SAGrader

SPRING ARBOR UNIVERSITY

Lloyd first used SAGrader in his Sociology and Social Psychology courses at the University of Missouri in 2010. Currently, Lloyd is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Spring Arbor University where he continues his research on the Emerging Church.

Why did you decide to use SAGrader in your class?

There were basically two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to educate myself by exploring new technology. I always want to have a sense of what the latest teaching tools are, how well they work, and how they can help me to teach better. Secondly, I wanted to know what I could do to adapt to the changing demands of higher institutions, for instance, with colleges offering online courses, and larger class enrollments. I saw in SAGrader an opportunity to address both these reasons.

How has your class improved since you started using SAGrader?

I strongly believe my class has improved in a few ways. Being able to keep a big class of students writing throughout a course is invaluable, something that typically would not be possible with an instructor and two TAs for a big class of 290 students like I'm teaching now. Students benefit from having to understand and apply concepts instead of just hearing about them in lecture.

I believe students are more motivated to grasp concepts and theories because instead of being just passive "consumers" of knowledge, they know that through SAGrader they have to engage these concepts as "producers" of knowledge. They are forced to be "hands on" with the concepts and theories, and do things with them by formulating arguments they have to back up and provide evidence for.

What are your favorite tools or features of the program?

I think one of my favorite features of SAGrader is the instant scoring and feedback function. It motivates students since they know their grade is essentially in their hands: they can work on assignments as early as they like, so that they have enough time to resubmit and improve their grades. I also appreciate being able to track which students are not doing well, or who are consistently late submitting assignments. It has given me the opportunity to contact those students, express concern about their performance, and in a few cases to eventually help them get back on track with their grades.