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Lectures to Go

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mschlangen1@udayton.edu.
University of Dayton School of Law student Abbegail Hempfling cracks open her iPod playlist to study. She can do it by going to itunes.udayton.edu and downloading lectures from iTunes U, a free service at Apple's commercial iTunes store. Apple's web site says more than half of the nation's top 500 schools use iTunes U. Hempfling, who owns an iPod Shuffle, also plans to listen to podcasts through her computer.

"I could use them in the car or gym," Hempfling said. "Then, I'd listen to them again to take notes."

Hempfling also said it's nice to rewind parts for which she needs clarification.

At least 10 UD professors upload portions of lectures to iTunes U in a three-step process. They emphasize that podcasts are supplements to regular lectures.

"I am not podcasting my entire class. I have 10 five- to seven-minute podcasts planned for the semester," law professor Sheila Miller said. "I review important concepts or expand on things not fully covered in class. I hope a student who did not get something in class will listen to the podcast and understand it more."

Miller started podcasting her class when she noticed how many students regularly used iPods before and after class. She saw it as another way to reach the millennial generation.

Art Jipson, UD's criminal justice studies program director, uses podcasts to give students exam preparation tips, add commentaries on class material and answer student questions.

David Wright, UD's director of curriculum innovation and e-learning, thinks this new way for students to learn beyond the classroom has great potential.

"Students like having a choice as to how to learn and podcasting offers course content for busy students on the move," he said. "This is a maturing approach. We will grow this slowly and eventually add more content."

Wright says podcasting lectures allows for more face-to-face discussion in the classroom. Another benefit is that students in different disciplines such as law and business can listen to one lecture about a common topic such as intellectual property.

According to Apple, any school can open all or part of its site to the public. Parents can listen to what their children are learning in class. High school students can get a sneak preview of a particular subject or potential professor's teaching style. Anyone with an interest in a particular subject can tune in to satisfy their curiosity. A law class in England could listen to an American law class.

UD also uses iTunes U to podcast speakers who come to campus and other special presentations.