded. I think that will provide feedback that many of the students think is missing in our course and I think this will be something that adds another dimension to it. So that’s what I’ve done with my negotiation mediation and arbitration in business class. I Started off with a terrible failure back in 2007 trying to do this as a lecture class, took it to a seated version that was very popular and very successful and I think we are going to have a successful transition to the online environment using the modalities that I’ve just talked about. If you have any questions about any of the things I’ve mentioned in the course of my discussion with you. Feel free to contact me by email or otherwise. Thank you.