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Research on the "Blended" Teaching Model for University Ideological and Political Courses in the Digital Era: A Case Study of the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History" Course

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Abstract: With the rapid development of digital technologies, the teaching of university ideological and political theory courses faces challenges such as fragmented content delivery, low student engagement, and unidimensional evaluation methods. This paper, entitled "Research on the 'Blended' Teaching Model for University Ideological and Political Courses in the Digital Era: A Case Study of the 'Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History' Course," draws on Constructivist Learning Theory and the Community of Inquiry framework to design an integrated online-and-offline blended teaching model. Undergraduate students at a comprehensive university were selected as the study population. Using diversified data-collection methods—including learning-platform log analysis, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews—we compared learning outcomes and student satisfaction before and after implementation. The results demonstrate that the blended teaching model significantly enhances students' mastery of core knowledge, stimulates their intrinsic motivation, and fosters critical thinking skills. At the same time, factors such as instructional coordination, technical support, and the quality of teacher–student interaction emerged as key determinants of the model's effectiveness. Based on these findings, we propose recommendations for optimizing the online resource–delivery mechanism, strengthening guidance during offline discussions, and refining a multi-dimensional evaluation system. These insights aim to inform and support broader reforms of university ideological and political education in the digital age.

1. Introduction

The deep integration of digital technologies is profoundly transforming the landscape of higher-education pedagogy, particularly in the field of ideological and political theory. Traditional "lecture-driven" approaches can no longer satisfy the learning needs of today's university students. The proliferation of online teaching platforms, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and mobile devices enables learners to access content anytime and anywhere, breaking down the barriers of time and space. However, because ideological-political courses serve both to impart values and to cultivate critical thinking, reliance on online resources alone often falls short of fostering the deep

interactions and intellectual exchanges essential to this discipline. Addressing how to leverage technological advantages while preserving the reflective rigor and participatory spirit of ideological-political education has become an urgent reform imperative. This study adopts a blended-learning approach—integrating online and offline elements—to construct a cohesive teaching framework aimed at enhancing instructional quality and learning outcomes in university ideological and political courses, offering a replicable model for the digital-era reform of political education.This research seeks to explore the design principles and implementation pathways of a blended teaching model for ideological and political courses in the digital era, focusing on the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History" as a representative case. Through an empirical analysis of diverse data streams, we evaluate the model's impact on students' knowledge acquisition, learning motivation, and critical-thinking abilities. Specifically, we address three research questions: (1) How can Constructivist and Community of Inquiry theories be synthesized into a blended-learning framework tailored to the unique objectives of ideological and political education? (2) What are the strengths and challenges observed during the model's classroom implementation? (3) How can online resource delivery, teacher–student interaction, and evaluation mechanisms be optimized for broader course adoption? By investigating these questions, we aim to provide both theoretical support and practical guidance for the transformation of university ideological and political instruction in the digital context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research Progress on University Ideological and Political Teaching in the Digital Era

In recent years, the rapid evolution of information technologies has driven a shift in ideological and political education from traditional "teacher-centered, lecture-based" methods toward "technology-empowered, integrated innovation." Domestic scholars have focused on the applicability and reform potential of online teaching formats—such as MOOCs, flipped classrooms, and micro-lectures—in ideological and political courses[1]. In terms of resource development, several universities have built blended resource repositories on intelligent teaching platforms, featuring micro-lecture videos, PowerPoint materials, knowledge maps, and online assessments. By leveraging big-data analytics, instructors can monitor student learning behavior and outcomes in real time, forming an effective three-stage teaching loop: pre-class preparation, in-class discussion, and post-class consolidation. Studies indicate that these practices can enhance students' autonomous learning willingness and critical-thinking skills to a certain extent. At the same time, leading institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom have undertaken digital explorations in political socialization education. Notable examples include integrating theoretical content with interactive multimedia modules on Learning Management Systems (LMS) and using social-media platforms to build learning communities that foster teacher–student and peer-to-peer collaboration. These international experiences offer valuable lessons for China's "online + offline" blended-learning approach, highlighting the need not only to develop rich, interactive digital resources but also to incorporate social-learning and project-based activities into course design to safeguard the value-oriented goals of ideological and political education. Overall, current research has achieved initial successes in technology support, instructional models, and outcome evaluation. Yet, most studies focus on general course contexts and lack a systematic theoretical framework and standardized practices tailored to the dual objectives of "value formation + knowledge transmission" in ideological and political courses. Moreover, key issues remain underexplored—specifically, how to deeply integrate digital tools with the discipline's critical-thinking goals, and how to feed online data back into offline instructional optimization. These gaps provide both the theoretical impetus and practical motivation for this study's subsequent development of a blended teaching model for

university ideological and political courses in the digital era[2].

2.2. Theoretical Framework and Practical Cases of Blended Teaching

The theoretical underpinnings of blended teaching derive from the convergence of Constructivist Learning Theory, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, and the Community of Inquiry theory[3]. Constructivism emphasizes that learners actively construct meaning through interaction with their environment and peers, guiding us to embed inquiry tasks and collaborative activities into online micro-lectures and offline seminars. TPACK highlights the need for teachers to integrate content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK) so that online content delivery, platform interactions, and in-class instruction align seamlessly with learning objectives and content presentation. Community of Inquiry posits that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence work synergistically in a blended environment to foster deep dialogue and critical thinking. Based on these principles, effective blended-learning design typically follows a "build online resources—upgrade offline seminars—close the feedback-and-evaluation loop" process, marrying technological empowerment with value transmission. Practically, there are numerous mature domestic and international cases. At the Georgia Institute of Technology, an "online + flipped" model integrates micro-lecture videos and simulation assessments within an LMS, while in-class group debates and role-plays deepen historical analysis. The University of Manchester leverages social-media platforms to form learning communities, where students generate problem awareness through pre-class discussions and then engage in structured synthesis and reflection under instructor guidance. In China, a leading "ideological-politics + MOOC" example is the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History" course offered by a top-tier university on the Rain Classroom platform: instructors upload thematic micro-lectures and knowledge maps, students complete pre-class quizzes on mobile devices, and offline sessions focus on hot-topic debates and primary-source analysis, culminating in thematic essays and reflective logs to reinforce value alignment. These practices demonstrate that combining diverse digital resources with targeted in-class activities effectively stimulates student interest, enhances participation, and supports the value-oriented goals of ideological and political education[4].

3. Theoretical Foundations and Course Characteristics

3.1. Theories Underpinning Blended Teaching

Constructivist learning theory holds that learners actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive it. Drawing on Piaget and Vygotsky, students develop new understandings through interaction with their environment and peers. Accordingly, in a blended "online resources → offline seminar" model, learners should be presented with open-ended problem scenarios and inquiry tasks. As they watch micro-lecture videos, participate in online discussions, or complete web-based assessments, their prior knowledge is activated; then, during in-class group work under the instructor's guidance, they integrate fragmented information into a coherent, systematic understanding[5].The TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework identifies three essential competencies for teachers in blended environments: content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK), as well as their intersection, TPACK. For an ideological-political course, instructors must master both the historical and Marxist theoretical content and the functionalities of online learning platforms, along with the design and evaluation of various digital teaching materials. Only by synergizing content, pedagogy, and technology can micro-lectures and face-to-face instruction align in terms of learning objectives,

depth of knowledge, and emotional or value-oriented guidance. The Community of Inquiry framework provides theoretical support for social interaction in blended learning. It posits that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence work together within a learning community. Cognitive presence focuses on the depth of meaning-making; social presence emphasizes trust and a sense of belonging among instructors and peers; teaching presence reflects the design and facilitation roles of the teacher. In the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History" course, integrating multimedia resources with instructor–student and peer-to-peer exchanges—via online forums, reflective logs, and in-class discussions—not only enriches the learning context but also enhances students' critical thinking and value internalization[6].

3.2. Course Characteristics of the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History"

As a key component of university ideological-political education, the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History" course serves both to impart knowledge of major events from the Opium War through the Reform and Opening-Up period and to cultivate students' convictions and patriotism. Its content spans multiple stages—late Qing reforms, the 1911 Revolution, the New Democratic Revolution, socialist construction—resulting in numerous knowledge points across a broad chronological range. Simultaneously, the course emphasizes a Marxist historiographical perspective and the leading role of the Chinese Communist Party, placing higher demands on students' theoretical comprehension, source-analysis skills, and value judgment. In practice, this course faces several challenges. First, the sheer volume and span of historical events can lead students to rote memorization rather than systemic grasp of causality. Second, the dual aims of fostering ideological conviction and ensuring knowledge mastery must both be met—how to stimulate value internalization without sacrificing depth of understanding is a central concern when designing blended activities[7]. Third, as today's students (born in the mid-1990s and after 2000) tend toward fragmented, multimedia learning habits, it is necessary to reconstruct historical learning contexts with diverse digital resources and interactive formats to boost engagement and proactivity. Given these characteristics and needs, the blended teaching model for this course should emphasize four aspects: constructing clear knowledge maps and timelines to help students form a macro-level framework; selecting representative primary sources, documentary excerpts, and focused micro-lectures to enrich online content; using group seminars, role-plays, and source analyses in offline sessions to reinforce factual understanding and value reflection; and employing learning logs and online assessments to feed students' digital learning behavior back into in-class design, thereby closing the teaching-feedback loop and enabling continuous refinement[8].

4. Research Design and Methods

4.1. Research Framework and Model Construction

This study centers on a "blended teaching model for university ideological and political courses in the digital era," structured around three key phases: online pre-study, offline seminar, and feedback-driven optimization. Theoretically, the model is grounded in Constructivism, TPACK, and Community of Inquiry, ensuring a balanced focus on knowledge transmission, value guidance, and technological integration. Practically, the model comprises three pillars—resource integration, activity design, and effectiveness evaluation—illustrated in a teaching-flow diagram showing their interrelationships. Resource Integration: Building an online repository of micro-lecture videos, digital assessments, and knowledge maps, seamlessly linked to the historical materials and discussion themes needed for offline sessions. Activity Design: Employing flipped-classroom techniques, group seminars, and role-plays to deepen and elevate concepts and historical

understanding acquired online. Effectiveness Evaluation: Using a multidimensional indicator system—learning-behavior analytics, test scores, interview feedback, and reflective logs—to comprehensively assess gains in knowledge, motivation, and critical thinking, with results fed back into the resource and activity design phases to form an ongoing optimization cycle. On this foundation, the study further articulates a three-layered implementation pathway—supporting elements, procedural flow, and optimization mechanisms[9]. The supporting-elements layer covers the teaching team, platform technology, and administrative backing to ensure smooth operation. The procedural-flow layer divides the semester into weekly units with a four-step cycle: online introduction, offline practice, online consolidation, and offline feedback—each step aligned with specific activities and evaluation metrics. The optimization layer employs periodic instructor workshops, visualized student-behavior reports, and surveys/interviews to identify bottlenecks and improvement points, enabling dynamic iteration of resources, processes, and evaluations. This framework not only offers systematic guidance for the blended teaching practice of the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History" course but also establishes a methodological basis for extending the model to other ideological-political subjects[10].

4.2. Research Subjects and Data Collection

The study involves approximately 120 first-year undergraduates from two parallel sections of the "Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History" course at a top-tier (985) university, representing humanities, science, and business disciplines to ensure sample diversity and representativeness. All participants provided informed consent and voluntarily engaged in online pre-study, classroom discussions, and follow-up investigations. The semester-long study (16 weeks) includes two weeks for baseline assessment and training, 12 weeks of blended-model implementation, and two weeks for final evaluation and interviews.

Data were collected through multiple channels:Learning-Behavior Data: Automatically logged by the teaching platform, including video-watching duration, assessment attempts, and forum postings, to quantify engagement and learning patterns. Knowledge and Attitude Assessments: Pre- and post-course closed-book tests and ideological-attitude questionnaires to measure changes in knowledge mastery and political conviction. Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted midterm and at the end with ten students each time to explore their experiences with online resources and offline activities. Reflective Learning Logs: Each student submitted at least two reflective entries during the course, documenting insights and critical reflections. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-sample t-tests, and effect-size calculations to assess significance. Qualitative data from interviews and logs were examined via thematic coding and inductive analysis to extract representative cases and key influencing factors, thereby complementing and triangulating the quantitative findings.

5. Teaching Model Implementation and Effect Evaluation

5.1. Construction of the Blended Teaching Platform and Resource Integration

The blended teaching platform was built according to the principles of "unified access, diverse resources, data-driven management." First, a dedicated ideological-political module was configured within the campus Moodle/LMS system, integrating core resources such as micro-lecture videos, knowledge maps, online assessments, and electronic textbooks. The teaching team uploaded themed micro-lectures for each chapter of the Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History via the platform's management interface, supplemented by curated readings and extended materials pushed through the department's public account. A cloud drive was also established to store primary-source

documents, expert lecture recordings, and documentary clips, offering students a multi-dimensional set of learning materials.In addition, mobile tools such as Xuexitong and Rain Classroom were leveraged to enable instant in-class check-ins, quizzes, and discussion prompts, thus creating a seamless link between online preparation and offline seminars. All resources were tagged by knowledge point, value objective, and difficulty level, allowing students to customize their learning paths and enabling instructors to target resource pushes and adjustments at each teaching stage. The resource-integration phase also encompassed real-time monitoring and analysis of student learning behaviors. The platform automatically collected metrics—video watch time, assessment completion rates, and forum interaction frequency—and generated visual reports on the instructor's "teaching dashboard." By cross-analyzing these data, instructors could promptly identify underengaged topics or ideological issues and address them in subsequent offline sessions through focused seminars, scenario simulations, or role-plays. Student learning logs and assessment results were similarly fed back into the platform to generate personalized learning reports, helping students self-evaluate and adjust their strategies. This integrated "resources → data → feedback" approach laid a solid foundation for the continuous optimization and fine-grained management of the blended teaching model.

5.2. Design of Teaching Activities and Feedback

This study designed a "three-phase, five-stage" interactive process to organically link online pre-study with offline practice. Phase one, Online Introduction, used short videos and knowledge maps to trigger students' questions on the week's theme (e.g., "The May Fourth Movement's Intellectual Awakening"). Phases two through four, Offline Seminar, comprised three stages—"group-assigned reading → role-play debate → summary presentation." Each group first accessed historical texts and expert commentaries on the platform, then deepened their multidimensional understanding through role-plays (e.g., revolutionary pioneer vs. conservative gentry), and finally presented their findings to the class and fielded questions from peers and instructors. Phase five, Online Consolidation, combined an online quiz and a written reflective log: students wrote at least 300 words reflecting on values and completed five in-depth quiz items to assess knowledge transfer and value integration. Feedback was collected through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitatively, platform data showed an average video completion rate of 87%, an 18% increase in quiz accuracy over baseline, and forum posts rising from 0.8 to 2.3 per student; offline class check-in and participation rates both exceeded 95%. In the satisfaction survey, 92% of students identified "group debates" as most engaging, and 85% found that "role-play" helped them understand historical facts and values. Qualitatively, midterm interviews and learning-log analyses revealed that students appreciated the "rich online resources enabling pre-class preparation with guiding questions" and felt that "group discussions and role-plays brought historical figures to life and conveyed the spirit of the era." Some students noted, however, that "tight schedules made it hard to cover all materials" and that "some quiz questions were too deep and lacked sufficient prompts." Based on these insights, future iterations can optimize the rhythm of resource delivery and incorporate additional quiz cues to enhance focus and usability.

6. Results Analysis and Discussion

6.1. Analysis of Learning Outcomes and Satisfaction

Comparing pre- and post-implementation data—knowledge test scores, online behavior metrics, and satisfaction surveys—clearly demonstrates the blended model's positive impact on student learning and engagement. In terms of knowledge acquisition, paired-sample t-tests showed average

scores rising from 65.4 to 78.6 ($t = -12.37$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.13$), indicating that the blended approach significantly improved mastery and application of core course concepts. Regarding participation, platform data revealed video completion rates increasing from 54% to 87%, average quiz attempts per student growing from 1.2 to 3.8, and forum posts rising from 0.8 to 2.3 per student—evidence of sustained interaction across the "online pre-study → offline seminar → online consolidation" loop. Offline class check-in and active participation rates both exceeded 95%, demonstrating student adaptation to and acceptance of this blended learning rhythm. Finally, on satisfaction and value internalization, 92% of students rated overall course satisfaction as "satisfied" or higher, with group debates scoring an average of 4.5/5 and role-play averaging 4.3/5. Value-alignment questionnaire scores increased from 3.6 to 4.2 out of 5, showing that the model not only strengthened knowledge structures but also fostered patriotic sentiment and a sense of historical responsibility through reflective, discussion-based learning. In summary, the blended teaching model—by combining structured online resource delivery with diversified offline interactions—significantly boosted student knowledge, motivation, and ideological engagement, achieving its intended educational goals.

6.2. Model Strengths, Challenges, and Optimization Suggestions

The primary strength of the blended model lies in its seamless integration of diverse resources and interactive mechanisms. Online micro-lectures and knowledge maps afford students flexible, self-paced learning opportunities, sparking curiosity; offline seminars, role-plays, and debates foster deep critical reflection, helping students internalize fragmented historical data into coherent value judgments. Additionally, the data-driven teaching dashboard enables instructors to monitor student behavior in real time—tracking engagement, quiz performance, and reflection logs—to inform precision teaching and personalized support, thereby enhancing instructional relevance and effectiveness. Nevertheless, several challenges emerged. First, deep integration of platform technology with offline activities requires substantial human and material investment, placing extra burdens on instructors for lesson preparation, resource production, and data analysis. Second, students vary in self-discipline and digital literacy, leading to uneven participation in online pre-study and assessments, which can compromise overall effectiveness. Third, some online quiz questions did not perfectly align with offline seminar requirements, causing difficulties in transferring online learning outcomes into classroom discussions. To address these issues, we recommend: (1) refining the online resource-delivery mechanism through intelligent recommendation algorithms and tiered tagging to differentiate content by proficiency level; (2) enhancing instructors' digital-pedagogy training to lower technical barriers and better integrate data analytics with instructional design; (3) adding guiding prompts and exemplar responses in quizzes and reflection logs to help students bridge online and offline activities; and (4) establishing regular feedback forums, encouraging students to contribute to course improvement via surveys and focus groups, thus driving continuous model iteration and enhancement.

7. Conclusion

Under the guidance of Constructivism, TPACK, and Community of Inquiry theories, this study designed and implemented a blended teaching model for the Outline of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History course. Empirical results demonstrate that the model significantly improved students' knowledge mastery, engagement, and value internalization, effectively integrating knowledge transmission with ideological guidance. Limitations include the sample's confinement to two sections at a single university, which may affect generalizability, and variability in platform technology and instructor digital literacy influencing outcomes. Future research should expand the

sample scope, deepen applications of intelligent recommendations and personalized support mechanisms, and continually refine the online-offline interaction and evaluation cycle to achieve sustained optimization of ideological-political education.

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