The misunderstood concept that I reflected on in the Prior Knowledge Reflection assignment was that of students not understanding the difference between assessment and evaluation. The pervasiveness of the student question, “Does it count?” is a symptom of this. An analogy to help students understand the difference could be comparing these to the difference between taking a picture and creating a photo album – a process many students are familiar with. Assessments are like snapshots of a specific moment in time. They focus on capturing a current knowledge or skill level. Evaluation is like a photo album that contains multiple and varied snapshots which are selected and analyzed to provide a wide-ranging view of development and achievement over time.

Just as a single snapshot or selfie does not accurately reflect an entire year, a single assessment does not fully reflect student learning through an entire course. As mentioned in my earlier reflection, assessments serve as diagnostic and formative tools (“as” and “for” learning), providing insights into the attainment of learning objectives and guiding next steps for both teaching and learning. Evaluation is summative, “of” learning, which is based on careful analysis of a variety of assessments conducted over time. Explaining assessments and evaluation in this way might help students shift their perspective from fear of assessments to looking at them as opportunities to identify learning gaps, successes, and to inform future goals.



